

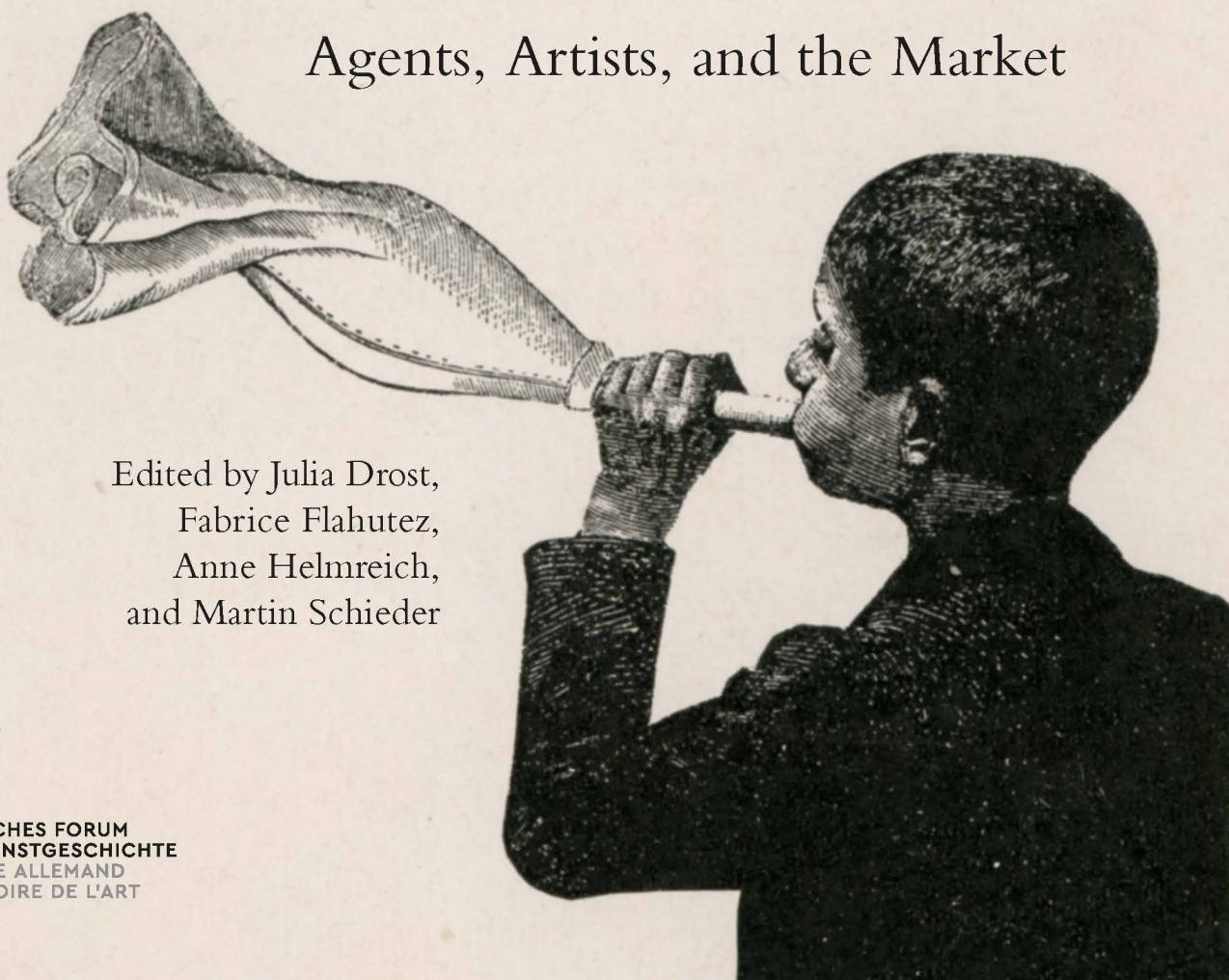
# Networking Surrealism in the USA

Agents, Artists, and the Market

Edited by Julia Drost,  
Fabrice Flahutez,  
Anne Helmreich,  
and Martin Schieder



DEUTSCHES FORUM  
FÜR KUNSTGESCHICHTE  
CENTRE ALLEMAND  
D'HISTOIRE DE L'ART  
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*Deplorably passé in Montmartre and Montparnasse even before the war, surrealism has a new lease on life along Park Avenue and in the 57th Street galleries.*

Klaus Mann, 1943



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## Foreword

Stephanie D'Alessandro  
and Matthew Gale

Casting a view across surrealism's long history and wide international scope, one can justifiably say that the historiography of the movement has experienced ebbs and flows, much like the fluctuations of interest in the various individuals and groups constituting its wider network. Turning to the example of the Paris group formed in the 1920s, one will note that scholarship has considered the relationship of artists to the art market, but owing at least partly to the conflicted attitude of the surrealists to employment (as opposed to an occupation of pure creativity) much is still to be done. Two areas rich for consideration quickly come to mind: the relationship between artists and collectors, who the former regarded as necessary conveniences; think, for instance, of Louis Aragon and André Breton, both employed at certain points by Jacques Doucet. Another is the sale of many of the surrealists' own collections, whether through financial necessity or aesthetic upgrade; here, for instance, one could turn to the 1931 auctions of Breton's and Paul Éluard's works from Africa, America, and Oceania, as well as the latter's 1938 sale of his painting collection to Roland Penrose. This volume, then, is a welcome contribution to a still-open field.

The Paris market was often close to surrealism, even determining certain directions and methods of production, especially in the 1930s when there was a concerted interest in its internationalization. Because of, and despite, the Depression there was a determined effort to grow the American market in order to provide a lifeline for European artists (which prefigured the actual lifeboat the country would represent to many at the start of World War II). This area of study has recently offered new information on the means by which many surrealist artists and writers in exile sustained themselves on a daily basis. Associated with this topic is the distribution and popularization of their work and certain styles in the United States, and, consequently, the relationship between the availa-

bility of their works and acquisitions by North American museums that produced concentrations of surrealism in the country. Ultimately, such unrivaled resources in the United States in comparison to more limited support in Europe brought an official acceptance of surrealism that the earliest European surrealists had difficulties countenancing. This was the situation that met those surrealists who reached safety in the United States and in Mexico in the 1940s, and their presence, in turn, helped to formulate the reductionist narrative of surrealism and the birth of abstract expressionism we try to counter today. To some extent this can be seen now as a triumph of inventive commercialism and, in some cases, recognizable style, mediated by important supporters and fellow travelers often hitherto pressed into the shadows—Chick Austin, Peggy Guggenheim, Julien Levy, Pierre Matisse, James Thrall Soby—all familiar names but rarely (with the exception of Guggenheim) central to surrealist narratives.

The texts in this volume, like the original conference that gave them voice, help to transform this important and largely latent field of surrealist studies. They also offer a wider understanding of the vital relationship, within a capitalist structure, between creativity and distribution, art and commerce, as North American and European surrealism spoke to each other across the Atlantic. This can be seen as a history of the decentralization of power, as the Paris surrealists had to relinquish control in order to be able to prepare the ground for the growth and, therefore, wider reception of work. Artists such as Salvador Dalí and Marcel Duchamp, in very different ways, exploited the commercial imperative, while others appear to have been borne along on the rising wave of success.

The development of this branch of study is, to a certain extent, a logical outcome of our times, but the ways in which it allows a rethinking of the world at the time of the surrealists is vital. It offers a deeper understanding of the place of the work of art in a complex structure of relationships made more acute by the troubled contexts extending out from the 1930s. The specific atmosphere of the economic and political history of the United States that allowed this market, and is the focus of these studies, was not readily translatable to other places at other times. As the field moves to reach more broadly across and beyond the traditional geographical and chronological definitions of surrealism, so it is crucial to assess its echoes and its silences. The reconsideration of one of its most visible markets serves to reaffirm the significance of how detailed scholarship into the local inflects, in various ways, the understanding of a multitude of contexts. The conference from which these essays emerge was erudite and collegial, and, as this publication demonstrates, underpinned by a subtle choreography by its expert organizers—a sensitivity that, like the most inventive surrealist *cadavre exquis*, allowed the parts to be constituted into a fertile and innovative whole.



## Introduction

# Avida Dollars! Surrealism and the Art Market in the United States, 1930–1960

Julia Drost, Fabrice Flahutez,  
Anne Helmreich, and Martin Schieder

“Surrealist art used to be reserved for the happy few”: this is how Olivier Camu, international director and co-head of the Impressionist and Modern Art department at Christie’s in London, describes with charming understatement the growing demand for surrealism since the turn of the millennium.<sup>1</sup> The auction of André Breton’s sizable and impressive personal collection in April 2003 signaled a new high-water mark, leaving a lasting impact. The thousands of objects, artworks, books, and manuscripts from Breton’s studio apartment at 42 rue Fontaine in Paris were dispersed. The public auction was eagerly awaited, and illustrated in an eight-volume, 2,300-page catalogue. Having nourished fantasies, the auction proceeded to live up to expectations of surrealism, with the French state exerting its right of pre-exemption 335 times, spending nearly €15 million, or one third of the total value of a sale that brought in €46 million in ten days. We can say that a page was turned, and that at the same time surrealism was entering a new and unusual speculative phase. Building on this momentum, Camu then began holding regular auctions under the title “The Art of the Surreal Evening Sale,” which have delivered steadily rising sales ever since. In the brochure for the February 2019 auction, Christie’s self-confidently presents itself as market leader—outperforming Sotheby’s by between 25 and 75 percent in this particular segment between 2001 and 2018. To highlight its “record success with Dada and surrealism,” a number of “exceptional results” are listed, including René Magritte’s painting *The Empire of Light* (*L’Empire des lumières*, 1949), which sold in 2005 for \$20,562,500, and the \$16,332,500 achieved by *The Stolen Mirror* (1941), the highest price ever paid for a work by Max Ernst (2011). Yves Tanguy’s *The Closing Days*

<sup>1</sup> Olivier Camu, quoted from <https://artkuwait.org/2012/09/why-todays-collectors-are-in-hot-pursuit-of-surrealist-art.html>, accessed February 13, 2019.

(*Les derniers jours*, 1944) and Roberto Matta's *The Revolt of Opposites* (*La révolte des contraires*, 1944), which fetched, respectively, \$7,495,362 in 2005 and \$5,010,500 in 2012, also set world records "for the artist."<sup>2</sup> These unprecedented sums suggest that for some years now there has been an almost insatiable demand for surrealist art.<sup>3</sup>

This is a far cry from the conditions of the interwar period, when Léonce Rosenberg, the leading dealer in cubism with his Galerie de l'Effort Moderne in Paris, responding to Joan Miró's offer of *The Farm* (*La Ferme*, 1921–22) (fig. 1), his largest and most important work up to that time, insisted, "As you know, right now times are very hard in Paris. People are going for smaller and smaller flats, tiny places with low ceilings. I therefore propose the following: we could cut the canvas into eight pieces and sell them individually."<sup>4</sup> Were there no collectors in avant-garde Paris interested in this new art at the time it appeared?

It is true that surrealist art initially met with a cool response in the very country in which the first "Manifesto of Surrealism" was published in 1924.<sup>5</sup> Of the leading gallerists of cubism and the French avant-garde, the brothers Léonce and Paul Rosenberg shunned the risk, while others, such as Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, rejected surrealism outright. In Paris between the wars, the surrealist artists were exhibited by no more than a handful of exclusively younger art dealers. These included the galleries of Jeanne Bucher, Pierre Loeb, Leonard Van Leer and Aram Mouradian, Camille Goemans, Pierre Colle, Jan-Hans Effenberger-Sliwinski, and, of course, the Galerie surréaliste founded by André Breton in 1926. Indeed, the surrealists took matters into their own hands, organizing their own exhibitions, such as the "Exposition internationale du surréalisme" in 1938, and were to maintain this practice until after the Second World War.

The number of commercial exhibitions in which works by members of the surrealist movement were shown was small. The first collective show, "La peinture surréaliste," was held at the Galerie Pierre from November 14 to 25, 1925. A "club ... one is thrown out [of] for not adhering rigorously to Party rules," carped the critic Maurice Raynal in his review, alluding to the group's communist sympathies.<sup>6</sup> However,

2 "Sell with Christie's. The Art of the Surreal," *Christie's*, <https://www.christies.com/zmags?ZmagsPublishID=1b3cd0e8>, accessed January 31, 2019.

3 Judd Tully, "Dreams for Sale: Why Today's Collectors Are in Hot Pursuit of Surrealist Art," *Art+Auction*, September 14, 2012.

4 Joan Miró, interview with Francesc Trabat, *La Publicitat*, Barcelona, July 14, 1928, in Margit Rowell, ed., *Joan Miró. Écrits et entretiens* (Paris: Daniel Leong, 1995), pp. 103–112, here p. 106.

5 Julia Drost, "Le surréalisme et le commerce de l'art parisien dans l'entre-deux-guerres," in Hélène Ivanoff and Denise Vernerey-Laplace, eds., *Les artistes et leurs galeries, Paris-Berlin, 1900–1950* (Rouen: PUHR, 2019), pp. 287–304.

6 Maurice Raynal in the "Les Arts" column of *L'Intransigeant*, December 1, 1925. Translated from the French.



1 Joan Miró, *The Farm*, 1921–1922, oil on canvas, 123.8 × 141.3 cm.  
Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art.

Pierre Loeb, who at the time described himself as a “surrealist,” put Miró under contract, guaranteeing him regular exhibitions and later lining him up with Pierre Matisse in New York.<sup>7</sup> In so doing, the gallerist boosted the Catalan artist’s international renown at an early stage—and surrealism’s reputation into the bargain. In 1926, Miró was shown in the Société Anonyme’s “International Exhibition of Modern Art” organized by Katherine Dreier and Marcel Duchamp at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.<sup>8</sup> Two years later, the American critic Henry McBride wrote that the whole of New York was talking about Miró, and, moreover, that the artist was “one of the triumphs of surrealism.”<sup>9</sup>

7 See *L’aventure de Pierre Loeb. La galerie Pierre (1924–1964)*, exh. cat., Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and Musée d’Ixelles, Brussels (Paris: Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1979); Albert Loeb, “Pierre Loeb, la galerie Pierre,” in Nicolas Hacquebart-Desvignes and Albert and Sonia Loeb, eds., *13, rue Bonaparte, l’aventure de Jacques Povolozky et de Pierre Loeb, deux marchands d’avant-garde* (Paris: Artbiblio, 2017), pp. 95–110. For Miró and his dealers Pierre Loeb and Pierre Matisse, see also Rémi Labrusse, *Miró. Un feu dans les ruines* (Paris: Hazan, 2018).

8 Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde, 1920–1950* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995), p. 37. International Exhibition of Modern Art, New York, Brooklyn Museum of Art, November 19, 1926, to January 10, 1927.

9 Henry McBride, “Modern Art,” *The Dial*, no. 85 (December 6, 1928), quoted in Henry McBride, *The Flow of Art. Essays and Criticisms*, ed. Daniel Catton Rich (New Haven/

Despite increasingly distancing himself from surrealism during the second half of the 1920s, Miró continued to take part regularly in shows of the group. Thus in 1938 he was included in representative fashion in the “Exposition internationale du surréalisme.”<sup>10</sup> This Paris event marked the conclusion of a series of international exhibitions that started with “Surrealistische und Abstrakte Malerei und Plastik” at the Kunsthaus Zurich in 1929 and that brought surrealism to global attention. The intervening shows were “International kunstustilling kubisme-surrealisme” in Copenhagen in 1935; “První výstava skupiny surrealistů v ČSR” in Prague in 1935; the “International Surrealist Exhibition” at the New Burlington Galleries in London in 1936; “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” at MoMA in New York in 1936; and “Surrealism” at the Nippon Salon in Tokyo in 1937.<sup>11</sup>

### Surrealism travels to the United States

In short, surrealism met with commercial success and institutional appreciation internationally far earlier than it did in its country of origin. Although little researched until now, this phenomenon is particularly true of the United States, where interest in surrealist art began to develop early on. In 1931, the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, mounted the exhibition “Newer Super-Realism” (fig. 2) dedicated to the European surrealists, comprising forty-nine paintings by artists including Salvador Dalí, Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, André Masson, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso.<sup>12</sup> This museum was also the first public collection in the United States to purchase a surrealist painting, Pierre Roy’s *The Electrification of the Country* (fig. 3). In January 1932, most of the works from this exhibition were reshowed at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York. The two shows attracted considerable attention from the American art world, initiating a consistent and much-debated presence for surrealism over the course of the next three decades. The Levy Gallery showed works by Ernst in 1932 and put on Dalí’s first solo exhibition in the United States in 1934, the same year that André Mas-

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London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 249; Henry McBride, “Exhibition of Abstract Art at the Museum of Modern Art,” *New York Sun*, March 7, 1936, quoted in McBride, *The Flow of Art* (see above), p. 336.

10 Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous. Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 2001); Annabelle Görgen, *Exposition internationale du surréalisme, Paris 1938. Bluff und Täuschung – die Ausstellung als Werk; Einflüsse aus dem 19. Jahrhundert unter dem Aspekt der Kohärenz* (Munich: Schreiber, 2008).

11 See the list of international exhibitions compiled by Arturo Schwarz in 1989: Arturo Schwarz, ed., *Die Surrealisten*, exh. cat., Frankfurt am Main, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (Frankfurt am Main: Mazzotta, 1989).

12 See Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen* (note 8), p. 37ff.





2 George Platt Lynes, cover of the catalogue for the exhibition "Newer Super-Realism," 1931. Hartford, CT, Wadsworth Atheneum.



3 Pierre Roy, *The Electrification of the Country*, 1930, oil on canvas, 71.8 × 49.4 cm. Hartford, CT, Wadsworth Atheneum.

son had his first American solo show at the Pierre Matisse Gallery.<sup>13</sup> De Chirico had been introduced to the public even earlier, in a solo show at the Valentine Gallery in 1928.<sup>14</sup>

Looking beyond the commercial art market, the New York exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" at MoMA demonstrates the important role of the European avant-garde at the institutional level (see fig. 27, p. 36). Alfred H. Barr Jr. had started to buy surrealist art for MoMA even earlier, with Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* entering the collection in 1934 as a gift to the museum from an anonymous friend

<sup>13</sup> See Julien Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1977); Ingrid Schaffner, Lisa Jacobs, eds., *Julien Levy, Portrait of an Art Gallery* (Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> "Introducing Giorgio de Chirico," Valentine Gallery, October 18, 2016, <http://www.thevalentinegallery.org/blog/2016/10/6/introducing-de-chirico-to-america>, accessed January 31, 2019; Julia May Boddewyn, "A Valentine to European Modernism," *Modernism Magazine* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2001), pp. 42–48.

who had purchased it from the Julien Levy Gallery (see fig. 29, p. 54). Museums not only in New York, but also in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and San Francisco began showing surrealist art in the early 1930s, when almost no European museum would consider displaying it. Indeed, French museums held back from exhibiting or acquiring art of this kind until after the Second World War. For instance, no works by Max Ernst entered the collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris until 1949.<sup>15</sup> Another six years were to pass before a second work was acquired—and that was only after Ernst, Miró, and Hans Arp had been exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1954. It was more than ten years after the Second World War before the Musée d'Art Moderne honored Miró with a retrospective. A year earlier, no less a figure than Michel Ragon, one of the most prominent French critics of the postwar period, had reflected on Miró's "dripping of small spots" ("*dripping de petites taches*") and drew attention to his impact on the American art scene: "Many are Miró's most avant-garde canvases in the collections and museums of the United States. ... And neither Gorky nor Rothko try to hide the influence the Catalan painter has had on them."<sup>16</sup>

From the 1920s onward, another avenue for exposure was the trade in so-called "primitive art" conducted primarily by the galleries of Paul Guillaume and Louis Carré.<sup>17</sup> Parisian dealers such as Charles Ratton combined the sale of surrealist art with that of objects from Oceania, Africa, and South America, for which there was a strong demand on the US market from dealers such as Julius Carlebach. Furthermore, French avant-garde periodicals such as *Minotaure* (1933–39) and *Cahiers d'art* (1926–60) circulated in the United States art scene relatively early, serving as models for American magazines like *View* (1940–47). Against the background of this awareness and dissemination of surrealism in the United States, exile for the émigré artists to the other side of the Atlantic proved to be more than merely a tragic necessity—it also made perfect economic sense, as there they had access to an interested circle of art lovers and functioning networks.

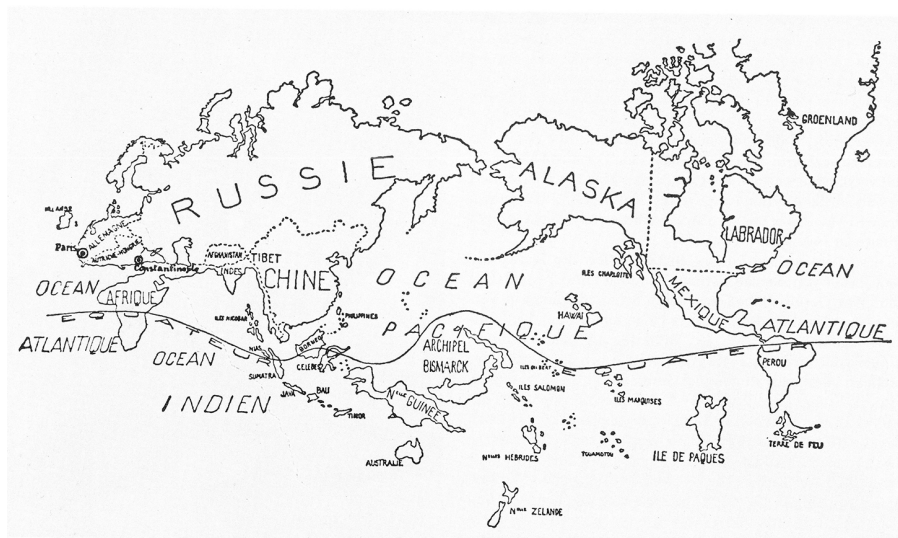
15 This was the painting *Flowers (Fleurs, ca. 1928–29, Inv.: AMVP 814)*. Another, untitled, work by Max Ernst, also *circa 1928–29 (Inv.: AMVP 1907)*, followed in 1955.

16 Michel Ragon, "Le Mickey Mouse abstrait," *Profil*, May 3, 1961. Translated from the French. ("Les toiles les plus avant-gardistes de Miró sont nombreuses dans les collections et les musées américains. ... Et ni Gorky ni Rothko ne cachent l'influence que le peintre catalan a exercé sur eux.")

17 See Maureen Murphy, *De l'imaginaire du musée. Les arts d'Afrique à Paris et à New York (1931–2006)* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2009) and the chapter "Les objets. La reconnaissance des arts indigènes," in Sophie Leclercq, *La rançon du colonialisme. Les surréalistes face aux mythes de la France coloniale (1919–1962)* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2010), pp. 91–118. Christophe Flubacher, ed., *Surréalisme et arts primitifs, un air de famille*, exh. cat., Crans-Montana, Fondation Paul Arnaud (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2014).

## The surrealist map of the world

While certain American critics, curators, and collectors demonstrated a keen interest in European surrealism, the Parisian mouthpieces of surrealism, by contrast, emphatically rejected American society—indeed, the United States of America was literally absent from the world map concocted by Breton and his Paris friends. The famous *Surrealist Map of the World* (*Le monde au temps des surréalistes*), published in the Belgian magazine *Variétés* in 1929 (fig. 4), represents a vision of an internationalist world from which national boundaries and the nationalisms of the



4 Anonymous, *The World at the Time of the Surrealists*, in *Le Surréalisme en 1929*, special issue of *Variétés*, June 1929.

interwar period have been eliminated. The double-page spread concomitantly highlights the dualism of two social systems: while communist Russia is depicted oversized on one side of the globe, capitalist America is all but obliterated from the other. Where we would expect to find the United States, only indigenous Alaska and Hawaii, and the former French territory of Labrador are marked. Only a few years later, the surrealists were compelled to flee war and dictatorship and take refuge almost *in toto* in this blank area of their map (while almost all of the expressionist artists and exponents of Dada remained in Europe; fig. 5). Their exile in the United States can thus be viewed as a quasi-tragic misunderstanding.

Since the publication of art historian Dickran Tashjian's book *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde, 1920–1950*





5 George Platt Lynes, photograph taken on the occasion of the exhibition “Artists in Exile,” 1942, Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York. Left to right, first row: Roberto Matta Echaurren, Ossip Zadkine, Yves Tanguy, Max Ernst, Marc Chagall, Fernand Léger; second row: André Breton, Piet Mondrian, André Masson, Amédée Ozenfant, Jacques Lipchitz; standing: Pavel Tchelitchew, Kurt Seligmann, Eugene Berman. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

(1995), intensive research has been devoted to the European surrealists’ exile in the United States,<sup>18</sup> with *Surrealism in Exile* by Martica Sawin (2001), *Paris à New York. Intellectuels et artistes français en exil* by Emmanuelle Loyer (2005), and *Nouveau monde et nouveau mythe. Mutations du surréalisme, de l’exil américain à l’“Écart absolu”* by Fabrice Flahutez (2007) particularly worthy of mention here. These accounts have brought to the surface the contrasting fates of the surrealists. Breton, for example, was not especially at ease in American society, in comparison to Duchamp, who had lived in New York since the 1920s. Breton worked as a radio announcer for the United States Office of War Information, but unlike in Paris, he had little success in New York in forming around

18 Josefina Alix, Martica Sawin, eds., *Les Surréalistes en exil et les débuts de l’école de New York*, exh. cat. (Strasbourg: Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain, 2000); Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 1995); *La planète affolée. Surréalisme, dispersion et influences 1938–1947*, exh. cat., Marseille, Centre de la Vieille Charité (Paris: Flammarion, 1986).

him a tight-knit group of surrealist intellectuals.<sup>19</sup> His efforts to maintain the cohesion of the movement in exile are borne out by the founding of the magazine *VVV*, which he edited in conjunction with David Hare from 1942 to 1944, and his collaboration with Charles Henri Ford on several issues of the American avant-garde magazine *View*. Scholars have also tended to view the exhibition “First Papers of Surrealism” in this light.<sup>20</sup> An entire international field of art historians, anthropologists, literary scholars, artists, and critics have taken up the subject of the surrealist presence in the Americas, bringing to attention such facets of their practice as the artists’ interest in Native Americans, including the Hopi people and their rites, as well as pre-Columbian and Inuit art.<sup>21</sup>

It is important to emphasize that a clear distinction should be made between the reception of surrealism in the United States, on one hand, and the artistic and intellectual interests of the exiles—above all André Breton as the movement’s spokesperson—on the other. The history of surrealism in the United States also requires recognizing the ways in which American consumer culture absorbed the surrealist aesthetic, leaving a lasting impression on media strategies not only in advertising, but also in film and television.<sup>22</sup> In addition to probing the artists’ dynamic interaction with their new terrain, Anglo-American art history has also focused its attention on the development and different forms of expression of American surrealism since the legendary exhibition “Surrealism and American Art: 1931–1947” at the Rutgers University Art Gallery in New Brunswick in 1977, such as, for example, in the exhibitions “Surrealism USA” in Phoenix, Arizona (2005), and “American Painting in the 1930s” in Paris, London, and Chicago (2016–17).

19 For a synopsis by Jean-Paul Salles of Emmanuelle Loyer, *Paris à New York. Intellectuels et artistes français en exil, 1940-1947* (Paris: Hachette-Littératures, 2007), see <https://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/dissidences/index.php?id=105>, accessed January 31, 2019. Julien Levy’s account of Breton’s failed attempt to take charge of a meeting of surrealists in Greenwich Village has become legendary; see Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 13), p. 279.

20 See also “Dada and Surrealism: Transatlantic Aliens on American Shores, 1914–1945,” *The Space Between: Literature and Culture 1914–1945*, vol. 14, 2018, [http://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-space-between-literature-and-culture-1914-1945/vol14\\_2018\\_contents](http://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-space-between-literature-and-culture-1914-1945/vol14_2018_contents); Janine Mileaf and Susan F. Rossen, eds. *A Home for Surrealism: Fantastic Painting in Midcentury Chicago* (Chicago: Arts Club of Chicago/University of Chicago Press, 2018); Fabrice Flahutez, *Nouveau monde et nouveau mythe. Mutations du surréalisme, de l’exil américain à l’“Écart absolu” 1941–1965* (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2007); Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous* (note 10).

21 Marie Mauzé, “Des surréalistes en exil,” catalogue for the sale of the Robert Lebel collection (Paris: Calmels, 2006), pp. 17–29; Katherine Conley and Pierre Taminiaux, *Surrealism and its Others* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006) (Yale French Studies, no. 109).

22 Sandra Zalman, *Consuming Surrealism in American Culture: Dissident Modernism* (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate, 2015) (Ashgate Studies in Surrealism).



## Questions for research

A review of historical and current research positions reveals that consideration of the art market for surrealism in the United States has by and large been confined to monographic studies of major collectors and dealers. The present volume seeks to advance the field beyond these borders by building on a number of fundamental methodological considerations. Surrealism's success in the United States from the early 1930s until well into the 1960s needs to be understood in terms of its socio-historical context. The performance of, and demand for, surrealist works on the art market was closely linked to the prevailing political, social, and economic conditions—from the Great Depression and the New Deal in the 1930s through to the Second World War and the exile of the surrealists in the 1940s, followed by the anti-communism of the McCarthy era and the Marshall Plan in the 1950s. At the time when many surrealist artists were emigrating to the United States to escape war and persecution, the American art market was at rock bottom: “[I]n 1941 business was not only terrible, it was nonexistent,” recalls Julien Levy.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, in a letter of 1942 to Benjamin Péret, Breton reports that neither Ernst nor Masson had sold anything at their solo exhibitions.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, as pointed out by the French theorist Bruno Latour, the history of the art market can be seen as a history of agents and systems.<sup>25</sup> These agents include artists, dealers, collectors, financiers, insurers, and art world movers and shakers, in addition to the artworks themselves, their paths of circulation, and their financial value. Until now, astonishingly little has been known about the agency and networks of the European surrealists in the context of the United States market. What public relations, modes of display, and, not least of all, economic strategies did the surrealist movement develop in its unwillingly adopted country? Which middlemen or -women interceded on their behalf? Which galleries exhibited them? Who invested interest and money in these artists? And who, and which, did not? What was distinctive about the collecting profile of the directors and curators of American museums who showed surrealist art and of the collectors of these works—from Chick Austin in Hartford to Alfred Barr and James Johnson Sweeney in New York, and John and Dominique de Menil in Houston? Although hefty monographs and exhibition catalogues are available on the activities of Peggy Guggenheim, the role of the art market in the success of surrealism in the United States remains largely unexplored.

23 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 13), p. 255.

24 Letter from André Breton to Benjamin Péret, April 7, 1942, *Correspondance André Breton – Benjamin Péret, 1920–1959*, introduced and annotated by Gérard Roche (Paris: Gallimard, 2017), pp. 131–132.

25 For an introduction to actor-network theory, as theorized by Bruno Latour, see, *Reassembling the Social, An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

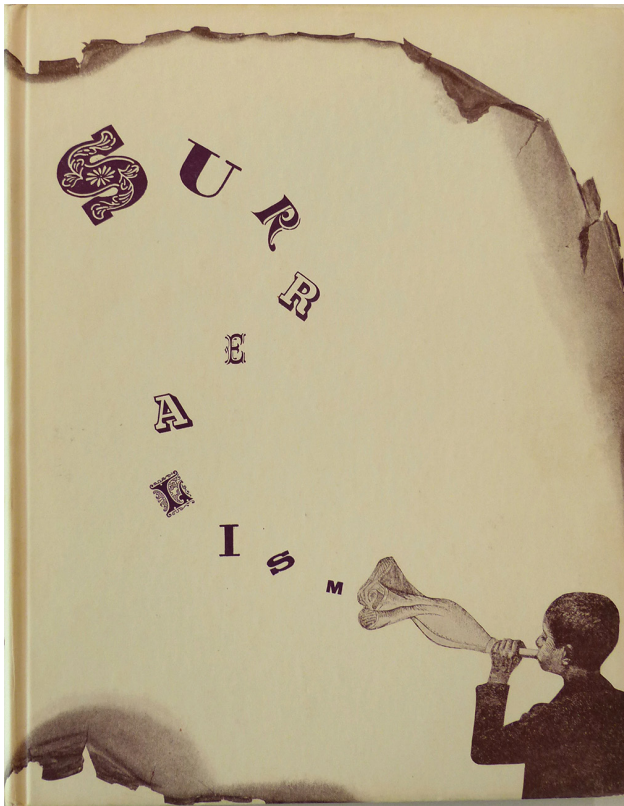
genheim, Julien Levy, and Pierre Matisse,<sup>26</sup> relatively little is still known about the majority of dealers in surrealist art in the United States—for example, Alexander Iolas in New York, who established Magritte on the United States art market, and William Copley, who, after the Second World War, ran the Copley Galleries in Beverly Hills (which proved to be a short-lived venture). In six exhibitions held between 1948 and 1949, the Copley Galleries showed works by Joseph Cornell, Ernst, Magritte, Matta, and Tanguy for the first time in Los Angeles, and, in 1948, held a show titled “Paintings Repatriated from Paris” of Man Ray works sent over from Europe. Even Barr’s commitment to surrealism awaits scholarly investigation, as does that of native Englishman Gordon Onslow Ford, who facilitated transatlantic contacts between artists, collectors, and museums. After arriving in the United States in June 1940, Onslow Ford soon became an influential proponent of surrealism. In 1941, he gave a series of lectures on surrealism accompanied by exhibitions, organized by the art dealer Howard Putzel at the New School for Social Research in New York. Putzel, meanwhile, before becoming an adviser to Peggy Guggenheim, ran a gallery initially located in San Francisco and later in Los Angeles, thereby playing a pivotal role in the early dissemination of surrealism in the Southwest. Among collectors he worked with were Walter and Louise Arensberg, to whom he sold Max Ernst’s painting *The Forest (La Forêt)* in 1937. These few examples suffice to illustrate the intended focus of this publication: surrealism found in America what it had lacked in France during the interwar period—dealers and museums, and even attracted interest from the general public.

### “They do the pioneering”

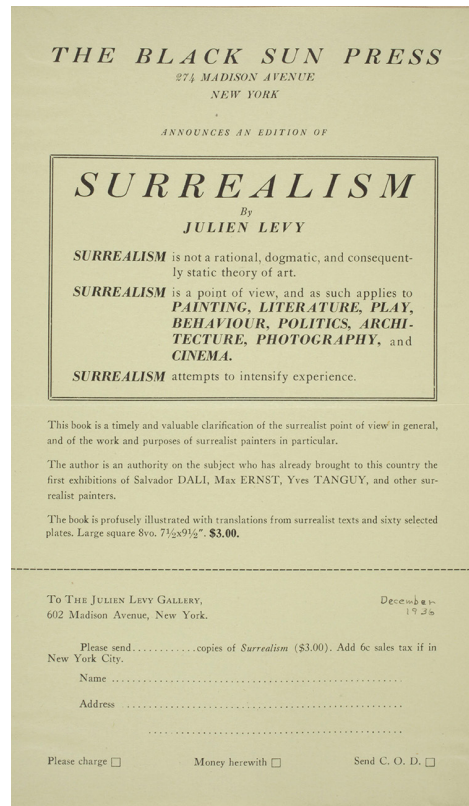
A key figure in this network was Julien Levy, who, before becoming an art dealer, studied art history under Paul J. Sachs in the Fine Arts department at Harvard—alongside Alfred Barr and James Thrall Soby.<sup>27</sup> When Levy opened his gallery at 602 Madison Avenue in New York in 1931, *ARTnews* wrote, “Today there is a slump in the art trade of Great Britain and America brought about by large numbers of collectors who

26 Susan Davidson and Philip Rylands, eds., *Peggy Guggenheim and Frederic Kiesler. The Story of Art of This Century*, exh. cat., Venice, Peggy Guggenheim Collection (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2004); *The American Matisse, The Dealer, His Artists, His Collection*, exh. cat., New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2009); Pierre Schneider, ed., *Pierre Matisse, un passeur passionné. Un marchand d'art et ses artistes*, exh. cat., Mona Bismarck Foundation, Paris (Paris: Hazan, 2005); William Griswold, Jennifer Link Tonkovich, eds., *Pierre Matisse and His Artists* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 2002). For Julien Levy, see note 14.

27 See the essay by Anne Helmreich in this volume, pp. 319–339.



6 Joseph Cornell, cover of Julien Levy's book *Surrealism* (1936), 1931–32.



7 Order form for Julien Levy's book *Surrealism*, 1936.

are in the habit of buying art [and who are] temporarily ceasing to make purchases.”<sup>28</sup> The Julien Levy Gallery provided artists such as Dalí, Ernst, Leonor Fini, Alberto Giacometti, Frida Kahlo, and Magritte, as well as the Americans Man Ray, Joseph Cornell, Walter Quirt, and Lee Miller with their first opportunity for an exhibition in New York. In his autobiography, Levy described his vision for his gallery venture: “It was to be the gallery that represented the most enduring artists of the period: the Surrealists.”<sup>29</sup> In 1931, Levy bought Dalí’s iconic painting *The Persistence of Memory* for \$250 from the Galerie Pierre Colle in Paris and showed it in his exhibition “Surrealism: Paintings, Drawings and Photographs” in January 1932; Barr then included it in “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” two years later. The extent of the reputation Levy built for himself within the space of just a few years is illustrated by his inclusion in *Vogue* magazine’s 1938 list of New York’s seven “distingu-

28 “Art and the Slump,” *ARTnews*, August 19, 1931, p. 19.

29 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 13), p. 12.

ished art dealers”—along with the well-established Knoedler’s, Valentine, Marie Harriman, Carstairs, Wildenstein, and Durand-Ruel. “They do the pioneering. They do the subsidizing. They take the chances. ... It is in their galleries, and each gallery has a personality as sharp and distinct as any movie star, that art in New York gets its first impetus.” Levy’s special merit lay in his ability to make his artists, “the enthusiasms also of some of the cleverest and gayest art collectors.”<sup>30</sup> Levy also helped to publicize and disseminate surrealism in his capacity as an author. His book *Surrealism*, published in 1936, was the first American publication on the movement (figs. 6 and 7).<sup>31</sup> Incidentally, it should be noted that the first history of surrealism as such, written by Maurice Nadeau, did not appear until 1945.<sup>32</sup> Levy’s book pays tribute to surrealism in an artistic, poetic manner and emphasizes the vast spectrum covered by the movement in terms of different media. It deals with photography, literature, art, film, architecture, theater, and so on, while at the same time undertaking a historical contextualization. Levy reports one particular anecdote that is characteristic of the creation of surrealist works and their guiding principle of chance. On one occasion Cornell, who was first exhibited by Levy in 1932, visited him in the gallery and asked to borrow his photograph of the Parisian dancer Cléo de Mérode. Levy replied:

“‘Of course.’ I lit a cigarette, very pleased, for she was a favorite of mine too. Idly picking up a proof of the catalogue cover for his exhibition, I put a match to one corner, watching it brown and curl as the flame spread. ‘Disturbing, isn’t it? Let me hold it,’ said Joseph, and carefully revolved the paper so that the edges burned almost around, bordering the image. ... And we later used that burnt sheet for the jacket of my book *Surrealism*.”<sup>33</sup>

The book was variously received by American reviewers, and their reactions can be seen as emblematic of the reception of surrealism as a movement in the United States. Some recommended the book as a suitable gift for the upcoming Christmas season, but there were also

30 Sallie Saunders, “Middle Men of Art,” *Vogue* New York, vol. 91, iss. 6 (March 15, 1938), pp. 102, 154–155, here p. 154.

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

32 Maurice Nadeau, *Histoire du surréalisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1945).

33 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 13); Levy was originally considering entrusting the design of the cover to Max Ernst: “I’ve heard from Caresse concerning the planned book: *What is Surrealism*? I’ll do the cover design over the next few days and let you have it straight away” (“J’ai reçu un mot de Caresse à propos du livre projeté: *What is surrealism*? Je ferai d’ici quelques jours le projet pour la couverture et vous l’enverrai aussitôt”), letter from Ernst to Levy, March 22, 1936, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Levy Archive.

harsh voices. A reviewer in *Town & Country* magazine denounced Levy's "Faulkneresque ganglia of words" and observed, "Notice that it is a jargon, that it is clubby, that being uninitiated, you have no idea what it means."<sup>34</sup> *The Nation* criticized as a "Surrealist Field Day" the artists' claim to produce inner images while ignoring rationality, and challenged the feasibility of this approach. According to the reviewer, despite all its criticism of bourgeois society, surrealism served precisely this end. In the communist journal *The New Masses*, Meyer Schapiro went even further. In his article titled "Shrines of Unreason," he condemns surrealism as authoritarian, referring to a sentence from Levy's catalogue introduction: "The [surrealist] point of view is essentially anti-definitive and anti-explanatory."<sup>35</sup> A little further on Schapiro states that "Surrealism is not a rational ... theory of art." These aspects led Schapiro to draw a connection with fascism: "I am aware that it is dangerous to cry fascism. I am aware that Surrealists include anti-fascists ... Still, to which would Surrealism most appeal as a philosophy, to communism or fascism?"<sup>36</sup>

In order to avoid adopting any political positioning with his exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," Barr evidently ignored surrealism's social dynamic, instead staging the works as pure art. Lewis Mumford, in his article in the *New Yorker*, highlights the combination of older Continental art and surrealism in the exhibition, but adds regretfully, "They therefore neglect the wild Surrealist element that has been present in American art and in American humor from the very beginning."<sup>37</sup> Mumford clearly attributes to the surrealist aesthetic a proximity to an American tradition, and attempts to inscribe it into the nation's own modern culture. Yet, the European surrealists were accused by their American communist colleagues of adopting a bourgeois outlook and of producing art devoid of any social relevance. Thus, the critic Margaret Duroc writes in *Art Front* in 1936 of an exhibition at the John Reed Club, "Surrealism is a false medium for the revolutionary artist. It uses an occult language which needlessly separates the artist from his audience."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Town & Country*, December 1936.

<sup>35</sup> Meyer Schapiro, "Shrines of Unreason," *New Masses*, December 29, 1936.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis Mumford, "The Art Galleries: Surrealism and Civilization," *New Yorker*, December 19, 1936, p. 68.

<sup>38</sup> Margaret Duroc, "Critique from the Left," *Art Front*, no. 2 (January 1936), pp. 7–8; quoted in Ilene Susan Fort, "American Social Surrealism," *Archives of American Art*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1982), pp. 8–20, here p. 11.



## Surrealism and American consumer culture

The hypothesis that the exhibition and museumization of surrealism in the United States went hand in hand with the depoliticizing of this art movement raises the fundamental question: What were the parameters that governed the reception of surrealism in the United States? Did it reach a wider audience in the United States—even before the outbreak of the Second World War—than it had in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s as a result of its acculturation and transformation in accordance with the local conditions that prevailed in matters of taste and the art market? Did a capitalistically oriented society categorically reject surrealism’s “communist” superstructure, or was it simply eclipsed by this society? Were the surrealists perceived in the United States largely as a European avant-garde movement, as a unified group, or did interest lie primarily in their individual artistic positions? The concept behind the 1942 “Artists in Exile” exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York, for example, could be interpreted from the latter perspective. Placing the emphasis on exile—starting with the exhibition’s very title—there is no suggestion either of it as a surrealist group show, or, indeed, of it being categorized as surrealist in any sense. Rather, collector and curator James Thrall Soby’s introductory lines in the catalogue emphasize the varied positions of the artists: “They are a disparate group, but all belong to the rare company of those who have brought originality and authority to the art of their period.”<sup>39</sup> Clearly, surrealist works of art were transferred from Europe to the United States and fed into the local art market—but the worldview and aesthetic idea behind them were not.

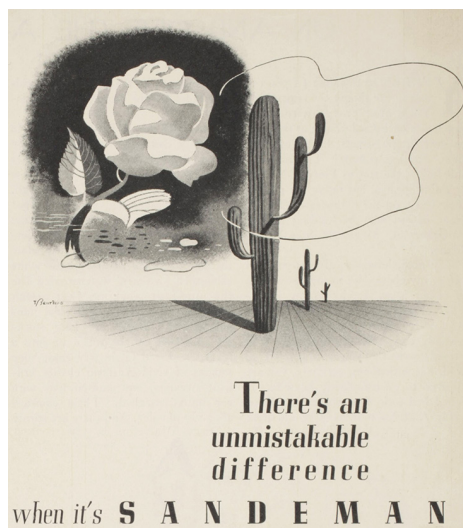
In light of this, can we, and perhaps should we, talk of a specifically American way of seeing surrealism? One reviewer’s response to Herbert Read’s book *Surrealism* of 1936 is particularly interesting in this context: “In this volume it is fully and clearly explained, not as one more movement from Paris, but as a fundamentally new attitude toward all aspects of life.”<sup>40</sup> Here, then, surrealism is regarded not so much as an artistic movement, but rather as an appropriate form of reflection on modern life, one that pervades every area of existence. On the other hand, in his foreword to the catalogue of the 1939 New York World’s Fair, titled “American Art Today,” at which some 1,200 works of contemporary American art were displayed, arts administrator Holger Cahill reflects on the degree to which surrealism had infiltrated and been absorbed into American art:

39 James Thrall Soby, “Europe,” in *Artists in Exile*, exh. cat., New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery (New York: Pierre Matisse, 1942), unpaginated.

40 Herbert Read, *Surrealism* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936); Oliver Larkin, “Inspirations of the unconscious,” *Saturday Review of Literature*, August 21, 1937.



8 A surrealism-inspired advertisement in *The New Yorker*, February 6, 1937.



9 A surrealism-inspired advertisement in *The New Yorker*, December 26, 1936.



10 "Insanity Time Only Right Time for Surrealist Hair Dressings," article in the *New York World-Telegram*, December 31, 1936.

“Straight surrealism, as practiced by the European adept, has not proved attractive to many American artists, and this type of work is distinctly in the minority in this exhibition. However, a good many of the works exhibited indicate that surrealist ideas and technique have been assimilated into the stream of contemporary American expression. Surrealism has given the artist a new daring in the use of narrative, and an enhanced power of emotional statement through unusual handling.”<sup>41</sup>

The success story of surrealism in the United States cannot be properly understood without considering the prevailing visual culture. In America, the pictorial worlds of surrealism penetrated everyday life as never before, spreading rapidly as a result of commercialization, media absorption, and popularization. Against a background of Walt Disney cartoons, the introduction of television, advertising campaigns for American shrines to consumerism, and fashion and lifestyle magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, surrealism had a very different reception and cross-media popularization in the United States than it had experienced in interwar Europe.<sup>42</sup> For example, the Sloane furniture chain advertised rooms à la de Chirico (fig. 8), and surrealist imagery was used in advertising for the New York department store Bamberger's and for Sandeman Sherry (fig. 9). For the 1937 New Year celebrations, surrealist hairstyles and fashions were recommended in the press (fig. 10). Furthermore, a number of popular cartoons show how deeply surrealism had entered society (fig. 11). These few examples illustrate how surrealism conquered the media and American high society, not only in the world of art, but also in film, ballet, and theater (fig. 12). In the field of advertising and fashion, endless variations were played out on the theme of Dalí's limp watches; the artist's public appearances provided the press with a constant feast of material, while his media strategies and the high prices commanded by his works were caricatured. Perhaps the most spectacular example of Dalí's strong media presence is the Dream of Venus pavilion that he unveiled to an equally fascinated and shocked public at the New York World's Fair in 1939, with which, as *Time* magazine observed, he was likely to “win more converts to Surrealism than a dozen highbrow exhibitions.”<sup>43</sup> Dalí is known to have ceased to be an official member of the surrealist movement in 1934—expelled by Breton for his ambivalent attitude toward fascism, he nevertheless continued to present himself as

41 Holger Cahill, “Introduction,” in National Art Society, ed., *American Art Today*. New York World's Fair, exh. cat., New York (New York: National Art Society, 1939), p. 27.

42 See Zalman, *Consuming Surrealism* (note 22).

43 “World's Fairs. Pay as You Enter” *Time*, June 26, 1939.





11 "A man by the name of Salvador Dali left his watch to be repaired," cartoon in *Esquire*, June 1943.



12 Cover of the program for the Surrealist and Fantastic Film Festival, New York, Fifth Avenue Playhouse, December 1941.

a surrealist artist.<sup>44</sup> His carefully calculated appearances and provocative showmanship were therefore seen as a betrayal of the movement, and ultimately inspired Breton to come up with his “Avida Dollars” anagram (fig. 13).<sup>45</sup> Dalí’s expulsion from the movement and simultaneous meteoric rise in the American art market reflect, and effectively exemplify, the transformed reception of surrealism in the United States art market, while also pointing to the need to investigate this reception in a way that takes into consideration these diverse, complex, and to some extent opposing, interests.



13 Yale Joel, *20,000 Dollar Dalí*, 1954. The LIFE Picture Collection.

44 Robin Adèle Greeley, *Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 81. See Ingrid Schaffner, *Salvador Dalí's Dream of Venus. The Surrealist Funhouse from the 1939 World's Fair* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002).

45 See the essay by Martin Schieder in this volume, pp. 191–215, p. 199.



## Between appropriation and accommodation

The commercial appropriation of surrealism in general, and Dalí in particular, was the subject of controversial debate among contemporaries.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, surrealist artists came in for open criticism in the press. This was nourished not only by their purported communist convictions, but also by their marketing strategies, which contrasted diametrically with their political beliefs (or perceived ideologies). Interestingly, it was a German exile, the writer Klaus Mann, who initiated a campaign against the surrealists by reproaching them for sacrificing their convictions for the sake of mere show. Mann's article "Surrealist Circus" was published in the *American Mercury* in 1943:

"Deplorably passé in Montmartre and Montparnasse even before the war, surrealism has a new lease on life along Park Avenue and in the 57th Street galleries. Shocked and amused, Americans witness an increasingly fashionable revival of all the familiar gags: the fancy publications and complicated intrigues, the noisy artistic snobbery, the fights, the pretentious blare and bustle. Of course, some of the more daring gadgets have to be sacrificed—the anti-capitalist and anti-God stuff, for example, is a trifle too hot for Park Avenue palates."

In particular, Mann was struck by the fact that despite Dalí's scandalous behavior, the artist's "solid craftsmanship has been recognized and well paid for by exacting collectors," and that Peggy Guggenheim flew the "surrealist family" to the United States in a plane and took them "under her wing." Yet what did one see in her gallery Art of This Century? In Mann's words, "The Guggenheim gallery looks like the amusement area at a second-rate World's Fair, say in Mexico City or Bucharest, with all kinds of turning wheels, changing lights, and mechanical tricks."<sup>47</sup> This condemnation of surrealism's putative commercial mien is found repeatedly in American criticism, and in 1944, in *The Nation*, Clement Greenberg castigated the profit-oriented popularization and appropriation of surrealism with his own brand of sarcasm:

"The desire to change life on the spot, without waiting for the revolution, and to make art the affair of everybody is Surrealism's most laudable motive, yet it has led inevitably to a certain vulgarization of modern art. The attempt is made to depress it to a

46 Robert S. Lubar, "Salvador Dalí in America: The Rise and Fall of an Arch-Surrealist," in Isabelle Dervaux, Michael Duncan, eds., *Surrealism USA*, New York, National Academy Museum (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2004), pp. 20–29, here p. 26.

47 Klaus Mann, "Surrealist Circus," *American Mercury*, February 1943, pp. 174–181, passim.

popular level instead of raising the level of popularity itself. The anti-institutional, anti-formal, anti-aesthetic nihilism of the Surrealists—inherited from Dada with all the artificial nonsense entailed—has in the end proved a blessing to the restless rich, the expatriates, and aesthete-flaneurs in general who were repelled by the asceticism of modern art. Surrealist subversiveness justifies their way of life, sanctioning the peace of conscience and the sense of chic with which they reject arduous disciplines.”<sup>48</sup>

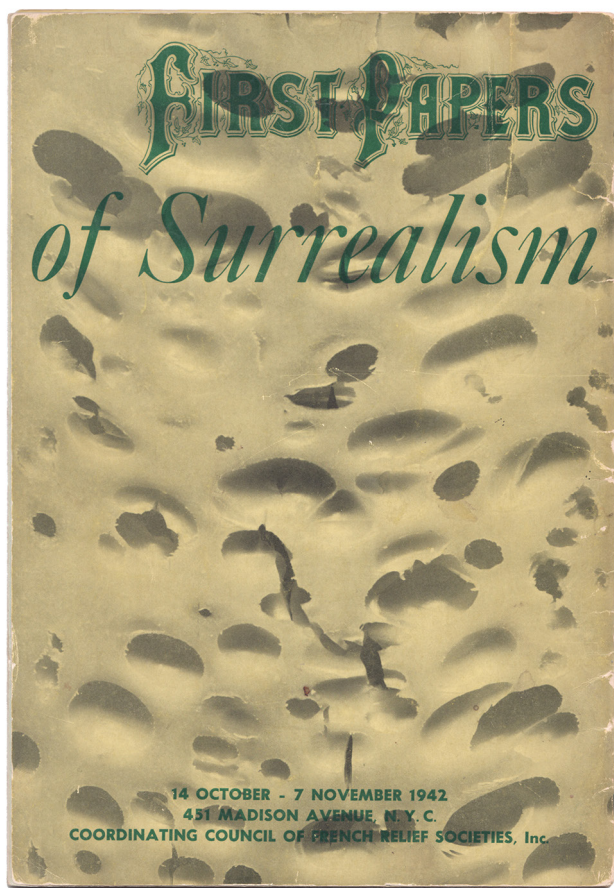
On one hand, the acculturation of surrealism in the United States was largely determined by the expansion of consumerism and modern visual culture; on the other, surrealism was only perceived to a limited extent as a European avant-garde movement. While some exhibitions and critics repudiated the political claims, ideology, and group character of the movement, others criticized the compromising of surrealism’s ideological values to satisfy the demands of consumption. As we have argued, the interest of the American public appears to have depended on the particular artistic position or aesthetic value of a work rather than the underlying worldview—or, put another way, a worldview did not necessarily travel with the artwork as it entered the networks of dealers, museums, and collectors.

This shift in possibilities for the artist and understandings of works of art can be described as a process of accommodation or adapting to circumstances. In this context, it is worth underscoring once again that the historicization and canonization of surrealist art occurred on the continent of America rather than in Europe. Surrealism experienced its first phase of museumization in the United States within the context of large-scale group and individual exhibitions, such as at MoMA in New York and the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, whose curators served as active agents, buying and also reselling surrealist art.<sup>49</sup> Significantly, the majority of exhibitions were no longer organized by the surrealists themselves but by art historians and curators in the white cube, where the displays “inevitably took on some of the character of the clean lines of a Bauhaus-derived approach to design.”<sup>50</sup> Thus in 1936–37, Barr’s pioneering show “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” took the form of a historical survey—in other words, not a surrealist exhibition but an exhibition *about* surrealism. After attracting 50,000 visitors in New York, the show then traveled to Pennsylvania, Boston, Springfield, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and San Francisco.

48 Clement Greenberg, “Surrealist Painting,” *The Nation*, August 12, 1944, p. 192–193, here p. 192.

49 Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen* (note 8), p. 44.

50 Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous* (note 10), p. 16.



14 Cover of the catalogue for the Marcel Duchamp-designed exhibition “First Papers of Surrealism,” New York, Whitelaw Reid Mansion, 1942.

Its success helps to explain how Breton, as the self-proclaimed impresario of surrealism, lost his control and sway over the movement's exhibitions and displays during his exile in the United States. Although he endeavored, as he had in Paris, to play a part in the planning and mounting of group shows, and to organize his own exhibitions, such as “First Papers of Surrealism” at the Reid Mansion Gallery in 1942 (fig. 14), at the same time Peggy Guggenheim was creating a commercial platform for surrealist art with her Art of This Century gallery, Levy and Pierre Matisse were organizing their own successful group and individual exhibitions, Sidney Janis curated the 1944 exhibition “Abstract and Surrealist Painting” at the San Francisco Museum (in which artists from both continents were hung next to one another as equals), and Duchamp was advising important American collectors such as Walter and Louise Arensberg. Thus, not only did Breton have to share his interpretive sovereignty

with American agents and institutions, he also had to surrender it to the individual interests of those artists for whom a new market was opening up in the United States. The exiled surrealists associated with Breton distanced themselves from Dalí, “the painter of Franco’s ambassador” and a “stinking Don Quixote,” as underlined by Nicolas Calas in *View* in June 1941.<sup>51</sup> Indeed it can be observed that by this time, the exiled artists hardly ever acted as a united group. In this, they were in a sense betraying the fundamental principle of surrealist exhibition strategy, whereby the collective had always taken precedence over individual success. In exile, they now pursued their own interests and projects, conducting their marketing individually and developing a wide range of business and finance models with their agents and gallerists. Marcel Duchamp wrote:

“My friends Tanguy, Léger, Seligmann, Ernst are on the job and working; but unlike during our early days of exile, our regular meetings of lost souls are a thing of the past. Each has gone his own way. Breton is the only one I see reasonably often. He has been speaking for nearly three years, and continues to speak, several times a day, on the radio.”<sup>52</sup>

### American surrealism

In the catalogue for “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism,” Barr emphasizes the contribution of American artists to surrealism:

“The fantastic and marvelous in European and American art of the past five centuries is represented by about one hundred and fifty items. The main body of the exhibition is devoted to the Dada and Surrealist movements of the past twenty years together with certain pioneers. A number of artists, both American and European, who have worked along related but independent lines, are brought together in a separate division.”<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Nicolas Calas, “Anti-Surrealist Dalí. I say His Flies Are Ersatz,” *View*, vol. 1, no. 6 (June 1941), pp. 1 and 3. See Julia Pine, “Anti-Surrealist Cross-Word Puzzles Breton, Dalí and Print in War-time America,” *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, no. 1 (2007), pp. 1–29.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to Henri-Pierre Roché, December 17, 1944, Scarlett and Philippe Reliquet, eds., *Correspondance Marcel Duchamp – Henri-Pierre Roché, 1918–1959* (Geneva: Mamco, 2012), p. 67. Translated from the French. (“Les amis Tanguy, Léger, Seligmann, Ernst sont fidèles au poste et travaillent; mais il n’y a plus comme aux premiers jours de l’exil de fréquentes réunions d’âmes en peine. Chacun s’est débrouillé de son côté. Breton est le seul que je voie assez souvent, il a parlé depuis presque trois ans et parle encore à la radio plusieurs fois par jour.”)

<sup>53</sup> Alfred H. Barr Jr., “Preface to the first edition,” in Alfred H. Barr Jr., ed., *Fantastic Art Dada Surrealism*, exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936), pp. 7–8, here p. 7.

In recent years, not only has the fate of the exiled surrealists been studied extensively in a number of exhibitions and publications, but genuinely American movements such as the social surrealists and the post-surrealists have also drawn increasing attention. In the United States of the 1930s and 1940s, a heterogeneous American surrealist scene developed that was positioned between internationalism and regionalism, between European modernism and national realism. In contrast with European surrealism, psychological and erotic subject matter took a back seat, while the political and social relevance of the art itself was formulated more trenchantly. Through a range of different aesthetic and political approaches, artists sought to develop a visual language somewhere between social surrealism, post-surrealism, and magic realism. In the United States, the transitions between the different “isms” and forms of expression were seldom distinct or even predetermined. While recognizing these conditions, as well as the development of platforms for the dissemination of American surrealism—such as the Gallery of Living Art in New York (renamed the Museum of Living Art in 1936), directed between 1927 and 1943 by Albert E. Gallatin, whom art critic Forbes Watson described as ranking among the American collectors “who have done their bit to keep the American artist from being swamped in the waves of the Paris vogue”—the attention of this volume is largely directed to the fate of European surrealism in the United States.<sup>54</sup> We look forward to future projects that can advance the investigation of the networks of dealers, collectors, and museums that helped to foster and sustain an artistic identity for American artists that was distinct from their European colleagues, as in the case of a Californian offshoot of American surrealism that emerged in Los Angeles as early as the mid-1930s around Lorser Feitelson, Helen Lundeberg, Philip Guston, Reuben Kadish, Harold Lehman, Knud Merrild, and Grace Clements. Known as subjective surrealism or post-surrealism, this movement deliberately distanced itself from both European surrealism and the East Coast, as critic Jules Langsner observes in his foreword to the exhibition “Post-Surrealists and Other Moderns” held at the Stanley Rose Gallery in Los Angeles in May 1935: “Post-surrealism affirms all that surrealism negates.”<sup>55</sup> One year earlier—in other words, prior to the emigration of the European artists and agents to the United States—Helen Lundeberg defined a “new classicism” as an answer to “manneristic” European surrealism:

54 Forbes Watson, “Honor List of American Art Supporters,” *Creative Art*, no. 9 (November 1931), p. 416; quoted in Gail Stavitsky, “A. E. Gallatin’s Gallery and Museum of Living Art (1927–1943),” *American Art*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Spring 1993), pp. 47–63, here p. 54.

55 Jules Langsner, “Introduction,” in Elisabeth Ann Mills, Jules Langsner, eds., *Post Surrealists and other Moderns*, exh. cat., Los Angeles, Stanley Rose Gallery (Los Angeles: Stanley Rose Gallery, 1935), unpaginated, quoted in Susan Ehrlich, ed., *Pacific Dreams: Currents of Surrealism and Fantasy in California Art, 1934–1957* (Los Angeles: Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, 1995), p. 15.



“The aesthetic structure in the works of Lurcat, Pierre Roy, Chirico, Severini, Dali, and Max Ernst is of no historical significance, since it is still imitative and manneristic in its faithful mimicry of the essential principles of pictorial pattern to be found in Renaissance painting. In NEW CLASSICISM alone do we find an aesthetic which departs from the principles of the decorative graphic arts to found a unique order, an integrity of subject matter and pictorial structure unprecedented in the history of art.”<sup>56</sup>

## The making of surrealism

The new research gathered here, both grounded in the archive and methodologically diverse, collectively investigates, for the first time, the United States art market networks of the 1930s to the 1960s in relation to surrealism. Twenty case studies take as their subjects various exhibitions, artists, dealers, and collectors chosen for their ability to serve as critically informed examples. Divided into three sections, “Private / Public,” “Agents / Artists,” and “Galleries / Dealers,” this book offers an innovative and lasting contribution to research and scholarship on the history of art in America, while focusing specifically on the expansion and reception of surrealism in the United States.

The essays brought together here pursue the leading questions discussed since 2014 within the framework of the international research project “Surrealism and Money. Galleries, Collectors, and Intermediaries” (“Le surréalisme et l’argent. Galeries, collectionneurs et médiateurs”), initiated by the DFK German Center for Art History in Paris in collaboration with the Université Paris Nanterre and the Universität Leipzig. This project explores the extent to which the global success of surrealism in the twentieth century was due to the roles played by, and factors embodied in, private collectors, museums, and exhibitions, as well as the commercial strategies of artists. The intention is to shed light on the formal and informal networks that sustained surrealism as an international movement, as well as to establish formal and informal networks of emerging and senior scholars, drawn largely from the United States and Europe, to stimulate new scholarship on surrealism. Since 2014, supported by the DFK Paris and the Labex Arts-H2H, directed by Fabrice Flahutez, we have been studying the galleries, dealers, and networks of surrealism in various workshops, and

<sup>56</sup> Helen Lundeborg, “New Classicism,” 1934; quoted in Michael Duncan, ed., *Post Surrealism*, exh. cat., Pasadena, Museum of California Art (Logan: Utah State University, 2002), [http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/artmuseum\\_cat/7](http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/artmuseum_cat/7), accessed January 31, 2019, p. 19.

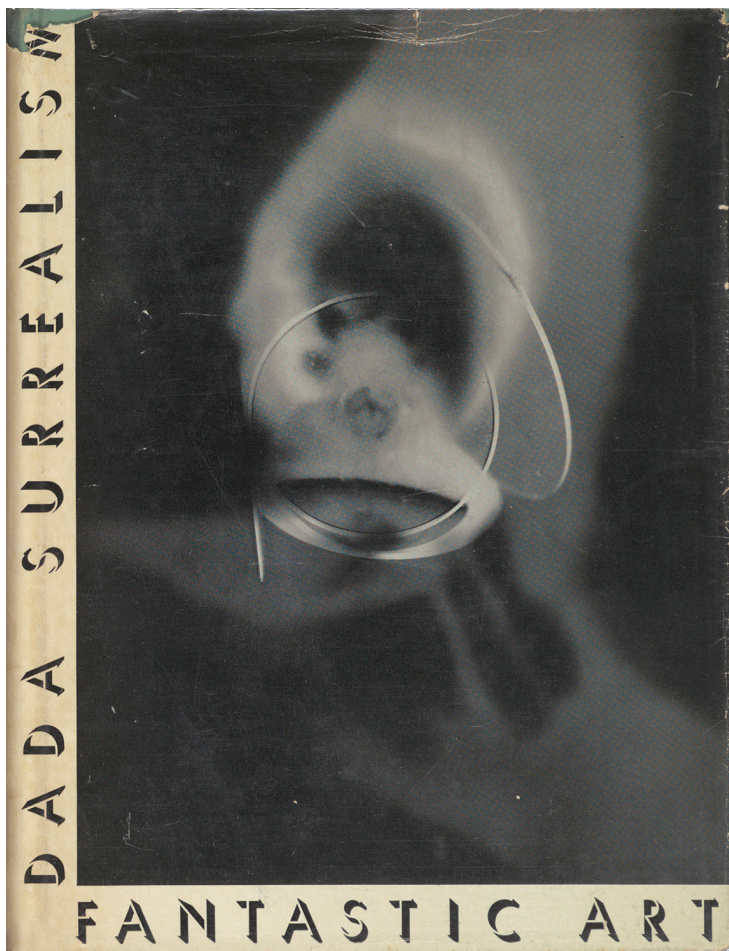
have endeavored to establish an international and innovative research team that brings together both established specialists and young scholars of surrealism and the art market on a regular basis, focusing on a range of topics. The first workshop was devoted to surrealism as a worldwide phenomenon, examining whether we can approach the surrealist movement, which spread across all of the world's continents over the course of forty years, from such a perspective. The subsequent workshops pursued specific geographic, chronological, or systematic questions: "The Surrealist Map of the World" ("Le monde au temps des surréalistes," Paris 2014), "Surrealism in Europe Between the Wars" ("Der Surrealismus in Europa zwischen den Weltkriegen," Paris 2016), "Surrealism and Indigenous Arts" ("Surréalisme et arts premiers," Paris 2016), "Surrealism in Paris, North Africa, and the Middle East from the 1930s" (Beirut, 2016), "Surrealism's Galleries, Collectors, and Dealers, 1945–1969" ("Galerien, Sammler und Händler des Surrealismus, 1945–1969," Paris 2017), and, from November 27 to 29, 2017, "Networks, Museums, and Collections. Surrealism in the United States" (at the DFK in Paris).

The present volume is the work of many heads and hands, and its editors owe a debt of sincere gratitude to numerous institutions and many colleagues for their ideational, scholarly, and practical support. Without the ongoing support of the DFK Paris, and in particular its director Thomas Kirchner, neither the project nor the publication would have been possible. We would like to thank the Terra Foundation for American Art and its president Elizabeth Glassman for generously supporting our conference and publication.

We also thank Markus A. Castor, responsible for online publications at the DFK, Béatrice Adam and Marthje Sagewitz for their reliable and careful editorial supervision of this volume, and Carolin Muser, Luca Arendt, Clara Forcht, and Yorick Berta for their assistance with picture research and editing. We are also grateful to Marcel Fleiss, Regina Karl, and María Fernandez Lopez for the attention they have shown to this project.

Deke Dusinberre, Richard George Elliott, Sarah Tooth Michelet, Lindsay Jane Munro, Timothy Stroud, and Edith C. Watts have produced wonderful English translations of the introduction and the texts by Julia Drost, Florence Duchemin-Pelletier, Marianne Jakobi, Scarlett Reliquet, Martin Schieder, Élisabeth Schlaunick, and Julie Waseige, with Sarah Tooth Michelet also responsible for copyediting. Last but not least, our thanks go to all the authors for their enthusiastic and inspiring participation in this project, and of course for their texts, which now simply await readers!

## I. Private / Public



27 Man Ray, *Rayograph*, 1923, on the cover of the first edition of the catalogue for the exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," 1936. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

## Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism: “A Serious Affair”

Anne Umland and Talia Kwartler

On December 9, 1936, the exhibition “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” opened to the public at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.<sup>1</sup> It was the second in what its organizer, the museum’s founding director Alfred H. Barr Jr., envisioned as an ongoing series of “exhibitions planned to present in an objective and historical manner the principal [*sic*] movements of modern art.”<sup>2</sup> Today, “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” has achieved landmark status as “an exhibition that contributed fundamentally to the historicization and canonization of surrealism in the United States,”<sup>3</sup> and many art historians have written about it. Most recently, Sandra Zalman has carefully analyzed the exhibition’s contribution to the spread of the image of surrealism in popular culture in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Earlier, Lewis Kachur examined its relationship to the “International Surrealist Exhibition” in London (June 11 to July 4, 1936) and surrealist group exhibition strategies.<sup>5</sup>

1 The exhibition ran from December 9, 1936, to January 17, 1937. Although it was originally scheduled to open on December 2, the opening was delayed one week “because of the great number and variety of the art and objects to be shown, many of which were late in arriving at the museum.” See the MoMA advance press release for the exhibition, n.d., [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_press-release\\_325073.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325073.pdf), accessed January 12, 2018. Note that the museum had previously listed the incorrect opening date for the exhibition as December 7; this has subsequently been corrected in MoMA’s records following the authors’ research.

2 Alfred H. Barr Jr., “Preface,” in *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, Alfred H. Barr Jr., ed., exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, first edition, 1936), p. 7. The first exhibition in the series was “Cubism and Abstract Art” (March 2–April 19, 1936), followed by “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” (December 9, 1936–January 17, 1937), and “Masters of Popular Painting: Modern Primitives of Europe and America” (April 27–July 24, 1938).

3 Email from Julia Drost to Anne Umland, January 12, 2018.

4 See Sandra Zalman, *Consuming Surrealism in American Culture. Dissident Modernism* (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), especially Chapter 1: Surrealism Between Avant-Garde and Kitsch, pp. 11–46.

5 See Lewis Kachur, *Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), especially the section in Chapter 1: Ideological Exhibition Spaces and Surrealist Exhibitions on “The International Surrealist Exhibition” (1936) and “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” (1936–37), pp. 10–19.



What has received less attention to date is the role of art historian Margaret Scolari Barr in the planning of the exhibition; the specifics of Barr's installation, which were distinctly and deliberately different from those of the surrealist artists themselves; and the impact of "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" on the museum's permanent collection, where its legacy lived on long after the exhibition closed. This essay's primary focus is on these three topics: Scolari Barr's contribution to the organization of the exhibition; the exhibition's relatively undocumented, ephemeral installation; and its afterlife, as represented in the museum's collection and collection displays. Related details concerning the particularities of "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," key lenders to the project, and its reception in New York are also considered, drawing primarily on the rich resources of the Museum of Modern Art's archives.

## Planning

In his preface to the "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" catalogue, Alfred Barr describes surrealism as "a serious affair."<sup>6</sup> His words were quoted by various reviewers of the exhibition, all the better to scoff at the perceived frivolity of its content. Edward Alden Jewell, in the *New York Times*, provides an example of the tongue-in-cheek tone of many of the show's critics: "Dada rides in the saddle, messieurs, mesdames. The bars are down and the season of exquisite mal-de-lune has blossomed in all its splendor of hokuspochondria."<sup>7</sup> Barr's characterization of surrealism as "a serious affair," however, is a telling indicator of his determination not to produce a *surreal exhibition*, but an *exhibition about surrealism*. He had, after all, been a university professor before becoming a museum director, and this impacted on his selection of works for the exhibition, the way he chose to display them, and the various publications he produced to accompany it. These publications include an exhibition brochure authored entirely by Barr, a special issue of the *Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art* that featured an advance copy of surrealist Georges Hugnet's essays on "Dada and Surrealism," and a much delayed catalogue that was published in late December 1936, after the show had opened.<sup>8</sup> By the time it closed in

6 Barr, "Preface" (note 2), p. 8.

7 Edward Alden Jewell, "Exhibition Opens of 'Fantastic Art,'" *The New York Times*, December 9, 1936, press clipping in A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbooks, 42, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York (hereafter cited as MoMA Archives).

8 Alfred H. Barr Jr.'s "A Brief Guide to the Exhibition of Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" is held in the A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbooks, 42 (note 7); see also Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Albums 3.44, MoMA Archives. Georges Hugnet's article "Dada and Surrealism," *Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art*, no. 2/3 (November–December 1936), is held in the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Albums, 3.41, MoMA Archives. Note that although Hugnet's essays are titled "Dada and Sur-

New York on January 17, 1937, the exhibition had been seen by over 50,000 visitors.<sup>9</sup>

Among the earliest archival traces of the exhibition that was to become “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” is a telegram from Barr to the surrealist poet Paul Éluard dated March 12, 1936. It references the forthcoming “International Surrealist Exhibition”—organized by Roland Penrose and the London surrealists in collaboration with Éluard, André Breton, Georges Hugnet, and Man Ray<sup>10</sup>—that would be held at the New Burlington Galleries in London later that year. “CABLE DATES SURREALIST EXHIBITION LONDON,” Barr wrote Éluard, “WHAT CHANCE DO WE HAVE TO OBTAIN IT FOR NEW YORK NOVEMBER DECEMBER.”<sup>11</sup> Éluard responded the following day: “LONDON JUNE STOP NEW YORK POSSIBLE NOVEMBER.”<sup>12</sup> In the end, however, Barr—working in close collaboration with Margaret Scolari Barr, a multilingual art historian whom he had married in 1930—made the decision to organize their own show.

The Barrs (figs. 15 and 16) spent much of the summer of 1936 working abroad on “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Scolari Barr’s chronology “‘Our Campaigns’ 1930–1944,” published in the *New Criterion* in 1987, provides an important firsthand account of their activities. They arrived in Paris on May 18 and stayed there through August 1. According to Scolari Barr, “The first visit is to André Breton. ... [T]o give what he calls his *adhésion*, he wants the show to be exclusively Dada and surrealist and insists on dictatorial powers.”<sup>13</sup> She also reported on the need for support from Éluard, “the other high priest of Surrealism ... to enlist the coop-

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realism” on the cover of the *Bulletin*, they are respectively titled “Dada” and “In the Light of Surrealism” inside the publication. They were translated by Margaret Scolari Barr, and were reproduced in *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., ed., exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, second edition, 1937).

9 Although this was one of the more widely attended exhibitions in MoMA’s early history, it did not receive as many visitors as “Vincent van Gogh” (November 4, 1935–January 5, 1936), which was visited by 123,339 people (see MoMA press release for the exhibition’s circulating tour, n.d., [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_press-release\\_333032.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_333032.pdf), accessed January 12, 2018). It is worth noting that “Vincent van Gogh” ran more than two weeks longer than “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” In total, 50,034 visitors attended the latter exhibition, far more than the 29,272 visitors who attended “Cubism and Abstract Art” (March 2–April 19, 1936). For attendance statistics on these two exhibitions, see Michelle Elligott, “Chronology,” in Anne Umland and Adrian Sudhalter, eds., *Dada in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), pp. 307, 309.

10 Kachur, *Marcel Duchamp* (note 5), pp. 10, 12–13.

11 Telegram from Alfred Barr to Paul Éluard, New York, March 12, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives: “CABLEZ DATES EXPOSITION SURREALIST LONDRES QUELLE CHANCE NOUS AURIONS DE L’OBTENIR POUR NEW YORK NOVEMBRE DECEMBRE.” All translations from the original French are by the authors and Charlotte Barat.

12 Telegram from Éluard to Barr, Paris, March 13, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives: “LONDRES JUIN STOP NEW YORK POSSIBLE NOVEMBER [sic].”

13 Margaret Scolari Barr, “‘Our Campaigns,’” *New Criterion*, August 1987, p. 44.



15 Margaret Scolari Barr in the 1930s, in *Our Campaigns: An Album*, special issue of *The New Criterion*, Summer 1987. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.



16 Alfred H. Barr Jr., ca. 1932–33. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

eration of the artists.”<sup>14</sup> Scolari Barr describes long visits to artists’ studios, including those of Jean (Hans) Arp, Max Ernst, Leonor Fini, Valentine Hugo, and Joan Miró. Even though these meetings were convivial, the Barrs knew they could not “take for granted” the artists’ willingness to “risk rejection from the Surrealist circle” by supporting the exhibition.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, they made the strategic decision to enlist Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray as intermediaries in their negotiations with surrealist artists.

The Barrs traveled to London in June to visit the “International Surrealist Exhibition” and upon their return to Paris they continued their efforts to reach an agreement with the surrealist poets Breton and Éluard.<sup>16</sup> On July 12, Barr met with Éluard, who sent him a letter the following day in which he set out a number of demands, notably that the exhibition be titled “Exposition surréaliste” and that Barr include the artists that he and Breton proposed. Éluard also encouraged Barr to reach out to Duchamp concerning the selection of American artists for

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Kachur explains that the Barrs left Paris for London on June 25, 1936. See Kachur, *Marcel Duchamp* (note 5), p. 14. For discussion of the Barrs’ return from London, see letters from Alfred H. Barr Jr. to Jean (Hans) Arp and E. L. T. Mesens, both Paris, July 14, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives.

the show.<sup>17</sup> According to Éluard, if Barr agreed to the conditions he and Breton requested, they would eagerly contribute “to the success of the exhibition, to the success of true Surrealism in America.”<sup>18</sup>

Barr’s reply to Éluard’s letter indicates that even though he found its tone “dictatorial,” he appreciated Éluard’s “desire to clearly state [his] position” and hoped to maintain the “friendship that I have always felt for you and Mrs. [Nusch] Éluard.”<sup>19</sup> The same day, at Éluard’s suggestion, Barr wrote to Breton, whom Barr had been unable to meet again before Breton left Paris for the countryside. In this letter, Barr explains his plans for the exhibition, informing Breton that he could not concede to their demands, particularly regarding the inclusion of specific surrealist artists as it was not within his power to “put the Museum exclusively at the service of Surrealism.”<sup>20</sup>

In subsequent letters to Arp, Duchamp, and Ernst to request the loan of works, Barr reported on the disapproval of the show expressed by Breton and Éluard. To Duchamp, Barr wrote, “They had expected to have an official surrealist manifestation at the Museum but this is not possible, especially as it would involve showing artists merely because they had signed a manifesto.”<sup>21</sup> Barr also asked Duchamp for his “American suggestions,” as Éluard had advised, noting that he already had a list of around fifteen artists. Writing to Ernst, Barr described “a letter from Breton saying that he disapproves of the exhibition and would not collaborate in any way, nor would Éluard,” which would prevent him from borrowing “several good Ernsts.”<sup>22</sup> To Arp, Barr remarked, “Mme. [Sophie Taeuber] Arp has doubtless spoken to you of our conversation about the attitude of the surrealist poets. I now have word from M. Breton saying that he disapproves of the exhibition and will not collabo-

17 Letter from Éluard to Barr, Avignon, July 13, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives.

18 Letter from Éluard to Barr, Avignon, July 13, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives. Excerpted from: “Je suis certain, en vous demandant tout ceci, d’être accord avec André Breton et avec tous mes amis. Je crois d’ailleurs que vous n’y verrez que la ferme volonté de concourir, par le succès de l’exposition, au succès du surréalisme véritable en Amérique.”

19 Letter from Barr to Éluard, Paris, July 18, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives. Excerpted from: “Bien que je ne puisse m’empêcher de trouver dictatoire le ton de votre lettre, je comprends et j’apprécie votre désir d’établir votre position. Je désire sincèrement de maintenir dans le cours de cette discussion l’amitié que j’ai toujours ressentie pour vous et pour Mme. Éluard.”

20 Letter from Barr to André Breton, Paris, July 18, 1936, Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives. Excerpted from: “En tant que directeur de l’exposition je suis enchanté de recevoir vos conseils et ceux d’Éluard particulièrement pour ce qui concerne les artistes surréalistes mais je n’ai pas le pouvoir de mettre le Musée exclusivement au service du surréalisme.”

21 Letter from Barr to Marcel Duchamp, August 7, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives.

22 Letter from Barr to Max Ernst, August 7, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives.

rate.”<sup>23</sup> Barr told Arp he was deeply distressed by his disagreement with Éluard and Breton, but also expressed his surprise “at their assumption of the right to dictate either to artists or to the museum.”<sup>24</sup>

Although Scolari Barr deflected attention from herself in “Our Campaigns,” her correspondence with Barr and various surrealist artists held in MoMA’s archives reveals her deep involvement in the planning of the exhibition, especially during her stay in Paris in September 1936 after Barr had returned to New York.<sup>25</sup> In addition to her keen intellect and training as an art historian, Scolari Barr’s language skills, particularly in French and her native Italian, were far superior to Barr’s and she translated much of his correspondence during this period. She also played an essential role in securing support from Breton and Éluard in Paris during the last crucial months leading up to the show.

Scolari Barr met with both Éluard and Breton in late September, with Duchamp assisting in arranging various important meetings.<sup>26</sup> On September 19, Barr sent her a telegram concerning the exhibition title: “CONSULT MAN RAY ADVISABILITY OF CALLING EXHIBITION SURREALISM AND FANTASTIC ART.”<sup>27</sup> Scolari Barr replied with further details about her efforts with the surrealist group: “RECONCILIATION DINNER ELUARD TWENTY FIRST WILL PUSH PICASSO DALI ... WHAT BORROWS FROM BRETELUARD.”<sup>28</sup> Scolari Barr’s list of appointments for the following week details her meetings, which included lunch with Valentine Hugo and dinner with Leonor Fini on 25 September, followed by a morning studio visit with Breton and an evening meeting with Éluard at Café Flore on 26 September. The same week, Scolari Barr also met with Duchamp at the Hôtel Lutetia.<sup>29</sup>

23 Letter from Barr to Jean (Hans) Arp, August 7, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives.

24 Ibid.

25 Barr departed Europe on August 12 by boat, arriving in New York five days later on August 17. Scolari Barr, “Our Campaigns” (note 13), p. 48.

26 See letter from Marcel Duchamp to Margaret Scolari Barr, Paris, Wednesday [September 16, 1936], The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives. Duchamp writes, “J’ai donné rendez-vous à Breton pour demain jeudi déjeuner / Pourrais-je vous voir, après, vers 2 h ½ au Lutetia?” (“I have organized a meeting with Breton for tomorrow Thursday lunch / May I see you after that around 2:30 p.m. at the Lutetia?”). It was only later that week that Scolari Barr was finally able to meet with Breton. In a letter to Barr of September 25, Scolari Barr writes, “[A]m seeing Breton tomorrow only (Saturday, just a week since I got here).” See letter from Scolari Barr to Barr, September 25[–28], 1936, Alfred H. Barr Jr., Papers, I.B.3, MoMA Archives.

27 Telegram from Barr to Scolari Barr, Greensboro, Vermont, September 19, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.2, MoMA Archives.

28 Telegram from Scolari Barr to Barr, Paris, September 19, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives.

29 Margaret Scolari Barr, list of appointments for September 23–26, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.2, MoMA Archives.



In addition to negotiating a détente with Breton and Éluard and securing key loans, Scolari Barr pursued discussions concerning the texts to be commissioned for the exhibition catalogue. Barr had originally hoped for Hugnet to contribute a text on Dada and for Breton to write one on surrealism. Predictably, Breton's initial resistance to the overall concept extended to the writing of a text for the catalogue, and he even went so far as to ask Barr in early August to "also excuse Georges Hugnet."<sup>30</sup> As a result, Barr's plans for the catalogue remained in flux in late September, when he wrote Scolari Barr, "WANT BRETONS PRESENT POSITION SURREALIST ART HUGNETS BRIEF HISTORIES DADASURR-/EAILIST [*sic*] ART."<sup>31</sup> He reminded her that the texts needed to arrive by mid-October to be included in the publication.<sup>32</sup> In a long letter started on September 25, Scolari Barr remarked on the state of Hugnet's essay: "[He] was authorized to settle down to work yesterday. ... [H]e's promised me the dada section for the evening of the 29th so I and Man Ray can translate it on the boat."<sup>33</sup> She also addressed the missing essays and the two other major unresolved aspects of the show—the loan of works from surrealist artists and the exhibition title—in a cryptic, heavily annotated telegram of September 27: "BRETLPIC TANGUYMAAR HUGOPENROSE HUGENTKOCHNI LENDING DALIGAFFE JAMES PROBABLY ROSENBERG BRAQUEKAHN ABSENT BRETUGNET WRITING ... TITLE SURREALISM RELATED MOVEMENTS MUCH LIKED."<sup>34</sup> To Barr, however, the meaning was clear—Scolari Barr had succeeded in obtaining the agreement of both Breton and Éluard to collaborate and lend works, along with the support of many other surrealist artists. He replied the next day: "CONGRATULATIONS MAGNIFICENT WORK."<sup>35</sup>

Although Breton eventually agreed to contribute a text on surrealism, its potential inclusion in the catalogue so greatly angered Dadaist leader Tristan Tzara that he wrote to Barr on October 6 threatening to withdraw his extensive loans from the exhibition.<sup>36</sup> As for Hugnet's essay, Barr finally received it on October 19, with an accompanying note stating, "In any case, I have shown [the text] to Breton and to Éluard and

30 Letter from Barr to Georges Hugnet, Badenweiler, August 4, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives. "Il me prie d'excuser aussi Georges Hugnet."

31 Telegram from Barr to Scolari Barr, Greensboro, Vermont, September 21, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.2, MoMA Archives.

32 Ibid.

33 Letter from Scolari Barr to Barr, September 25[–28], 1936, AHB.I.B.3, MoMA Archives.

34 Telegram from Scolari Barr to Barr, Paris, September 27, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives.

35 Telegram from Barr to Scolari Barr, New York, September 28, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.2, MoMA Archives.

36 Letter from Tristan Tzara to Barr, Paris, October 6, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.5, MoMA Archives.

they didn't make the tiniest objection, and even seemed very happy."<sup>37</sup> In the end, Breton's essay never materialized. Barr explained to Tzara in a letter of November 7 that he had asked Breton to "write a short statement on *the present position of the Surrealists*. He has not, however, found the time to do so."<sup>38</sup> Barr no doubt hoped that Breton's failure to submit a text would appease Tzara, and the Dadaist did, in fact, lend a large number of works to the exhibition. Even so, Barr remained disappointed in the catalogue, writing to Breton on November 29, "I can only strongly regret the lack of your text, because I have always admired the content and lucidity of your writings, and because of your decisive and essential role within Surrealism."<sup>39</sup> Barr wrote to Éluard the same day, remarking specifically on his support in late September: "Mrs. Barr told me in great detail all that you did to aid our exhibition and all of the kindness that you gave her. I thank you for her and for the exhibition."<sup>40</sup> "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" would open a week later in New York, with many of the loans from surrealist artists secured thanks to Scolari Barr's efforts in Paris.

## Installation

According to the checklist for "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," by the time the exhibition opened to the public on Wednesday, December 9, 1936, it had grown to comprise more than 700 works, including paintings, collages, drawings, sculptures, photographs, films, prints, journals, and architectural projects (represented by photographs, studies, and models), as well as comparative works created by children, self-trained artists, and commercial designers, and various objects of "Surrealist character."<sup>41</sup> Within this gargantuan selection, forty-five works were lent from the museum's permanent collection, just under 650 were specially borrowed

37 Letter from Georges Hugnet to Barr, [Paris,] October 19, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.2, MoMA Archives. "En tout cas, ici, je l'ai montré à Breton et à Éluard qui n'ont pas fait l'ombre d'un objection et qui, même, paraissaient fort contents."

38 Letter from Barr to Tzara, November 7, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.5, MoMA Archives.

39 Letter from Barr to Breton, November 29, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives. "Je ne peux que regretter très vivement le manque de votre texte, soit parce que j'ai toujours admiré le contenu et la lucidité de vos écrits, soit à cause de votre rôle décisif et essentiel dans le surréalisme."

40 Letter from Barr to Éluard, November 29, 1936, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives. "Mme Barr qui m'a raconté en grand détail tout ce que vous avez bien voulu faire pour aider l'exposition et toutes les gentillesques que vous avez eu pour [sic] pour elle. Je vous remercie pour elle et pour l'exposition."

41 "Catalog of the Exhibition," in *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, Alfred H. Barr Jr., ed., exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, first edition, 1936), p. 238. All page references to the exhibition checklist refer to the first edition of the publication.

for the occasion, and around thirty-five were photographic reproductions of works that Barr considered important to his exhibition concept but was unable to borrow. Artworks began arriving from abroad in late October, although a number of loans were delayed and shipments continued to trickle in to the museum through November into early December.<sup>42</sup>

The museum's previous exhibition closed on November 22, leaving just over two weeks before the evening preview of "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" scheduled for December 8.<sup>43</sup> Taking into account the need to de-install much of the museum, Barr probably had around ten days at his disposal to install a vast exhibition featuring an extraordinary variety of objects in MoMA's first permanent home.<sup>44</sup> Located at 11 West Fifty-Third Street, the five-floor Beaux-Arts-style townhouse was originally designed by C. P. H. Gilbert for the linen merchant William Barbour in 1901 (fig. 17).<sup>45</sup> The Rockefeller family had purchased the building in 1924 and subsequently leased it to the museum from 1932; it would be demolished by 1938 to make way for a modern, international-style building designed by architects Philip L. Goodwin and Edward Durell Stone.

To date, neither floor plans nor elevations for the Gilbert townhouse have been located,<sup>46</sup> either from the time it was built or from 1936 when Barr installed "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism." Likewise, there do not seem to be any surviving installation plans for the exhibition. This limits

42 See the document, "Regarding Insurance Lists for Exhibition of Surrealism and Fantastic Art," sent by MoMA to W. D. Mayer of Farjean, Ballin & Co, the museum's insurer, detailing the arrival of shipments from abroad. The French shipments arrived on the S. S. *Lafayette* (October 22, 1936) and the S.S. *Champlain* (November 4, 1936); English shipments arrived on the S.S. *American Banker* (October 20, 1936), the S.S. *Georgie* (October 26, 1936), the S.S. *Aquitania* (October 27, 1936), and the S.S. *Queen Mary* (November 11, 1936). An Italian shipment arrived on the S.S. *Rex* (October 23, 1936) and a Swiss shipment arrived on the S.S. *Manhattan* (October 30, 1936). "Waybill No. 2611" (October 22, 1937), prepared by Farjean, Ballin & Co. concerning the return shipments for the exhibition, shows that the last shipment to arrive in New York was on the S.S. *Black Falcon* (December 3, 1936). The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.11, MoMA Archives.

43 "John Marin. Watercolors, Oil Paintings, Etchings" (October 19–November 22, 1936) preceded "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism." The press release for the exhibition (dated October 21, 1936) details that it was installed on the first and second floors of the museum; [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_press-release\\_325070.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325070.pdf), accessed January 12, 2018.

44 Advance press release, 1936 (note 1).

45 Christopher Gray, "With a Museum for a Neighbor..." *New York Times*, May 2, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/realestate/momas-history-of-demolishing-potential-landmarks.html>, accessed January 12, 2018.

46 Neither floor plans nor elevations are held in The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York; the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow; or New York City's Municipal Archives. Thanks to the tremendous support of MoMA colleagues Tunji Adeniji (Chief Facilities and Safety Officer) and Vincent Bosch (Manager of Buildings Operations), the authors were also able to pursue research in New York City's Department of Buildings. MoMA's current site incorporates numerous official addresses, and it was not possible to locate records for this specific building at 11–13 West Fifty-Third Street, though it is still faintly possible such records exist. Historical floor plans for the building at 23–25 Fifty-Third Street were consulted, and they confirmed the authors' understanding of historical Beaux-Arts buildings on this block.



17 Beaumont Newhall, facade of the original townhouse of the Museum of Modern Art at 11 West Fifty-Third Street, showing a Calder mobile displayed in the exhibition "Cubism and Abstract Art," 1936. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

the accuracy of any attempt to reconstruct the specifics of Barr's display, including the sequencing of galleries, floor-by-floor layouts, and wall-by-wall groupings of artworks, and to analyze the broader arguments broached by his display strategies that might impact interpretive views of "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism." Nevertheless, working from sources that include reviewers' comments on the installation published in the press at the time; the twenty-five photographs of the displays that Barr commissioned from photographer Soichi Sunami (which document only some 140 individual objects out of a total of over 700); installation photographs of other museum exhibitions presented in the same building between May 1932 and July 1937, which reveal more of the interior design; Barr's correspondence with artists included in the exhibition; and painstaking scrutiny of flooring types, wall treatments, and moldings as photographed, certain hypotheses can be advanced.

On February 1, 1937, after the exhibition had closed in New York, Barr wrote to Duchamp in Paris, enclosing installation photographs and describing how Duchamp's *Rotating Apparatus* "faced the entrance of the Museum and made a very fine effect. At the right are your *Stop-*

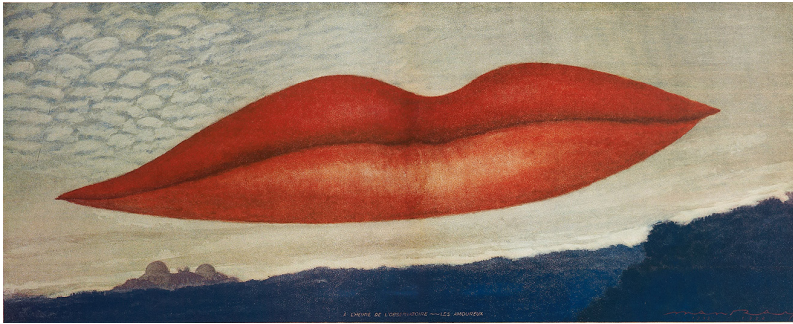


18 Soichi Sunami, installation view of the exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1936. Showing *Orator* by Man Ray, 1935 (center), above *Rotating Apparatus* by Marcel Duchamp, 1920; and *3 Standard Stoppages* by Duchamp, 1914, above a display case containing three of Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs*, 1935. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.



*pages-étalon*, underneath which revolved your *Roto-reliefs*”<sup>47</sup> (fig. 18). Barr’s letter, combined with the installation photographs he sent, make it clear that the first thing visitors who walked through the front door of 11 West Fifty-Third Street would have seen was Duchamp’s *Rotating Apparatus* (*Optique de précision*, 1920), which according to the press release could have its speed adjusted by viewers to their liking, as well as his *3 Standard Stoppages* (*Stoppages-étalon*, 1914), and a case with three spinning *Rotoreliefs* (1935). Over Duchamp’s whirling optical machine, as documented in the photograph, Barr hung Man Ray’s *Orator* (*L’Orateur*, 1935), a wood and glass object. This was not, however, the work that was displayed in this position on the night of the exhibition preview, which was attended, as reported by newspapers, by trustees such as A. Conger Goodyear, the museum’s president, and Mrs. Cornelius N. Bliss, chair of the museum’s Membership Committee, along with artists including Salvador Dalí, Leonor Fini, and Man Ray.

47 Letter from Barr to Duchamp, February 1, 1937, The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.4, MoMA Archives.



19 Man Ray, *Observatory Time—The Lovers*, 1932–34/1970, colored lithograph after an oil on canvas, 68 × 104 cm (dimensions of original painting shown by Barr, now lost: 99 × 251.5 cm). Collection Clo and Marcel Fleiss, Paris.



20 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Showing, left to right: *The Surrealist Poets* Paul Éluard, André Breton, Tristan Tzara, René Crevel, Benjamin Péret, René Char by Valentine Hugo, 1935; *Puzzle of Autumn* by Salvador Dalí, 1935; *Daily Torments* by Richard Oelze, 1934; and *Observatory Time—The Lovers* by Man Ray, 1932–34 (top center). New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

Instead, according to Scolari Barr and several newspaper critics, Barr initially positioned Man Ray’s *Observatory Time—The Lovers* (*À l’heure de l’observatoire, les amoureux*, 1932–34) (fig. 19) opposite the entrance, above Duchamp’s *Rotating Apparatus*.<sup>48</sup> Speaking of the Man Ray painting, Scolari Barr recalled, “A vast pink mouth, like a cloud at sunset. ... Here for generations to see are the lips of Lee Miller, Man Ray’s mis-

<sup>48</sup> See the clipping of “Ga-Ga Season Is On and in Display of New York’s Artistic Fringe” (unattributed), in *Pantagraph*, December 9, 1936, Department of Public Information Records, 30 [mf 7:749], MoMA Archives.

tress. The trustees are shocked and feel that the picture should be hung less prominently.”<sup>49</sup> By the time Barr called Sunami in to document the exhibition, the “vast pink mouth” had been moved to what was likely a gallery on the second floor, where Barr placed it above works by Dalí, Valentine Hugo, and Richard Oelze (fig. 20). This incident is a vivid reminder that Breton and Éluard were not the only involved parties with whom Barr had to negotiate in order to realize “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism”—he also had to reassure various skeptical trustees, A. Conger Goodyear chief among them.<sup>50</sup>

To the immediate right of the museum entrance, according to reviewers, Barr placed a six-foot tall assemblage by American artist Wallace Putnam (fig. 21).<sup>51</sup> Critics enjoyed enumerating all the recognizable real-world elements in the various assemblages Barr included in the show, and Putnam’s *Agog* (1935) was no exception: the photograph of the work confirms reports of a “rolling-pin capped by a green glass insulator, two umbrella handles, a tin strainer, a rubber, a large picture frame, a barrel hoop and automobile reflector, a piece of rubber hose, and the top of a refuse barrel.”<sup>52</sup> The same *New York Herald Tribune* reviewer also noted at the entrance level, along with Putnam’s *Agog* and Duchamp’s *Rotating Apparatus*, the enigmatically titled work by Duchamp, *Why Not Sneeze?* (1921), consisting of a marble-cube-filled birdcage. Installation photographs document this work as being placed at the center of a wall near other works by Duchamp (fig. 22).

Judging from the similarity in flooring, it seems likely that Barr installed a wall of abstract, mechanomorphic paintings by Duchamp’s New York Dada partner, Francis Picabia, in the same gallery as *Why Not Sneeze?* and the other Duchamps (fig. 23). If this conjecture is true, and taking into account the initial presence of Man Ray’s *Observatory*

49 Scolari Barr, “Our Campaigns” (note 13), pp. 48–49.

50 In addition to Scolari Barr’s account that A. Conger Goodyear demanded that the Man Ray painting in the entrance to the exhibition be swapped after the opening, Goodyear also attempted to force Barr to remove various artworks from the traveling exhibition early the following year. Barr wrote insistently to Goodyear on January 13, 1937, “I cannot agree to the arbitrary omission from the tour of the exhibition the objects in question. ... [M]atters of principle and procedure are involved as well as the value to the exhibition of the objects themselves.” Goodyear replied on January 15, “[T]he item to which I most strongly object is [Meret Oppenheim’s ‘Fur-covered cup, plate and spoon’]. ... However, on further consideration I am inclined to think that the best solution of the matter is to leave the decision as to what articles are to be included in the exhibition entirely in your hands, merely registering my protest.” Goodyear was objecting to the inclusion of eight works by the artists Oscar Dominguez, Marcel Duchamp, Georges Hugnet, Oppenheim, and Wolfgang Paalen, in addition to a scientific model of lichen. See correspondence between Thomas Maybury and A. Conger Goodyear, New York, January 8, 1937; a letter from Barr to Goodyear, New York, January 13, 1937, and Goodyear to Barr, New York, January 15, 1937, A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbooks, 42, MoMA Archives.

51 Jewell, “Exhibition Opens of ‘Fantastic Art’” (note 7).

52 “Fur-Line-Cup School of Art Gets Spotlight” (unattributed), *New York Herald Tribune*, December 9, 1936, press clipping, A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbooks, 42, MoMA Archives.



21 Wallace Putnam, *Agog*, 1935, Exhibition albums for "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism." New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

*Time*, which was subsequently replaced by his *Orator*, it means that Barr introduced his "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" exhibition with the key triumvirate of New York Dada: Duchamp, Picabia, and Man Ray.

Also mentioned by a reviewer as being installed in the room "next to" Duchamp's *Why Not Sneeze?* was Max Ernst's *The Gramineous Bicycle* (*La Bicyclette graminée de grelots*, ca. 1921) (fig. 24):

"The pièce de résistance in the next room is a large oil [painting] of several cross-sectioned peanuts infested with termites. Some of the peanuts have stomachs and one is equipped with flippers in the manner of a seal. It was painted by Max Ernst, a German, and the title (get set) is: 'The Gramineous Bicycle Garnished with Bells The Pilfered Grey Bears and the Echinoderms Bending The Spine in Search of Caresses.'"<sup>53</sup>

53 Joseph L. Myler, "Night Mare Material At Surrealist Exhibit," *The Independent*, December 18, 1936, Department of Public Information Records, 30 [mf 7;764], MoMA Archives.





22 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Showing, left to right: Marcel Duchamp’s works *The King and Queen Traversed by Swift Nudes*, 1912; *Coffee Mill*, 1911; *The Bride*, 1912; *Why Not Sneeze?*, 1921; and *The Bachelors*, 1914. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.



23 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Showing, left to right: Francis Picabia’s works *Catch as Catch Can*, 1913; *Amorous Procession*, 1917; *Object Which Does Not Praise Times Past*, 1916; and *Infant Carburetor*, 1918. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

If the reviewer’s “in the next room” is to be trusted, the implication is that Barr installed all the Dada works, including those produced in New York and those produced in Europe, on the entrance level, thus grounding his show’s narrative sequence in the discoveries of Dada and not, as one might have expected if his presentation were strictly chronologi-





24 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Showing, right to left: *The Gramineous Bicycle Garnished with Bells the Pilfered Grey Beards and the Echinoderms Bending the Spine to Look for Caresses* by Max Ernst, ca. 1920; on a black background, works by Ernst (*Here Everything is Floating*, ca. 1919; *Sculpture: The Chinese Nightingale*, 1920; and *Dadamax with Caesar Buonarroti*, 1920, visible) and works by Johannes Theodor Baargeld (*Typical vertical scrawling as disguise of the Dada Baargeld*, 1920; *The Human Eye and a Fish, the Latter Petrified*, 1920; and *Drawing*, 1920, visible); *Dada Head* by Sophie Taeuber-Arp, 1920 (on a pedestal); *Birds in An Aquarium* by Jean (Hans) Arp, 1920; works by Christian Schad on a black background (including his *Schadographs*, 1918), next to his *Babylonian Apocalypse*, 1918; *Colored Woodcut* by Marcel Janco, 1916; *Miller* by Jean (Hans) Arp, 1916; and in a display case (lower left), two or more unidentifiable works. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.



25 Soichi Sunami, detail of the wall text in “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism,” showing the word “COLOGNE” above works by Johannes Theodor Baargeld and Max Ernst. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

cal, in the earlier “old master” precursors, who were represented by the “fantastic art” referenced in the exhibition title.

It is significant that Barr’s display of works by the European Dadaists was scrupulously historical: it brought together Arp’s early polychrome wood reliefs, Christian Schad’s photograms, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp’s *Dada Head* (*Tête dada*, 1920) as representatives of Zurich Dada, while works by Ernst and Johannes Theodor Baargeld, the primary protagonists of Cologne Dada, appeared beneath block letters spelling out the city’s name (fig. 25). This small, barely visible detail in the installation photograph suggests that Barr was probably the first to use a city-center model to display Dada objects, an organizing structure that has prevailed through to the present day.<sup>54</sup>

Also on the street level, most likely to the left of the main entrance on Fifty-Third Street, was a table used for displaying catalogues and other printed matter (fig. 26). Above it appeared the exhibition title, “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism,” and three reliefs by Arp.<sup>55</sup> Perpendicular to



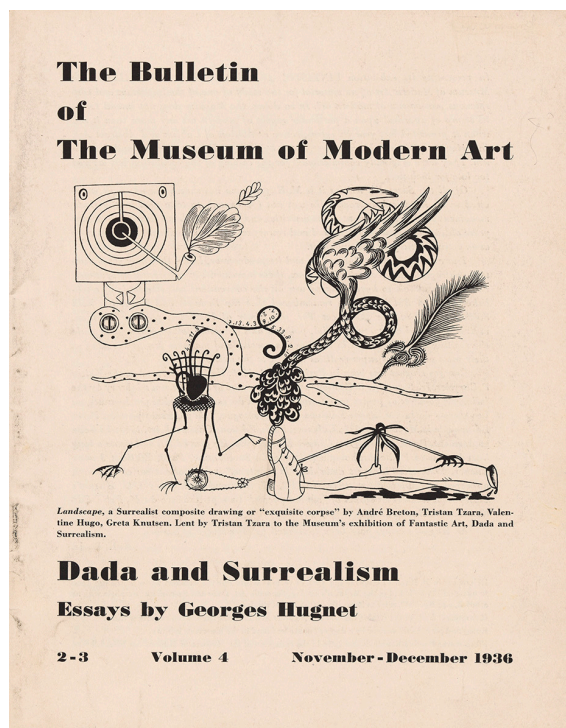
26 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Showing, left to right: Jean (Hans) Arp’s works *Torso and Head*, 1930; an unidentified relief; and *Constellation*, 1928. On the table are two open copies of the exhibition catalogue, with eight closed copies on the left below eight other museum publications, including *African Negro Art*, 1935; *American Folk Art: The Art of the Common Man in America, 1750–1900*, 1923; *Modern Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators*, 1936; *John Marin: Watercolors, Oil Paintings, Etchings*, 1936; and three unidentified books. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

54 Anne Umland, “Dada in the Collection: A Permanent Paradox,” in Anne Umland and Adrian Sudhalter, eds., *Dada in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), p. 18.

55 Ibid., p. 37; Scolari Barr, “Our Campaigns” (note 13), p. 45. The leftmost relief has been identified as *Torse et tête* (1930) and the rightmost relief as *Constellation* (1928); the center relief is unidentified.



28 Alfred H. Barr Jr., *A Brief Guide to the Exhibition of Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, 1936. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.



29 The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art with George Hugnet's essays, *Dada and Surrealism*, 1936. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

the title wall was a display of "Publications of The Museum of Modern Art," which included eight copies of the first edition of the exhibition catalogue (fig. 27),<sup>56</sup> with two open copies of the book on the table and two related publications—Barr's *A Brief Guide to the Exhibition of Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (fig. 28) and a special issue of the *Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art* (vol. 4, nos. 2–3, November–December 1936), which included Hugnet's essays on "Dada and Surrealism" (fig. 29). The photograph must have been taken after the first edition of the catalogue was published and after the exhibition's public opening on December 9. Due to the catalogue's delay, Barr's introductory text was initially printed in a "Brief Guide" to the exhibition. This was a give

<sup>56</sup> Ultimately there were three editions published of the "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" catalogue: the first edition bears a publication date of December 1936 and has Man Ray's black-and-white *Rayograph* (1923) printed on the cover; the second edition was published in July 1937, with the same Man Ray cover but printed in green ink; and ten years later, in 1947, a third, expanded and rearranged edition was published, but with a painting by Giorgio de Chirico, *The Evil Genius of the King* (1914–15), chosen by James Thrall Soby, replacing the amorphous Man Ray originally selected by Barr for the cover.



away pamphlet that included a “List of some of the devices, techniques, and media shown in the exhibition,” compiled by Barr and keyed to individual works in the show. The two open catalogue spreads visible in the photograph feature works by Arp from MoMA’s collection and two works by Dalí borrowed from the surrealist poet and patron Edward James. This display was most likely set up to echo what Barr described as the two primary categories of surrealist paintings: relatively spontaneous abstractions and “hand-painted dream photographs.”<sup>57</sup>

Visitors who proceeded up the stairs to the left of this display would have arrived at what were probably relatively spacious carpeted galleries. Here, Barr installed at least three walls of de Chirico paintings presented in a single line with ample space between them—a picture hanging practice that was first seen in the late nineteenth century and was particularly well suited to presenting a historical narrative of art (fig. 30).<sup>58</sup> De Chirico was one of several artists that Barr chose to present in a monographic manner. Another was Max Ernst, who was also the most



30 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Showing, left to right: Giorgio de Chirico’s works *Nostalgia of the Infinite*, 1911; *Toys of a Philosopher*, 1917; *Duo or the Mannequins of the Rose Tower*, 1915; and *Melancholy and Mystery of the Street*, 1914. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Alfred H. Barr Jr., “A Brief Guide to the Exhibition of Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism,” unpaginated, in A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbooks, 42; Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Albums 3.44, MoMA Archives. This quote is taken from the reproduction of this essay, which was printed as the “Introduction” in *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, Alfred H. Barr Jr., ed., exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, second edition, 1937), p. 11. Barr’s “Introduction” was not published in the first edition of the catalogue.

<sup>58</sup> John Elderfield, “The Front Door to Understanding,” in John Elderfield, ed., *Modern Painting and Sculpture: 1880 to the Present at The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), p. 41.



31 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Showing, left to right: *Animals Devouring Themselves* by André Masson, 1928; *Woman Asleep in an Armchair*, 1927, and *Seated Woman*, 1927, by Pablo Picasso; *Mask of Fear* by Paul Klee, 1932; and *Catalan Landscape* by Joan Miró, 1923–24. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

heavily represented artist in the exhibition, with some forty-seven works included. Yet another was Arp, who had twenty-five works on the checklist. Both he and Ernst were key figures not only within Dada, but also in surrealism, which at least in part explains their prominence in the show.

Barr’s approach to the presentation of works showed considerable variation, underscoring the richly complex legacy of the exhibition. In places, he intermixed works by Paul Klee, André Masson, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso (fig. 31)—perhaps, as John Elderfield has suggested, arranging them according to “the size, orientation, and visual weight of adjacent pictures.”<sup>59</sup> This hanging strategy differs from the historical, city-centric rationale used for the groupings in the Zurich and Cologne Dada display. Barr also included, most likely on the second floor (judging by the carpet), works by American artists such as Peter Blume and Georgia O’Keeffe, whom he categorized in the catalogue as “artists independent of the Dada and Surrealist movements,”<sup>60</sup> but whom he nonetheless chose to exhibit.

In typical Beaux-Arts townhouse style, the upper-floor rooms of the exhibition were probably smaller, with lower ceilings and various types of wood floors. Extrapolating from the photographs, it is possible to

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>60</sup> “Catalog of the Exhibition,” in Barr, *Fantastic Art* (note 41), p. 231.



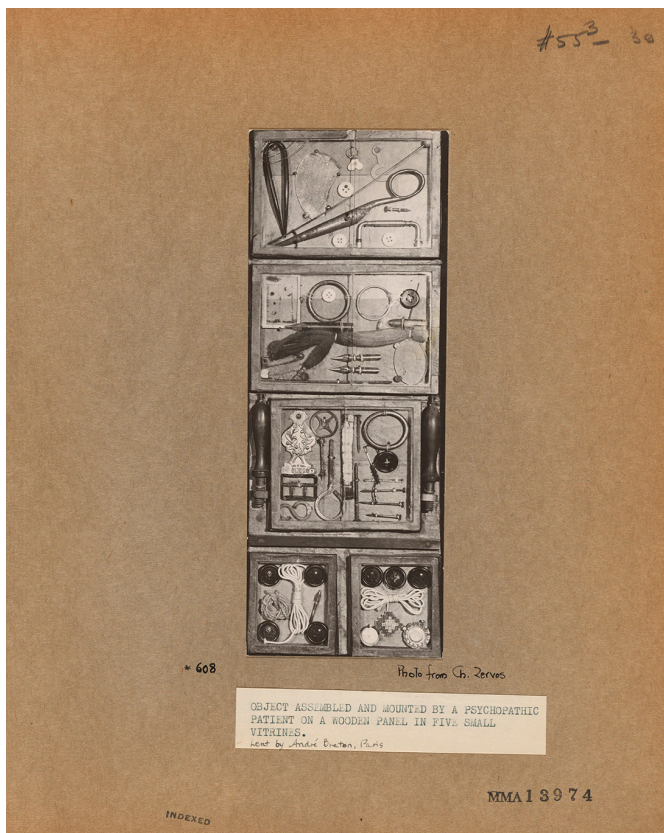


32 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Showing, left to right: *A God of War Shooting Arrows to Protect the People* by Jeane Hoisington, undated; *The Exact Hour* by Wolfgang Paalen, ca. 1935; *Object* by Joan Miró, 1936; *Soap Bubble Set* by Joseph Cornell, 1936; *Spectre of the Gardenia* by Marcel Jean, 1936; an object assembled by a psychopathic patient; and unidentified works on dark panels. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.



33 Jeane Hoisington, *A God of War Shooting Arrows to Protect the People*, undated, colored chalk. Current whereabouts unknown.

speculate that on the third floor Barr installed a gallery filled with surrealist objects (fig. 32), such as Wolfgang Paalen’s *The Exact Hour* (ca. 1935) and Miró’s *Object* (1936), along with a colored chalk drawing by the then eleven-year-old Jeane Hoisington (fig. 33) and an “object assembled by a psychopathic patient” lent by André Breton (fig. 34). Such “comparative” material included by Barr went largely undocumented in the commissioned installation views, yet was the source of considerable contretemps: perhaps most notoriously, the Société Anonyme founder,



34 Object assembled and mounted by a psychopathic patient on a wooden panel in five small vitrines, undated, exhibition albums for “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

artist, and modern art collector Katherine Dreier withdrew her seven loans from the exhibition following its New York presentation due to her objection to Barr’s decision to include children’s art and the “art of the insane” in the show.<sup>61</sup>

In the same room, presumably on the third floor, along with works by Miró, Paalen, Hoisington, and others, Barr dedicated a display cabinet to the New York artist Joseph Cornell. It featured his *Soap Bubble Set* (1936) and *The Elements of Natural Philosophy* (1936), and seems to have

<sup>61</sup> For the clash between Alfred H. Barr Jr. and Katherine S. Dreier, see the letter from Dreier to Barr, New York, February 27, 1937: “The fact that you claim that from the surrealist point of view a person’s insanity only adds greater interest—shows how confused they are as to what is art. . . . Personally I considered it very dangerous for our American public who are not art-conscious to present such a fare. . . . Most people left your exhibition feeling wuzzy!! And it seemed as if you had deliberately hung the pictures to give the emphases [*sic*] to the abnormal. It was most painful.” See The Museum of Modern Art Exhibition Records, 55.2, MoMA Archives. Note that the “Art of the Insane” is Barr’s terminology; see the “Catalog of the Exhibition,” in Barr, *Fantastic Art* (note 41), p. 237.



35 Joseph Cornell, *Soap Bubble Set* (installed as part of *The Elements of Natural Philosophy*), 1936, box construction, 40 × 36.2 × 13.7 cm. Hartford, CT, Wadsworth Atheneum. Photographed by Soichi Sunami. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

been the only vitrine in this section that Barr asked Sunami to document in a detailed, close-up view (fig. 35). This object-filled gallery, along with the Zurich and Cologne Dada gallery, and a display devoted to “Fantastic Architecture,” is one of only three photographed installation views that are more interdisciplinary and crowded. Possibly also on the third floor, Barr exhibited groups of smaller paintings. In one documented instance of another display that followed a city-center model (fig. 36), paintings by London-based surrealists were hung together, among them John Banting’s *His Royal Highness* (1935) and Eileen Agar’s *Quadrige* (1935). The latter was lent by the English surrealist writer and collector Roland Penrose.

On the fourth and last floor of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism,” Barr took yet another tack, installing examples of what he categorized as “Fantastic Architecture” (fig. 37).<sup>62</sup> Here he juxtaposed documen-

62 “Catalog of the Exhibition,” in Barr, *Fantastic Art* (note 41), p. 239.





36 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Showing, left to right: an unidentified work; *His Royal Highness* by John Banting, 1932; *Quadriga* by Eileen Agar, 1935; an unidentified work; and *Hostesses* by Edward Burra, 1932. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.



37 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Showing, left to right: photographs of Kurt Schwitters’s *Merzbau*, 1925–1935; *The Palace at 4 a.m.* by Alberto Giacometti, 1932; and etchings by Giovanni Battista Piranesi from the *Carceri* series, ca. 1745. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

tary photographs of Kurt Schwitters’s *Hannover Merzbau* (1923–36) with Alberto Giacometti’s mysterious wood, glass, and string construction *The Palace at 4 a.m.* (*Le Palais à 4 heures du matin*, 1932), and eighteenth-century etchings by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, folding the



38 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” Showing, left to right: a landscape-head painting in the tradition of Arcimboldo; a photographic reproduction of *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* by Hieronymus Bosch; a School of Bosch rendition of *Descent into Hell*; a North Italian School rendition of *The Fall of Phaeton*; and *Shipwreck—Miracle of St. Nicholas of Bari* by Giovanni di Paolo di Grazia, ca. 1450. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

differences in eras, locations, and intentions that produced these disparate works into a grand transhistorical narrative.

Also on the fourth floor, in a counterintuitive, anti-rational, quasi-“surrealist” maneuver, Barr displayed the very earliest works included in the show, making it clear that his installation was far from strictly chronological (fig. 38). These works ranged in date from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, and according to the catalogue and master checklist, included both original works of art and photographic reproductions. Hieronymus Bosch’s *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, for example, was represented by a framed photograph, but hung next to it was *Descent into Hell*, an “original” painting attributed to the School of Bosch, lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. All the other works documented in the photograph of this display are originals, perhaps explaining why this grouping was photographed “for the record,” while other displays of precursors of surrealism were not.

It is interesting to consider Barr’s varied installation tactics in relation to those of two other, now legendary, surrealist exhibitions of 1936 that preceded his: the “Exposition surréaliste d’objets,” held at the Galerie Charles Ratton in Paris from May 22 to 29, and the “International Surrealism Exhibition” held at the New Burlington Galleries in London from June 11 to July 4. We know that Barr and Scolari Barr visited London to see the latter exhibition and that early on, Barr had expressed



interest in the possibility of the London show traveling to New York. Somewhere along the line, however, Barr and Scolari Barr decided to organize an independent project that positioned contemporary surrealist art in relation to what had come before it. Although the decision to consider surrealism together with its “Fantastic” and “Dada” precursors can be questioned, Barr’s clear, straight-line installations testify to both his didactic intent and his determination to demonstrate that surrealism was “a serious affair.”



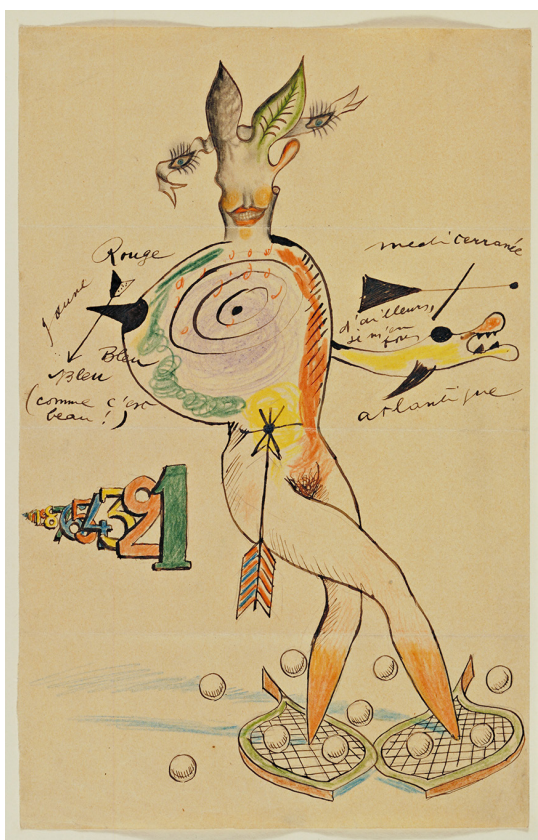
39 Salvador Dalí, *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931, oil on canvas, 24.1 × 33 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art.

## Collection

Barr acquired works exhibited in “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” for the museum before, during, and after the exhibition’s presentation in New York.<sup>63</sup> Works acquired before the show include contemporary surrealist paintings like Salvador Dalí’s *The Persistence of Memory* (1931) (fig. 39); surrealist films and “fantastic” film precursors like Georges Méliès’s *A Trip to the Moon* (*Le Voyage dans la Lune*, 1902) (fig. 40); key examples on paper of surrealist chance procedures, such as the game

63 Although beyond the purview of this essay, the touring exhibition “Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism”—note the added “and”—traveled to six domestic venues after the close of the exhibition in New York on January 17, 1937. It was shown at the Pennsylvania Museum of Art, Philadelphia (January 30–March 1); Boston Museum of Fine Arts (March 6–April 5); Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts (April 12–May 10); Milwaukee Arts Institute, Wisconsin (May 19–June 16); University Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (June 26–July 24); and the San Francisco Museum of Art, California (August 6–September 3). See Department of Circulating Exhibition Records, II.1.59.1, MoMA Archives.

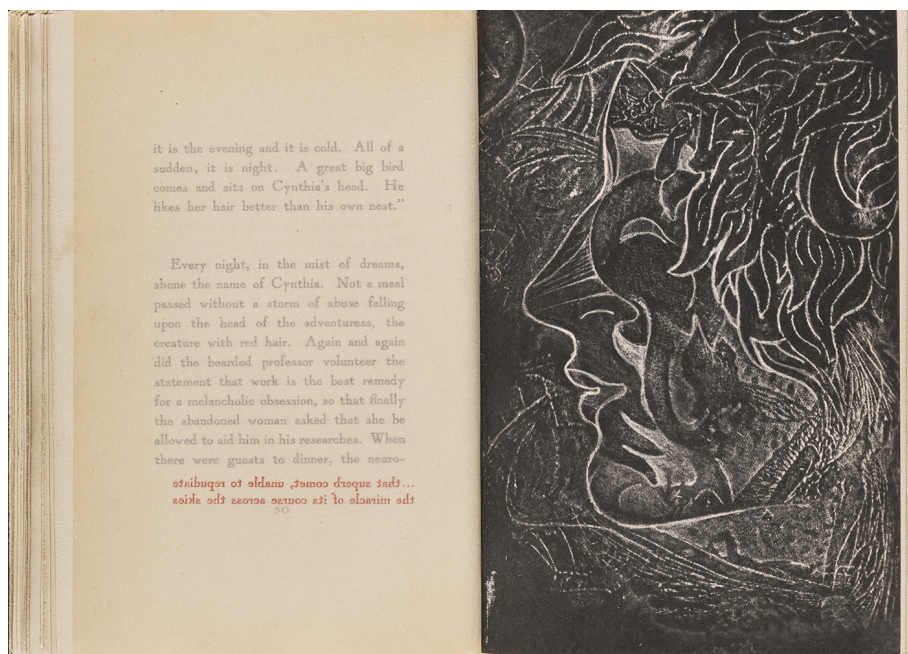
40 Georges Méliès, frame still from *A Trip to the Moon*, 1902, 35 mm film (black and white and hand-colored, silent), 11 min. New York, The Museum of Modern Art.



41 *Nude, cadavre exquis* by Yves Tanguy, Joan Miró, Max Morise, and Man Ray, 1926–27, composite drawing in ink, pencil, and colored pencil on paper, 35.9 × 22.9 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art.



42 Jean (Hans) Arp, *Objects Arranged According to the Law of Chance*, 1930, wood, 26.3 × 28.3 × 5.4 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art.



43 Max Ernst, illustration for *Mr. Knife, Miss Fork* by René Crevel, 1931, gelatin silver print, page size 17.8 × 11.3 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art.

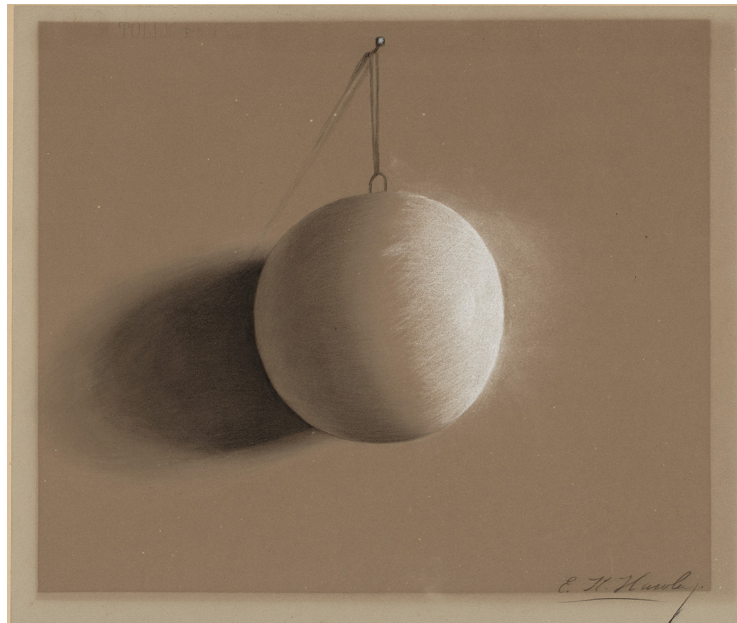
of *cadavre exquis* (fig. 41) and automatic drawings; relief-objects that eschewed traditional categories of painting and sculpture (fig. 42); and a large number of important surrealist books (fig. 43).<sup>64</sup> Prior to the exhibition opening on December 9, Barr had acquired thirty-four of the artworks for the museum's permanent collection. During the New York run, he acquired another twelve, followed by another forty-five between the close of the exhibition at MoMA and the end of 1941, when the museum presented a show titled "New Acquisitions. Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" (July 23 to September 29, 1941). In the subsequent years, Barr, as well as later generations of curators, would acquire a further thirty-six works that had been included in "Fantastic Art,

<sup>64</sup> Soon before "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" opened in New York, Walter P. Chrysler Jr., then chairman of MoMA's Library Committee, made a very substantial gift to the museum of "the rare and most complete existing collections of literature pertaining to the surrealist movement. ... The 700 items, including books, pamphlets, broadsides, and other memorabilia, were assembled from the collections of Paul Eluard and Dr. Camille Gause, both of which were bought last summer by Mr. Chrysler after they had been on the market for about two years." See Philip Boyer Jr., "Rare Surrealist Data a Gift to Museum Here" *New York Herald Tribune*, November 29, 1936, press clipping, A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbooks, 42, MoMA Archives. Many of these publications are not included in the total acquisition counts from the exhibition (see note 67), as they were not accepted into either the permanent collection or the study collection. Rather, these materials were given to the Museum of Modern Art Library, where they are held today in its special collections.



Dada, Surrealism.” Today, the number of works in the museum’s collection and study collection, which include various comparative materials (fig. 44) presented in the exhibition, totals 133.<sup>65</sup>

Although it is true, as Sandra Zalman has pointed out, that there were “no major exhibitions of surrealism in the United States between 1936 and 1968,”<sup>66</sup> many of the surrealist works shown in “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” remained at the museum after the exhibition moved on from New York on January 17, 1937, to embark on its seven-month, six-venue domestic tour until September 3, 1937. These works were



44 Elizabeth King Hawley, *Hanging Sphere*, ca. 1875, pastel on paper, 29.2 × 34.3 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art.

65 These numbers are drawn from the collection database of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The total number takes into account four works shown in “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism,” which were acquired by the museum but later deaccessioned. It also includes twelve objects in the study collection, a special group of non-accessioned objects that MoMA owns, around seven of which are comparative objects acquired between 1936 and 1937. In the “Catalog of the Exhibition,” Barr categorized such works as “Comparative Material: art of children,” “Art of the Insane,” and “Miscellaneous objects and pictures of surrealist character.” See “Catalog of the Exhibition,” in Barr, *Fantastic Art* (note 41), pp. 237–238. One of the acquisitions Barr made after the exhibition was a drawing by then eleven-year-old Jeane Hoisington, *A god of war shooting arrows to protect the people* (n.d.). Margot Yale, cataloguer in MoMA’s Department of Drawings & Prints, recently discovered that the Hoisington drawing was transferred to the Manhattan Laboratory Museum in 1985 (email to Alison Guh, February 4, 2019). The Manhattan Laboratory Museum later became the Children’s Museum of Manhattan. Lizzy Martin (Director of Exhibit Development & Museum Planning) indicated that CMOM does not currently hold this drawing (email to Talia Kwartler, February 25, 2019).

66 Zalman, *Consuming Surrealism* (note 4), p. 7.

included in various displays of works from the museum collection, where they would have been seen by MoMA's ever-expanding public including artists, students, and art-enthusiasts alike. Of particular note are the first three synoptic collection presentations that Barr installed in 1945, 1954, and 1964, all of which he intended to instruct the general public on the history of modern art. Collectively and individually, these collection displays encourage consideration of the ways that the legacy of "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," as manifested in collection works, remained present at the museum and in New York City, even when there was not a major surrealist loan exhibition on view.

On June 20, 1945, during what would prove to be the last months of World War II, the museum opened what it billed as the "first general exhibition of the Museum Collection of Painting and Sculpture."<sup>67</sup> This was the first time that Barr installed works from the collection in an interpretive sequence aimed at describing "the complex and contradictory ways ... modern art developed over the decades."<sup>68</sup> The exhibition galleries in Barr's 1945 installation illustrated the major movements of modernism for museum visitors. Works by surrealist artists that had been included in "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" were shown on the museum's third floor. In the press release (there was no catalogue produced), Barr explained, "The paintings on the third floor spring from two radically different artistic—and human—problems, both of fundamental importance in the modern world. One concerned with the relation of man to society [and the other] springing from the relation of man to his subconscious mind ... more or less inspired or justified by modern psychology and the aesthetics of Surrealism."<sup>69</sup>

Although Barr used the word "surrealism" in one section of the press release, the galleries showing works by artists such as Dalí, Ernst, Magritte, and Tanguy grouped them under the heading "Fantasy: Dream Perspectives"—the artists were not described as surrealists, but as "masters of dream realism, of vivid wonders and incongruities"<sup>70</sup> (fig. 45). The galleries that followed featured works presented under the title "Fantasy: Out of Chaos" (fig. 46), described by Barr in the press release as follows: "In contrast to [dream realism's] calculated magic, the artists

67 Press release, "Museum of Modern Art Opens Large Exhibition of Its Own Painting and Sculpture," n.d., p. 1, [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_press-release\\_325481.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325481.pdf), accessed January 12, 2019.

68 Elderfield, "The Front Door to Understanding" (note 58), p. 46.

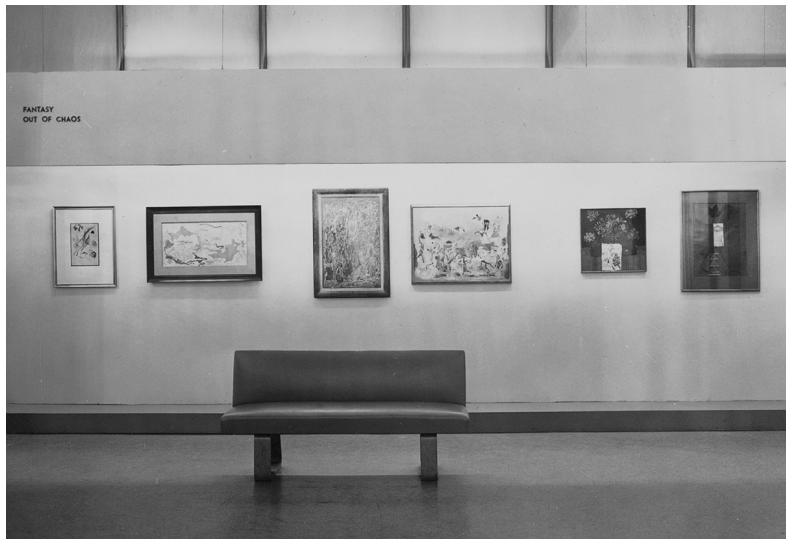
69 Press release, "Museum of Modern Art Opens Large Exhibition of Its Own Painting and Sculpture," n.d., p. 2, [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_press-release\\_325481.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325481.pdf), accessed January 12, 2019.

70 For the heading of the exhibition section, see installation photo (fig. 45). For a description of this section of the exhibition, see press release, "Museum of Modern Art Opens Large Exhibition of Its Own Painting and Sculpture," n.d. (note 69), p. 2.





45 Soichi Sunami, installation view of the exhibition “The Museum Collection of Painting and Sculpture,” 1945–46, featuring the wall titled “Fantasy: Dream Perspectives.” Showing, left to right: *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale*, 1924, and *Napoleon in the Wilderness*, 1941, by Max Ernst; *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931, and *Portrait of Gala*, 1935, by Salvador Dalí; *Admiration of the Orchestrelle for the Cinematograph* by Man Ray, 1919; *Mz 379. Potsdamer* by Kurt Schwitters, 1922; and *The Hat Makes the Man* by Max Ernst, 1920. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.



46 Soichi Sunami, installation view of the exhibition “The Museum Collection of Painting and Sculpture,” 1945–46, featuring the wall titled “Fantasy: Out of Chaos.” Showing, left to right: *Untitled* by Wassily Kandinsky, 1915; *Battle of Fishes* by André Masson, 1926; *Threading Light* by Mark Tobey, 1942; *The Tranquility of Previous Existence* by Walter Quirt, 1941; *Grandmother* by Arthur Dove, 1925; and *Street Singer* by André Masson, 1941. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.



47 Soichi Sunami, installation view of the exhibition “The Museum Collection of Painting and Sculpture,” 1945–46. Showing, left to right: an unidentified work; *Pancho Villa, Dead and Alive* by Robert Motherwell, 1943; an unidentified work; and *The She-Wolf* by Jackson Pollock, 1943. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.



48 Soichi Sunami, installation view of the exhibition “The Museum Collection of Painting and Sculpture,” 1945–46, featuring the wall titled “The Free Form.” Showing, left to right: *The Beautiful Bird Revealing the Unknown to a Pair of Lovers* (from the *Constellation* series) by Joan Miró, 1941; *Birds in An Aquarium*, ca. 1920, and *Mountain, Navel, Anchors*, 1925, by Jean (Hans) Arp; and an unidentified work. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

in the next gallery create images from a chaos of weaving, automatic brushstrokes.”<sup>71</sup> As documented in installation photographs (fig. 47), this section juxtaposed the work of André Masson and others with contemporary American artists like Robert Motherwell and Jackson Pollock, visually narrating the now familiar story of surrealist automatism’s impact on abstract expressionism and the New York School. A third gallery space was titled “The Free Form” (fig. 48), in which “the spontaneous, almost automatic method then finds a more calm and lucid expression in the nearly abstract ‘free form’ compositions of Arp and Miró.”<sup>72</sup> Although Max Ernst’s sculpture *Lunar Asparagus* (*Les Asperges de la lune*, 1935) was presented alongside paintings, Giacometti’s quintessential surrealist sculpture *The Palace at 4 a.m.* (1932) was relegated to a separate sculpture display. This is an important reminder of how relatively medium-specific and painting-and-sculpture-centric the museum’s story of surrealism, as represented in its collection galleries, was in the past—one that invites recognition and reckoning with the tremendous sway this image of surrealism as a movement driven by painters and sculptors has had on perceptions of surrealism in the United States.

Barr’s 1954 collection display was, as in 1945, a temporary exhibition, on view from October 19, 1954, to February 6, 1955, held in celebration of the museum’s 25th anniversary. According to the press release, “Expressionist, realist, and fantastic paintings since 1910 occupy the second floor,” with installation photographs documenting the presence of surrealist works on this floor. These included major monographic presentations of the work of Ernst and Miró, who were described as among “the painters whom we, at mid-century, like to think of as a master.”<sup>73</sup> The big news in 1954, however, was the museum’s commitment to contemporary American abstract expressionist artists such as Jackson Pollock, whose work was featured prominently on the third floor.

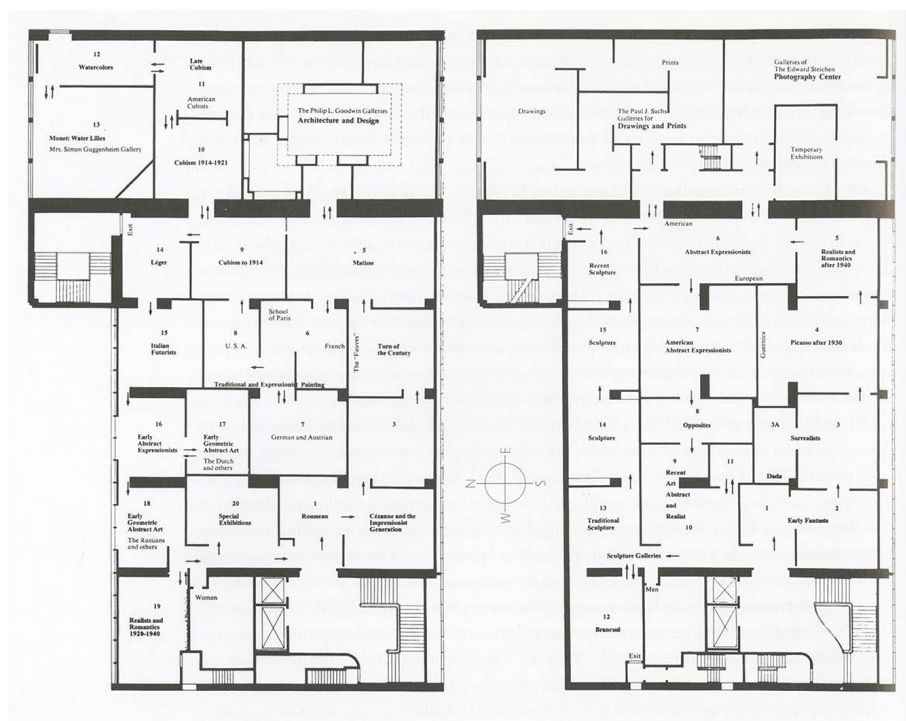
It was only in 1964, when the museum reopened after a significant expansion designed by architect Philip Johnson, that its collection became “continuously visible” and that as a result, surrealism went on “permanent” view.<sup>74</sup> Here, fortunately, there are floor plans documenting Barr’s presentation of works, which occupied the museum’s second and third floors (fig. 49). According to the press release, Barr, working with curator Dorothy Miller, decided to begin the third-floor installation with “the powerful movement toward the fantastic, marvelous, and

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Press release, “Paintings from the Museum Collection: Opens Museum of Modern Art’s 25th Anniversary Year Celebration,” for release October 17, 1954, pp. 1, 3, [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_press-release\\_325959.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325959.pdf), accessed January 12, 2019.

74 Elderfield, “The Front Door to Understanding” (note 58), p. 40.



49 Second and third floor information plans, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

antirational which, like realism, was partially a reaction against abstract art.”<sup>75</sup> In Gallery 3 and Gallery 3A (fig. 50), Barr exhibited “the abstract surrealists” Arp, Masson, and Miró; “dream photographers with realistic techniques” like Dalí and Magritte; and the “versatile Max Ernst.”<sup>76</sup>

Gallery 3A was a smaller space in which, according to the registrar’s records, Barr installed Giacometti’s *The Palace at 4 a.m.* and Meret Oppenheim’s fur-covered teacup, along with works by Cornell, Arthur Dove, George Grosz, Schwitters, and even a small Picasso painting. The intermingling of Dada and surrealist works, and artists not necessarily associated with either, underscores the extent to which for Barr the stakes were always far higher than whether something was classified or labeled as “Dada” or “surrealist.” What mattered most was his grand dialectical schema of rational and irrational forces, conceived against the backdrop of the rise of fascism in Europe, which led him in 1936 to present the consecutive exhibitions “Cubism and Abstract Art” and

75 Press release, “Painting and Sculpture from the Museum Collection,” May 25, 1964, pp. 3–4, [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_press-release\\_326325.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_326325.pdf), accessed January 12, 2019.

76 Ibid. (note 75), p. 4.



50 Soichi Sunami, installation view of “Art in a Changing World, 1884–1964: Painting and Sculpture from the Museum Collection,” 1964. Showing, on the foreground wall, left to right: Max Ernst’s works *Lunar Asparagus*, 1935; *Birds above the Forest*, 1929 (lower left); *Woman, Old Man and Flower*, 1923–24 (top center); *Nature at Daybreak*, 1938 (bottom center); *Napoleon in the Wilderness*, 1941 (top right); and *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale*, 1924 (bottom right); *The False Mirror* by René Magritte, 1929 (above door opening); and, on the right, *Meditation on an Oak Leaf*, 1942, and *Battle of Fishes*, 1926, by André Masson. On the background wall, left to right: *Multiplication of the Arcs and Slowly Toward the North* by Yves Tanguy, 1942; and *Phases of the Moon* by Paul Delvaux, 1939. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

“Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” at a time when surrealism was still very much contemporary art. These exhibitions gave European artists, writers, and intellectuals a prominent, American stage in the waning hours before the outbreak of World War II. During this time, support for avant-garde artists continued to dwindle across continental Europe, nowhere more dramatically than in Germany. Mere months before the tour of “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” came to a close, works by many of the artists shown at MoMA in Barr’s two shows were included in the Nazis’ defamatory “Degenerate Art” exhibition, which opened in Munich in mid-July 1937.<sup>77</sup> Considered within their own historical, social, and political context, Barr’s curatorial projects constitute what

77 The touring exhibition was titled “Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism” and traveled to six venues across the United States between January and September 1937. For further details on the exhibition venues and dates, see note 63.



has been described as an act of “resistance to an emergent totalitarian culture,”<sup>78</sup> making not only “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” but also “Cubism and Abstract Art” serious affairs, indeed.

### Note Regarding Captions & Acknowledgements

The captions for images of the exhibition “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” are drawn from the “Catalog of the Exhibition,” published in July 1937 in the 2nd edition of the exhibition catalogue. Titles and dates are taken from this source. Sometimes the historical titles and dates vary from that generally accepted in the current scholarship.

Many different individuals at the Museum of Modern Art in New York generously shared their time and expertise with us. We would especially like to thank our colleagues in the MoMA Archives—Michelle Elligott, Michelle Harvey, Elisabeth Thomas, Christina Eliopoulos, Nicole Kaack, and Ana Marie Cox—who kindly supported our research over many months. We are also grateful to Tunji Adeniji, Vincent Bosch, Nancy Adelson, and Patty Lipshutz, who assisted in obtaining files relevant to the museum’s original townhouse; to Charlotte Barat, who collaborated in our translations of archival materials from the original French; and to Alison Guh, who supported us in myriad ways.

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<sup>78</sup> Leah Dickerman, “Dada Gambits,” *Dada*, Summer 2003, p. 7, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3397679>, accessed January 12, 2018.

## Collecting Modern Art in Hartford: James Thrall Soby, the Wadsworth Atheneum, and Surrealism

Oliver Tostmann

When James Thrall Soby died on January 29, 1979, art critic John Russell remembered him as “a longtime activist in twentieth-century art.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Soby (1906–1979) is still best known for his multiple roles as collector, curator, and *éminence grise* in the art scene of his time (fig. 51). At the Museum of Modern Art, New York, where he bequeathed his remarkable art collection including important paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso, he is celebrated for his many significant exhibitions and key acquisitions from the 1940s to the 1960s.

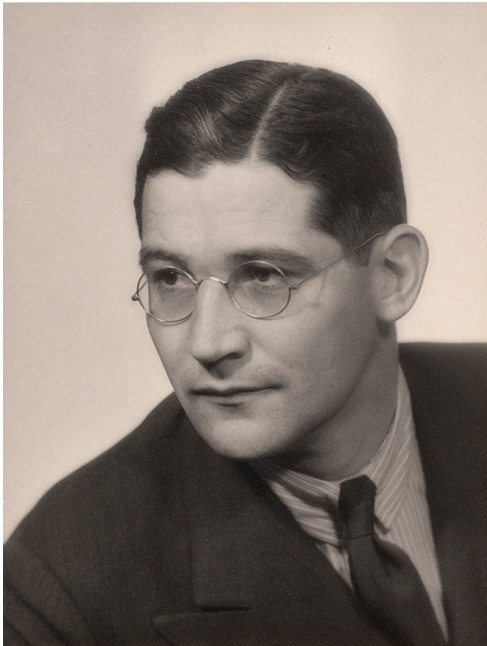
An exhibition organized by MoMA in 1961 showcased his collection and brought it into well-deserved public light.<sup>2</sup> In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, former museum director and close friend Alfred H. Barr Jr. discussed Soby’s roughly twenty-five-year career at MoMA. He focused on Soby as a collector and suggested that collecting enhanced his connoisseurship and inspired him to write about modern art in various monographs, catalogues, and magazines.<sup>3</sup> Barr highlighted Soby’s book *The Early Chirico*, the first monograph in English on the artist, and pointed out that at home Soby “could walk out of his study and see the finest collection of de Chiricos in the world.”<sup>4</sup> He presented Soby as a discerning collector, a leading art critic, and an accomplished

<sup>1</sup> John Russell, “Obituary James Thrall Soby,” *The New York Times*, January 30, 1979, D 19.

<sup>2</sup> *The James Thrall Soby Collection*, Gallery M. Knoedler and Company, ed., exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961). The exhibition ran from February 1–25, 1961.

<sup>3</sup> Rona Roob compiled Soby’s bibliography in John Elderfield, ed., *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century. Continuity and Change*, Studies in Modern Art, vol. 5 (New York: Museum of Modern Art; distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1995), pp. 230–251.

<sup>4</sup> Alfred H. Barr Jr., “James Thrall Soby and His Collection,” in Gallery M. Knoedler and Company, ed., *The James Thrall Soby Collection* (note 2), pp. 15–20, here p. 16; James Thrall Soby, *The Early Chirico* (New York: Arno Press, 1941).



51 Man Ray, *Portrait of James Thrall Soby*, 1932. Hartford, CT, Wadsworth Atheneum.

“museum man.”<sup>5</sup> Yet Barr barely mentioned one crucial aspect of Soby’s career: his relationship with the Wadsworth Atheneum.<sup>6</sup>

Soby was in his mid-thirties when he started working at MoMA in 1940.<sup>7</sup> Concurrently, he remained a trustee at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, where he had been actively involved since 1930. Soby and Wadsworth director A. Everett “Chick” Austin Jr. had made a formidable team over the previous ten years, and Soby’s rise to become one of the leading advocates of modern art in the United States cannot be fully understood without a proper assessment of his early years in Hartford.

In Hartford, Soby’s passion for modern art, particularly surrealism, was born. It is where he formed his art collection, cultivated a network of dealers and artists, and wrote the pioneering monographs *After Picasso*, in 1935, and (most, if not all, of) *The Early Chirico* in 1941.<sup>8</sup> In 1935, after working as a museum volunteer, he was named the first curator of modern art at the Wadsworth Atheneum, and in 1937 became a trustee and adviser to the museum. Most importantly, it was at the

5 Barr, “James Thrall Soby and His Collection” (note 4), p. 16.

6 Ibid., pp. 15–20.

7 Soby had already been a member of MoMA’s Junior Advisory Committee from 1937. Rona Roob, “James Thrall Soby. Author, Traveler, Explorer,” in Elderfield, *The Museum of Modern Art* (note 3), pp. 175–182.

8 James Thrall Soby, *After Picasso* (Hartford: E. V. Mitchell; New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935); Soby, *The Early Chirico* (note 4).

Wadsworth that Soby's activities as a collector, critic, and museum professional evolved simultaneously, complementing one another and, at times, overlapping and even merging. It was this unique *mélange* that prepared him for his later career at MoMA. Due to the city's small scale and because Hartford was his hometown, Soby was able to assume leading positions earlier and more swiftly than he might have in a larger city. Significantly, Hartford and the Wadsworth provide a meaningful case study for better understanding the rapid development and transformation of the modern art scene in America during the 1930s. To help elucidate this history, the present essay examines Soby's multiple activities in the art world, roughly covering the period of his involvement with the Wadsworth from 1930 until his resignation from its Board of Trustees in 1944.<sup>9</sup>

### Hartford, the Wadsworth Atheneum, and Chick Austin

Soby's interest in modern art went hand in hand with the cultural transformation of Hartford. Situated midway between Boston and New York, it was small but prosperous during Soby's youth. It was well known as a literary city, attracting writers and poets such as Mark Twain and, later, Wallace Stevens, but most local art collectors had a rather conservative taste. French novelist Marguerite Yourcenar, who lived in the city during the 1940s, described it as "reactionary, chauvinist, and Protestant, with a hint of worldliness."<sup>10</sup> Locals gravitated to paintings by the American Hudson River School, the Connecticut school of impressionists, and French academic paintings à la William Bouguereau. Until the early twentieth century, collectors had neither significant interest in, nor any particular taste for, European art, with the exception of J. Pier-

9 A biography about Soby is still a desideratum. Rona Roob published an excellent introductory essay about his life. She also edited excerpts of Soby's memoirs, titled *The Changing Stream*. Soby worked on his manuscript, which he titled *My Life in the Art World*, between 1962 and 1971. It remains unpublished and is archived at MoMA. For excerpts, see Rona Roob, "The Changing Stream," in Elderfield, *The Museum of Modern Art* (note 3), pp. 183–227. See also Tobias Garst, "Giorgio de Chirico nella collezione di James Thrall Soby," in Paolo Baldacci, Guido Magnaguagno, and Gerd Roos, eds., *De Chirico, Max Ernst, Magritte, Balthus. Uno sguardo nell'invisibile*, exh. cat. (Florence: Mandragora; Palazzo Strozzi, 2010), pp. 241–244; Eric Zafran, "Springtime in the Museum. Modern Art Comes to Hartford," in Eric Zafran, ed., *Surrealism and Modernism From the Collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum*, exh. cat. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 61–134; Pamela Koob, "James Thrall Soby and de Chirico," in Emily Braun, ed., *Giorgio de Chirico and America* (New York: Hunter College; Turin: Umberto Allemandi, 1996), pp. 111–124; and Nicholas Fox Weber, *Patron Saints: Five Rebels Who Opened America to a New Art 1928–1943* (New York: Knopf, 1992).

10 Quoted in Steve Courtney, "Elegant European Called 'Reactionary' Hartford Home," *Hartford Courant*, August 4, 2002. Yourcenar lived in Hartford from 1939–49. During this decade, she collaborated with Chick Austin on a theatrical dance work. See Josyane Savigneau, *Marguerite Yourcenar. Inventing a Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).





52 George Platt Lynes,  
*Portrait of Arthur Everett*  
*"Chick" Austin Jr.*, 1931.  
Hartford, CT, Wadsworth  
Atheneum.

pont Morgan, the famous Gilded Age banker who maintained close ties with his birthplace of Hartford but lived mostly in New York.<sup>11</sup>

Until the late 1920s, the Wadsworth Atheneum, one of America's oldest public art museums, was the perfect embodiment of this conservative taste. It had impressive holdings of nineteenth-century Hudson River landscapes, numerous portraits of local dignitaries, and the occasional European old master. The museum was transformed dramatically with the arrival of young director Arthur Everett "Chick" Austin Jr. in 1927.<sup>12</sup> Within a few years, the Wadsworth became one of the leading institutions for collecting modern art in America. Austin's daring exhibition program vitalized the public well beyond the confines of Hartford. Thanks to his charisma, energy, and taste, Austin quickly connected artists, collectors, and socialites with the museum (fig. 52).

<sup>11</sup> Another exception is the Hillstead estate in nearby Farmington, Connecticut, where industrialist Alfred Atmore Pope (1842–1913) displayed his collection of French and American impressionist works.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Everett "Chick" Austin Jr. (1900–1957), director of the Wadsworth Atheneum from 1927–44. On his life, see Eugene R. Gaddis, *Magician of the Modern. Chick Austin and the Transformation of the Arts in America* (New York: Knopf, 2000).

Austin grew up in Boston and attended Harvard University, where he participated in the legendary art classes led by Paul J. Sachs and Edward Forbes. As a member of the Harvard Society of Contemporary Art he befriended the architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, the architect Philip Johnson, and Julien Levy, who would later become a prominent art gallery owner. All three played important roles in Austin's effort to transform the Wadsworth into a showcase for modern art. From his student days onward, Austin was a brilliant networker. Although gay, he married Helen Goodwin in 1929, joining one of the most powerful local families in Hartford. The Goodwin family was among the founders of Hartford and closely related to other local patrician families such as the Morgans. At the time of Austin's arrival in Hartford, Charles Archibald Goodwin, Helen's uncle, was president of the Board of Trustees at the Wadsworth. Philip Lipincott Goodwin, another family member, was a daring collector of modern art with connections in New York and beyond.<sup>13</sup> Shortly after their wedding, the couple built an extravagant new house in Hartford's most expensive neighborhood, surrounded by mansions owned by other family members. In the following years, The Austin House, as it became known, provided an ideal stage for lavish parties where local society mingled with artists, gallery owners, and collectors from New England, New York, and Europe.

Within a few years of his arrival, Austin created one of the most progressive exhibition programs in the United States. Modern art, specifically surrealism, played a crucial role in his effort. During the summer of 1931, Austin saw a Salvador Dalí show in Paris at the Galerie Pierre Colle, probably after being tipped off by his old friend Julien Levy.<sup>14</sup> The show inspired him to organize a survey exhibition introducing surrealism to America. The Wadsworth's "Newer Super-Realism" opened in November 1931 as the first exhibition of surrealism in the United States. It stirred an immediate public response and became an overnight success. Despite its modest size, with just fifty works displayed, Austin gathered an impressive group of artists including Salvador Dalí, André Masson, Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, and Max Ernst.<sup>15</sup> In its wake, Austin continued to conceive of innovative exhibitions. In 1934, he organized

13 Philip Lipincott Goodwin (1885–1958) lived mostly in New York and was a trustee at MoMA. In collaboration with Edward Durell Stone he designed the MoMA building in 1939. For his collection, see Alfred H. Barr Jr., "The Philip L. Goodwin Collection," *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin*, no. 1 (Fall 1958), pp. 4–12. Barr's article leaves Goodwin's substantial donation to the Wadsworth unmentioned.

14 Zafran, "Springtime in the Museum" (note 9), p. 74. Levy later had a business partnership with Pierre Colle.

15 See exhibition brochure, *Newer Super-Realism*, exh. cat. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1931). The exhibition opened November 15 and closed December 5, 1931. Deborah Zlotzky, "'Pleasant Madness' in Hartford: The First Surrealist Exhibition in America," *Arts Magazine*, vol. 60, no. 6 (February 1986), pp. 55–61.

the first Picasso retrospective in any American museum and, in the following years, oversaw a series of exhibitions that regularly included paintings by leading surrealists.<sup>16</sup>

Austin continuously bought works of art to expand the Wadsworth's permanent collection. One of his most spectacular acquisitions was Serge Lifar's collection of objects from the Ballets Russes in 1933.<sup>17</sup> Lifar's collection comprised paintings, set and costume designs by Léon Bakst, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso, as well as numerous paintings and drawings by Giorgio de Chirico, Joan Miró, and Max Ernst. With this collection in mind, he opened the Wadsworth to dance and film, and in the same year tried to bring the Ballets Russes's choreographer George Balanchine to Hartford to form a new school of ballet. This plan failed when Balanchine realized the provincial character of the city, but it nevertheless demonstrates Austin's audacious vision and ambition.

In 1934, artists and art cognoscenti flocked to Hartford to celebrate the grand opening of the new Avery Memorial wing, built after Austin's own architectural designs as the first modern art museum building in America. An extension of the existing main museum, the slick Bauhaus-inspired interior was ideally suited to presenting modern art exhibitions, showcasing the ever-growing collection, and serving as a stage for Austin's extravagant parties.<sup>18</sup>

There would have been very little modern art in Hartford without Austin. He was simultaneously a director, choreographer, and actor who reimagined the Wadsworth and introduced Hartford to the latest trends in the arts. However, traveling and socializing incessantly, Austin lacked the focus required of a systematic researcher or disciplined writer; Soby, whom Austin met in 1930, would become both a friend and grow into the role of writer and researcher for him.

### Soby as collector of modern art

Born in Hartford in 1906, Soby grew up in a well-to-do New England family. He rarely left his hometown during his childhood, except for boarding schools and a stint at Williams College in nearby Massachusetts. On his first trip to Paris in 1926–27, he discovered works by

<sup>16</sup> Zafran, "Springtime in the Museum" (note 9), p. 89.

<sup>17</sup> Austin bought the Lifar collection from Julien Levy. Already in 1931, Austin had bought Pierre Roy's *The Electrification of the Country* (1930). With this purchase, Roy's painting became the first surrealist painting to enter any American museum collection.

<sup>18</sup> Eugene R. Gaddis, ed., *Avery Memorial, Wadsworth Atheneum: The First Modern Museum* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1984).



53 Pablo Picasso, *Seated Woman*, 1927, 129.9 × 96.8 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art.

French Romantics, such as Delacroix and Géricault in the Louvre.<sup>19</sup> France would become a lifelong passion for Soby; he returned to Paris almost annually during the 1930s. Back in Hartford, he immersed himself in art history while half-heartedly pursuing a variety of career paths, including a short spell in finance. He also opened a bookstore in downtown Hartford, but ultimately found it unfulfilling.

In 1930, at the age of twenty-four, he started collecting European art, purchasing paintings by Matisse and Derain.<sup>20</sup> Supported by Chick Austin, his collection quickly expanded with additions by Daumier, Degas, and other French artists.<sup>21</sup> In early 1932, however, his direction swiftly

<sup>19</sup> James Thrall Soby, *My Life in the Art World*, 2 parts, unpublished typescript, Museum of Modern Art Museum Archives, New York, vol. I, 2, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. vol. I, 9, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> In the mid- to late 1930s, Soby worked on a book about nineteenth-century French art. The book was never printed.



shifted when he bought Picasso's large *Seated Woman (Femme assise, 1927)* for \$16,000 from the Valentine Gallery in New York (fig. 53).<sup>22</sup> He realized that the market for French nineteenth-century art had become too expensive for him, and refocused his attention on modern art, especially the surrealists and the so-called neo-Romantics.<sup>23</sup> During this time, he acquired his first works by Miró and Dalí, as well as paintings by Masson, Ernst, and Tanguy. Generally, he stayed away from abstract art; instead, he was attracted to figurative art with gloomy themes. Dark waters lurked below the surface of the proper New England gentleman.

Soby bought mostly from the New York galleries of Pierre Matisse, Valentine Dudensing, and Julien Levy. He had close personal relationships with each and had a 49 percent stake in the Levy Gallery, according to Russell Lynes.<sup>24</sup> Thanks to his travels, he also worked with European galleries, especially in Paris where he became a regular customer at the galleries of Pierre Colle, Jeanne Bucher, and Pierre Loeb.<sup>25</sup> Although he was financially independent, Soby's resources were not unlimited. To accommodate his purchases, he regularly traded older pictures for new works. His frequent trades trace broad shifts in his collecting interests over time. During the 1930s and 1940s, he sold works by older artists such as Juan Gris, Derain, and Matisse to buy less expensive works by younger artists.<sup>26</sup>

22 "I'm not sure I would have had the courage to buy it if it hadn't been for the enthusiastic support of Chick Austin and Jere Abbott," Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. I, 9, p. 6. Jere Abbott (1897–1982) was the first associate director at MoMA in 1932. The same year he became the director of the Smith College Museum of Art in Northampton, Massachusetts.

23 "I was at last beginning to realize that I had no business splashing around in the larger tides of the market for 19th century French art. And besides there were modern paintings appearing at the New York dealers during the Depression which I thought better suited to my pocketbook and my growing sense of affinity with works of art produced within our own memory and century," Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. I, 9, p. 5.

24 Lynes states that Soby had a 49 percent business interest in the Levy Gallery, "but stayed in the background." When Soby became a member of the Advisory Committee at MoMA in 1940, he sold his interest back to Levy. Russell Lynes, *Good Old Modern. An Intimate Portrait of The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 236. In addition, Soby and Levy had a commercial partnership to support the neo-Romantic painter Eugene Berman, from 1932 to 1943. See letter from Soby to Levy, August 28, 1932, copy in Wadsworth Atheneum Archives, Hartford, Connecticut. In 1943, Soby disentangled his and Levy's partnership on Berman. See letter from Soby to Levy, March 26, 1943, Wadsworth Atheneum Archives, Hartford, Connecticut. On December 31, 1937, Levy's gallery owed Soby \$5,000. Soby's soon to be wife Eleanor "Nellie" Howland had loaned the Levy Gallery \$5,000 as well. See Balance Sheet, Julien Levy Gallery, December 31, 1939, copy in Wadsworth Atheneum Archives, Hartford, Connecticut.

25 Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. I, 9, p. 9; and *ibid.*, vol. II, 26, p. 3.

26 Soby, for instance, asked Austin in November 1942 to send his *Still Life* by Juan Gris to Pierre Matisse, "so that I can buy new pictures. The only way I can get anything new these days is to sell something old." Letter from Soby to Austin, November 10, 1942, James Thrall Soby Papers, I. 17, MoMA Archives, New York.

Soby acted quickly when art became available. When he saw the 1935 Giorgio de Chirico show at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, he immediately bought four paintings.<sup>27</sup> To pay for them, he sold a recently acquired painting by Degas.<sup>28</sup> In 1940, after de Chirico's second show at the Matisse Gallery, he traded his *Girl by a Window* (1921) by Pierre's father Henri as part of the payment for three new paintings by de Chirico.<sup>29</sup> When objects were not immediately available to Soby, he acted with patience and persistence. In 1930, at the Valentine Gallery, he saw Miró's *Portrait of Mistress Mills in 1750* (1929), a painting that deeply affected him but was not for sale. In the following years, Soby asked for it repeatedly until he was eventually offered to purchase the painting in 1945.<sup>30</sup> Due to his overlapping roles as a private collector, part owner of a gallery, and museum representative, it may not have always been clear to his business partners in which capacity Soby acted. However, he did aim for transparency and overall, it seems, prioritized institutional interests over his own. In 1937, for instance, he became interested in Alexander Calder's *Praying Mantis* (1936) and even had it shipped to his home on approval. When he learned of the Wadsworth's interest in the work a few months later, he gave the museum priority, offering them first right of refusal.<sup>31</sup> The museum purchased *Praying Mantis* in 1938, and it remains an important work in its collection.<sup>32</sup> A similar situation played out with MoMA and Balthus's *Joan Miró and His Daughter Dolores* (*Joan Miró et Sa Fille Dolores*, 1936) in 1938, a painting that Soby had under reserve at Pierre Matisse. He left the portrait to MoMA when he learned about Alfred Barr's interest in it.<sup>33</sup>

27 In early December Soby bought from Pierre Matisse de Chirico's *The Enigma of the Day* (1914) for \$2,500 and *The Grand Metaphysical Interior* (1917) for \$1,200. In mid-December, Soby bought *The Duo* (1914–15) for \$2,500. See letters from Matisse to Soby, December 4 and 14, 1935, James Thrall Soby Papers, V.D.2, MoMA Archives, New York. Around the same time, Soby bought de Chirico's *The Faithful Servitor* (1916–17); see Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. I, 9, p. 20. Soby considered this group of four paintings by de Chirico as "the central passion of my life as a collector." James Thrall Soby, "Genesis of a Collection," *Art in America*, no. 49 (1961), pp. 68–81, here p. 71. All four paintings by de Chirico are now at MoMA.

28 Soby had bought Degas's painting *Woman Putting on her Gloves* (ca. 1877) from Wildenstein in November 1931.

29 Soby bought de Chirico's *The Gare Montparnasse* (1914), *The Amusements of a Young Girl* (1916–17), and *The Double Dream of Spring* (1915). All three paintings are now at MoMA. See correspondence from Soby to Pierre Matisse, October 30, 1940, James Thrall Soby Papers, V.D.2, MoMA Archives, New York. Compare with Soby, *Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. II, 10, p. 2. Matisse's painting is now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

30 Joan Miró, *Portrait of Mistress Mills in 1750*, 1929, oil on canvas, MoMA, New York. See Soby, "Genesis of a Collection" (note 27), p. 71.

31 Letter from Alexander Calder to Austin, March 31, 1938, copy in Wadsworth Atheneum Archives, Hartford, Connecticut.

32 Alexander Calder, *Praying Mantis*, 1936, wood, rod, wire, string, and paint, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.

33 Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. II, pp. 26, 6.

## Soby in Farmington

With his growing aspirations, Soby needed additional hanging space to display his collection. In July 1935, he acquired a new country home in Farmington, about ten miles outside of Hartford. Shortly after the purchase, he consulted with his friend Henry-Russell Hitchcock to renovate the building and add a modernist wing that included a space he could use as an art gallery (fig. 54). For the display of his collection, Soby wanted a gallery with maximum light control. He described many modern paintings as “night-blooming” and believed they should be viewed in artificial light.<sup>34</sup> For the next decade, this newly built gallery played center stage for his collection.<sup>35</sup> One of Soby’s first commissions was an enormous wellhead by Alexander Calder for the garden next to the gallery.<sup>36</sup> Inside, he commissioned neo-Romantic painter Eugene



54 Photographer unknown, Farmington interior, ca. 1939. Hartford, CT, Wadsworth Atheneum.

34 Soby, “Genesis of a Collection” (note 27), p. 71. Soby also pointed out that de Chirico had painted his early works in artificial light. Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. I, 9, p. 20.

35 Soby sold the house in May 1954 to live permanently in New York and New Canaan, Connecticut.

36 Alexander Calder, *Well Sweep*, 1935, standing mobile, New York, MoMA.



55 Photographer unknown, group portrait with Soby and friends. Front row, left to right: Teeny Matisse, Kirk Askew, Jane Cooley, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Lelia Wittler; back row: Iris Barry, Thomas Howard, Helen Austin, Pierre Matisse, Constance Askew, Arthur Everett “Chick” Austin Jr., Paul Cooley, *ca.* 1938. Hartford, CT, Wadsworth Atheneum.

Berman to create a series of theatrical scenes in the new dining room adjacent to the gallery.<sup>37</sup>

More private and reserved than Austin, Soby opened his house to a relatively small circle of friends that included fewer Hartford luminaries, but a stronger contingent from the art world. Here, Soby, Austin, and Hitchcock mingled with artists such as Yves Tanguy and Calder, as well as dealer friends Pierre Matisse, Julien Levy, and Kirk Askew. Museum directors and curators such as Alfred Barr, Jere Abbott, and Iris Barry visited his home.<sup>38</sup> An important member of this group was Austin’s former assistant Eleanor “Nellie” Howland, who was working in the late 1930s as assistant to Barr at MoMA. She became Soby’s second wife in 1937.<sup>39</sup> Another member was Hartford-born Paul Whitman Cooley, whose father served on the board of the Wadsworth.<sup>40</sup> From 1934 to

37 Berman’s series of five paintings from 1936 is now held in the Wadsworth Atheneum Archives, Hartford, Connecticut.

38 Iris Barry (1895–1969), first curator of the film department at MoMA, from 1935–49.

39 Eleanor “Nellie” Howland (1905–1999), assistant to Austin at the Wadsworth Atheneum from 1933–36. In 1937, she left for New York to work for Alfred Barr at MoMA. She married Soby in New York on February 12, 1938. In the late 1930s she worked at the Knoedler and Durlacher galleries, as well as for Julien Levy.

40 Paul Whitman Cooley (1907–1974). After his time at the Wadsworth, Hartford native Cooley opened the Moyer Gallery in Hartford.



1944, Cooley worked as Austin's assistant and also collected modern art. His taste closely paralleled that of Soby and Austin; in fact, Cooley owned *Collage* (1934) by Miró before Soby acquired it in 1935 (fig. 55).<sup>41</sup>

The Hartford press followed the activities of the Austin circle with avid curiosity. Openings and lectures at the Wadsworth and lavish parties in private homes were often covered in the local newspapers. Throughout the 1930s, Soby and his wives regularly appeared in the society pages, sometimes illustrated with his dashing portrait by Man Ray.<sup>42</sup> He clearly supported and probably enjoyed the media's interest in him and his collection, for it must have been Soby himself who provided images and detailed information on his artworks and writings. The newspapers presented him as one of the country's most important collectors of modern art and an influential art critic. His latest purchases were duly reported and reproduced.<sup>43</sup> Probably thanks to Hitchcock's connections, international magazines covered the renovations of Soby's Farmington home in 1937.<sup>44</sup>

An article in the *Hartford Daily Times* from May 1937 gave local readers a peek into Soby's freshly renovated house and lauded his collection of "modern French art" as the most important in Connecticut. It also described the gallery in great detail.<sup>45</sup> Three paintings by de Chirico hung along its southern wall, with *The Enigma of the Day* (1914) in the center flanked by *The Seer* (1914–15) and *The Duo* (1914–15). Above the mantle hung a *Double-Self-Portrait* (1933) by Christian Bérard and on the opposite wall, Picasso's *Seated Woman* (1927) (fig. 53).<sup>46</sup> Paintings by Henri Rousseau, Matisse, and Berman hung on other walls.

Although the paintings highlighted in the article represented only a small part of Soby's collection, the selection clearly reflected his vision of modern art as laid out in the books he wrote around the time the article was published. Soby considered surrealism and neo-Romanticism as the most important art movements of his time; he understood them as a reaction against cubism, as an "authentic romantic revival" that rejected the "architectural" formalism of cubism.<sup>47</sup> Surrealism and neo-Romanticism were seen as closely related; both "touch the emotions rather

41 Joan Miró, *Collage*, January 20, 1934, corrugated cardboard, felt, gouache, and pencil on sandpaper, MoMA. See Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. I, 9, p. 17.

42 See, for instance, *Hartford Daily Times*, November 29, 1941.

43 See, for instance, Marian Murray, "Hartford Collector Buys Famous Paintings by Modern Artist," *Hartford Daily Times*, January 4, 1937.

44 "House at Farmington, Connecticut: Remodeled by Henry-Russell Hitchcock Jr.," *Architectural Review*, no. 81 (January 1937), pp. 19–20; "Farmington, Connecticut. House remodeled by Henry-Russell Hitchcock," *American Architect and Architecture*, no. 151 (July 1937), pp. 67–68.

45 Marian Murray, "4 Art Collections on View," *Hartford Daily Times*, May 8, 1937.

46 Christian Bérard, *On the Beach (Double Self-Portrait)*, 1933, oil on canvas, MoMA, New York; Pablo Picasso, *Seated Woman*, 1927, oil on canvas, MoMA, New York.

47 Soby, *After Picasso* (note 8), p. xii.

than ... the intellect.”<sup>48</sup> By reserving the entire south wall of his gallery to paintings by de Chirico, Soby emphasized the importance of the artist. In *After Picasso*, Soby described de Chirico as a key precursor to the surrealists and neo-Romantics.<sup>49</sup> In the same publication, he praised Picasso’s *Seated Woman* from 1927, owned by him, as “a surrealist icon which strikes one with a tremendous and uncanny force. The austerity of his abstractions is retained, but the figure has a psychological power which far surpasses anything achieved by the surrealists themselves.”<sup>50</sup> It was thus possible for visitors to experience the room as an illustration of his books and an extension of the arguments he presented for the first time in 1935 with *After Picasso*.

One artist, however, was never mentioned in local newspapers and rarely displayed publicly in Soby’s house. Soby was an early collector of Balthus’s work and possessed several particularly provocative paintings. They were carefully hidden away in a vault most of the time, accessible only to his closest friends. Apparently, Soby knew the artist from trips to Paris in the 1930s.<sup>51</sup> In 1934, he saw his first solo exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, where the large painting *The Street* (*La Rue*, 1933) made a strong impression on him.<sup>52</sup> In 1937, he bought it through Pierre Matisse for the modest sum of \$118.50 and briefly hung it in his Farmington home. It was the first painting by the artist to enter any American collection. Although it caused a stir among his friends, Soby was concerned about its graphic sexual content and decided to store it away in his vault after neighborhood mothers expressed concern.<sup>53</sup> With *The Toilette of Cathy* (*La Toilette de Cathy*, 1933) and *The Guitar Lesson* (*La Leçon de guitar*, 1934), he acquired two even more sexually charged paintings, which he also kept in his vault, accessible only to a small circle of friends.<sup>54</sup> When

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 4. “The longer I worked on my book [After Picasso/O.T.] the more convinced I became that Giorgio de Chirico in his youth had provided the central starting point both for the reveries of the neo-Romantics and for the affronts to logic of the surrealist painters,” Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. I, 9, p. 19. Eventually, in 1941, Soby discussed de Chirico’s importance in his monograph *The Young Chirico*. This first American publication on the artist praised de Chirico’s “metaphysical” period from 1910–17, while dismissing his later works. Soby’s collection of ten paintings by the artist only comprised paintings from this early period. See also Pamela Koob’s discussion of Soby’s passion for de Chirico, in Koob, “James Thrall Soby and de Chirico” (note 9), p. 116.

<sup>50</sup> Soby, *After Picasso* (note 8), p. 97. Soby frequently lent the painting to exhibitions. In 1936, it was shown at MoMA in the landmark exhibition “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism.” In 1939 Barr praised it in the catalogue for his large Picasso show as “one of the most awe-inspiring of Picasso’s figures.” See Alfred H. Barr Jr., ed., *Picasso: Forty Years of his Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art 1939), p. 134.

<sup>51</sup> Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. II, 26, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Balthus, *The Street*, 1933, oil on canvas, MoMA, New York.

<sup>53</sup> Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. II, 26, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Balthus, *The Guitar Lesson*, 1934, oil on canvas, private collection; Balthus, *The Toilette of Cathy* (a.k.a. *Cathy Dressing*), 1933, oil on canvas, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. On Soby as a col-

Soby contributed an introduction to the catalogue of Balthus's first American solo show at Pierre Matisse's gallery in 1938, he was one of the foremost connoisseurs and patrons of the artist in the country.<sup>55</sup> In the catalogue, Soby quoted and discussed at length Balthus's quip "*Je fais du surréalisme à la Courbet*" ("I do surrealism in the style of Courbet"). Soby took the artist's words at face value and considered Balthus a surrealist.<sup>56</sup> In Hartford, Soby was not alone in his admiration for Balthus. With the help of Pierre Matisse, Paul Cooley commissioned a portrait of his wife in August 1937 and the following year Austin purchased Balthus's *Still Life* (*Nature morte*, 1937) for the museum.<sup>57</sup> With this purchase, the Wadsworth became the first museum to acquire a Balthus. Two years later, Austin bought *The Bernese Hat* (*Le Chapeau bernois*, 1938–39), a portrait of Balthus's first wife Antoinette de Watteville.<sup>58</sup> In an undated gallery leaflet for *The Bernese Hat*, probably written in early 1940, Soby once again discussed Balthus's claim to be a surrealist and introduced him in this way to the larger public in Hartford.<sup>59</sup> Soby probably played a major role in promoting Balthus in his immediate circle and in Hartford, and Balthus is not the only example of the commingling of Soby's private interests with his activities at the Wadsworth.

## Soby at the Wadsworth Atheneum

Only a few months after meeting Austin in early 1930, Soby started volunteering at the museum. He immediately set out to work with Austin and Hitchcock on exhibitions of the neo-Romantics and surrealists.<sup>60</sup> It was his responsibility to research and write texts, while Austin

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lector of Balthus, see Sabine Rewald, "Pierre Matisse et Balthus. Une relation difficile," in Pierre Schneider, ed., *Pierre Matisse passeur passionné. Un marchand d'art et ses artistes* (Paris: Hazan, 2005), pp. 33–44.

55 James Thrall Soby, "Introduction," in *Balthus*, Pierre Matisse Gallery, ed., exh. cat. (New York: Pierre Matisse Gallery, 1938), unpaginated. Soby again argued in 1941 that Balthus was a surrealist. See Soby, *The Early Chirico* (note 4), p. 108. On Soby's reputation as a patron of Balthus, see contemporaneous reviews of the Balthus exhibition: "James Thrall Soby was the first American to glance. Now so many people are glancing that Pierre Matisse had to do considerable hustling in order to be the first to present Balthus officially to an impatient public," Henry McBride, "The Debut of Balthus," *New York Sun*, March 26, 1938, p. 12. In addition to *The Street*, Soby also lent *The Toilette of Cathy* to the show.

56 It may have been Matisse who introduced Soby to Balthus's quip. See letter from Matisse to Soby, January 20, 1938, Box 121, F. 6, Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives at Pierpont Morgan Library. Quoted in Rewald, "Pierre Matisse et Balthus" (note 54), p. 33.

57 Balthus, *Portrait of Mrs. Paul Cooley*, 1937, oil on canvas, private collection; Balthus, *Still Life*, 1937, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.

58 Balthus, *The Bernese Hat*, 1939, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.

59 A copy of Soby's leaflet is in the object file, Registrar's Office, Wadsworth Atheneum Archives, Hartford, Connecticut.

60 Wadsworth Atheneum, "Tonny, Tchelitchew, Bérard, Berman, Leonid," Hartford, 1931; Wadsworth Atheneum, "Newer Super-Realism," Hartford, November 1931. On these exhibi-

conceived of the shows and focused on the hanging and design.<sup>61</sup> Soby eventually became an honorary curator of modern art at the Wadsworth in March 1934.<sup>62</sup> The same year, he and Austin co-curated the first retrospective of Picasso's work in the United States, to which Soby lent Picasso's *Seated Woman*.<sup>63</sup> He also curated smaller shows, filled out with objects from his own collection. In 1934, for example, he presented an exhibition of photographs by Man Ray, the first by this artist in any American museum. Two years later, in November 1936, he staged an exhibition by the Swiss artist Louis Adolphe Soutter thanks to his acquaintance with Soutter's cousin, the architect Le Corbusier.<sup>64</sup> Most of the drawings exhibited were for sale to support the starving artist who was living in a mental asylum. In his introduction to the exhibition, Soby mentioned "the immense neuroticism of the twentieth century" in order to stress the "primitive" aspects of Soutter, who "live[s] out a tortured old age in a poorhouse."<sup>65</sup> The exhibition flopped and only the immediate circle around Soby showed any interest and bought drawings.<sup>66</sup> However, the show drew an interesting parallel with Alfred Barr's "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" at MoMA that opened only one month later. In his landmark exhibition, Barr also included works by mentally ill patients.

In March 1937, Soby gave up his curatorship to become a trustee of the Wadsworth and a member of the powerful Acquisition Committee. He was the only one from Chick Austin's circle of friends to join the Board of Trustees. As Austin's ally and an advocate of modern art, he played an influential role beyond the closed doors of the boardroom. The mostly conservative trustees had viewed Austin's embrace of modern art with increasing alarm and by the time of Soby's arrival tensions between the director and board had become palpable. With his relaxed and genteel air Soby worked with Austin to smooth out frictions between conservative board members and progressive ideas, and soon a détente became possible.

tions, see Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. I, 4, pp. 3, 7.

61 Ibid., pp. 4, 3.

62 See *Wadsworth Atheneum Bulletin*, no. 1, January–March 1934, p. 26. Soby is listed as honorary curator of modern art and librarian.

63 The Picasso exhibition at the Wadsworth took place from February 6 to March 1, 1934, showing 137 paintings and works on paper. Soby lent three works in total.

64 Le Corbusier had visited Soby earlier in 1935 and deposited the drawings by his cousin. See Mardges Bacon, *Le Corbusier in America. Travels in the Land of the Timid* (Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 2001), p. 89.

65 James Thrall Soby, "Introduction," in Wadsworth Atheneum, ed., *Louis Soutter*, exh. cat. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1936), unpaginated.

66 Coincidentally, Le Corbusier wrote an article about Soutter for the surrealist magazine *Minotaure* the same year. See Le Corbusier, "Louis Soutter, l'inconnu de la soixante," *Minotaure*, no. 9 (1936), pp. 62–65.



For some years during the 1930s, the board begrudgingly tolerated Austin's acquisitions of modestly priced modern artists. But these purchases became ever more contentious during the second half of the 1930s. It was Austin's and Soby's goal to create a permanent allocation to modern art. They were eventually successful and several paintings and sculptures were purchased under this special allocation in the late 1930s.<sup>67</sup> Soby described committee meetings as "stormy polite" when he and Austin tried to persuade the "elder" committee members to buy modern art.<sup>68</sup> However, the practice of persuasion became obsolete in 1941, when each committee member was given \$2,000 annually at his discretion. Austin and Soby used their stipends exclusively for purchases of modern art. Looking back at this time, Soby highlighted the ongoing struggles within the committee, while also acknowledging the relative success of this practice.<sup>69</sup>

Using his stipend, Soby bought Roberto Matta's *Prescience* (1939) and Tanguy's *The Five Strangers* (*Les Cinq étrangers*, 1941) in the following years.<sup>70</sup> His most spectacular acquisition, however, was Max Ernst's *Europe after the Rain II* (1940–42).<sup>71</sup> Soby became friendly with Ernst and his wife Peggy Guggenheim when the couple arrived in New York in the summer of 1941, and by early 1942 he had an intimate grasp of the artist's work.<sup>72</sup> As with the paintings by Matta and Tanguy, he returned to Pierre Matisse to find the Ernst. In his correspondence with Austin, Soby relayed his struggles and lamented Matisse's high asking price of \$2,200 for *Europe*: "I don't mind sticking myself out but spending museum cash seems all very official and final."<sup>73</sup> Soby knew the painting

67 See, for instance, the invoice from March 24, 1937, for the purchase of Giorgio de Chirico's *La Maladie du Général*, bought for \$500 from Pierre Matisse, Registrar's Office, object file, Wadsworth Atheneum Archives, Hartford, Connecticut. See also Gaddis, *Magician of the Modern* (note 12), p. 318.

68 James Thrall Soby, "A. Everett Austin Jr. and Modern Art," in John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, ed., *A. Everett Austin, Jr. A Director's Taste and Achievement*, exh. cat. (Sarasota: John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, 1958), p. 32.

69 Ibid.

70 Roberto Matta, *Prescience*, 1939, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut; Yves Tanguy, *The Five Strangers*, 1941, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford.

71 Max Ernst, *Europe after the Rain II*, 1940–42, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.

72 Also in 1942, Soby was asked to become a member of the Art Advisory Committee for Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery. See the press release to the Art of This Century Spring Salon, May 13, 1943, James Thrall Soby Papers, I. 10, MoMA Archives, New York. Art of This Century's exhibition "Masterworks of Early de Chirico" in late 1943 was based on Soby's book from 1941. Angelica Zander Rudenstine suggested that Soby planned and organized the show. See Angelica Zander Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice* (New York: Harry N. Abrams and The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1985), p. 775. See also 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. 73.

73 Letter from Soby to Austin, March 27, 1942, Wadsworth Atheneum Archives, Hartford, Connecticut.

well; he had seen it earlier in Matisse's "Artists in Exile" exhibition, for which he had contributed a foreword in the catalogue. Perhaps thanks to his long-standing relationship with Matisse and his recent involvement with the show, Soby was able to negotiate its price down to \$1,400 for the Wadsworth. In his correspondence with Austin, Soby compared *Europe* favorably with Ernst's *Napoleon in the Wilderness*, concurrently offered by the Valentine Gallery for the lesser price of \$800. *Europe after the Rain II* finally arrived at the Wadsworth in May 1942 and was shown with twenty other works as a variation on Matisse's "Artists in Exile" exhibition.<sup>74</sup> Given Soby's involvement with the former show and his close relationship with Matisse, it is possible that he played a role in arranging the Wadsworth show as well.

Despite these activities, Soby's focus already began shifting toward MoMA in the early 1940s.<sup>75</sup> In 1940, he was given an office at MoMA, where he worked as director of the Armed Service Program and served on the Acquisition Committee. He collaborated closely with Alfred Barr and was able to build a remarkable career in just a few short years. In 1941, he curated MoMA's monumental Dalí exhibition and also wrote an important assessment of the museum's School of Paris works. This assessment would become integral to Barr's strategy for redirecting the focus of MoMA's acquisition policy. Soby became a trustee of the museum in 1942 and in early 1943 was appointed assistant director. Similar to his relationship with Austin at the Wadsworth, he developed a rapport with Barr and remained loyal to him. In the 1940s he came to the rescue of the embattled Barr on several occasions by persuading trustees to support him.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, he continued to support Austin at the Wadsworth. When he heard the board had finally forced Austin out in June 1944, he immediately sent his resignation to its president Charles A. Goodwin. Soby elaborates in his letter to Goodwin that his "interest in the Atheneum has always centered on Mr. Austin's activities there. Our sympathies have been so close that I think it better both for the Atheneum and for us if we leave at the same time."<sup>77</sup>

74 "Painters in Attendance," Wadsworth Atheneum, May 22–29, 1942.

75 Soby's extensive collection of Man Ray photographs may serve as a case in point. In March 1939, he mentioned in a letter to the artist his plan to give the collection to the Wadsworth. By January 1941, however, he had changed his mind, and described in another letter to the artist that MoMA was the more suitable place for the photographs. See letters from James Thrall Soby to Man Ray, March 7, 1939, and January 17, 1941; Man Ray letters and album, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. My thanks go to Martin Schieder for bringing the correspondence to my attention.

76 Roob, "James Thrall Soby" (note 7), p. 176.

77 Letter from Soby to Charles Goodwin, June 2, 1944, Wadsworth Atheneum Archives, Hartford, Connecticut.

## Soby and Dalí

Always eager to befriend artists, Soby's relationship with Salvador Dalí illustrates the way he supported artists through his network and his various roles in the art world. He became an important authority on the artist thanks to his close ties with Austin and the dealer Julien Levy.<sup>78</sup> During the 1930s, he avidly collected works by the Spanish artist, wrote about him, and supported Austin in purchasing his paintings for the Wadsworth. His enthusiasm for Dalí culminated in his 1941 Dalí exhibition at MoMA, after which he appears to have lost interest in his work.

Soby probably discovered Dalí's work during the Wadsworth's surrealism exhibition in November 1931. Eight works by the artist were included in this show and shortly afterwards the Wadsworth bought the museum's first work by him.<sup>79</sup> Thanks to the eager support of Julien Levy, the Wadsworth became one of the leading institutions to collect and exhibit works by Dalí in the following years. In 1933, Soby hosted a private screening of Dalí's film *L'Âge d'or* to a packed house in his West Hartford residence.<sup>80</sup> A short time later, in 1934, Levy lent several more of Dalí's paintings to the Wadsworth, and it was on this occasion that Dalí came to Hartford to lecture at the museum. While Austin bought for the Wadsworth the diminutive *Paranoiac-Astral Image* (1934) from the exhibition, Soby bought *The Ghost of Vermeer* (1934), his first acquisition by the artist.<sup>81</sup> The painting must have held a deep significance for him as he developed a theory about Vermeer's influence on Dalí, which he later published in *After Picasso*.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, Soby's chapter on the artist in *After Picasso* is the longest dedicated to any surrealist in the book. He lauded Dalí for having "a leading position in Surrealism" and described in detail the Wadsworth's newly acquired *Paranoiac-Astral Image* (fig. 56): "The beautiful grays and blues of the *Paranoiac-Astral Image*, the carefully measured scaling down of figures and use of perspective, the unbelievably fine painting of the boat and figures, make it a picture which even those who distrust the whole edifice of Surrealism can hardly ignore."<sup>83</sup>

78 Eric Zafran, "'I am not a madman,' Salvador Dalí in Hartford," in Dawn Ades, ed., *Dalí's Optical Illusions*, exh. cat. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 38–61.

79 Salvador Dalí, *Solitude*, 1931, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.

80 See *Hartford Daily Times*, December 4, 1933.

81 Salvador Dalí, *Paranoiac-Astral Image*, 1934, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut; Salvador Dalí, *The Ghost of Vermeer of Delft Which Can Be Used As a Table*, 1934, oil on canvas, Salvador Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida.

82 Soby, *After Picasso* (note 8), p. 108.

83 Ibid., pp. 111–112.



56 Salvador Dalí, *Paranoiac-Astral Image*, 1934, oil on wood panel, 15.6 × 22 cm. Hartford, CT, Wadsworth Atheneum.

During the second half of the 1930s, Austin and Soby continued to borrow Dalí paintings from Levy for exhibitions at the Wadsworth, and Dalí returned to Hartford periodically. He usually stayed with Soby in Farmington, accompanied by his wife Gala as well as his friend Levy, and occasionally James Lord. With *Inventions of the Monsters* (1937), Soby bought a key work by Dalí around this time.<sup>84</sup> In 1939, the Wadsworth bought *Apparition of Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach* (1938), its grandest and most expensive work by the artist, which was purchased via the Acquisition Committee from Levy for \$1,750.<sup>85</sup> While all official receipts and bills for this transaction were addressed to Austin, we can assume that Soby played a pivotal role in persuading members of the committee to agree to this unusually costly acquisition. The painting was praised in the *Hartford Daily Times* immediately after its purchase. The writer favorably reviewed the new painting, but recalled “the hoots

84 Salvador Dalí, *Inventions of the Monsters*, 1937, oil on canvas, Art Institute of Chicago. Soby sold the painting to the Art Institute in 1943 via his friend Kirk Askew at the Durlacher Gallery.

85 Salvador Dalí, *Apparition of Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach*, 1938, oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.



of derision” when Dalí was first shown in Hartford in 1931 and pointed out how he had gained acceptance since then.<sup>86</sup> Although Soby is left unmentioned in the article, one could add that he had a significant part in Dalí’s rising popularity in Hartford.

It should be noted that Soby was still Levy’s business partner when *Apparition of Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach* was acquired by the museum. However, it is not clear if Soby ever disclosed this to his fellow committee members. While we do not know whether he felt a conflict of interest, it is interesting that he disentangled his business relationship with Levy around the time he became a trustee at MoMA in 1943.<sup>87</sup>

For his grand Dalí show at MoMA in late 1941, Soby reactivated his old network. Dalí trusted him entirely and lent him older works.<sup>88</sup> The Wadsworth, as well as Julien Levy and Edward James, lent several works. In addition, Soby included five works from his own collection.<sup>89</sup> He did not curate any other Dalí shows, nor did he buy any other work by him. In fact, during the mid-1940s, he swapped some of his paintings for other artists. In his autobiography, he distanced himself from Dalí’s works of the 1940s and 1950s and bemoaned the short duration of the artist’s creative span.<sup>90</sup>

## Coda

By the mid-1940s, Soby had established himself as one of the leading authorities on modern art in the country. Neither an impresario like Chick Austin nor an intellectual like Alfred Barr, Soby became an influential voice on his own terms. None of his singular achievements, however, as collector, critic, or museum curator, explain his authority in the mid-century art world. Soby’s collection was impressive, but how does it compare to Walter Arensberg’s or Peggy Guggenheim’s? Soby’s writings are important, yet some of his contemporaries mocked them.<sup>91</sup> His roster of exhibitions at the Wadsworth and at MoMA is impressive, as well; however, his exhibitions were quickly outdone by the next generation of curators only a few years later.

86 Marian Murray, “Avery Acquires Salvador Dalí ‘Double Image,’” *Hartford Times*, May 13, 1939.

87 On Soby’s business relationship with Levy, see note 24.

88 Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. II, 12, pp. 5–6. James Thrall Soby, *Paintings, Drawings, Prints: Salvador Dalí* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1941).

89 Soby anonymously lent Dalí’s paintings *The Basket of Bread* (1926), *The Ghost of Vermeer* (1934), *Inventions of the Monsters* (1937), *Debris of an Automobile Giving Birth to a Blind Horse Biting a Telephone* (1938), as well as his drawing *Nude* (1935).

90 Soby, *My Life in the Art World* (note 19), vol. II, 12, p. 6.

91 See “Books on Art. The Early Chirico – James Thrall Soby,” *Dyn. A Review of Art and Literature*, no. 1 (April–May 1942), p. 51.

What remains significant about Soby's career is his unique combination of roles and positions that intersected and mixed. Who else during the 1930s and 1940s acted as a collector, trustee, curator, critic, and art business owner? And who else was able to talk easily to New England dignitaries as well as artists like Salvador Dalí? Soby was part of a generation of upper-class men and women who rebelled against the old order of their parents. Modern art became a rallying force for this group, especially in the Hartford circle with Chick Austin, Julien Levy, and Henry-Russell Hitchcock. Soby and his friends saw themselves as "allies" battling against the provincial taste and conservative mores of the old guard.

These conflicts became perhaps more virulent in provincial cities such as Hartford where the local upper class consisted of only a few interconnected families. Soby's own establishment background provided him easy access to high-powered circles; collecting art and working at the Wadsworth offered him the ideal outlet for his aspirations. It was through modern art that he grew out of the shadows of his family and became a public figure in Hartford. Moreover, being a member of the Austin circle and a curator of modern art at the Wadsworth probably helped to open doors for him in New York.

Hartford's geographic proximity to New York and the close exchange between the cultural capital and the provincial satellite facilitated Soby's career. During the 1930s the Wadsworth and MoMA were rapidly developing institutions that engaged in fostering dialogue between their trustees, directors, and curators. New York's evolving commercial art scene, with its recently founded galleries that specialized in modern art, contributed to the cultural exchange between the cities as well. Lastly, both New York and Hartford benefited from the arrival of European artists before and during World War II, such as Tanguy, Ernst, and Masson. Many of these artists settled in New York and Connecticut, and invigorated the cultural life of America.

Most importantly, Soby's career would not have been possible without his brilliant eye and strong aesthetic judgment. Chick Austin had introduced him to the arts, but he matured quickly and had the confidence to act on his own. He had an eclectic taste with an emphasis on modern French art. Collecting French nineteenth-century artists may have been conventional around 1930, but Soby soon distinguished himself as a patron of the European avant-garde and particularly the surrealists. While he personally preferred figurative art, he supported the Wadsworth's initiatives to collect and showcase abstract art. Although he selected representative works for museums, he himself often veered toward unusual subjects. In 1945, art critic Clement Greenberg went so far as to accuse Soby of an "obsessional affinity with 'morbid' modern

art.”<sup>92</sup> Although this characterization was intended as a denunciation of Soby’s taste, many of Soby’s most beloved works from de Chirico, Miró, and Balthus can indeed be best labeled as morbid. This distinctive taste and his sense for friendship and facilitating connections distinguish Soby. As an advocate for modern art, he contributed significantly to the *renaissance of the arts* in Hartford during the 1930s.

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92 Clement Greenberg, *The Nation*, no. 160 (1945), p. 581.

## Peggy Guggenheim and Howard Putzel. Partners in Purchasing

Susan Davidson

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

Peggy Guggenheim\*

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

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>14</sup> The Dalí exhibition was held in the month of September 1934. A second Dalí exhibition occurred February to March, 1935. See Lader, "Howard Putzel" (note 2), p. 95. With Duchamp's encouragement, Putzel sourced the second Dalí show from the Julien Levy Gallery, New York. See letter from Howard Putzel to Julien Levy, December 31, 1934, Box 21, Folder 33, Julien Levy Gallery, Subseries A: General Correspondence 1913–1956, Julien Levy Gallery records, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives (hereafter cited as PMAA). This correspondence provides the earliest confirmed date for Duchamp and Putzel working together. I would like to thank Miriam Cady, Reference Archivist, for supplying this correspondence. The Ernst exhibition closed on October 13, 1934. See "Surrealism" *Art Digest*, no. 9, October 15, 1934, p. 17. For the history of the Paul Elder Bookstore, see <http://paulelder.org/>, accessed October 2, 2018. Unfortunately, the website does not address the bookstore's art activities, although I am grateful to David Mostardi for his efforts in helping sort out Putzel's programming (email correspondence to the author, June 26 and 29, 2018). Putzel's move to Paul Elder's also was precipitated by a raise in rent and a change in his commission basis at the East West Gallery. See letters from Putzel to Levy, July 23, 1934, and January 7, 1935, Box 21, Folder 33, Julien Levy Gallery, Subseries A: General Correspondence 1913–1956, Julien Levy Gallery records, PMAA. I would like to thank to Anne Helmreich for supplying a copy of these letters.

<sup>15</sup> The Kandinsky exhibition, arranged through Duchamp, occurred in March 1935. See "March 30, 1935" and "June 24, 1935," in Jennifer Gough-Cooper and Jacques Caumont, eds., *Ephemerides on and about Marcel Duchamp and Rose Sélavy, 1887–1968* (Milan: Bompiani, 1993), unpaginated. According to Kandinsky's Handlist, Putzel sold one work from the exhibition, *Unités*, to the Arensbergs for \$150 (the work is today in the Arensberg Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art). I am grateful to Vivian Endicott Barnett for supplying information on this sale (email correspondence to the author, July 11, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> For the correspondence regarding the Léger sale, see Jacques Seligmann & Co. records, 1904–1978, bulk 1913–1974, Box 78, Folder 33, AAA. This folder also contains consignment discussions between Putzel and the gallery for works by Redon and Braque. Putzel requested the Masson consignment from Pierre Matisse. See letter from Putzel to Matisse, June 15, 1935, MA 5020; Box 85.66, Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, The Morgan Library & Museum.

<sup>17</sup> Putzel gifted four artworks to the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) in 1935. These were a painting by Rufino Tamayo, *The Window* (1932), and a watercolor by David Park, *Violinists* (1934). The other two works, lithographs by Utrillo and Toulouse-Lautrec, have since been deaccessioned. Putzel organized Park's first solo exhibition at the East West Gallery in June 1934, and it was most likely the occasion for acquiring this work. Putzel's program at the East West Gallery also showcased Mexican art (see *Oakland Tribune*, July 28, 1934, from which he may have acquired the Tamayo Painting. For the details on these donations, I am grateful to Sarah Roberts, Andrew W. Mellon, Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture, and Sara Wessen Chang, Curatorial Assistant, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (email correspondence to the author, July 10, 2018).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 See note 15 above.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

<sup>57</sup> Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 1), p. 270.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alexander Iolas,  
the Collectors John and Dominique de Menil,  
and the Promotion of Surrealism in the United States

Eva Fotiadi

In 2014 the Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York organized the exhibition “Alexander the Great: The Iolas Gallery 1955–1987.” The show included works by artists whose careers were linked to the late art dealer and collector Alexander Iolas, especially those associated with surrealism, pop art, and Nouveau Réalisme. The introduction to the accompanying catalogue was penned by Bob Colacello, long-term editor of *Interview Magazine* during Andy Warhol’s lifetime, who recounted the first time he met Iolas through Adrianna Jackson, “a petite but feisty Milanese contessa” and wife of Brooks Jackson, Iolas’s business partner in New York:

“Adrianna warned me that Iolas was a cross between Machiavelli and Pagliaccio, half-diplomat, half-clown, all monster. ... Iolas was incredibly cunning, she would tell me, not to mention capricious, cynical, and more than a little crazy. Of course, in the perverse manner of Italian aristocracy, she saw these as positive qualities, to be admired and respected. ... I finally laid eyes on the legend himself at an opening at the New York gallery, and *Il Divino*—another term Adrianna used for Iolas—certainly lived up to her descriptions, especially visually. ... He seemed to float through the crowd blowing air kisses and waving his hands in little circles, like European royalty. When he found the person he was looking for, in a far corner playing the wallflower as usual, he threw his arms up in the air and exclaimed, ‘Oh, Andy, darling! How wonderful it is to see you!’”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bob Colacello, “I Remember Iolas,” in Vincent Fremont and Adrian Dannatt, eds., *Alexander the Great: The Iolas Gallery 1955–1987*, exh. cat. (New York: Paul Kasmin Gallery, 2014), pp. 9–11, here p. 9.



This fragment is typical of stories about Alexander Iolas, which generally represent him as a character who was as insightful as he was theatrical and eccentric. Today Iolas is mainly known as a gallerist who promoted surrealism in the United States after the Second World War, who was René Magritte's exclusive dealer there and a close adviser to the collectors John and Dominique de Menil. He is remembered for giving Andy Warhol his first and last solo shows (1953 and 1987), and for promoting the French Nouveau Réalistes in the 1960s. The image of the eccentric character is not uncommon in descriptions of successful art dealers,<sup>2</sup> but it fits well with the cult of the individual that is prominent in the art market, which is where interest in Iolas has returned in recent years. This interest has a clear marketing agenda. For instance, the Paul Kasmin Gallery, which in 2014 took the initiative to celebrate the memory of Iolas, sells works by artists once connected to Iolas's galleries—William Copley, Max Ernst, Les Lallane, Jules Olitski, and Andy Warhol. In May 2017, Sotheby's in London held an auction titled "Alexander Iolas. Alexander the Great," offering over 150 items described as "a selection of paintings, sculpture, furniture, prints, and jewellery formerly in the collection of Alexander Iolas, the twentieth-century art dealer whose legacy is credited with defining the careers of the leading artists he championed."<sup>3</sup> Unearthing Iolas as an important, albeit forgotten, figure in a commercial context is, of course, a way of lending additional prestige to the works of those artists he promoted and the objects he owned.

In the case of Iolas, the postmortem representation of him as a persona, with little attention given to historical research into his actual business practices as an art dealer, is facilitated by the fact that there are no business records from his galleries that are accessible to researchers today. The primary sources we have are exhibition catalogues, invitations, interviews with Iolas and others who refer to him, as well as some materials that are scattered between artists' personal archives and have not yet been systematically studied. The bulk of these available primary sources date from the mid-1960s onward, the heyday of his career, even though Iolas started out in 1945 when he became director of the newly funded Hugo Gallery in New York. This absence of gallery records and other documentation from the first fifteen to twenty years of his business activities might be useful for keeping attention focused on his character,

2 Characteristically, the biographer of artist Joseph Cornell presents each of the dealers that Cornell worked with—Julien Levy, Alexander Iolas, and Eleanor Ward—as special characters. Deborah Solomon, *Utopia Parkway: The Life and Work of Joseph Cornell* (New York: Other Press, 2015), pp. 72, 226.

3 Media release, Sotheby's, *Alexander Iolas. Alexander the Great*, unpaginated, [http://files.shareholder.com/downloads/BID/oxox941516/2C2F85F1-21CA-4760-B255-C5744AEBAADC/Iolas\\_Collection\\_PR\\_May17.pdf](http://files.shareholder.com/downloads/BID/oxox941516/2C2F85F1-21CA-4760-B255-C5744AEBAADC/Iolas_Collection_PR_May17.pdf), accessed May 11, 2018.

but it also has a downside in terms of his visibility in art history. On one hand, his friendship and professional involvement with surrealists of all generations is repeatedly mentioned in interviews with artists, professional partners, collectors, and other individuals who knew him (such as Brooks Jackson, William Copley, Arturo Schwarz, and Dominique de Menil).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in the American (art) press of the 1940s and 1950s there are dozens of announcements of shows of well-known and lesser-known surrealists at the Hugo Gallery and later at the Alexander Iolas Gallery.<sup>5</sup> Yet on the other hand, and despite the above evidence, in secondary art-historical and biographical literature about key surrealist artists such as Max Ernst, Giorgio de Chirico, or Roberto Matta, with whom there is little doubt that Iolas had long friendships and professional collaborations, his name appears almost only on exhibition lists. The reason for this must be that we generally miss documentation of these relationships, such as correspondence, records of sales and transactions, and so on, which would help reconstruct historical details.<sup>6</sup>

The only major exception to this general lack of available archive materials and, subsequently, of visibility in secondary art-historical literature of Iolas's relationship to surrealism can be found in the Menil Collection in Houston, Texas. The collectors John and Dominique de Menil met Iolas when he first started out as an art dealer in 1946 and remained his clients for several decades. The Menil Archives include such documents as lists of artworks, records of money deposits, handwritten notes, and dozens of letters from the professional exchanges between Iolas and the collector couple. In addition to this, Iolas handed over to them his correspondence with René Magritte.

4 Interview with Brooks Jackson by Paul Cummings, March 22, 1976, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, available online, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-brooks-jackson-12916>, accessed May 23, 2018; interview with William Nelson Copley by Paul Cummings, January 30, 1968, Archives of American Art, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-william-nelson-copley-12646>, accessed May 23, 2018; Arturo Schwarz, *Interviews and Memoirs*, exh. cat. (New York: publisher unknown, 2014), p. 89; William Middleton, *Double Vision: The Unerring Eye of Art World Avatars Dominique and John de Menil* (New York: Knopf, 2018).

5 The exhibition announcements appeared in *ARTnews*, *Art Index*, and the *New York Times*, among other things. They are too numerous to list here.

6 The loss of a certain amount of records should be linked to: a scandal in the Greek yellow press during the last years of Iolas's life, in which he was, among other things, accused of illicit trade in antiquities (nothing was ever proved); and the rather obscure conditions under which items from his collection were claimed by various individuals around the time of his death and afterwards; as well as inheritance disputes and lootings of his villa. Due to the negative publicity of such events, Iolas's heirs have generally been reluctant to disclose materials that might be in their possession. See Eva Fotiadi, "The Myth of the Collector and His Collection. Art Works, Stories, Objects, Relations of Alexander Iolas," in Asimina Kaniari and Yorgos Bikos, eds., *Museology, Cultural Politics and Education*, Athens, 2014, English translation only available online, [http://www.academia.edu/19580767/Art\\_works\\_objects\\_stories\\_and\\_relations\\_of\\_Alexander\\_Iolas.\\_The\\_legendary\\_collector\\_and\\_the\\_recollection\\_of\\_the\\_legend.\\_English\\_translation\\_of\\_published\\_Greek\\_original\\_](http://www.academia.edu/19580767/Art_works_objects_stories_and_relations_of_Alexander_Iolas._The_legendary_collector_and_the_recollection_of_the_legend._English_translation_of_published_Greek_original_), accessed August 7, 2018.

Largely based on material held in the Menil Archives, Menil Collection publications, and William Middleton's biography of the de Menils, *Double Vision: The Unerring Eye of Art World Avatars Dominique and John de Menil* (2018), the aim of this essay is twofold.<sup>7</sup> First, I will discuss largely unpublished information about the business relations between the collector couple and the art dealer. The de Menils did not merely receive advice and buy artworks from Iolas, as is broadly known—they were also investors in the Hugo Gallery from very early on and provided backing to Iolas in various ways. Moreover, in the communication between the dealer and his client-patrons, which starts in 1946, we come across a different character than the one that dominates post-mid-1960s sources. The latter are more attuned to Iolas's public persona during the years of his professional success. Both directly and indirectly, one can draw information on the motives behind the patronage and the strategies the dealer used to maintain their mutually beneficial relationship. The previously unknown extent of the support given to Iolas's galleries by the de Menils also has further consequences with regard to Iolas's role in the promotion of surrealism in the United States. The second aim of this essay is therefore to demonstrate that any success Iolas achieved in promoting surrealism in the United States must have been intricately linked to his success in convincing John and Dominique de Menil to invest in the surrealist artists represented by his galleries—on one hand, because the de Menils helped him keep his head above water in the 1950s at a time when Iolas's insistence on surrealism weakened his gallery's position in a market that was primarily directed toward American expressionism and other new local avant-gardes; on the other, because the de Menils had the means and the willingness to promote artists in American institutions in ways that exceeded Iolas's range of action.

The two following sections introduce biographical information about Alexander Iolas and his relationship with John and Dominique de Menil. This information is selectively focused on their involvement with surrealism, without elaborating on other important chapters of their involvement with art. There is also little reference made here to René Magritte's close connection to Iolas and the de Menils as this topic is covered elsewhere in this publication. The discussion then turns to details on the relationship between the adviser-dealer and his client-patrons. Attention will be drawn initially to content, namely the largely unpublished documentation in the Menil Archives, and subsequently

7 The Menil Archives are located in the Menil Collection, and are publicly accessible. The biography of Dominique and John de Menil is also based on the Menil Family Papers, which have restricted access. Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4). The Menil Archives, Houston, Texas (hereafter cited as Menil Archives).

to the efforts undertaken by the de Menils to advance the reputation of surrealist artists in the United States, which, in turn, had a positive impact on Iolas's parallel endeavors.

### Alexander "the Great" and his galleries

Iolas was born to a Greek family of merchants based in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1907. His first career was as a ballet dancer, initially in Germany and later in France and the United States. In Paris he met many visual artists and occasionally posed as a model in exchange for works. He was especially fascinated by the surrealists. According to Brooks Jackson, while Iolas was still a dancer in New York in 1939, he used to live in the same building as de Chirico, Leonor Fini, and Eugene Berman, whose works he later sold.<sup>8</sup> In 1942 he formed a dancing duo with the young Theodora Roosevelt, granddaughter of President Roosevelt. Their eight-month tour of Latin America attracted the attention of the American press. Iolas also acted as choreographer for the duo, and Salvador Dalí designed the costumes for one of his pieces.<sup>9</sup> After returning to New York, Iolas was briefly appointed artistic director of the Grand Ballet of the Marquis de Cuevas, but soon fell out with the Marquis. He decided to abandon the dance world altogether and turned professionally to art.

In 1945 he became the director of the new Hugo Gallery in New York, established by Maria Ruspoli Hugo with the support of Robert de Rothschild and Elizabeth Arden. Maria Hugo, formerly the Duchesse de Gramont, was an Italian aristocrat living in New York.<sup>10</sup> Having exhausted her fortune, she was working at the time for Elizabeth Arden. Her second husband had been François-Victor Hugo, great-grandson of the French writer. Robert de Rothschild, a French aristocrat also living in New York during the Second World War, was befriended by Maria Hugo. They had both been acquainted with the de Menils before the war, when they all lived in Europe. As for Elizabeth Arden's contribution to the gallery, Iolas told David Sylvester that Arden helped secure the lease by signing as a guarantor.<sup>11</sup>

8 Brooks Jackson, "Interview by Adrian Dannatt," exh. cat. (note 1), p. 75.

9 See, for example, "Theodora Roosevelt plans dancing debut," *New York Times*, March 31, 1942, p. 28; "Dancer Roosevelt home from Brazil," *New York Times*, February 4, 1943, p. 16.

10 For information on the founders of the Hugo Gallery, see Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), pp. 290, 305–306.

11 David Sylvester, ed., *René Magritte Catalogue Raisonné*, 5 vol., vol. 2 (London: Philip Wilson, 1992), p. 119.

The Hugo Gallery opened with an impressive party for its inaugural show, “The Fantastic in Art,” in November 1945, which instantly made news.<sup>12</sup> It was a group exhibition organized by the editors of the surrealist magazine *View*. Participating artists included Alexander Calder, Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, Leonor Fini, Fernand Léger, Pavel Tchelitchew (who had also designed the gallery’s interior), Yves Tanguy, Dorothea Tanning, Ossip Zadkine, and others. Significant later surrealist shows include “The Poetic Theater” (December 1945), which featured Dalí, Joseph Cornell, Tchelitchew, and others; the “Romantic Museum at the Hugo Gallery: Portraits of Women, Constructions and Arrangements by Joseph Cornell” (December 1946), and the group exhibition “Bloodflames” (February 1947). “Bloodflames” was organized by the art critic Nicolas Calas, who also edited the catalogue. The display was designed by Frederick Kiesler.<sup>13</sup> It seems that in these early shows the gallery interior was treated with special care to capture attention, as documented in contemporary sources such as Dominique de Menil’s correspondence with her husband, artist Joseph Cornell’s personal diary, and press accounts.<sup>14</sup> Several solo shows featured European and American surrealists of different generations, including Jean Cocteau, Max Ernst, René Magritte, Leonor Fini, as well as Roberto Matta and Joseph Cornell. Group shows also displayed works by Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and others. When William Copley planned to open his own gallery in Los Angeles, Duchamp introduced him to Iolas; the inaugural show at the Copley Galleries in 1948 was a Magritte show, with most of the works shown sent by the Hugo Gallery.<sup>15</sup>

In November 1951 Iolas opened his first eponymous gallery in New York, at 46 East Fifty-Seventh Street. The inaugural show was a solo exhibition of work by Max Ernst in honor of the artist’s sixtieth bir-

12 “‘Fantastic in Modern Art’ Set as First Exhibition. Other Displays Being Planned,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1945; Edward Alden Jewell, “Fantastic in Art at Hugo Gallery. New Exhibition Hall Displays Variety of Unusual Works. Modernists Represented,” *New York Times*, November 16, 1945, p. 13.

13 For an in-depth analysis of “Bloodflames,” see Irini Marinaki, *Nicolas Calas. Critic and Curator*, unpub. PhD diss., London Consortium, Birkbeck College, University of London, January 2011.

14 For example, in the first show, “The Fantastic in Art,” visitors were impressed by the use of flowers and purple curtains as decor. Dominique de Menil described in some detail the function of spotlights on individual paintings and the color of the walls. Kiesler created a total installation that extended to the walls and ceiling. These elements were in tune both with the theatricality of surrealist shows and the gallery display methods of the day (e.g., hanging paintings in front of curtains). On installation shots of the Alexander Iolas Gallery in the 1960s, a white-cube logic is often prominent. Letter from Dominique de Menil to John de Menil, February 18, 1946, Menil Archives, quoted extensively in Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), pp. 306–307. See also Solomon, *Utopia Parkway* (note 2); and Jewell, “Fantastic in Art at Hugo Gallery” (note 12).

15 Toby Kamps, “William N. Copley: The world according to CPLY,” in Germano Celant, ed., *William N. Copley*, exh. cat. (Milan: Fondazione Prada with the Menil Collection, 2016), pp. 26–39, here p. 28. The Copley Galleries opened in 1948; the paintings for the Magritte show had been sent by the Hugo Gallery.



thday.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, despite the fact that the show celebrated Ernst's birthday and the opening of Iolas's new gallery, and also that throughout his career Iolas sold dozens of works by Ernst (the de Menils alone bought forty-two items), the show is often omitted in solo exhibition listings of the artist.<sup>17</sup> In secondary literature the gallery usually appears to have started its operation in 1954 or 1955, with no reference to the 1951 inaugural show. Based on contemporaneous exhibition announcements in the press, one concludes that shows were held regularly at the Hugo Gallery at least until the summer of 1954, while the very last ones took place in 1956. As for the Alexander Iolas Gallery, there is only very sporadic evidence of its existence before 1955. For instance, a solo show by Dorothea Tanning was held from January 14 to 31, 1953, and Iolas sometimes used writing paper with the gallery logo and postal address in his correspondence with John de Menil.<sup>18</sup> One is led to the possible conclusion that Iolas tried to open his own gallery in 1951, but it took a number of years before he could truly move on from the Hugo Gallery and operate a gallery in his own name.

Today, there is an appreciation for Iolas's professional endeavors to support surrealists and non-American artists in New York after the war. Yet this was not always the case—Iolas confessed in a letter to the de Menils in 1962 that during the 1950s he had “just enough to make ends meet” and that his “business was tumbling, running on just one leg only, having missed the jackpot with the boom of the 1950s and 1960s.”<sup>19</sup> He attributed his failure to the rise of abstract expressionism

16 The inaugural show of the Alexander Iolas Gallery was mentioned in the press. See “Charities to Gain By Two Art Shows,” *New York Times*, November 5, 1951, p. 29; and “Art to Be Shown in Many Mediums,” *New York Times*, November 12, 1951. It should be noted that both articles simply announced the opening of the new gallery with Ernst's solo show reported among other exhibition openings. When the Hugo Gallery opened in 1945, the *New York Times* immediately published a review of its first exhibition.

17 In the listing of Max Ernst's group shows and one-man shows in the catalogue of Ernst's complete oeuvre, there is no reference made either to Ernst's participation in the Hugo Gallery's 1945 inaugural group show, “The Fantastic in Art,” or the Alexander Iolas Gallery's 1951 inaugural solo show of Ernst's work. There are references to an earlier solo show at the Hugo Gallery (November 7–11, 1950) and to Ernst's 1952 exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Association in Houston, Texas, organized by Dominique de Menil in collaboration with Iolas (January 13–February 3, 1952). Werner Spies, Siegrid and Günter Metken, eds., *Max Ernst Oeuvre-Katalog*, 7 vol., vol. 5: 1939–1953 (Houston: Menil Foundation; Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1987), pp. 375, 373. For works sold by Iolas, see Werner Spies, Sigrid and Günter Metken, eds., *Max Ernst Oeuvre Katalog*, 7 vol., vol. 5, 6, and 7 (Houston: Menil Foundation; Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1987, 1998, and 2005, respectively). For the specific number of works sold to the de Menils, see Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), p. 111.

18 On Dorothea Tanning's show, see *Dorothea Tanning Life and Work*, <https://www.dorotheatanning.org/life-and-work/view/867>, accessed May 11, 2018. For writing paper with the logo “Alexander Iolas Gallery, 46 East Fifty-Seventh Street,” see letter from Alexander Iolas to John de Menil, June 23, 1952; letter from Iolas to John de Menil, April 5, 1953, Alexander Iolas Papers, 1946–1987, Menil Archives.

19 Letter from Alexander Iolas to John and Dominique de Menil, November 5, 1962, Alexander Iolas Papers 1946–1987, Menil Archives.

and a rather nationalistic spirit in the American art market that marginalized non-American artists.<sup>20</sup> In the early 1960s new collaborations with young French artists of the Nouveau Réalisme movement, such as Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint Phalle, Martial Raysse, Yves Klein, and others, proved a clever professional move. From 1963 onward Iolas expanded with branches in Paris, Geneva, Milan, and collaborations with galleries in Rome (Iolas-Galatea), Athens (Iolas-Zoumboulakis), and Madrid (Iolas-Velasco). He worked with artists associated with Arte Povera, like Jannis Kounellis and Pino Pascalli. The 1960s and 1970s were his heyday.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the central position of surrealists was not forsaken. Keeping a promise he had made to Max Ernst, Iolas closed all the branches of his gallery the day Ernst died in 1976. Only the New York gallery continued operating until Iolas's death in 1987. It was renamed after his business partner to become the Iolas-Jackson Gallery.

### The de Menils' first contact with Iolas and their initiation to surrealism

Dominique (1908–1997) and John de Menil (1904–1973) moved from France to Houston, Texas, around 1940.<sup>22</sup> John was working for the company owned by Dominique's family, Schlumberger Limited, which specialized in gas and oil extraction technologies and had moved its headquarters to Houston due to World War II. The couple also bought an apartment in New York, where they became acquainted with other Europeans who had emigrated. Among them was Maria Hugo, who initially introduced Iolas to Dominique during the latter's first visits to the Hugo Gallery in February 1946, around three months after the gallery's inaugural show. In a letter to her husband, Dominique spoke of the Hugo Gallery as "Maria's gallery," as she regarded it as a project undertaken by her friend.<sup>23</sup> She comes across as impressed by Maria Hugo's initiative "with only about \$200 in her pocket," by the gallery itself (the decor, the exhibitions), and by her friend's associate, "a Greek, a certain Iolas." In the letter, Dominique informs her husband that she

20 Ibid., and "Fahrelnissa Zeid: City-by-city," <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/fahrelnissa-zeid-22764/quick-read/city-by-city>, accessed May 11, 2018.

21 Characteristically, Middleton mentions a show by Jean Tinguely at the Alexander Iolas Gallery in Paris in December 1964 attended by the French Prime Minister Georges Pompidou: "[C]rowds of onlookers caused traffic jams on the Boulevard St. Germain." John de Menil bought the entire show for the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), p. 410.

22 All biographical information about the de Menils comes from Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), unless otherwise indicated.

23 Dominique to John de Menil, March 27, 1946, Menil Archives, quoted in Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), p. 306.

gave Hugo \$1,000, explaining, “Maria had not asked but I thought it was the right thing to do. And that it was something you would have done.”<sup>24</sup>

The couple already had an amateur interest in art, yet they were not fond of surrealism. Back in 1934 they had commissioned a portrait of Dominique from Max Ernst after an acquaintance had introduced them to the artist.<sup>25</sup> They were initially unimpressed by the portrait, coming to an appreciation of it only some time later after discovering it wrapped up on top of a cupboard when they returned to Paris after the war. So, when Iolas first tried to initiate them to surrealism (around 1947–48), they were rather mistrustful. Dominique described surrealism as a very strange world that she felt distant from.<sup>26</sup> They stated that they had bought their first surrealist painting, Giorgio de Chirico’s *Hector and Andromache* (*Hector et Andromaque*, 1918), without being very enthusiastic about it, but trusting Iolas’s judgment.<sup>27</sup> In 1949 Iolas offered them the paintings *Design in Nature* (1917) by Max Ernst and *The Alphabet of Revelations* (*L’alphabet des révélations*, 1929) by Magritte as gifts, and eventually managed to convince them of the importance of surrealism.<sup>28</sup> During the following decades, the de Menils amassed more than one hundred works by Ernst and more than fifty by Magritte, alongside works by other artists including, for instance, Wols and Louis Fernandez, artists represented by Iolas who were virtually unknown in the United States.

From the beginning, the de Menils acquired a lot more than surrealist works from Iolas. For example, a year after the aforementioned gifts, they bought their first painting by Picasso, *Female Nude* (*Femme nue*, 1910), and one by Henri Matisse, *Brook with Aloes* (*Le ruisseau aux aloès*, 1907), and, around that time, works by Fernand Léger, Georges Braque, Jean Hugo, and Christian (“Bébé”) Bérard, among others.<sup>29</sup> Today there are around 344 items in the Menil Collection that were either bought from, or offered as gifts (some 56 items) by Iolas.<sup>30</sup> They include

24 Ibid. It is worth mentioning that such a gesture from Dominique of offering money in the context of these friendships was not unique, nor limited to art-related donations. Middleton mentions, for instance, another letter from Dominique to her husband from March the same year in which she refers to helping a mutual American friend of hers and Maria Hugo’s who was also working for Elizabeth Arden. Dominique offered the friend \$250 to help buy clothes, because her income was limiting her.

25 Kristina Van Dyke, “Losing One’s Head: John and Dominique de Menil as Collectors,” in Josef Helfenstein and Laureen Schipsi, eds., *Art and Activism. Projects of John and Dominique de Menil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 120.

26 Pamela G. Smart, “Aesthetics as a Vocation,” in Helfenstein and Schipsi, *Art and Activism* (note 25), p. 35; Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), p. 314.

27 Smart, “Aesthetics as a Vocation” (note 26), p. 35.

28 Van Dyke, “Losing One’s Head” (note 25), p. 122.

29 Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), p. 300; for Picasso and Matisse’s works, see illustrations in Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), unpaginated.

30 The number is based on a list held in the Menil Archives.

twentieth century art, 132 examples of which are considered as surrealist works, by artists such as Viktor Brauner, Giorgio de Chirico, William Copley, Joseph Cornell, Max Ernst, Louis Fernandez, René Magritte, Roberto Matta, Man Ray, Yves Tanguy, and Dorothea Tanning; fifty-six antiquities (Greek, Roman, or other); and a few objects from non-Western cultures. The de Menils' biographer Middleton indicates that over a period of forty years, the de Menils acquired over 450 works of art from Iolas.<sup>31</sup>

It is nevertheless important to note that the de Menils had more than one adviser, that they chose not to restrict themselves to only one dealer, and that their interest in art extended beyond, and often contrasted with, the position taken by Iolas and the artists he represented (such as their interest in abstract expressionism). Moreover, as one reads the couple's biography in detail, it becomes clear that they were very keen to develop personal friendships with artists (Max Ernst, for example) and museum curators and directors. They were highly active in sponsoring and organizing exhibitions, as well as university art and art history programs. John served on several museum boards and committees.<sup>32</sup> One can assume that they did not always need an art dealer to keep up with a particular artist's work. At the same time, their professional relations with Iolas proved extremely prolific, long-lasting, and of pivotal importance, especially concerning their surrealist collection.

### The dealer/adviser-client/patron relationship: Records of a mutually beneficial practice

Research into the art market has shown that art dealers very often cannot sustain their businesses from profit alone, particularly at the beginning of their careers and when they attempt to carve a niche for themselves, something that requires investment in exhibitions, publications, marketing, and so on.<sup>33</sup> It is therefore common for dealers to seek an income outside the sale of artworks, either from other business ventures, family inheritance, or from financial "backers" such as collectors, who often have a stake in the business.<sup>34</sup> It is known, for example, that Julien Levy, the first gallerist to be associated with surrealism in New York from 1931, initially located his gallery in a rent-free building

<sup>31</sup> Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), p. 312.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 379, 398.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Olaf Velthuis, "Art Dealers," in Ruth Towse, ed., *Handbook of Cultural Economics* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011), p. 28; and Deirdre Robson, *Prestige, Profit, Pleasure: The Market for Modern Art in New York in the 1940s and 1950s* (New York: Garland, 1995), p. 108.

<sup>34</sup> Robson, *Prestige, Profit, Pleasure* (note 33), p. 108.

owned by his father, and made his first purchases in Paris with funds he had inherited.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, in 1937, the art collector and museum curator James Thrall Soby, who also had an interest in surrealism and neo-Romanticism, became a major stockholder in Levy's business, enabling the gallerist to move to larger premises.

When Maria Hugo and Alexander Iolas started the Hugo Gallery in 1945, their financial capital was limited. Probably their most significant capital was their broad social circle of artists, intellectuals, and wealthy friends, such as the de Menils. It is often stated that Dominique helped Iolas financially; however, details of the collector's financial contribution to the gallery were rarely mentioned publicly, aside from the purchase of works. Interestingly, people who became close to Iolas in the later, commercially more successful years, openly questioned whether the de Menil's financial backing was actually true.<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, as we learn from documents in the Menil Archives and the Menil Family Papers, this claim is more than true: the collector couple clearly stepped in as "backers" of the Hugo Gallery very early on. The earliest documentation to support this is a balance sheet, handwritten by John de Menil, which includes a note about ten shares of the Hugo Gallery, dated September 1945, appearing next to the amount of \$1,000. Further down, there is another note about five shares, dated March 1946, next to the amount of \$500.<sup>37</sup> It is, of course, curious that September 1945 was just two months before November 1945, when the gallery's inaugural show opened, and five months before the aforementioned letter in which Dominique tells her husband of her first visit to the gallery and her donation of \$1,000. The documents in the Menil Archives often don't help us to figure out the correct dates or amounts of money involved; what we can ascertain with certainty is that Dominique de Menil became a stockholder of the gallery very early on as in April 1947 she is recorded as owning 30 shares, more than any other stockholder.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, André Mourgues: "They always say that Dominique de Menil had financed the gallery; not at all, though she did buy a great deal, she would always come a day or so before any exhibition opened." André Mourgues, "Interview by Adrian Dannatt," *Alexander the Great* (note 1), pp. 65–70, here p. 69. Other collectors Iolas developed relations with were Agnelli and Karpidas. He also found a financial backer in the husband of his sister, Niki Stifel.

<sup>37</sup> Balance in the Books, 1945–1951: John de Menil's handwritten balance sheet, September 1945–November 1946, Alexander Iolas Papers, 1946–1987, Menil Archives.

<sup>38</sup> "Hugo Gallery Incorporation Records," 1947–1952: typed list of Hugo Gallery stockholders, April 30, 1947, Alexander Iolas Papers, 1946–1987, Menil Archives. These close business relations between the dealer and the collectors went unmentioned even by curators of the Menil Collection in publications about the beginnings of the collection in the 1940s, probably because the relevant files were sent from the Menil Archives to the de Menil Family Papers in August 2004 and were later transferred back to the Menil Archives in September 2013. For example, in the volume *Art and Activism: Projects of John and Dominique de Menil* published by the Menil Col-



Various letters show that the de Menils also gave loans to Iolas. In one letter dated October 4, 1947, John de Menil writes that he could continue financing the venture indefinitely, but if the gallery failed to begin selling works, it meant that something was awry with the business.<sup>39</sup> In another letter, from June 15, 1952, de Menil suggests that Iolas buy back four shares that he had sold to someone from Romania, as this person was not actively supporting the gallery.<sup>40</sup> And, if the business went well, de Menil anticipated making a profit from the share value. These letters indicate that at the time Iolas was advising the de Menils about art, John was, in a friendly but straightforward manner, directing Iolas on how to run his business.

In a handwritten letter from August 6, 1949, probably written by Iolas just before he left on a trip to Europe, he states that if anything should happen to him during his travels, everything he owned in his business would pass to Dominique de Menil. It is possible that Iolas wrote this in consideration of his debts to the de Menils, but it is also likely that the de Menils financed Iolas's trips overseas to buy new paintings. We know for certain about one such trip that is described in the collectors' biography.<sup>41</sup> As the story goes, immediately after the war, during a friendly dinner at Maria Hugo's apartment in New York, the de Menils suggested to Iolas that he travel to Paris in search of new work. They felt that there was no longer enough good new work available in New York as since the end of the war European artists who had migrated to the United States had begun to return home to Europe. The de Menils thus financed Iolas's first trip to Paris as an art dealer, and Robert de Rothschild arranged for him to stay at his family home.<sup>42</sup>

In later correspondence we learn that the de Menils provided Iolas with financial assistance to open his own gallery in the early 1950s. They also sponsored museum acquisitions from the Iolas galleries and probably helped him open his European branches in the early 1960s.<sup>43</sup> During these years Iolas continued to inform the de Menils of the works

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lection in 2010, in the passages referring to Iolas's relationship to the de Menils in the 1940s and 1950s, the authors did not use the aforementioned files. Only the couple's biographer, William Middleton, seems to have studied these files, and offers some context to previously unknown aspects of the de Menils' early involvement with the Hugo Gallery.

39 See, for example, *Balance in the Books, 1945–1951*, Menil Archives; letter from John de Menil to Alexander Iolas, with bank receipt, October 4, 1947, Alexander Iolas Papers, 1946–1987, Menil Archives.

40 Letter from de Menil to Iolas, June 15, 1952, Alexander Iolas Papers, 1946–1987, Menil Archives.

41 Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), p. 313.

42 Ibid.

43 On the financial support given to open new galleries, see letter from Alexander Iolas to John and Dominique de Menil, November 5, 1962, Alexander Iolas Papers 1946–1987, Menil Archives. On the sponsoring of museum acquisitions, see *A Modern Patronage: de Menil Gifts to American and European Museums*, Marcia Brennan et al., eds., exh. cat. (Houston: The Menil Collection, 2007).

he sold, payments he received or expected, and expressed his gratitude, now and then reminding them of how broke he was.

In summary, there are many ways in which the de Menils were not simply collectors buying art from Iolas, but were also investors in his business, with Iolas regularly providing updates on the performance of his gallery. The details of this financial support have only rarely been mentioned in public, however, evidence of this can now be found in the resources of the public-access archives of the Menil Collection.

The question arises as to why the de Menils would choose to become so deeply involved with the Hugo Gallery. From a pragmatic perspective, it clearly benefitted their art collection. As shareholders, they were able to purchase works from Iolas's galleries on favorable terms. For instance, Dominique de Menil explained in an interview that she and her husband were compensated for financing Iolas's trip to Europe in the aftermath of the war: "We advanced some money to Iolas so he could buy things, and then when he came back, we reimbursed ourselves by keeping this and that. And his profit was for the gallery."<sup>44</sup> In his letters, John de Menil frequently instructed Iolas to facilitate payments that were advantageous to the couple. From de Menil's casual and unpretentious manner, it appears that this was a matter of routine in their exchanges. We can assume that Iolas gave the de Menils artworks to repay loans, a practice that could at least partly explain his many gifts to the Menil Collection. Furthermore, Iolas also made other purchases on their behalf, such as acquisitions of antique furniture and antiquities, both of which he also purchased for himself. As the de Menils became avid collectors with broad areas of interest, Iolas was shrewd enough to purchase works that he himself thought little of, but whose potential value he recognized. Mondrian was one such case: although Iolas considered Mondrian's work boring, he arranged the purchase of the de Menils' first Mondrian painting (*Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Blue-White*, 1922).<sup>45</sup>

Another motivation was that Dominique trusted the dealer's judgment of quality, and believed that Iolas gave them priority on what he considered the best works. Middleton quotes her as saying, "Iolas was everywhere and nowhere. But he was very interested to build our collection. It was a point of pride that ours would be a great one, so he always kept paintings for us, and since he had a very good eye, they were the best. For instance, we bought one Magritte every year from

<sup>44</sup> Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), p. 313.

<sup>45</sup> For Iolas's opinion of Mondrian's work, see Nikos Stathoulis, *Alexander Iolas* (Athens: A. A. Livani, 1994); on Mondrian's purchase, see Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), pp. 312–313.

him, the one Iolas considered the most outstanding.”<sup>46</sup> One can assume that since Dominique valued Iolas’s opinion, she was also flattered by the priority he gave to her collection in the years when he was doing well. Such models of favoring selected buyers are commonplace in the gallery world, as shown by the collectors’ waiting lists that Mary Boone put together for new works by popular artists in the early 1980s. But the thing that earned his client-patron’s trust most of all was that he made her feel that her collection was for him a matter of personal interest. As Brooks Jackson stated in an interview, “He [Iolas] could charm anyone and especially Dominique de Menil, as they used to say, he could talk the hind off a wooden billy goat.”<sup>47</sup>

The above quote brings us to the issue of Iolas’s character, which was introduced at the beginning of this text as the main focus of his postmortem representations. It is known, for example, that Iolas frequently made flamboyant gestures of generosity, such as gifts, to build up personal relations, to convince, fascinate, and flatter.<sup>48</sup> In the case of the Magritte and Ernst paintings he gave to the de Menils in 1949, his aim was to mobilize their interest in these artists. There are other stories of the dealer pulling out a Max Ernst painting from his bag at a restaurant, or a Cartier watch from a drawer in his bedroom, to offer them as presents when the recipients least expected them.<sup>49</sup> However, with the de Menils he was well aware of when and how it was necessary to put aside his eccentric behavior. For instance, in a long letter in which he asks them to back his gallery expansion plans, he comes across as extremely serious, self-reflexive, taking stock of his failures and explaining his financial situation in some detail, sounding very different from the vain and pompous character we know from his public persona.

### Beyond selling and collecting: The promotion of surrealism in the United States after World War II

Nowhere was the long alliance between Iolas and the de Menils more evident than in their efforts to bring recognition to the importance of European, and especially surrealist, art in the United States after the war.<sup>50</sup> The promotion of surrealist artists in the American market after the mid-1940s is remembered today as one of Iolas’s key achievements.

46 Dominique de Menil, biographical interview by Winkler and Mancusi-Ungaro, quoted in Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), p. 312.

47 Dannatt, *Alexander the Great* (note 1), pp. 75–76, here p. 76.

48 Fotiadi, “The Myth of the Collector” (note 6).

49 Dannatt, *Alexander the Great* (note 1), pp. 65, 91.

50 For John de Menil’s commitment to this goal, see, for example, Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), p. 300.

I would argue that his success in persuading the de Menils about the value of surrealism played a decisive role in that project.

The collector couple trusted Iolas and bought surrealist works during the 1950s when neither seemed to be a safe bet in the New York art market, largely because institutions and the art market at the time showed a preference for American art, such as abstract expressionism and pop art. Iolas showed a strong commitment to surrealism, and this reputation was more harmful than advantageous for his gallery. However, his insistence with the de Menils specifically regarding surrealism proved insightful, as they were not the kind of collectors who would have relied on museum curators, art critics, or dealers to establish the reputation of artists they appreciated and invested in. Rather, they had the financial means and the willingness to promote artists themselves within the cultural and educational institutions of the United States in ways that went far beyond the capacities and practices of Iolas as an art dealer. During the 1950s, the most difficult decade for both Iolas and the European surrealists in the local market, the de Menils sponsored the Museum of Modern Art in New York for the acquisition from the Hugo Gallery of two works by René Magritte, *The Empire of Light II* (*L'Empire des lumières II*, 1950) and *Memory of a Voyage* (*Souvenir de voyage*, 1955); one by Max Ernst, *The King Playing with the Queen*, 1944, cast in 1955; and one by Matta, *The Spherical Roof Around Our Tribe* (a.k.a. *Revolvers*, 1952).<sup>51</sup> During the same period, they frequently lent works, by Magritte and Brauner, for example, to exhibitions in public institutions around the country, and sponsored and organized their own shows, such as a Max Ernst solo exhibition in 1952 at the Contemporary Arts Association in Houston. Furthermore, they donated works to universities, such as the University of St. Thomas and Rice University in Houston. Particularly for these two universities, the de Menils also funded the construction of new buildings, including those housing the departments of art and art history, and the Art Institute at St. Thomas; they promoted the establishment of art history courses and Dominique taught at the University of St. Thomas. From 1969 they started financing the long-term research and writing of the catalogues raisonnés of the works of Max Ernst and René Magritte.

With such projects the de Menils contributed to the appreciation of surrealist artists (among others) in the United States, and of other artists represented by Iolas, in ways that were not dependent upon the art dealer. By means of exhibitions, providing input to art history cur-

51 See Brennan et al., *A Modern Patronage* (note 43); Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 4), p. 313; and [https://www.moma.org/collection/works?locale=en&utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=de+Menil&classifications=any&date\\_begin=Pre-1850&date\\_end=2018&with\\_images=1](https://www.moma.org/collection/works?locale=en&utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=de+Menil&classifications=any&date_begin=Pre-1850&date_end=2018&with_images=1), accessed August 7, 2018.

ricula, and funding artists' catalogues they brought art in contact with a much wider audience than that of New York galleries and museums, and also intervened in the writing and dissemination of art history. In addition, not only did the de Menils focus on cost-intensive projects that extended the visibility of their patronage, they also maintained meticulous records and archives. As mentioned earlier, Iolas had the perspicacity to bequeath all of his correspondence with Magritte to them, thereby ensuring that these letters did not disappear along with the rest of his gallery records. Thanks to their archiving of their communications with Iolas—as they did with other figures involved in their art-related activities—Iolas's name features in studies on Magritte and other publications relating to the de Menils' surrealist collection, which is not the case for the bulk of secondary literature on the major surrealist artists.

As we can see, the Menil Archives and the recently published biography of the couple (largely based on other, as yet inaccessible, archive materials) reveal previously unknown details about the extent of the de Menils' patronage of the Hugo Gallery and the Alexander Iolas Gallery. It is evident that they supported Iolas almost from the beginning of his dealership (1946) and throughout the toughest period for his business in the 1950s. It can be argued that the dealer's success in promoting surrealism in the United States art market should be seen within the context of the collectors' backing of his gallery, as well as their own efforts to support the movement. Of course, to be able to draw final conclusions regarding the degree of the art dealer's dependence on these patrons, we need to gather further information about his activities during the 1940s and 1950s—a difficult task due to the disappearance of his gallery records. In any case, the financial support provided to Iolas by the de Menils is characterized by patterns of patronage (such as investment in stocks and assistance for relocating gallery premises) that were not unknown in the art market of the time. Nor is it unusual that up until today, despite the commitment of the collectors (and, later, the Menil Collection curators) to archiving and publishing, this aspect of their patronage—the sponsoring of an art dealer—is seldom brought to the attention of outside audiences.



## Magritte at the Rodeo: René Magritte in the Menil Collection

Clare Elliott

In the late 1940s, John<sup>1</sup> and Dominique (born Schlumberger) de Menil's attention was drawn to the enigmatic images of familiar objects by the Belgian surrealist artist René Magritte. Over the course of the next forty years, the couple established a critically acclaimed collection of paintings, sculpture, and drawings by Magritte in the United States, which are now housed at the museum that bears their name in their chosen home of Houston, Texas. Multifaceted, experimental collectors with strong philosophical inclinations, the de Menils relished Magritte's provocations and his continual questioning of bourgeois convention. In 1993, Dominique described the qualities that attracted her and John to Magritte's work: "He was very serious in dealing with the great problem of who are we? What is the world? What are we doing on earth? What is after life? Is there anything?"<sup>2</sup> A focused look at the formation of this particular aspect of their holdings allows insight into the ambitious goals that animated the de Menils and reveals the frequent and sometimes unexpected ways in which the networks of surrealism—galleries, collectors, museums, and scholars—intersected and overlapped in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Born Jean de Menil, he anglicized his name when he took American citizenship in 1962.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Susie Kalil, "Magical Magritte Maze at the Menil," *Houston Press*, January 21, 1993, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> For this paper I have consulted in addition to published sources the archives available to me as a curator at the Menil Collection: the object files initiated by John de Menil and added to over the years by researchers and museum staff; interviews given by the de Menils and their dealer Alexander Iolas; and material in the Menil Collection Archives, particularly the documents relating to their involvement in the Hugo and Iolas Galleries, which were restricted until 2013, but are now available to researchers.

## Alexander Iolas and the Hugo Gallery

The de Menils married in Paris in 1931, and, a few years later, John joined the growing engineering firm founded by Dominique's father and uncle. John went on to help build the company into what it is now, Schlumberger Oilfield Services, a worldwide provider of equipment and expertise essential to oil and gas discovery. When the Germans occupied Paris during the Second World War, Schlumberger relocated its headquarters to Houston.<sup>4</sup> John moved to oversee operations there, bringing Dominique and their children with him. The de Menils remained based in Houston but maintained an apartment in New York, where, during the war and in the years following, they socialized amongst a group of displaced Europeans who had also taken refuge in the city, including Maria Hugo—"Donna Maria" as the de Menils called her. Born Princess Maria Ruspoli in 1888, she had married the 11th Duc de Gramont, who died in 1925, leaving her widowed with a large fortune at age thirty-seven. The de Menils knew Hugo from Paris and had visited her estate, Vigoleno, the medieval Italian fortress she inherited from her first husband and where she hosted guests such as Jean Cocteau, Arthur Rubinstein, and Max Ernst.<sup>5</sup> By the time she moved to New York, she had spent most of her inheritance and had remarried to François Hugo, the also-very-well-connected great grandson of the French author Victor Hugo. In the fall of 1945, backed by Elizabeth Arden and Robert de Rothschild, Maria Hugo opened the Hugo Gallery at 26 East Fifty-Fifth Street in New York. In February 1946, Dominique de Menil, staying alone in New York, wrote a letter to her husband recording her first impression of the Hugo Gallery:

"I loved this gallery and the boldness with which Maria launched herself in the adventure. With only about \$200 in her pocket, Maria rented a little gallery on the sixth floor of a building on Fifty-Fifth Street. The décor is not meant to be sensational, which surprised me. It has three small rooms, perfectly arranged from a technical standpoint to enhance the paintings, with a very sophisticated lighting system that uses small spotlights in the ceiling, pointing in all directions. Every painting, every engraving is lit individually. The picture is bathed in light, and yet the source of the illumination is not immediately clear. The colors of the walls, like the lighting, are very well studied. The effect is like being bathed in warm dusk. Each

4 Josef Helfenstein and Laureen Schipsi, eds., *Art and Activism. Projects of John and Dominique de Menil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 276.

5 William Middleton, *Double Vision. The Unerring Eye of Art World Avatars Dominique and John de Menil* (New York: Knopf, 2018), pp. 305–306.

part of the wall is a different gray, but all of the tones are harmonious, complementing one another: there is a dark gray with a hint of mauve, a lighter gray, and one that has some blue in it.”<sup>6</sup>

Dominique was impressed not only by the gallery but also by the man Hugo had brought on board to direct the venture. “Maria has associated herself with a Greek, a certain Iolas,” she wrote to John, “I think he’s very much on the same team.”<sup>7</sup> As Dominique predicted in this early letter, for the next quarter century Iolas and the de Menils became an important team decisively influencing the reception of a number of artists in the United States, none more so than René Magritte.

One of the many colorful characters in the history of twentieth-century art, Alexander Iolas was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in or around 1907. He frequently lied about his age—most sources give his birth year as either 1907 or 1908, but it has been documented as late as 1912,<sup>8</sup> and one source suggests it may have been up to a decade earlier than he claimed.<sup>9</sup> His parents named him Konstantinos Koutsoudis, but like the best self-mythologizers Koutsoudis shed this identity and chose a new name for himself. He left Egypt in the 1920s, eventually landing in Paris, where he found success as a ballet dancer. The ballet world introduced Iolas to many prominent figures in Parisian society, Maria Hugo among them.

Outside of his ballet training, Iolas had no formal art education. Rather, he had, as Dominique de Menil described it, “an exceptional flair for art and a talent for selling it.”<sup>10</sup> Iolas moved to New York in 1944, and the following year became the director of the Hugo Gallery, later establishing galleries in his own name. Iolas steered the Hugo Gallery toward surrealism, which he had discovered before the war in Paris. In 1947, the closing of the Julien Levy Gallery left Iolas the chief representative of the movement in America. Dominique credited Iolas with helping her and John overcome their initial skepticism towards

6 Dominique de Menil to Jean de Menil, February 18, 1946. De Menil Family Archives, quoted in Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 5), p. 306.

7 Ibid., p. 307.

8 Eva Fotiadi, “The Myth of the Collector and His Collection. Art Works, Stories, Objects, Relations of Alexander Iolas” (English translation), in Asimi Kaniari and Yorgos Bikos, eds., *Museology, Cultural Politics and Educations*, Athens, 2014, [http://www.academia.edu/19580767/Art\\_works\\_objects\\_stories\\_and\\_relations\\_of\\_Alexander\\_Iolas.\\_The\\_legendary\\_collector\\_and\\_the\\_recollection\\_of\\_the\\_legend.\\_English\\_translation\\_of\\_published\\_Greek\\_original\\_](http://www.academia.edu/19580767/Art_works_objects_stories_and_relations_of_Alexander_Iolas._The_legendary_collector_and_the_recollection_of_the_legend._English_translation_of_published_Greek_original_), accessed August 7, 2018.

9 Adrian Dannatt, “Character Study,” in Vincent Fremont and Adrian Dannatt, eds., *Alexander the Great. The Iolas Gallery, 1955–1987*, exh. cat., New York, Paul Kasmin Gallery (New York: Paul Kasmin Gallery, 2014), p. 21.

10 Julia Brown and Bridget Johnson, eds., *The First Show. Painting and Sculpture from Eight Collections, 1940–1980*, exh. cat., Los Angeles, Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1983), p. 37.

surrealism in general: “At first I resisted surrealism; it was such a strange world, I felt outside of it.”<sup>11</sup> More specifically, Iolas introduced them to Magritte’s work: “It was ... through Iolas that we discovered Magritte.”<sup>12</sup> According to Mrs. de Menil, Iolas anticipated Magritte’s future importance despite the lukewarm reception of his work in the 1940s. She recalled “about Magritte [Iolas] used to say ‘one day the force of these images will appear to everybody, you’ll see.’”<sup>13</sup>

According to the object records created by John de Menil in 1948, Iolas gave the de Menils Magritte’s canvas of the same year, *The Fair Captive* (*La belle captive*). The following year, they exchanged it for *Alphabet of Revelations* (*L’alphabet des révélations*, 1929) (fig. 62), which remains the first Magritte painting acquired by the de Menils still in their collection. Over the next four years, Iolas gave John and Dominique four more works by Magritte: one object and three gouaches.<sup>14</sup> These works were among many others given to the de Menils by Iolas from 1947 through the mid-1950s, including paintings and objects by surrealists like Joseph Cornell, Max Ernst, and Yves Tanguy, and other twentieth-century artists like Christian Bérard, Georges Braque, and Fernand Léger.

On the surface, it seems strange that a gallerist in the early stages of establishing his business gave away inventory to a couple not yet known as collectors. The fact is that the works cannot be considered strictly as gifts. The de Menils underwrote a substantial portion of Iolas’s and Hugo’s venture from its earliest days. Upon her first visit to the Hugo Gallery, Mrs. de Menil, although she did not purchase any artwork, gave Maria Hugo one thousand dollars as an investment in the gallery. She explained in a letter to her husband, “Maria had not asked but I thought it was the right thing to do. And that it was something you would have done.”<sup>15</sup> Dominique’s initial thousand-dollar investment was converted into shares in the gallery and followed by two more cash investments the same year. The de Menils literally purchased stock in the Hugo Gallery and by the end of 1946 owned 20 percent of the enterprise. In addition to the stock purchases, the de Menils provided Iolas with travel expenses, advanced him money to buy artworks, and provided him with petty cash.<sup>16</sup> In 1995 Dominique recalled all of this as something of a

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> These were *A Rare Old Vintage Picasso* (*Un Picasso de derrière les fagots*, 1949); *The Smile* (*Le sourire*, 1947); *The Treachery of Images* (*La trahison des images*, 1952); and *The Legend of the Centuries* (*La légende des siècles*, 1952).

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Dominique de Menil to Jean de Menil, February 18, 1946, De Menil Family Archives, quoted in Middleton, *Double Vision* (note 5), p. 307.

<sup>16</sup> The details of these transactions are recorded in ledgers, contracts, and stock certificates in the Alexander Iolas Papers, Folders 12–21, Menil Archives, The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas (hereafter cited as Menil Archives).



62 René Magritte, *The Alphabet of Revelations*, 1929, oil on canvas, 54.3 × 73.3 cm.  
Houston, TX, The Menil Collection.

casual arrangement, stating, “We advanced some money to Iolas so he could buy things ... since he had his good eye—and then when he came back, we reimbursed ourselves by keeping this and that. And his profit was for the gallery.”<sup>17</sup> In 1984, Iolas remembered in a little more detail, “Mr. de Menil gave me money, without asking for a receipt. ... [T]hey gave me open credit. ... I came to owe them \$600,000 ... it was a lot of money,” adding, “Jean was a person who had a lot of faith in people. ... I have found very few people in life who have this kind of generosity.”<sup>18</sup>

The de Menils rarely spoke publicly of their financial involvement with the gallery, but John de Menil kept detailed accounts of what he and Dominique advanced to Iolas for many years.<sup>19</sup> In addition to pages of John de Menil’s own accounting, there are copies of professionally prepared balance sheets and statements of income and loss. Iolas recalled, “I said [to John] ‘Make an agreement with the accountant, and I will accept whatever you say and whatever he says.’ And that was how it was

<sup>17</sup> Transcript of interview with Dominique de Menil by Paul Winkler and Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, September 27, 1995, Audio Tape Number Au95-06.4, Menil Archives.

<sup>18</sup> Transcript of interview with Alexander Iolas by Adelaide de Menil, 1984, Box 2, Folder 4, Session I, sound rolls #11 and #12, Menil Archives.

<sup>19</sup> See note 16.



done every year, there would be the amount of how much I owed, how much they took, and I never interfered with the bookkeeping because I know nothing about it and if I ever do some bookkeeping, I do it badly rather than well.”<sup>20</sup> The details of these ledgers are complicated but nothing close to the \$600,000 figure that Iolas claimed is evident in the accounts. In 1957, for example, more than ten years into their relationship, the CPA’s balance sheet for the Iolas Gallery shows “Loans Payable to John de Menil” equal to just over \$51,000.<sup>21</sup> (By 1984, when Iolas gave his interview, the value of \$50,000 in 1957 money would be approximately \$189,000. In 2018 the value would be about \$456,000.)<sup>22</sup> The documents record a value for merchandise inventory (artworks) as an asset, but even the very early accounting does not show transfers of any inventory to the de Menils in the form of payments. Based on Dominique’s recollection, one assumes that some, if not all, of the “gifts” from Iolas that John de Menil recorded in his object files were in fact their dividends as stockholders, however these remained apart from the official accounting. The de Menils invested enough money that they were motivated to keep track of it, and remained involved financially with Alexander Iolas for years. As a result they had the first choice out of any exhibition or inventory at the Hugo Gallery (and later at the Iolas galleries), not because they were favored clients, but because they were essentially partners.

### The case of Magritte

The partnership between the de Menils and Iolas became exceptionally favorable with regard to establishing a Magritte collection because Iolas handled the majority of Magritte’s output beginning around 1950. At the end of 1956, the two agreed that in exchange for an annual retainer Iolas would receive the exclusive rights to represent Magritte both in Europe and the United States (a few exceptions were to be design work or small commissions within Belgium). Although Magritte sometimes found ways around it, he continued to renew their unofficial contract until his death a decade later, indicating that for the most part he found the arrangement beneficial.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See note 17.

<sup>21</sup> See note 16.

<sup>22</sup> [www.usinflationcalculator.com](http://www.usinflationcalculator.com)

<sup>23</sup> David Sylvester, ed., *René Magritte. A Catalogue Raisonné; Volume III; Oil Paintings, Objects, and Bronzes* (Houston: Menil Foundation, 1993), pp. 73–74.



63 René Magritte, *Golconda*, 1953, oil on canvas, 80 × 100.3 cm.  
Houston, TX, The Menil Collection.

In 1954, taking full advantage of their partnership with Iolas, the de Menils bought nine paintings by Magritte, all of them from the Hugo Gallery (three are no longer in the collection).<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, this is the year that they bought both the most unusually abstract Magritte in the collection, *The Good News* (*La bonne nouvelle*, 1928), as well as two that have since become among the most recognizable, *Golconda* (*Golconde*, 1953) (fig. 63) and *The Listening Room* (*La chambre d'écoute*, 1952) (fig. 64). Between 1949 and 1972, the de Menils acquired from Iolas, either by gift or purchase, more than half (thirty-four of fifty-nine) of the works by Magritte in their present-day collection. This figure includes three paintings—*The Listening Room*, 1952 (fig. 64); *Pascal's Coat* (*Le manteau de Pascal*, 1954); and *Memory of a Voyage* (*Souvenir de voyage III*, 1951)—

<sup>24</sup> The other Magritte works purchased in 1954 are *Elementary Cosmogony* (*Cosmogonie élémentaire*, 1949), given to a family member in 1954; *The Wasted Footsteps* (*Les pas perdus*, 1950), exchanged in 1964; *Memory of a Voyage* (*Souvenir de voyage III*, 1951); *The Song of the Storm* (*Le chant de l'orage*, 1937); *Manet's Balcony* (*Le balcon de Manet*, 1950), exchanged in 1968; *The Smile* (*Le sourire*, 1947); and *Pascal's Coat* (*Le manteau de Pascal*, 1954), Menil Archives.



64 René Magritte, *The Listening Room*, 1952, oil on canvas, 45.2 × 55.2 cm.  
Houston, TX, The Menil Collection.

that John and Dominique gave to their children in the 1950s, but which have been donated to the museum since its opening in 1987.

The notable exceptions to the Iolas rule during the 1950s and 1960s are three Magritte paintings the de Menils purchased in 1960 and 1961 directly from André Breton, who was selling work from his collection. These works—*The Law of Gravity* (*La loi de la pesanteur*, 1928); *The Legend of the Guitars* (*La légende des guitares*, 1928); and *Surrender* (*L'abandon*, 1929)—all date from the years that Magritte lived in Paris, when he was in closest contact with Breton, and which were also the most prolific and innovative years of Magritte's career.<sup>25</sup> In addition to their sterling provenance, these three canvases added a needed balance of early paintings to the de Menils' collection, which was heavily skewed toward Magritte's postwar production.

25 See Josef Helfenstein and Clare Elliott, "A Lightning Flash Is Smoldering Beneath the Bowler Hats," in Anne Umland, ed., *Magritte. The Mystery of the Ordinary, 1928–1938*, exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2013), pp. 70–87.

## After Iolas

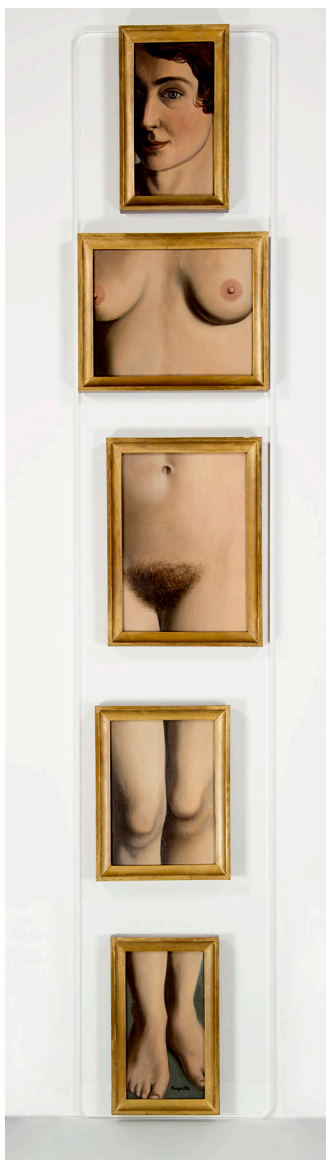
In a broad way, the Magritte acquisitions mirror the rest of the de Menils' collection of twentieth-century art. Generally the 1950s and 1960s and the first few years of the 1970s were a period of intense activity characterized by a large number of purchases, low prices, and an informed, but primarily intuitive, reaction to artworks and artists. This period concluded, approximately, with the death of John de Menil in 1973. When Dominique returned to collecting in the late 1970s and beyond, she made fewer purchases. Because prices tended to be higher, it also served her to be more strategic, consciously strengthening areas where there were weaknesses. Within the Magritte holdings this period is delineated by the influence of the art historian David Sylvester, whom the de Menils engaged in 1969 to edit the catalogue raisonné of Magritte's oeuvre. The catalogue raisonné itself should be understood as a significant investment of both time and money in the de Menils' Magritte collection. Under Sylvester's leadership, the remarkably thorough research and documentation contained in the catalogue raisonné includes extensive biographical information and source material both carefully cross-referenced to each object's entry. The ambitious project took twenty-eight years to complete and remains an indispensable tool for scholars of the artist's work. Collectors and dealers of Magritte, including the de Menils, likewise benefited—the documentation and identification of accepted works making forgeries easier to detect and avoid. The original five volumes, finished in 1997, set what Dawn Ades described as “a new standard for the genre ... far more than an accumulation of data and listings.”<sup>26</sup>

In 1976, Sylvester left an urgent message for Mrs. de Menil informing her of the chance to acquire both the painting and the drawing of Magritte's famously disturbing *The Rape* (*Le viol*, 1934), an image of a woman's naked body superimposed onto her face. Sylvester took for granted that Dominique understood their importance, stressing instead the fact that the works were underpriced: “You would be crazy not to purchase it. It is the price bargain of the decade. Terrible pity if the foundation<sup>27</sup> or you personally don't make the purchase. It is a staggering opportunity.”<sup>28</sup> As his work on the catalogue raisonné continued, Sylvester advised all fourteen Magritte purchases made

26 Dawn Ades, “Reviewed Works. René Magritte. Catalogue Raisonné,” *Burlington Magazine*, no. 140/1142 (May 1998), pp. 340–41.

27 Sylvester is referring to the Menil Foundation. The de Menils established a foundation in 1954 through which they funded the Magritte catalogue raisonné, as well as a number of charitable causes. It now serves solely as the governing organization of the Menil Collection. See Helfenstein and Schipsi, *Art and Activism* (note 4), p. 280.

28 David Sylvester, quoted in undated memo (ca. 1976) by Elsian Cozens, object file, 1976–06 DJ, Menil Archives.



65 René Magritte, *The Eternally Obvious*, 1930, oil paint on five separately stretched and framed canvases mounted on Plexiglas, installed: 167.6 × 38.1 × 55.9 cm. Houston, TX, The Menil Collection.

after John de Menil's death. Several came from important collections, such as *This Is a Piece of Cheese* (*Ceci est un morceau de fromage*, 1936 or 1937), acquired from Roland Penrose, co-founder of the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. Penrose had purchased the object from Magritte's solo exhibition at the London Gallery in 1938. Although it was Dominique who requested Sylvester's advice, she nonetheless at times needed urging. A letter from 1980 is worth quoting at length as it reveals Sylvester's role as her unofficial agent, along with Mrs. de Menil's ambivalence. Having undertaken the complex process of



turning her collection into a museum she was committed to enhancing her holdings, but reluctant to spend given the demands on her resources. Sylvester wrote:

“I have vague memories of your gently chiding me on one occasion for not having tried hard enough to persuade you to buy some Magritte or other. Because of that, I am going to call your attention again to the object owned by Roland Penrose. ... You may remember that when you saw it in Brussels you asked me to tell Roland that you would appreciate having first refusal if ever he decided to sell it. When he decided to sell a few months ago, you were not interested. ... So I am mentioning it to you again before Roland puts it in the hands of a dealer.”<sup>29</sup>

Sylvester’s final remark demonstrates how deeply connected to important museum professionals the de Menils were by 1980. He added, “If you are not interested, you might mention it to Pontus; Beaubourg have not got a Magritte object.”<sup>30</sup> Also on Sylvester’s advice, the Menil Foundation purchased several important works from the collection of the painter and collector William Copley: *The Meaning of Night* (*Le sens de la nuit*, 1927);<sup>31</sup> *The Eternally Obvious* (*L’évidence éternelle*, 1930) (fig. 65);<sup>32</sup> and *The Survivor* (*Le survivant*, 1950).<sup>33</sup>

### Beyond collecting

In addition to essentially partnering in a modern art gallery and assembling their own collection, the de Menils were influential participants in a diverse program of activities that served to cement the reputations of the artists that they collected, none more so than Magritte. The de Menils’ commitment to serious scholarship on Magritte’s work has been discussed in terms of their sponsorship of his catalogue raisonné. Long before he had the idea to launch a catalogue raisonné of Magritte’s work, however, John de Menil assumed an active role as a trustee of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, where he served for over ten years (nearly twenty, counting his time as a committee member beginning in 1949). He and Dominique were faithful supporters of the foun-

29 Letter from David Sylvester to Dominique de Menil, June 19, 1980, object file, 1980–1409 DJ, Menil Archives.

30 Ibid.

31 Sotheby Parke Bernet, November 5–6, 1979, lot 21.

32 Sotheby Parke Bernet, May 17, 1978, lot 78.

33 Sotheby Parke Bernet, November 5–6, 1979, lot 22.

ding director Alfred H. Barr Jr. and were proactive in establishing their influence at the institution. John clarified the couple's intention to be participants in the acquisition process in a letter to the curator Dorothy Miller in 1964: "When we contribute something to the collection of the Museum, it is for a specific work with which Alfred Barr or you have fallen in love, as well as we have."<sup>34</sup>

Iolas initiated the couple's first gift to the museum in 1949. That June he wrote to Barr to inform him that the de Menils wished to donate one work each by Victor Brauner, Stanislaw Lepri, and Magritte. Barr accepted the first two gifts, the Brauner and the Lepri, without reservation. Ironically, given Magritte's later prominence in MoMA's collection, it was his work that gave Barr pause. He rejected the three paintings that Iolas initially proposed (Barr was to have chosen one of the three) and replied asking Iolas if "the donor would permit us to look through the shipment of Magrittes which I believe you expect during the course of the next few months."<sup>35</sup> Finally at the end of 1950, Barr found at the Hugo Gallery a painting that he, Iolas, and the de Menils approved of, the second version of *The Empire of Light* (*L'Empire des lumières II*, 1950). Barr wrote to the de Menils that the choice was "a picture which we all agree is of extraordinary quality," adding the slightly backhanded editorial, "not only is the canvas beautifully painted, but the paradoxical poetry is much more subtle than is usual in Magritte."<sup>36</sup> A few years later, in 1957, James Thrall Soby, then chairman of MoMA's acquisition committee, was at the Hugo Gallery when he spied *Memory of a Voyage* (*Souvenir de voyage*, 1955). The de Menils happily provided the museum with the funds to purchase the painting.<sup>37</sup>

## The exhibitions

The de Menils understood the power of well-designed exhibitions in the public's reception of an artist and so left a legacy of organizing important shows, beginning in 1951 with "Vincent Van Gogh" for the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. Magritte was often included in group or thematic exhibitions drawn from their collection in the 1950s and 1960s, such as the 1958 show "Islands Beyond: An Exhibition of Ecclesiastical Sculpture and Modern Paintings" organized and installed

34 Quoted in Ann Temkin, "Sharing a Vision. The de Menils and the Modern," in Marcia Brennan et al., eds., *A Modern Patronage. de Menil Gifts to American and European Museums*, exh. cat., Houston, Menil Foundation (Houston: Menil Foundation, 2007), pp. 63–73, here p. 66.

35 Ibid., p. 66.

36 Ibid., p. 67.

37 Ibid., p. 68.



66 Adelaide de Menil, *René Magritte and Dominique de Menil at the Rodeo, Simonton, Texas, 1965*. Houston, TX, The Menil Collection.

by curator Jermayne MacAgy. A candlelit combination of modern paintings with medieval religious sculpture, “Islands Beyond” exemplified the innovative connections that MacAgy drew between artworks from differing contexts as well as her dramatic style of installation. Dominique de Menil’s later exhibitions, though less theatrical, owed much to MacAgy’s model of unexpected juxtapositions and sensitive exhibition design.

The de Menil family were major lenders to “Magritte in America,” the first solo museum exhibition of Magritte in the United States. Organized by Douglas MacAgy (Jermayne MacAgy’s ex-husband) for the Dallas Museum of Art, the show opened in December 1960 and traveled to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in 1961, where it was installed by Jermayne. In 1964 Dominique de Menil herself, with the aid of the art department of St. Thomas University and underwriting by Nelson A. Rockefeller, organized a retrospective, “Magritte,” of over one hundred works by the artist for the Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock. Although Jermayne MacAgy had passed away suddenly at the beginning of the year, the installation was designed in her aesthetic. A review in the *Houston Chronicle* described the show as “filling gallery after gallery and reaching into cubicles and structural mazes erected

within the center's big rooms. ... Jim Love, an artist in installation who worked closely with Dr. MacAgy hung this show under the direction of Dominique de Menil."<sup>38</sup>

Testament to the growing importance of Magritte's art in the United States in the 1960s, these two important retrospectives were soon followed in 1965 by a third, organized by MoMA. "Magritte," the first to bring together works from European and American collections, solidified Magritte's prominence in the United States. Not only extremely popular with the public, the exhibition brought a renewed critical appreciation for Magritte both as a precedent for pop art and as a living representative of a historical avant-garde.<sup>39</sup> Magritte's attendance at the opening festivities marked the first and only time he came to America. After visiting New York, Magritte traveled with his wife Georgette and their Pomeranian dog Loulou to only one other American city, Houston. John and Dominique de Menil, who despite their growing collection of his work, had never before met Magritte, hosted a reception for the artist at the University of St. Thomas,<sup>40</sup> installing a number of his works on the campus to mark the occasion. The de Menils also took the Magrittes, including Loulou, to attend a rodeo in Simonton, Texas (approximately forty miles west of Houston), where the artist traded his signature bowler hat for a cowboy hat by the famous designer Stetson (fig. 66).

The de Menils remained committed to Magritte's legacy after his death in 1967, continuing to focus important posthumous exhibitions on his work. October 1976 saw the opening of "Secret Affinities: Words and Images by René Magritte," at Rice Museum, Rice University, Houston.<sup>41</sup> Curated by Dominique de Menil, the relatively small exhibition consisted entirely of works from the de Menils' collection and other private collections in Houston. Her installation design (fig. 67) drew themes and motifs from the paintings themselves to create poetic vignettes, including mirrors, windowed-doors, and curtained interiors, that placed the viewer within Magritte's familiar, yet disturbing, domesticity. When the Menil Collection as a museum opened in 1987, the Magritte works unsurprisingly played a major role in the Surrealism Galleries. Installed by Dominique de Menil, director Walter Hopps, and assistant director Paul Winkler, the galleries, painted in a signature gray

38 Campbell Geeslin, "A Perfect Platform" *Houston Chronicle*, May 24, 1964, p. 6.

39 See Sandra Zalman, *Consuming Surrealism in American Culture: Dissident Modernism* (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2015) (Ashgate Studies in Surrealism), pp. 85–99.

40 St. Thomas is a small Catholic University adjacent to the Menil Collection. The de Menils were important underwriters of the institution from 1956 to 1963. See William Camfield, "Two Museums and Two Universities. Toward the Menil Collection," in Helfenstein and Schipsi, *Art and Activism* (note 4), pp. 49–73.

41 When their involvement with the University of St. Thomas ended, the de Menils shifted their support to another nearby school, Rice University, from 1969–1985. *Ibid.*

67 Hickey & Robertson,  
installation view of the  
exhibition “Secret  
Affinities: Words and  
Images by René Magritte,”  
Houston, TX, Rice  
University, Rice Museum,  
1976, curated by Dominique  
de Menil. Houston, TX,  
The Menil Collection.



color, reiterated some of the impulses of the Rice exhibition. Two paintings were placed in niches in the gallery walls, and an actual window cut into the wall allowed viewers to glimpse a second gallery, where *David's Madame Récamier* (*Madame Récamier de David*, 1967), was displayed on a platform with *The Listening Room*. A selection of Magritte's work has remained on view in the Surrealist Galleries of the Menil Collection ever since.

Although John de Menil had died some twenty years earlier, in the winter of 1992–1993 Dominique celebrated their multi-decade devotion to the work of Magritte by making her museum the site of an important posthumous retrospective. Simply titled “Magritte,” the exhibition, curated by David Sylvester, was timed to accompany the publication of both the first volume of the catalogue raisonné and the monograph that Sylvester simultaneously prepared. The huge exhibition included over 150 works and occupied nearly half of the Menil Collection's public galleries. More than twenty years later, the Menil Collection took up the founders' legacy, co-organizing, with MoMA and the Art Institute of Chicago,



“Magritte: The Mystery of the Ordinary,” the first in-depth exploration of the artist’s breakthrough surrealist period from 1926 to 1938. The Menil Collection was not only the largest lender to the exhibition but, due to the depth of its holdings, was able to mount a separate companion show, “Memories of a Voyage: The Late Works of René Magritte.”

## Conclusion

John and Dominique de Menil were passionate collectors of art with a strong humanist belief in its importance to a meaningful life. Teasing apart the Magritte holdings from their collection at large actually exaggerates his importance to the de Menils. Magritte, after all, was only one of many living artists that the de Menils patronized, and modern art was but one of several genres that combine and connect throughout the couple’s diverse collections.<sup>42</sup> It is nonetheless a constructive exercise yielding as it does a thorough account of the many ways in which the de Menils engaged with the art and artists that so inspired them. Guided by Alexander Iolas, who simultaneously played the role of adviser, dealer, and partner, John and Dominique de Menil saw the power in Magritte’s penetrating images at a crucial moment—at the end of the 1940s, when Magritte’s reputation, along with surrealism itself—was largely overpowered by the dominance of abstract expressionism. Iolas’s exclusive right to represent Magritte just at the time that America emerged as a lucrative market was both cause and effect of the importance of the de Menils’ collection. With privileged access to purchase the best of his work, the de Menils gained renown for their growing collection. Meanwhile their burgeoning reputation as serious collectors reflected well upon Magritte. A program of supporting research, the organization of ambitious exhibitions, and the forging of relationships with museums, most notably the Museum of Modern Art, New York, amplified this mutually reinforcing phenomenon for more than twenty years. Beginning in the 1970s, following the closing of Iolas’s galleries and the deaths of John de Menil and Magritte, Dominique de Menil pursued the projects that she and John had started, now making use of David Sylvester’s expertise to enhance the collection. A close look at the Magritte holdings in the Menil Collection demonstrates the manifold overlaps and connections between galleries, museums, and collectors of surrealism in the twentieth century, as well as the key role played by John and Dominique de Menil within these networks.

42 Art itself was only one area to which John and Dominique de Menil directed their energy and resources. See Helfenstein and Schipsi, *Art and Activism* (note 4).

## 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):

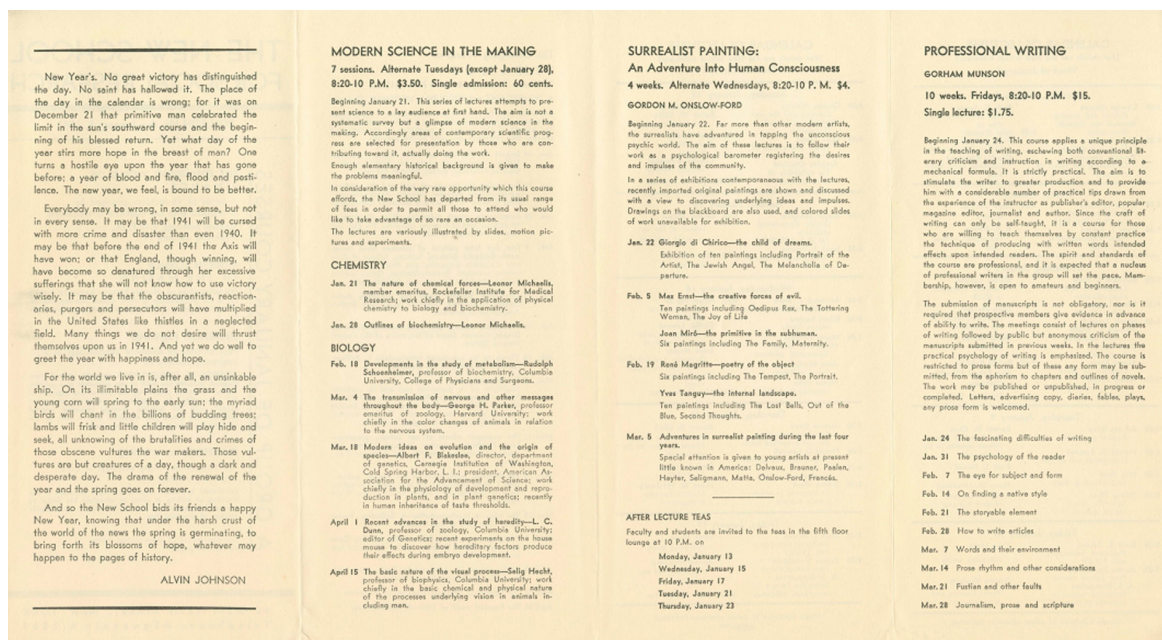
“*Surrealist Painting: An Adventure into Human Consciousness*; 4 sessions, alternate Wednesdays. Far more than other modern artists, the Surrealists have adventured in tapping the unconscious psychic world. The aim of these lectures is to follow their work as a psychological barometer registering the 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.”<sup>1</sup>

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,<sup>2</sup> who accompanied the shows with four lectures.<sup>3</sup> The surrealist events, arranged by surrealists themselves with the help of the New School for Social Research, had

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

<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> 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



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.<sup>4</sup> 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

give a series of lectures at the New School for Social Research, which I called 'Surrealist Painting—An Adventure Into Human Consciousness'). Letter from Gordon Onslow Ford to André Breton, April 18, 1941, Fonds André Breton, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris.

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, *Collezioneismo e mercato: la London Gallery e la diffusione dell'arte surrealista (1938–1950)* (Florence: Ponte-corboli, 2018), pp. 214–221.

surrealism exhibitions.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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."<sup>10</sup>

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

<sup>10</sup> 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).<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup> 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."<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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 Itell 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."<sup>16</sup>

The mural painter Matta referred to was the Ecuadorian artist Camilo Egas, who at the time headed the school's art department<sup>17</sup> and mounted solo exhibitions in 1940 of work by surrealists exiled in New York: Kurt Seligmann in March,<sup>18</sup> Onslow Ford in May,<sup>19</sup> and Stanley William Hayter in October.<sup>20</sup> 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"<sup>21</sup> by a group of dissident academics who had left Columbia University and become associated with the journal the *New Republic*.<sup>22</sup> Its two principle founders were Charles A. Beard and James Harvey Robinson,<sup>23</sup> who, after resigning from Columbia, were looking for an environment that combined teaching and the

<sup>16</sup> Matta to Onslow Ford, April 2, 1940, Lucid Art Foundation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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."<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> 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.”<sup>33</sup>

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 became 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.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> 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."<sup>41</sup>

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,<sup>42</sup> 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."<sup>43</sup>

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."<sup>44</sup>

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."<sup>45</sup>

### "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."<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup> 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."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> New School Curriculum (1941), p.7.

<sup>46</sup> *New School for Social Research Bulletin* (1934), unpaginated.

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

<sup>48</sup> 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."<sup>49</sup>

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,<sup>50</sup> and which he had already introduced in *Minotaure*.<sup>51</sup> However, Breton entirely approved of the lectures.<sup>52</sup>

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.<sup>53</sup> 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."<sup>54</sup>

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.”<sup>55</sup>

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.”<sup>56</sup> 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.”<sup>57</sup> 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,<sup>58</sup> 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.

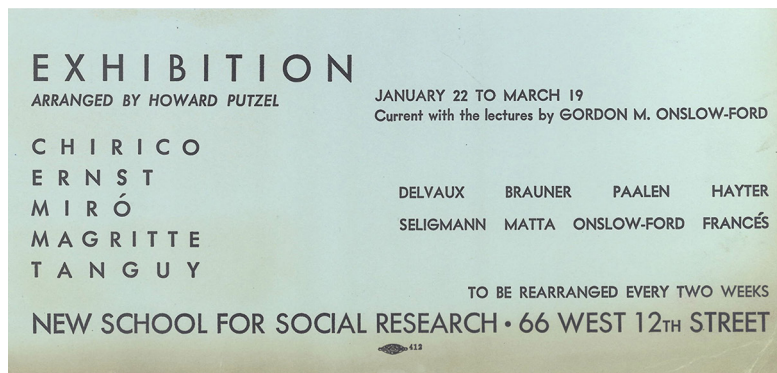
58 Rutkoff and Scott, *New School* (note 23), pp. 72–73.



moment, with the addition of several more lines, to my stupefaction, there appeared a typical classical de Chirico before one's eyes."<sup>59</sup>

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."<sup>60</sup>

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.<sup>61</sup> 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,<sup>62</sup> 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.

- <sup>59</sup> 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.
- <sup>60</sup> Letter from Onslow Ford to Thrall Soby, October 28, 1940, JTS II.C.2.3, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- <sup>61</sup> 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.
- <sup>62</sup> 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."<sup>63</sup> 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."<sup>64</sup> 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."<sup>65</sup> 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 86 West 12th Street New York		
EXHIBITION		
Arranged by Edward Futsel	January 22 to March 19, 1941	Third Floor
CATALOGUE		
CHIRICO		
1. Nostalgia of the Infinite (1911)	Loaned by the Museum of Modern Art	
2. Self-portrait (1912)	" " 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 Poet (1914)	" " Mrs. Yves Tanguy	
6. Toys of a Prince (1915)	" " Pierre Matisse Gallery	
7. War (1916)	" " " " " "	
8. Pelitic (1916)	" " Julien Levy Gallery	
9. The Regret (1916)	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford	
10. The Mathematicians (1917)	" " Museum of Modern Art	
11. Sternal Farewell	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford	
ASP		
12. Mountain, Table, Anchors, Navel	" " Museum of Modern Art	
13. Heads, Quadruped, Landscape	" " Virgil Thomson	
DELVAUX		
14. Psychological Spaces	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford	
DELVAUX		
15. Water Myths	" " " " " "	
DOMINGUEZ		
16. Decalcomania	" " Museum of Modern Art	
ERUST		
17. Tettering Women (1923)	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford	
18. Henry IV, the Lion of Belfort and the War Veteran	" " " " " "	
FRANCÉS		
19. Psychological Landscape	" " " " " "	
20. Mother Earth	" " " " " "	
HAYTER		
21. Ebbence	" " the artist	
22. Introduction	" " " " " "	
23. Composition	" " " " " "	
MAGRITTE		
24. Portrait	" " Gordon H. Onslow-Ford	
MATA		
25. Forêt Bestial de l'Esprit, or Unfinished Forest	" " the artist	
26. Esotericists, the Seduction 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.”<sup>66</sup> 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.”<sup>67</sup> Onslow Ford had begun his speech by stressing that the exhibition presented artists described by Breton as the new generation of surrealists,<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup>

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.<sup>70</sup> 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.”<sup>71</sup> 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."<sup>72</sup>

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."<sup>73</sup> 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."<sup>74</sup>

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.,<sup>75</sup> Roberto Matta, William Baziotès, 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.<sup>76</sup> 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.<sup>77</sup> 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.”<sup>78</sup>

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.<sup>79</sup> 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.”<sup>80</sup> 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.

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

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167–170.

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

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

<sup>80</sup> 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.”)

## II. Agents / Artists



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).<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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”<sup>3</sup> and the *New York Sun* described it as “one of the most triumphant manifestations of free spirit.”<sup>4</sup> *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.”<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> 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

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

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

and finished in exile,<sup>7</sup> 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.”<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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).<sup>13</sup>

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 Burcu 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.<sup>14</sup>

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

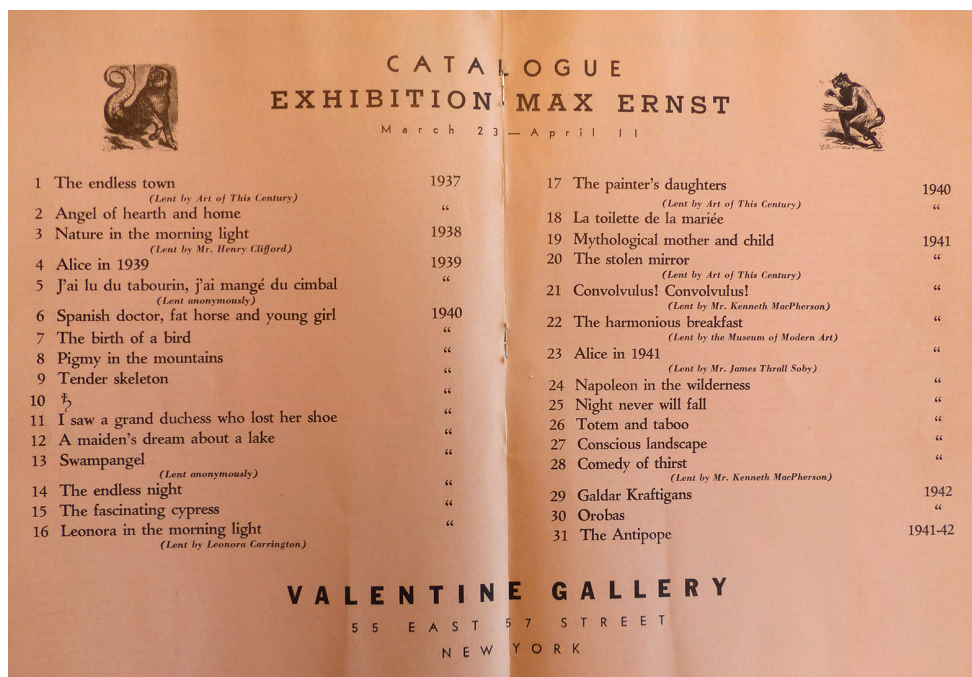
The “Max Ernst” exhibition at the Valentine Gallery, which ran from March 27 to April 11, 1942, presented a total of thirty-one paintings from 1937 to 1942; the decalcomania pictures from the latter two years dominated, representing the technique most used by Ernst at that time (fig. 77). But how did 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> Ernst senior

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

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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.”<sup>17</sup> Yet in 1930s New York, Valentine Dudensing, Pierre Matisse, Paul Rosenberg, and many others were already actively dealing in European and American paintings.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup>

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 Stillleben* (note 16), p. 254.

19 See [www.thevalentinegallery.org](http://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.<sup>21</sup> 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.”<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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.”<sup>26</sup> 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.”<sup>27</sup>

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.<sup>28</sup> Dudensing staged the first solo exhibition of Mondrian’s work in 1942, and was especially known for his interest in Picasso.<sup>29</sup> It was Dudensing who first presented Picasso’s exiled *Guernica* to the American public in May 1939.<sup>30</sup> 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.”<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> 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.”<sup>33</sup>

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).<sup>34</sup> Chrysler then auctioned it in 1945, and as the irony of fate would have it, the Pierre Matisse Gallery bought the picture.<sup>35</sup> 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.

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

<sup>35</sup> 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.”<sup>36</sup>

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.<sup>37</sup> 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.”<sup>38</sup> 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.”<sup>39</sup>

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."<sup>40</sup>

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?"<sup>41</sup> 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."<sup>42</sup>

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]."<sup>43</sup>

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

<sup>40</sup> 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")

<sup>41</sup> Ernst, *Nicht gerade ein Stillleben* (note 16), p. 371.

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

<sup>43</sup> 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."<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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).<sup>46</sup> In addition, Levy issued a press release in which he emphasized that the two artists would be participating in the upcoming MoMA show.<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, the New York press reproduced the phrasing in Levy's press release, celebrating Max Ernst as "one of the leaders,"<sup>48</sup> "the well-known modernist,"<sup>49</sup> and "one of the pioneers of surrealism,"<sup>50</sup> while the younger Leonor Fini was introduced as "the newcomer,"<sup>51</sup> or "one of his younger followers."<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup>

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."<sup>55</sup>

### 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."<sup>56</sup> The *New Yorker* printed a biographical piece about the émigré artist,<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> 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."<sup>59</sup> The reviewer at the *Times* also stressed Ernst's closeness to abstraction, something that the *Sun*, on the other hand, sharply criticized.<sup>60</sup> 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*."<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup> In one of the few reviews to do so, *ARTnews* also drew attention to the special issue on Max Ernst published by *View* magazine.

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

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

<sup>57</sup> "Expatriate," *New Yorker*, April 4, 1942, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> "Max Ernst," *New York Herald Tribune*, March 29, 1942.

<sup>59</sup> 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.

<sup>60</sup> *New York Sun*, March 27, 1942.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> 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,<sup>63</sup> 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.”<sup>64</sup>

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.<sup>65</sup> *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.<sup>66</sup> 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*.<sup>67</sup>

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*.”<sup>68</sup> Breton and Ford had already crossed paths in Europe when Ford was working in London as the American editor of the *London Gallery Bulletin*.<sup>69</sup> 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.<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup>

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.

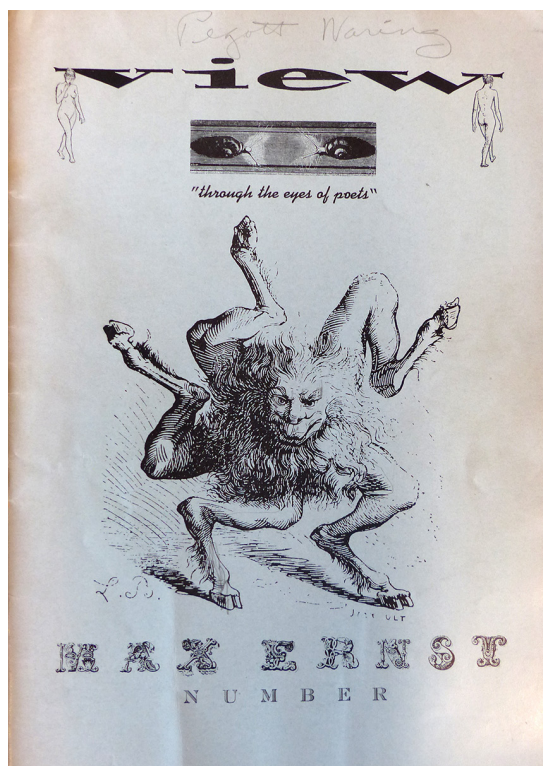
By subsidizing and distributing the monograph, the Valentine Gallery also boosted its own publicity. The Max Ernst edition was followed by a second issue with a similar concept, introducing two artists, Yves Tanguy and Pavel Tchelitchew, and also effectively served as the catalogue for their monographic exhibitions at the Pierre Matisse and Julien Levy galleries.<sup>72</sup> 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.<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup>

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.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup>

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.<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup>

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.<sup>79</sup>

## 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.<sup>80</sup> 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.”<sup>81</sup> 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*.<sup>82</sup> 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."<sup>83</sup> 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.<sup>84</sup> 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."<sup>85</sup> None of these events are mentioned in Gypsy Rose Lee's autobiography.<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup>

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*).<sup>88</sup> *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.”<sup>89</sup>

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*.”<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup> 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.”<sup>92</sup>

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.



81 Raymond Gram Swing, "Nativity of a New World," in *Esquire*, December 1942.



## Surrealistic Socialite: Dalí's Portrait Exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries in 1943

Martin Schieder

In December 1942, the men's magazine *Esquire* published Salvador Dalí's painting *Nativity of a New World*, which was created the same year, on a foldout double-page color spread (fig. 81). In his article, journalist Raymond Gram Swing presented the work as a symbol of contemporary America: "His New World is the product of the physical America of today, with its contours, canyons ... redwood trees, and sloping hills. The central individuals, a cowboy and a Negro ... are genuine representatives of the American of today." He emphatically interpreted the painting as "a call to courage."<sup>1</sup> In point of fact, the painting can be read as a symbol of Dalí's own success in the United States. Even before he and his wife Gala went into exile in the United States in August 1940, Dalí had regularly exhibited at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York in the 1930s, and in 1939 at the New York World's Fair with his Dream of Venus pavilion, as well as creating a sensation with spectacular events such as his window display for the Bonwit Teller luxury department store on Fifth Avenue. In 1942, MoMA dedicated a large-scale solo exhibition to the artist, which subsequently toured the United States to great interest. *Time* magazine described his autobiography *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, published the same year, as "a wild jungle of fantasy ... narcissist and sadist confessions."<sup>2</sup> Dalí was "BIG news," with the press reporting extensively on the glamorous and publicity-seeking lifestyle that Gala and Salvador maintained on both the East and West Coasts, where they resided in luxurious hotels, giving them access to

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Vera Bornkessel and Franziska Fleckenstein for their inspiration and support. R. G. Swing, "Nativity of a New World," *Esquire. The Magazine for Men*, December 1942, pp. 41–42, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> "Art: Not So Secret Life," *Time*, December 28, 1942.



82 Salvador Dalí, *Portrait of Princess Gourielli (Helena Rubinstein)*, 1943, oil on canvas, 88.9 × 66 cm. Private collection.



83 Salvador Dalí, *Portrait of Dorothy Spreckels Munn*, 1942, oil on canvas, 78.7 × 63.8 cm, frame: 104.1 × 87.6 × 5.1 cm. San Francisco, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, gift of Mrs. Charles A. Munn.

super-rich, art-collecting American socialites.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, Dalí and his wife were to focus their business strategy entirely on this audience. They availed themselves of the experience of the exclusive *Zodiaque* network of patrons who had supported them in Paris since 1932. Several members of this *tourbillon mondain*, which included Charles de Noailles, Caresse Crosby, and the Marquise Cuevas de Vera, had helped the artist couple in their early career in the United States by securing key social connections.<sup>4</sup>

*Nativity of a New World* was one of the works displayed in the Dalí exhibition held from April 14 to May 5, 1943, in the galleries of M.

3 Herbert Cerwin, "Dalí's Del Monte Party Is Attracting National Interest," *Monterey Peninsula Herald*, Monterey California, August 29, 1941, p. 14.

4 Marijke Peyser-Verhaar, "Salvador Dalí et le mécénat du Zodiaque," *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, no. 121 (2012), pp. 58–71, p. 67.



84 Salvador Dalí,  
*Mrs. Harrison Williams*  
*(Mona Bismarck)*, 1943,  
 oil on canvas,  
 92 × 62 cm.  
 Private collection.

Knoedler and Company in Manhattan.<sup>5</sup> The show's real attraction, however, was a top-class selection of portraits that Dalí had executed in the late 1930s and early 1940s of members of American high society, as well as exiled personalities whom the artist had known in Europe. It is immediately noticeable that it was almost exclusively women who sat for these social portraits—daughters, wives, and widows of industrialists and bankers; singers and fashion icons; glamorous women from the international jet set; and self-made women. They included Princess Artchil Gourielli (alias Helena Rubinstein) (fig.82), who had built up an empire of beauty products and was known for her love of jewelry; and

<sup>5</sup> A letter from Gala to Otto Spaeth indicates that the painting was lent specifically to the exhibition at Knoedler's; see Gala Dalí (Pebble Beach, California) to Otto Spaeth (Dayton, Ohio), February 15, 1943. Eloise and Otto Spaeth Papers, 1937–1983. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/gala-dali-pebblebeach-calif-letter-to-otto-spaeth-dayton-ohio-11073>, accessed February 24, 2019.





85 Salvador Dalí, *His Excellency Don Juan Cardenas, Spanish Ambassador*, 1943, oil on canvas, 61.3 × 50.8 cm. Private collection.

Dorothy Spreckels, heiress to the Spreckels Sugar Company (fig. 83), whose public breakup with her husband created enormous buzz in the San Francisco tabloid press. Viewers could admire the portrait of Mrs. Harrison Williams (alias Mona Bismarck) (fig. 84), voted the Best-Dressed Woman in the World; that of Claire Dux, a singer of German descent and third wife of a Chicago meat processing industry tycoon; that of Mrs. Harold McCormick, initially a nurse then the third wife, and finally widow, of Harold Fowler McCormick, a harvesting machine millionaire; and that of Lady Louis Mountbatten, an English aristocrat who dedicated her life to the pursuit of pleasure, running between parties, dress shops, and men.<sup>6</sup> Also on display was the portrait of Mrs. Ortiz de Linares, wife of the Bolivian ambassador to France, and that of the wife of film director Luther Greene. For his few portraits of men, Dalí chose the impresario the Marquis de Cuevas, a patron of his theater projects, and Juan Cárdenas, the Spanish ambassador to the United States (fig. 85).

6 See Janet P. Morgan, *Edwina Mountbatten: A Life of Her Own* (London: Harper Collins, 1991).

“Drawings and Paintings by Dalí,” as the Knoedler exhibition was titled, illustrates fundamental aspects of the business relationship between artists, art dealers, and clients in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s at the very high end of the market.<sup>7</sup> Within the context of the broader research project that is the focus of this publication, which investigates the networks, agents, and mechanisms of the market for surrealist art in the United States, this essay explores the perspective of one artist in particular and, specifically, the ways in which Dalí aligned his artistic work, business strategy, and public relations with the conditions of the American market. Why did Dalí choose to present his society portraits at a gallery famed for selling old masters, which did not, at the time, include any avant-garde art in its program? And how could Dalí, with his surrealist imagery, satisfy the need of wealthy clients and style icons for social representation and the “publicness of the private,” to use Roland Barthes’s phrase? To illustrate these points and answer these questions, it is necessary to reconstruct the ways in which Dalí developed his successful business model of painting “surrealistic” society portraits by drawing on sociological, media-historical, and fashion world perspectives.

### Avida Dollars!

Since no photographs of the exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries appear to have survived, it is difficult to comment on the display, not least because press reports contain few details about the exhibition itself. The most important primary source of information is the exhibition catalogue, which was published in a print run of 3,000 copies and features full-page black-and-white reproductions of all the exhibits. Thanks to a working maquette for the show’s design that has recently appeared on the art market, we know that Dalí meticulously designed the catalogue himself. Working on the reverse side of a catalogue from an El Greco exhibition that had taken place in January–February 1941 at Knoedler’s, he designed the catalogue layout by sketching the exhibits in pen and

7 On Dalí’s success and popularity in the United States, see Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen. Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde 1920–1950* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995); Robert S. Lubar, “Salvador Dalí in America: The Rise and Fall of an Arch-Surrealist,” in *Surrealism USA*, exh. cat., New York, National Academy Museum/Phoenix Art Museum, ed. Isabelle Dervaux (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz/New York: National Academy Museum, 2004), pp. 20–29; and Sandra Zalman, *Consuming Surrealism in American Culture: Dissident Modernism* (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2015). So far, only Gabriel Montua has dealt with Dalí’s exhibition at Knoedler’s; Gabriel Montua, *Dalís 20. Jahrhundert. Die westliche Kunst zwischen Politik, Markt und Medien* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 226ff. See also Ian Gibson, *Salvador Dalí. Die Biographie* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1998), pp. 442–444; and Torsten Otte, *Salvador Dalí & Andy Warhol. Encounters in New York and Beyond* (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016), pp. 275–284.



pencil, while Gala transcribed in French the foreword dictated by Dalí, titled “Dalí to the Reader.”<sup>8</sup> This programmatic essay lists the artist’s successes in the United States as if on a business card, and defines his new “classical” understanding of art that drew on old master techniques, which was then taken up and disseminated by the press.

It may initially seem surprising that Dalí decided in favor of the Knoedler Galleries on 15 East Fifty-Seventh Street, having previously exhibited at the Julien Levy Gallery,<sup>9</sup> which specialized in European and American avant-garde art. The Knoedler Galleries’ program was geared toward old masters from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries and impressionism, and at that time did not feature any European avant-garde art. In collaboration with the International Art Union, the gallery also sponsored American art and artists, hosting the exhibition “American Watercolors and Pastels” in 1942, “American Landscape Painting” in 1943, and “American Painting: Landscape, Genre, and Still Life of the 19th and 20th Century” a year later. A third focus of the gallery was portrait painting—in 1940 Knoedler’s showed “Italian Renaissance Portraits” and, in 1944, a loan exhibition of “American Portraits by American Painters.” Old masters from Europe, American art, and portraits: Dalí and his business-savvy wife recognized in this program the opportunity to gain access to a clientele that was both of high social standing and financially extremely powerful. Knoedler’s customer list included the blue chips of American collectors, ranging from the Rockefellers to Andrew and Paul Mellon, Henry Clay Frick, and Samuel Kress. Knoedler also had important institutional partners, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Musée du Louvre, and the Tate Gallery. In light of this, the Knoedler Galleries offered the perfect venue to present a selection of Dalí’s society portraits—and Dalí’s calculation seemed to pay off. “His surrealist portraits are selling like hot cakes,” wrote the *San Antonio Light*.<sup>10</sup> In *Life* magazine he was dubbed “America’s No. 1 public madman,” and next to the reproduction of his portrait of Mona Bismarck one could read, “Society ladies pay as much

8 Salvador Dalí, “Dalí to the Reader,” *Dalí, April 14 to May 5, 1943, at the Galleries of M. Knoedler and Company, Inc.* (New York: M. Knoedler, 1943), o.p.; Working maquette for *Dalí, April 14 to May 5, 1943, at the Galleries of M. Knoedler and Company, Inc.*, New York, 1943; <https://fineart.ha.com/itm/fine-art-work-on-paper/salvador-dali-spanish-1904-1989-working-maquette-for-dali-april-14-to-may-5-1943-at-the-galleries-of-m-knoedler-a/a/5113-64020.s?ic3=ViewItem-Auction-Archive-ThisAuction-120115>, accessed February 24, 2019; “El Greco,” Loan Exhibition for the Benefit of the Greek War Relief Association, January 17–February 15, 1941, commemorating the 400th anniversary of the birth of El Greco, at the galleries of M. Knoedler and Company, New York 1941.

9 On January 12, 1935, Dalí had exhibited just two portraits—*Two Portraits of Salvador Dalí: Mrs. Clarence M. Wooley and Edward Wassermann*—at the Julien Levy Gallery for only one day. See Edward Alden Jewell, “Surrealiste Art Marks Week-End. Salvador Dalí,” in “Lectures on Paranoiac Images, Tells of Mystic Form,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1935, p. 12.

10 Inez Robb, “Dalí’s Daffy Day,” *San Antonio Light*, August 10, 1941, p. 7.

as \$25,000 for his portraits showing them garnished with lizards and sprouting foliage instead of hair.”<sup>11</sup> From other sources we know that the painter charged \$5,000 upwards for his portraits, an exorbitant sum at the time.<sup>12</sup>

The success of the show was not least due to skillful public relations and marketing: it was reported in detail in the leading American mass media as well as art magazines, frequently featuring lavish illustrations (fig. 86). In view of the celebrity of the subjects and their artist, it is not surprising that the interest of the journalistic community focused on the portraits, with very little discussion of the small number of other paintings, such as *Nativity of a New World* (fig. 81) and *Poetry of America* (1943), or the drawings on display. In most cases, writers of feature articles and columns expressed perplexity and amusement at the “portraiture lifted to an unforgettable plane in these carefully charted and meticulously recorded studies of the Upper Crust.”<sup>13</sup> The venerable *New York Times* stated that the portraits were possibly “a graphic report rendered at the end of a two-year psychoanalysis,” and that Dalí’s problem was obviously “that the paintings had also to be portraits.”<sup>14</sup> While *Art Digest* mocked the “sweet portrayal” of sugar heiress Dorothy Spreckels,<sup>15</sup> the *New York Sun* condemned the show: “Nothing but plodding, plodding workmanship and an infinity of detail. ... The sitters suggest money and that is about all.”<sup>16</sup> Even *Vogue* covered the Dalí exhibition, stating that the “new portraits look like a demoniac mixture of Underwood and Underwood photographic realism, Kraft-Ebbing, and superb Italian Renaissance draftsmanship.”<sup>17</sup> But a press that nagged, slandered, or expressed outrage precisely met the expectations of both audience and artist, guaranteeing the publicity they had hoped for. The artist and his critics also agreed on one thing: while Dalí’s art in Europe was supported only by intellectuals, in the United States everyone would understand it: “[I]n this country, he has wide popular appeal; the people like him, and even if they don’t understand his works, the poetry and emotion in the paintings appeals to them.”<sup>18</sup> In fact, Dalí’s Ameri-

11 Winthrop Sargeant, “Dalí. An excitable Spanish artist, now scorned by his fellow surrealists, has succeeded in making deliberate lunacy a paying proposition,” *Life*, September 24, 1945, pp. 63–68, p. 66.

12 “Close up of the Dali Technique; or, What Sitters Get for Their Money,” *ARTnews*, vol. 42 (April 15, 1943), p. 11: “In the long run it is his technique that brings dollars to Dalí. The sitter who meets his price (reputedly in five figures) gets solid craftsmanship along with a fascinating exposé of his libido.”

13 H.B., “Done the Dalí Way,” *Art Digest*, April 15, 1943, p. 7.

14 Edward Alden Jewell, “News and Notes of Art,” *New York Times*, April 14, 1943, p. 28.

15 H.B., “Done the Dalí Way” (note 13), p. 7.

16 H. McB [Henry McBride], “Attractions in the Galleries,” *New York Sun*, April 16, 1943, p. 28.

17 “People Are Talking About,” *Vogue*, vol. 101, no. 10 (May 15, 1943), p. 51.

18 Emilie Keyes, “Artist Salvador Dali Would Rather Paint His Wife Than Any Of Hollywood’s Fairest,” *Palm Beach Post*, April 21, 1942, p. 5.

## Portraits by *Dali*

Whatever else Salvador Dali's paintings may be, they are always news. His first exhibition of portraits, which opens on Wednesday at the Knoedler Galleries, seems certain to start the usual controversy. Hitherto the combination of smooth surfaces, a miniature-like technique, striking drawing and supposedly surrealist subject matter has led to endless discussion. In the portraits the sitters naturally have been given prominence

at the expense of the crutches and other strangely assorted objects so meticulously arranged in the earlier paintings, but some of the materials introduced in the earlier work remain in the portraits and the slick technique has been retained.

Five examples of Dali's new claim on attention, mostly portraits of people prominent in the world of society and fashion, are reproduced herewith. —H. D.



Mrs. Luther Greene.



Lady Louis Mountbatten.



Mrs. Harrison Williams.



Mrs. Dorothy Spreckles.



Mrs. Charles Swift.

86 H. D., "Portraits by Dali," press review of the "Dali" exhibition at the Galleries of M. Knoedler and Company, New York, 1943, in *The New York Times Magazine*, April 11, 1943.

can oeuvre, with its academic style in the manner of the old masters, offered a lithesome approach to an audience unfamiliar with the aesthetic and intellectual ideologies of the Parisian avant-gardes. And even though his pictorial symbolism was complex, bizarre, and occasionally “shocking,” the dream world of Salvador Dalí could be easily explained as “Freudian” and decoded as “personal symbology.” The harshest criticism, however, came from his adversary André Breton, who in his famous anagram “Avida Dollars” denounced Dalí’s capitalist appearance in the United States, making a distinction between this Dalí and “the early Dalí, who disappeared in around 1935 to make way for the personality better known as Avida Dollars, fashionable portraitist recently converted to the Catholic faith and ‘to the artistic ideals of the Renaissance.’”<sup>19</sup> When the exhibition opened at Knoedler’s, Breton had long since broken with Dalí due to his commercial motivation and proximity to fascism, and had banished him from the surrealist movement. Reacting to Dalí’s success in the United States, his former companions now turned against him as an “anti-surrealist.” After seeing Dalí’s last exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery, Nicolas Calas launched an attack on him in *View* both politically, as “the painter of Franco’s ambassador” and a “stinking Don Quixote” and for his classical style, with which he joined the “counterrevolution”: “How easy to protest in the name of Pure Art: You attack Dalí, after having praised him, because he no longer believes in revolutionary values! He has rediscovered Spain, penitence, Catholicism; he adores form and tries to draw as well as Ingres.”<sup>20</sup> So it was not without a certain irony that in the United States, Dalí was received by the press as *the* surrealist artist, while at the same time the Breton circle endeavored to isolate him in the strictest terms.

### American faces

For his society portraits, Dalí developed an image type that could be adapted and varied depending on the model: while he rendered the faces of his models almost photographically, he looked to contemporary fashion for the costumes. His models fit into the settings of his surreal landscapes in terms of their color scheme, which he stated was inspired by “the calm classicism of the Californian landscape.”<sup>21</sup> In addition, the portraits received special momentum through the use of mythologi-

19 André Breton, *Anthology of Black Humor* [1940] (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997), p. 323.

20 Nicolas Calas, “Anti-Surrealist Dalí. I Say His Flies Are Ersatz,” *View*, vol. 1, no. 6 (June 1941), pp. 1 and 3. See Julia Pine, “Anti-Surrealist Cross-Word Puzzles: Breton, Dalí and Print in Wartime America,” *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, no. 1 (2007), pp. 1–29.

21 Dalí, “Dalí to the Reader” (note 8).



cal stereotypes, which lent them a quasi-historical legitimacy. Dorothy Spreckels rides like a Nereid on a dolphin—an allusion to the name of her neoclassical estate La Dolphine in Newmar, California, acquired in 1940—as Apollo rises out of the water in the background (fig. 83). Helena Rubinstein, like her mythological alter ego Andromeda, is “chained” to rocks, draped in the jewels for which she was so famous (fig. 82). Lady Mountbatten’s head, sprouting green snakes, mutates into a seductive Medusa. With this eye-catching symbolism, Dalí valorized his clients and stylized them to become timeless artistic figures.<sup>22</sup> In this way, he positioned himself in the tradition of society portraitists such as Titian, Nattier, Gainsborough, and Ingres. To increase recognition value even further, he repeatedly inserted citations from art history into the compositions. In the portrait of Juan Cárdenas, Franco’s official representative in the United States, the observer could discover a scene from Velázquez’s *The Surrender of Breda* (ca. 1635). With its depiction of El Escorial in the background, this painting also introduced an explosively contemporary historical note revealing Dalí’s connection with the Franco regime (fig. 85).<sup>23</sup> And in the portrait *Marquis George de Cuevas*, a burial chamber and cypress tree evoke Arnold Böcklin’s *Isle of the Dead* (1880–86). For the portrait of Isabel Tas-Welz, from 1945, Dalí appropriated Piero della Francesca’s double portrait of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino in the Uffizi (ca. 1465), explaining that the sitter intended to hang her portrait next to a Tintoretto in her home in Vienna.<sup>24</sup> This rhetorical cue betrays Dalí’s desire to present himself as a master within art history by utilizing classical iconography and old master techniques—“my whole ambition,” he claimed, “is to rediscover the tradition of the old master.”<sup>25</sup> By adopting Renaissance glazing techniques, he demonstrated his technical virtuosity. To underscore Dalí’s new image as a “classicist,” for which Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci served as references, *ARTnews* published an article titled “Closeup of the Dali Technique, or, What Sitters Get for Their Money,” which stated that Dalí was “greatly improving modern standards of craftsmanship” and illustrated his skills with detailed photographs of two portraits.<sup>26</sup>

22 Ibid.: “My aim was to establish a rapport of fatality between each of the different personalities and their backgrounds, in a manner which, far from any direct symbolism, constitutes the sum of the mediumistic and iconographic volume that each person represented was capable of releasing in my mind.”

23 See Pine, “Anti-Surrealist Cross-Word Puzzles” (note 20), pp. 16–17; William Jeffett, “The Artist and the Dictator: Salvador Dalí and Francisco Franco,” in Michael R. Taylor, ed., *The Dalí Renaissance: New Perspectives on His Life and Art After 1940* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 128–152; Montua, *Dalís 20* (note 7), pp. 233–236.

24 [Salvador Dalí], “Exposition of the Latest Portraits by Dalí,” *Dali News: Monarch of the Dailies*, vol. I, no. 1 (November 20, 1945).

25 Dalí, “Dalí to the Reader” (note 8).

26 “Close up of the Dali Technique,” *ARTnews* (note 12), p. 11.



Furthermore, the portraits were intended to appeal to a clientele who collected old masters acquired from Knoedler, to be displayed in the American pastiches of their Renaissance palazzi or their baroque *hôtels particuliers*. In keeping with this, Dalí presented his paintings in “Antique frames courtesy of Knoedler Galleries.”<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, the question arises as to why the Spanish painter achieved such success with his portraits in the United States. Why did he choose a classical genre of pictures and an eclectic style so vehemently rejected by his former surrealist friends? When *Art Digest* stated that Knoedler had “the faces of America’s first families” on display, the magazine summed up Dalí’s intention perfectly.<sup>28</sup> In his recent book *American Faces: A Cultural History of Portraiture and Identity*, Richard H. Saunders investigates the cultural-historical tradition and identity-establishing significance of the society portrait in America. Interestingly, its roots can be traced, in part, back to the grand portrait tradition of the so-called Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century, when America’s oil barons, steel magnates, and railway tycoons amassed colossal fortunes and filled their domiciles with art and luxury. Saunders describes the sociological criteria for these *American Faces*, which Dalí’s portraits of the American social elite amply fulfill. The primary task of a society portrait is that it “involves the reinforcement of the sitters’ own self-image in which the outer representation matches the inner dreams and visions.”<sup>29</sup> Portraits were also intended to make visible the client’s affiliation with a specific social group, whereby “wealth, fashion, status, and likeness” were paramount.<sup>30</sup> Within American society, whose self-image was already based on success and prosperity in an elementary form at that time, these four aspects represented the parameters of social and individual identity. Dalí understood how to meet this need, on one hand by staging his models’ exterior in an eye-catching manner, and on the other, by lending historicity and an individual aura to the subjects depicted by means of surrealist symbolism. Even if the faces take on an almost photographic quality, likeness retreats behind the representation of social status, which is articulated through carefully selected poses and spectacular settings. Dalí’s artistic approach of the early 1930s, in which he revealed the subconscious minds of his models, took a back seat in his American portraits in favor of social representation.<sup>31</sup>

27 Salvador Dalí, “Dalí to the Reader,” *Dalí, April 14 to May 5, 1943* (note 8).

28 H.B., “Done the Dali Way” (note 13), p. 7.

29 Richard H. Saunders, *American Faces: A Cultural History of Portraiture and Identity* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2016), p. 6.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

31 See “Surrealist Art is Puzzle No More,” *New York Times*, January 10, 1935, p. 21: “‘In my painting I aim to portray the subconscious as realistically as other artists depict the objective world,’ Mr. Dali explained yesterday at the Julien Levy Gallery ... where his two latest portraits are to be shown privately for three days.”

Saunders also points out that society portraits are generally “not commissions for a private home, but they were created for public exhibition.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the establishment and institutionalization of a national portrait culture had been systematically pursued in the United States since at least the turn of the twentieth century. In 1912, the National Association of Portrait Painters was founded as an “American movement for the sake of the art of portraiture by American artists,” with annual exhibitions touring the country.<sup>33</sup> In 1942, one year before Dalí’s exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries, the Portrait Incorporation was created by fifty leading painters of social portraits who joined forces to regularly exhibit their work in the Portrait Painters’ Clearing House at 460 Park Avenue, New York.<sup>34</sup> Dalí pursued a similar strategy with his society portraits, which did not disappear into their owners’ private rooms after their completion, but instead circulated in exhibitions, charity events, and not least in the media, which was mutually beneficial to Dalí and his sitters. Numerous newspaper and magazine reports and advertisements for private and public portrait exhibitions regularly mention Dalí’s name. On May 24, 1941, the *Chicago Tribune* reported on the opening of the Dalí exhibition at the Chicago Arts Club, which included not only the portraits of Mrs. Harold McCormick and Lady Mountbatten, but also the gouache of the famous “walk-in” portrait of Mae West. Less was said about the aesthetic experience than the social event: “The tea given yesterday at the Arts club to open the last three exhibitions of the season was scheduled to start at 4 o’clock, but at least an hour earlier there were 100 women assembled in the galleries. Not the pictures, but Dalí ... was the main attraction.”<sup>35</sup> The Knoedler Galleries thus proved to be a perfect stage for the simultaneous appearance of ten portraits in which portraiture and the *image* of the socialite merged together, as had been the case in the Paris Salons of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

At the same time, the artist succeeded in generating commissions for further portraits and encouraging the art-going public to acquire other works from him, as the following example illustrates. In 1942 the businessman Albert Reynolds Morse and his wife Eleanor visited the traveling Dalí retrospective at the Cleveland Museum of Art organized by MoMA, and became fascinated with the artist’s work. During the exhibition at Knoedler’s, they met Dalí personally for the first time, and purchased the watercolor *The Madonna of the Birds* (1943) for \$675—a

32 Saunders, *American Faces* (note 29), p. xiii.

33 *American Art Annual*, no. 10 (1912), p. 148.

34 Publication issues include *Portraits of business executives and professional men at work and at play* (1942); *As others see us: Paintings and drawings* (1942?); and *Woman’s crowning glory* (1942?).

35 India Moffet, “Dalí Attracts Record Crowd to Arts Club,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 1941, p. 13.

florid pastiche of a Raphael Madonna. In fact, all thirteen drawings shown at Knoedler's were sold during the exhibition for prices ranging between \$200 and \$800, as indicated in Knoedler's sales ledgers.<sup>36</sup>

## Charity

In analyzing Dalí's target clientele, in addition to the factors of status awareness, social communication, and aesthetic preferences, we must also take into account a further psychographic aspect that had a specific influence on his clients' purchasing behavior. After the end of the Great Depression and America's entry into World War II in December 1941, the country was caught up in a wave of charity and patriotism. The media provided detailed and empathetic information about countless charity events, fundraisers, and social functions. These events were chiefly instigated by prominent, wealthy women. Following Dalí's exhibition at Knoedler's, Helena Rubinstein, for example, hosted a garden party in the Victory Garden of her fourteen-story penthouse to benefit farm workers being recruited by the War Manpower Commission: there, guests could admire her new portrait by the artist, who was present, as well as his three large wall paintings.<sup>37</sup> On July 19, 1940, a Midwestern newspaper carried the article "Women Join In Program To Aid War-Stricken People," which mentioned the dancer Polly Peabody, who had helped to launch Dalí in the United States and founded "the first ambulance units to go over during the lightning war." Also mentioned is Mona Bismarck, who "admits that she cannot knit but says she has plenty of time and money to give to war relief." In her commentary, Patricia Coffin points out the connection between war, charity, and upward social mobility: "Wartime is the golden time for the social climber. She sets foot in the doors which were barred to her before. She mixes with the cream of society because she will work for their cause."<sup>38</sup> The credo of the then-popular society reporter reads like a blueprint for Dalí—the artist, his society portraits, and his clients appeared together a number of times at charity events. This configuration provided an opportunity for publicity and a platform for encountering the same audience as at exhibitions, with the combined themes of cultural patronage and social philanthropy. Dalí and Gala

36 M. Knoedler & Co., Sales Book 14, January 1937–1948 December, The Getty Research Institute, Special collections; <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/2012m54b74>, accessed February 24, 2019.

37 See David Lardner, "Madame Rubinstein's 'Farm in the Sky' included chickens and rabbits," *New Yorker*, May 22, 1943. In 1942 Rubinstein commissioned Dalí to paint three murals to decorate the dining room of her thirty-six-room triplex on Park Avenue.

38 Patricia Coffin, "Women Join In Program To Aid War-Stricken People," *Sheboygan Press* (Sheboygan, Wisconsin), July 12, 1940, p. 6.



SALVADOR DALÍ, the world famous surrealist, talks over plans with Mrs. Dorothy Spreckels Dupuy for his forthcoming costume party, "A Night in an Enchanted Forest," to be held in the Bali room of Hotel Del Monte Tuesday night, September 2, for the benefit of the Museum of Modern Art's fund for European artists who want to come to America.

## Will You Be a Dream or An Animal For Senor Dali's Del Monte Party?

Since Senor Salvador Dali emerged from his "thought compression chamber" the other morning, looked at life behind his mirrored spectacles, and decided that it might be a good idea after all to give a party in the Bali room, certain Monterey Peninsula people in both artistic and social cir-

With Salvador Dali given a free rein at Hotel Del Monte, preparations for his party are booming and he evidently thinks of a new idea hourly without having to resort to his thought compressing machine.

The latest is an order for 5000 gunny sacks. These all have to be filled with newspapers.

Hotel Del Monte wants tons of newspapers, and is sending out an SOS for help. Please bring any old newspapers you may have to the Mechanical department.

cles—or both—are in quite a dither of excitement.

They've got from now until Tuesday, September 2, to decide whether they'll spend Dali's "Surrealist Night in An Enchanted Forest" as the materialization of a favorite dream, a primitive animal, or a little creature of the forest.

Among those who are giving the matter considerable thought and who are already deciding who they'd like to have seated at their

table, are Mr. and Mrs. S. F. B. Morse ("You couldn't pay me to stay away from THIS party," said Mrs. Morse); Dr. and Mrs. Charles Crocker, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Tevis, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Mack, Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Stanton, Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Eyre, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Bunn, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Velt, Mr. and Mrs. Ashton Stanley, Mrs. Francis McComas, Mr. and Mrs. Robinson Jeffers, Mr. and Mrs. Howard E. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Winslow, Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Haldorn, Mrs. Daulton Mañ, Mrs. Frances Elkins, Mrs. Henry Van Dyke, and many others who have been intensely interested in meeting Dali from the beginning.

Mrs. Lent Hooker (Nancy Morse) of Atherton called Del Monte on the telephone to say she's bringing down a large party of friends for this affair. Mrs. Dorothy Spreckels Dupuy has signified definitely that she will bring a group down.

Among Pebble Beach residents who have planned house parties over the Labor Day week end and who will bring their guests over to the Dali party are Mr. and Mrs. Harton Singer Jr., Mr. and Mrs. George Coleman Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Hornby, who will have the newly-wedded Raymond Hornby Jr.s with them among others; Mr. and Mrs. M. S. Slocum, Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler Farish, and Mr. and Mrs. Walter M. Drury.

## Douglas School News

The Douglas Camps closed their

pated with great eagerness, and those who have gone once are ready to go again the following year. The country they ride through is probably one of the

87 Salvador Dalí and Dorothy Spreckels at the Surrealistic Night in an Enchanted Forest event, photographed in *The Monterey Peninsula Herald*, August 21, 1941.

speculated on this market potential when they authorized viewings of the society portraits for an exclusive circle of culturally interested and socially engaged women from the American money aristocracy. For example, the legendary performative event *A Surrealistic Night in an Enchanted Forest*, held on September 2, 1941, at the Hotel Del Monte in Pebble Beach, California (fig. 87), was intended to generate funds for MoMA to help French and Spanish refugee artists. Clark Gable, Bob Hope, and Bing Crosby flew in from Hollywood, while Alfred Hitchcock arrived from New York along with a few millionaires in tow. The artist couple's strategic goal to introduce themselves into high society on the West Coast through their fundraising party appears to have succeeded. The local press and a photographer reported that Dorothy Spreckels had been waiting for the artist's arrival for three days before the ball. The fashionable Spreckels no doubt used this meeting to commission Dalí for her portrait—the painter was photographed by the press posing in front of the already finished portrait on February

12, 1942.<sup>39</sup> It was therefore no accident that Dalí chose not Julien Levy—who was probably no longer interested in working with the “reactionary” artist—but the Knoedler Galleries, for the simple reason that the gallery’s reputation was largely built on major charitable events at which wealthy American art collectors and socially conscious philanthropists circles met. Other exhibitions held at the gallery include the “London-Paris” show organized to benefit the British War Relief Society (1940) in partnership with the Durand-Ruel Gallery, and the presentation of the J. P. Morgan Collection held in support of the Citizens Committee for the Army and Navy (1943).

### The Best-Dressed Woman

Already in the Gilded Age, a system of public self-staging of American high society women had been established by means of portrait paintings. Even at that time, the boundaries between art and fashion, between pictorial reality and social reality, became blurred in press reports. In 1894, for example, more than 600 portraits of women from private collections were displayed in the “Portraits of Women Loan Exhibition” at the National Academy of Design in New York.<sup>40</sup> A visitors’ parlor game consisted of comparing the society portraits with the living models who were also present, whereby the aesthetic value of the image was of less interest than the social status of the person portrayed. As reported by the *New York Times*:

“Besides this happy competition between art and society there was a merry little rivalry between the portraits and the women who viewed them. As is the case at most such affairs, there were a large number of people present who were more anxious to see who was there in real life than who was there ‘in oils and water colors.’ As a society man said, ‘It was as much an exhibition of woman as of women’s portraits.’”<sup>41</sup>

Almost fifty years later, press coverage of Dalí’s society portraits followed precisely the same lines of argumentation. Whenever the artist, his models, and their portraits appeared together at dinners, parties, or

39 See Barbara Briggs-Anderson, Salvador Dalí’s “A Surrealistic Night in an Enchanted Forest” (Cork: BookBaby, 2012); and Evelyn Zaches Londahal, “Will You Be a Dream or an Animal For Senor Dalí’s Del Monte Party?” *Monterey Peninsula Herald*, August 21, 1941, p. 8; <http://sfhcbasc.blogspot.de/2015/12/salvador-dali-in-san-francisco-1941-1942.html>, accessed February 24, 2019.

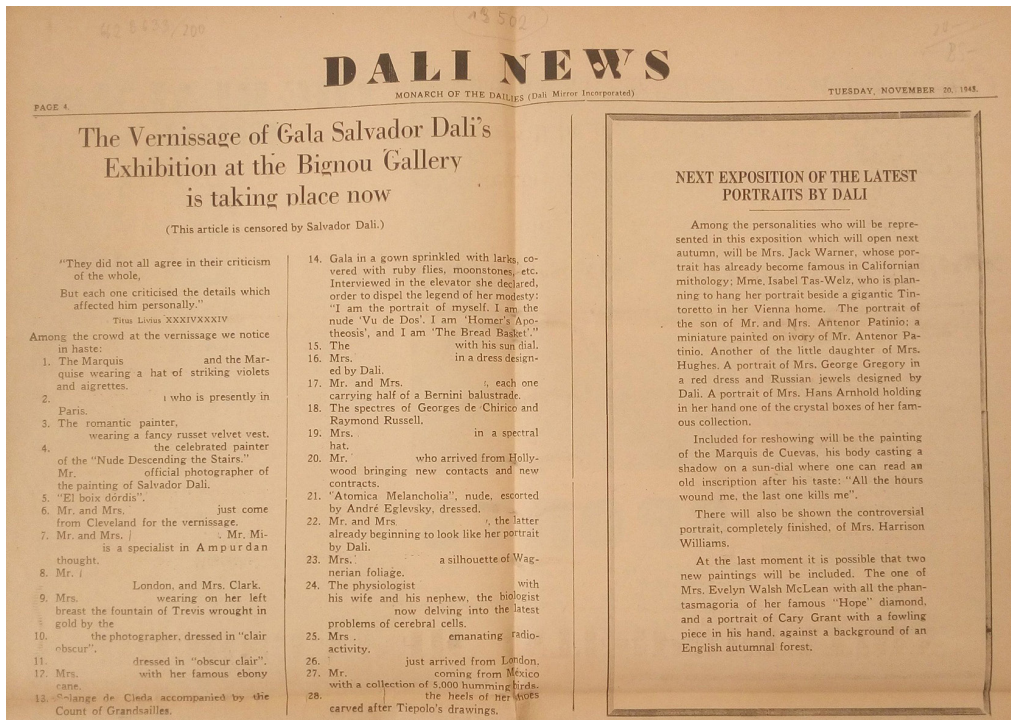
40 See *High Society: Amerikanische Portraits des Gilded Age*, exh. cat., Hamburg, Bucerius Kunst Forum, ed. Barbara Dayer Gallati and Ortrud Westheider (Munich: Hirmer, 2008).

41 “Portraits of Fair Women. Social Leaders of Two Centuries Seen in the Academy,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1894.



charity events, society reporters blended portrait and image. When the Arts Club of Chicago exhibited three society portraits by Dalí in May 1941, the focus of interest at the vernissage was not so much on the works of art as on the clients and costumes on display: “Mrs. Dalí was thoroughly Parisian in appearance. Mrs. McCormick’s frock was of navy blue sheer and she wore a small corsage of Easter lilies.”<sup>42</sup>

Aware of this media presence, Dalí knew how to artfully ratchet up the interplay between his clients, their fashions, and his portraits. As



88 *Dali News*. *Monarch of the Dailies*, vol. 1, no. 1, November 20, 1945.

part of his 1945 exhibition at the Bignou Gallery, he satirized contemporary society journalism by publishing his own newspaper—*Dali News* (fig. 88), a phonetic pun on “daily news”—in which he listed the Who’s Who of the guests at his opening and made fun of the practice of blackening out, or “censoring,” certain names to conceal the identity of celebrities to all but readers in the know: “Among the crowd at the vernissage we notice in haste: ... 9. Mrs. ... wearing on her left breast the fountain of Trevi [*sic*] wrought in gold by the ...”; or “16th Mrs. ... in a dress designed by Dalí.” In addition, Dalí placed his guests in direct

42 India Moffet, “Dalí Attracts Record Crowd to Arts Club,” (note 35), p. 13.

relationship with his portraits: “Gala in a gown sprinkled with larks, covered with ruby flies, moonstones, etc. Interviewed in the elevator she declared, in order to dispel the legend of her modesty: ‘I am the portrait of myself.’” And then number 22: “Mr. and Mrs. . . ., the latter already beginning to look like her portrait by Dalí.”<sup>43</sup> In this way, the exhibition mutated into a fashion show, as occurred later, in December 1945, with the exhibition “American Women From Romanticism to Surrealism,” at which Dalí’s portrait of Mona Bismarck was shown once again. The *Herald Tribune*’s critic described the work not only as “the hit of the loan exhibition,” but also noted, “Of particular interest to dress designers were the comparisons pointed out between clothes worn in the portraits of the 1890s and modern style tendencies.”<sup>44</sup>

This portrait had already been the undisputed highlight at the Knoedler Galleries, as Mona Bismarck was a prominent member of the international jet set.<sup>45</sup> After her marriage in 1926 to Harrison Williams, one of America’s wealthiest entrepreneurs and the third of her five husbands, she led a life of unimaginable glamour and luxury. When Williams died in 1953, he is said to have left her an inheritance of \$90 million. Her wealth and legendary beauty enabled her to interact with leading figures in the spheres of politics, society, and culture—her acquaintances included Presidents Roosevelt and Eisenhower, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and Greta Garbo. Bismarck was the first American to be named “Best-Dressed Woman in the World” by the major French fashion houses several years in a row. Since the late 1920s, she had been omnipresent in international fashion magazines and the tabloid press, captured by the most celebrated photographers of her time as a fashion and style icon, posing in her residences on Fifth Avenue in New York, the Hôtel Lambert on the banks of the Seine, her villa in Capri, or her Palm Beach estate—often pictured in front of portraits of herself (fig. 89). Countless stories revolve around her beauty, fashion, and wealth. For example, she is said to have ordered 150 dresses from her favorite designer Cristóbal Balenciaga in one fell swoop.

Dalí’s portrait of her reflects this glamour and style in a spectacular way (fig. 84). The painter collaged a cabinet of curiosities around the figure of Mona Bismarck, as if part of a “Where’s Waldo?” game. The subject’s elegant shape matches the emerald green of the bizarre setting.

43 *Dali News. Monarch of the Dailies*, vol. I, no. 1 (November 20, 1945).

44 “Of Mrs. Williams By Dali Causes Stir,” *New York Herald Tribune*, December 10, 1945, p. 8.

45 “Author Finds New York Cold But Crowded,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 9, 1943, p. 95: “Mrs. Harrison Williams, a noted New York matron, acclaimed for beauty and style in dress, was the central portrait in the show.” See James D. Birchfield, *Kentucky Countess: Mona Bismarck in Art & Fashion* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Art Museum, 1997); <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/impressionist-surrealist-art-evening-sal-l13003/lot.46.lotnum.html>, accessed February 24, 2019.



89 Cecil Beaton, *Mona Bismarck*, in *Harper's Bazaar*, August 1955. In the background, Dalí's portrait of Bismarck.

In addition to Egyptian architectural fragments and ancient sculptures, the Chimera of Arezzo, the colossal foot of Emperor Constantine in the Capitoline Museum, Bernini's equestrian monument of Emperor Constantine, and a Judith-and-Holofernes scene in the style of Mantegna can be identified. With her flowing, more-revealing-than-concealing drapery and striking *contrapposto*, Bismarck appears like an ancient sculpture, immediately bringing to mind the Venus de Milo. Clearly, Dalí deliberately chose this icon of European cultural history, considered the epitome of feminine beauty, as the model for Bismarck; in *Vogue* in 1939, star photographer and Bismarck's close confidant Cecil Beaton ranked her among "the few exceptionally beautiful women who marked the 1930s."<sup>46</sup> Dalí initially intended to depict his goddess nude, but this was rejected, finally painting her barefoot and in rags. Nevertheless, in terms of their fabric and cut, Dalí's rags bear an unmistakable

46 Cecil Beaton, *Vogue*, February 1, 1939.

resemblance to the haute couture garb preferred by the sitter, evoking an evening dress by Madeleine Vionnet worn by Bismarck in the winter of 1938–39.<sup>47</sup> The “best-dressed woman” was thus “dressed” by Dalí! It was not simply a punch line when a newspaper wrote of the Knoedler exhibition that Mona Bismarck “changed her entire color scheme after seeing her Dalí portrait.”<sup>48</sup>

### The duty of beauty

It is well known that Dalí collaborated closely with fashion magazines and designers to create new art objects and promote the product placement of his works. Fashion, makeup, and advertising offered him the ideal platform for his multimedia art. He designed covers for *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Esquire*, designed fashion accessories, and was commissioned to illustrate advertisements for perfume and nylon stockings. The September 1943 issue of *Vogue* featured a fashion spread titled *Dalí Eyes Fashion for Vogue*, for which the artist had contributed a self-portrait and a fashion illustration. The accompanying commentary elegantly draws a link between fashion in art history and the present: “Like Vermeer, Velasquez [*sic*], and Titian, who recorded exactly the textures and minutiae of the fashions of their time, Dalí paints the fashions of his time... paints them better than the eye can see.”<sup>49</sup>

When discussing beauty and cosmetics, lipsticks and jewelry, we must, of course, also mention the portrait of Helena Rubinstein created by Dalí in 1943. On one hand, this portrait marks the moment Dalí conquered American high society, moving in the circles of rich and famous beauties and staging himself as a celebrity; and on the other, Rubinstein was at the time considered the richest woman in the world. On her own, the Polish-born American business magnate had founded a cosmetics label that simply bore her name and shook up the industry with its highly automated production lines and innovative philosophy. She was the world's first self-made female millionaire and a pioneer in a male-dominated economy. Her business was constantly developing new products; in the 1930s, the range of her empire included more than 600 creams, lotions, lipsticks, and so forth. Her beauty salons were designed as spaces where customers could not only learn to discover their own look and taste, but also gain access to aesthetic awareness. Personality, art, and cosmetics defined Rubinstein's overarching business model

47 See <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/C.I.46.4.4a-c/>, accessed February 24, 2019.

48 “Casino, Arts Clubs Close for Summer,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1943, part 7, p. 2.

49 “Fashion: Dalí Eyes Fashion for *Vogue*,” *Vogue*, vol. 102, no. 5 (September 1, 1943), pp. 90–91.





90 Photographer unknown, *Madame Rubinstein*, in *LIFE*, July 21, 1941.

of the “democratization of beauty.”<sup>50</sup> Her breathtaking success and immense wealth would have a magical attraction for Dalí. Never before had he heard someone talk so shamelessly about their own luxury; never before had he met someone who was adorned with so much jewelry. The symbol of this public self-display is a photograph that appeared in *Life* magazine in 1941 showing Rubinstein—like a little girl—playing with her jewels on the floor (fig. 90). Rubinstein’s style was reflected in her fashion, jewelry, furnishings, and art collection. In the 1930s, this woman industrialist became a leading figure in the New York art scene. Her apartment at 625 Park Avenue was built on three floors, where she assembled works of art from all cultures and styles. It was an intercultural interplay of Latin American, African, and Oceanic objects, in the immediate vicinity of which were works of the classical periods and European avant-gardes. Through her professional approach to public relations, she styled her hybrid taste as an integral part of her business. In 1937 *Life* magazine ran a feature on living models posing behind frames,

<sup>50</sup> *Helena Rubinstein: Beauty is Power*, exh. cat., New York, Jewish Museum, ed. Mason Klein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 17. See also Holly Brubach, “Helena Rubinstein: A Self-Made Woman,” October 23, 2014; <https://www.wmagazine.com/story/helena-rubinstein-jewish-museum>, accessed February 24, 2019.



restaging famous portraits such as Picasso's *Girl in a Chemise* (*Jeune femme à la chemise*) in the window of Helena Rubinstein's salon at 715 Fifth Avenue, drawing crowds and publicity. Rubinstein's narcissistic interest in her own portrait can be explained against this backdrop—while she marketed her products with the slogan “Your cosmetic portrait by Helena Rubinstein,” she had herself been portrayed by leading artists and photographers of her time, from Picasso to Andy Warhol. She liked to be photographed in front of her portrait wall, where Dalí's portrait can be seen (fig. 82). Dalí and Rubinstein were two of a kind.

### Women's pages

Both Dalí and his clients sought distribution of their portraits through the media. In this way, public awareness of them could be increased, with society portraits functioning as a quasi-proxy for artist and model. Dalí's portraits also fit perfectly into the high-gloss aesthetics of fashion and lifestyle magazines in which the rich and beautiful were staged in elaborate settings by star photographers such as Philippe Halsman or Cecil Beaton. Similar to photographic portraits of celebrities, Dalí's portraits served the need of their models and viewers to convey a “publicness of the private.”<sup>51</sup> Whether as original works or in their reproductions in the press, they entered into competition with the image of the person depicted. Dalí's society portraits both were and created new images of celebrities of American society; their social and art-historical codes guided the reading of the portraits. Mona Bismarck illustrates their almost indexical quality—the focus of her portrait is not on the refined costume but, rather, our gaze is directed to her face, brightly illuminated by an aureole. Her face stands out from the dark green setting in its almost photographic realism, and seems almost like a portrait photograph cut out from a fashion magazine and mounted onto the work, as the *Chicago Tribune* remarked: “Her face, fairly photographic, was attached to a stranger figure in a horrible sort of messy cave.”<sup>52</sup> Viewers of Dalí's portrait immediately recognized the world's “Best-Dressed Woman” because her face and style were already stored in their visual memory by illustrations in fashion and lifestyle magazines. Mona Bismarck was repeatedly photographed by Cecil Beaton for *Harp-er's Bazaar* in the aristocratic setting of her luxurious Paris apartment in the Hôtel Lambert, in true regal drapery—wrapped in a burgundy robe

51 Roland Barthes, *Die helle Kammer. Bemerkung zur Photographie* (*La chambre claire*, Paris, 1980) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985), p. 109. See also Anna Feldhaus, *Salvador Dalí & Philippe Halsman. Das gemeinsame Werk* (Heidelberg/Berlin: Kehr Verlag, 2015), pp. 31ff.

52 “Author Finds New York Cold But Crowded” (note 45), p. 95.

by the Spanish fashion designer Balenciaga—posing in front of Dalí's portrait (fig. 89). Just in time for the exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries, *Vogue* featured a photograph with the heading, "A glimpse of Dalí sketching Helena Rubinstein in preparation for a portrait."<sup>53</sup> It was part and parcel of Dalí's public relations that he presented himself in these published photographs as a classic portrait painter with his model positioned in front of the easel, or posing with his client next to the finished portrait. Models, paintings, and photography thus entered into an intermedia dialogue of recognition and re-recognition in the reader's imagination. *Time* magazine summed up this transformation process after seeing Dalí's portraits at the Knoedler Galleries:

"When Surrealist Salvador Dali ... has painted portraits in the past, the results have rarely been recognizable as human beings. But last week his first portrait show at Manhattan's Knoedler galleries proved that Dali, when confronted by society ladies, can make faces look as vividly human as any other slick artist can. Garnished with the carefully strange surrealist fantasy which Salvador Dali affects, some of his canvases could pass for society magazine covers."<sup>54</sup>

But we encounter Dalí's portraits and his models not only in lifestyle and fashion magazines, but also in the society press, in the so-called women's pages, which generally covered issues intended to attract the readership of the stereotypical American housewife of the time: society news, fashion, food, health, interior decorating, and so forth. For example, the *Chicago Tribune Sun* reported on April 26, 1942, that Dalí was staying in Palm Beach, where he had painted the portrait of the Marquis George de Cuevas. We also learn that Dalí had just returned from Hollywood, where he had painted a portrait of Jean Gabin. A little further on the same page is a note about the "21st International Water Color Exhibition" at the Art Institute of Chicago, whose jury included Harold McCormick, a businessman and trustee of the institute whose wife Adah Wilson also sat for a portrait by Dalí. But it does not end there, with an advertisement by Helena Rubinstein for "quick pick-ups for your beauty" placed directly underneath the article.<sup>55</sup>

The association may be coincidental, but the framing of this newspaper page demonstrates how artists and socialites, fashion and advertising, and money and patronage benefited from each other in an intermedia interplay. The following example also illustrates the way in which Dalí

53 "And What's More...", *Vogue*, May 1, 1943, p. 80.

54 "Dali's Ladies," *Time*, no. 41/17 (April 25, 1943), p. 79.

55 Helen Van Hey Smith, "Clewiston, Fla Thriving Town Built by Sugar," *Chicago Tribune*, April 26, 1942, p. 102.

and his art were an integral part of social gatherings: from the moment Dalí painted the portrait of Dorothy Spreckels (fig. 83), she became the protagonist of a separation story that tabloid journalism exploited down to the last detail. Her relationship with oil salesman Andrew McCarthy was on the brink of a breakup; the tabloid press speculated that their encounter with Dalí at the Surrealistic Night was the triggering moment. After that, the events seem to have come thick and fast. The *San Antonio Light* headlined a full-page article with the title “Fled from His Wife Back Home to His-Mother-in-Law!” (fig. 91), which sarcastically questioned “whether Maestro Dali has been the inspiration for a new phase of life in the honey-haired socialite. Sugar heiress Spreckels’ husband was disturbed when she bought that hoodoo honeymoon nest, but when the Surrealist Dali did his masterpiece of Dorothy and the Dolphin, Andrew didn’t want to live there any more.”<sup>56</sup>

## Fled from His Wife Back Home to His-Mother-in-Law!

Sugar Heiress Spreckels' Husband Was Disturbed When She Bought That Hoodoo Honeymoon Nest, But When Surrealist Dali Did His Masterpiece of Dorothy and the Dolphin, Andrew Didn't Want to Live There Any More

**T**he artist's latest work, which is the portrait of Dorothy Spreckels, is a masterpiece of Surrealist art. It is a portrait of a woman who is looking out of a window. The woman is wearing a dark dress and a large necklace. The window has a decorative frame. The artist's name is Salvador Dalí.

**Mr. Andrew McCarthy, Dorothy Spreckels' husband, is a man who is a member of the McCarthy family. He is a man who is a member of the McCarthy family.**

**Mr. McCarthy, who has been in the city for some time, is a man who is a member of the McCarthy family. He is a man who is a member of the McCarthy family.**

**Mr. McCarthy, who has been in the city for some time, is a man who is a member of the McCarthy family. He is a man who is a member of the McCarthy family.**

91 “Fled from His Wife Back Home to His Mother-in-Law!” in *San Antonio Light*, April 5, 1942.

<sup>56</sup> “Fled from His Wife Back Home to His-Mother-in-Law!” *San Antonio Light*, April 5, 1942, p. 3. See Fred Dickenson, “The Jinx in a Dream Castle,” *Beckley Sunday Register*, April 5, 1942, p. 37: “Apparently husband Andrew McCarthy never learned the significance of the dolphin and fish because he had left the reputedly jinxed mansion before the work of art was unveiled.”



92 Ethel Scull in front of her portrait by Andy Warhol, *Ethel Scull 36 Times*, 1963, 200 × 370 cm, in *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1964.

## Hollywood facsimiles

The gossip would not have done Dalí any harm; on the contrary, he understood the agency of his society portraits very well. Their mediation through the press served the primary need of their owners for representation and recognition. By documenting their success, style, and beauty, they conveyed a female American identity based on wealth and charity, culture and fashion, as well as the narcissistic publicizing of the private sphere. By satisfying this need artistically and through media channels, Dalí was able to promote his own economic success and social advancement within American society. The exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries in 1943 was a strategic building block for this. It is therefore not surprising that Dalí painted socialite portraits with surrealist effects

until the end of his life. However, another artist who copied much from him would soon displace him. In March 1964, the *Ladies' Home Journal* published a photograph showing the collector Ethel Scull in front of her portrait, *Ethel Scull 36 Times*, which Andy Warhol had created a year earlier (fig. 92). The New York taxicab fleet owner Robert Scull had offered it to his wife as a birthday gift, although there was little doubt about the actual purpose: "Pop art ... turns both creator and collector alike into members of a new pop society. When Warhol sits Ethel Scull ... in front of an arcade photo machine and snaps away, the result may be art but it also puts Mrs. Scull on the society page," wrote Peter Benchley at the time.<sup>57</sup> *Ethel Scull 36 Times* was Warhol's first commissioned portrait and was the starting point for his business enterprise of making portraits at the request of wealthy celebrities. With his 1,000 or so iconic celebrity portraits, Warhol became an acclaimed "court portraitist" in the glamorous world of the international jet set. With his Polaroid camera he photographed anything and everything that was famous in showbiz, sport, art, and fashion. He transferred the Big Shot Polaroids into larger-than-life silk screens. Brigitte Bardot, Liza Minnelli, Mick Jagger, Jackie Kennedy, Yves Saint-Laurent, and even Prince Charles and Lady Di did not miss the opportunity to pose for him. Warhol once opined that all portraits should have the same size, and that together they would form a portrait of society. His friend and companion Bob Colacello provides us with a decidedly familiar explanation for Warhol's success: "[Warhol's] portraits transformed aging socialites into Venus de Milos, and their industrialist husbands into Florentine Davids—or at least, into Hollywood facsimiles thereof."<sup>58</sup> Regrettably, Dalí was never portrayed by Warhol.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Benchley, "Special Report. The Story of Pop," *Newsweek*, April 25, 1966.

<sup>58</sup> Bob Colacello, *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), p. 89. See also *Warhol. Le grand monde d'Andy Warhol*, exh. cat., Paris, Galeries Nationales, ed. Alain Cuffé (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2009).





94 Marcel Duchamp, *Box in a Suitcase*, 1936–41, cardboard, wood, paper, plastic, 40 × 37.5 × 8.2 cm. Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne.

## Marcel Duchamp: Paradoxical Promoter of His Art in the United States (1942–1960)

Scarlett Reliquet

The question of their fame, partly related to the question of the critical reception of their work during or after their own lifetime, has always preoccupied creative artists. The relationship to time and to what will remain of an oeuvre and a life—once it is over—is often a key concern during that life. No artist, regardless of when they lived and worked, is ever completely uninterested in the image they leave behind.

What was Duchamp's relationship to fame in general? What, fundamentally, was his attitude to his work, to his acceptance by museums and to his value on the art market? And how did that attitude evolve over time, notably once he moved to the United States in 1942? What should we make of the paucity of explanations by Duchamp early in his career, followed by his later concern to provide keys to an understanding of his work? How should we interpret his interest in the design of his exhibitions, and in the layout and typography of the books and catalogues in which he was involved? What should we think of his interest and curiosity about the work of his contemporaries (Brancusi and Picabia, whose works he collected and promoted) and of the younger artists who became his friends (notably pop artists)? What factors contributed, from 1960 onward, to what Pierre Cabanne, who interviewed Duchamp at length in 1966, called a kind of *laissez-faire* and endless self-indulgence? Finally, what should we make of the fact that his first retrospective in Europe took place in London in 1966 ("The Almost Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp," Tate Gallery), roughly ten years before the one in Paris in 1977?<sup>1</sup> Was there some kind of reticence toward Duchamp on the part of the French public, and, if so, where did it originate?

<sup>1</sup> The Duchamp rooms of the Philadelphia Museum of Art opened in 1954 thanks to the donation of forty-three works by Louise and Walter Arensberg; a Duchamp retrospective was organized in Philadelphia and MoMA in New York in 1973.

The answers are multiple, and often ambiguous. One thing is sure, namely that on many occasions Duchamp contradicted his own declaration that “the artist doesn’t know what he’s doing” (1960).<sup>2</sup>

Duchamp’s renown in the United States, where he lived on and off from June 1915 to the Second World War, then permanently from his wartime exile in 1942 onward, was notably built on the network of the country’s still-young museums and private collections of modern art. He integrated into America as soon as he arrived, lodging with Louise and Walter Arensberg, his long-time patrons and collectors. Two years earlier, in 1913, America had made a fuss over his famous painting of *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (*Nu descendant un escalier, no. 2*)<sup>3</sup> when it was exhibited at the Armory Show: that specific moment, marked by the scandal of newness and rupture, constituted the linchpin of Duchamp’s relationship with the country and even, it might be said, with the question of his relationship to notoriety. The incident of the Armory Show scandal<sup>4</sup> guided Duchamp’s behavior for the rest of his “career,” giving him an aloof, even suspicious attitude toward fame, especially when it arrived suddenly. Later, when critic Henry McBride interviewed him during the “Duchamp Frères et Soeur” show at the Rose Fried Gallery in 1952, asking if it were possible for him to dodge fame,<sup>5</sup> Duchamp replied that fame vanishes as suddenly at it appears, so it wasn’t worth bothering about such things. But that kind of answer is probably easier to give once you’re already famous.

When it comes to the exact place where Duchamp’s reputation emerged and grew, we know it wasn’t France. Marc Décimo has referred to the trauma of the withdrawal of his *Nude Descending a Staircase* from the 1912 Salon des Indépendants, as demanded by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Regarding that rejection, Duchamp commented, “The incident triggered in me a complete revision of my values, without me even realizing it.”<sup>6</sup> Even in 1954, Duchamp’s fame in France remained limited. “Who’s that?” the editor of *Arts*, André Parinaud, reportedly asked when Henri-Pierre Roché and Alain Jouffroy

2 Georges Charbonnier, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp* (Marseille: André Dimanche, 1994).

3 *Nude Descending a Staircase (no. 2)*, oil on canvas, 57% × 35% in. (147 × 89.2 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art.

4 The painting of *Nude Descending a Staircase (no. 2)*, which depicted a conventional subject (a nude) in a cubist, mechanistic manner, uniformly shocked American critics. Mocked and caricatured by the press of the day, the work was considered both provocative and incomprehensible. This artistic scandal delighted Duchamp and was not unrelated to his move to New York in 1915.

5 Henry McBride, “Duchamp du monde,” *Art News* 51, no. 1 (1952), p. 33.

6 Marc Décimo, review of Marcel Duchamp in Munich 1912, Helmut Friedel, ed., exh. cat. (Munich: Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus München, 2012) in *Critique d’art* (November 2013), <https://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/5419>, accessed November 2018.



93 Marcel Duchamp, *The Chess Players*, 1911, oil on canvas, 50 × 61 cm.  
Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne.

suggested that he publish an interview with Duchamp in his magazine.<sup>7</sup> That was the year the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris bought *The Chess Players* (*Les joueurs d'échecs*, 1911), a painting that had belonged to Jacques Villon and was the first work by Duchamp to enter a French public institution (fig.93).

Even today Duchamp and his oeuvre remain, in a way, unloved by the French public despite various attempts to present his work to a broad audience, as witnessed by recent exhibitions.<sup>8</sup> Thus the United States, although he wasn't born there, have definitively adopted him as one of their own, to the point where museums usually identify him as "Marcel Duchamp, American artist, born France." This profile reflects his nationality, since he acquired American citizenship in 1955 after having

7 The interview appeared in *Arts*, no. 491 (1954). See Henri-Pierre Roché, *Écrits sur l'art* (Marseille: André Dimanche, 1998), pp. 253–55.

8 "Marcel Duchamp: La peinture, même, 1910–1923," curated by Cécile Debray, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2014; "ABCDuchamp, l'expo pour comprendre Marcel Duchamp," Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen, 2018.



applied for it in 1947, although that is not generally acknowledged by French museums, which persist in considering him a Frenchman.

Duchamp is known for having managed to escape the laws of the art market, just as he initially rejected other rules and conventions of society related to marriage and the need to support a family, by making a living from his income as an artist.<sup>9</sup> He found himself faced with a dilemma: adopt the status of an accepted artist who aspires to some kind of recognition from his peers, which means occasionally selling works to collectors and museums, or choose the status of “anartist”<sup>10</sup> who seeks to produce an oeuvre while turning his back on all the rules and artifices of “the system.” As Harriet and Sidney Janis put it, “Here is the core of the inner drama, the conflict between acceptance and rejection that is the basis of Duchamp’s philosophic and aesthetic rationale. He resolves it by accepting both sides as concomitant parts of reality.”<sup>11</sup> The attitude of total independence that Duchamp wanted to maintain throughout his life could be summed up by an incident from 1916, while he was working on *The Large Glass* (*La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*, or *Le Grand Verre*). He was offered—via Man Ray, who reported it in his autobiography—\$10,000 by New York art dealer Alfred Knoedler for his annual output, even if that meant just one painting. Duchamp turned it down.<sup>12</sup> He remained loyal to this principle throughout his life in the two spheres of medium (don’t remain attached to painting) and money (don’t depend financially on a dealer). He wound up, however, bending the rule sometimes, as when he allowed Arturo Schwarz to produce editions of his readymades.<sup>13</sup>

### Self-restrained yet calculating

Duchamp tried to transcend this paradox by remaining on the sidelines, even while attentively following the game. He who declared that the future of art was futureless constructed a brilliant future for himself, without deliberately trying. It is hard to describe his “method” for

9 Marcel Duchamp married Lydie Sarasin-Levassor on June 7, 1927, but it was a brief marriage since the couple divorced on January 28, 1928. He was wed a second time, on January 16, 1954, to Alexina Sattler, with whom he lived until he died.

10 Duchamp invented the word “anartist” as contraction of “artist” and “anarchist.”

11 Harriet and Sidney Janis, “Marcel Duchamp, Anti-Artist,” *Horizon, A Review of Literature and Art* XII, no. 70 (October 1945), p. 264.

12 “I said no, and I wasn’t rich, either. I could very well have accepted ten thousand dollars, but no, I sensed the danger right away.” Marcel Duchamp interviewed by Pierre Cabanne, in Pierre Cabanne *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Rod Padgett (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 1987), p. 106. See also Man Ray, *Self-Portrait* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 234.

13 In 1964 the Schwartz Gallery in Milan produced new editions of eight copies each of thirteen readymades that were no longer extant.



ultimately achieving fame, but he clearly managed it while remaining self-restrained yet calculating—chess having represented, in this context, an escape and distraction from life as well as a metaphor for it. In every instance, Duchamp adopted an approach that kept him on the fringe of the art system, saving him from having to devote himself to it exclusively, excessively. While his abandonment of painting surprised and discouraged some of his early admirers, it was certainly his most courageous act and the one that favorably sealed his fate as an artist. Some commentators, such as his first biographer, Robert Lebel, wondered if Duchamp's almost systematic recourse to derision largely helped to save him from self-mystification.<sup>14</sup> Humor, irony, and witticisms in particular were central elements of Duchamp's method. But not everything rested on this approach—far from it.

The question of money and the profitability of his artwork, notably thanks to the production and sale of multiples, arose at that time, namely the years of the *Boîtes-en-valise* (fig.94), done between 1935 and 1941 (and up to 1968 for later series), whose production and sale put Duchamp in direct contact no longer just with friends and supporters such as Peggy Guggenheim, Katherine Dreier, and the Arensbergs, but also with American galleries and museums. It is easy to argue that Duchamp did not truly wish to make a business of his artwork once we read, in a 1952 letter to Roché, that he had had twenty-five *Boîtes-en-valise* made and “hope[d] to get rid of them quickly,” as though the goal was not to get the highest price but to distribute his work and make it more widely known.<sup>15</sup> In that letter he also mentioned that for each box he received seventy dollars of the \$125 price set by his dealer. These “boxes in a suitcase”—which Duchamp viewed as a “catalogue ... of almost all [his] work” or as “a box in which all [his] works would be mounted like in a small museum, a portable museum”<sup>16</sup>—contained sixty-nine items that were miniature reproductions (on a 1:3 scale) of Duchamp's works, plus one original work.<sup>17</sup> They demonstrate Duchamp's interest in museums as well as his underlying critique of that institution. While they provide proof that, right from the start, he liked to think about a commercial outlet for his art—on this occasion, at least—the *Boîtes-en-valise* also wittily jeered at museums, making an elegant “mock(up)ery” of

14 Robert Lebel, *Sur Marcel Duchamp* (Paris: Trianon, 1959). Translated into English by George Heard Hamilton as *Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Grove Press, 1959).

15 Letter from Duchamp to Henri-Pierre Roché, March 15, 1952, in Scarlett Reliquet and Philippe Reliquet, eds., *Correspondance, Marcel Duchamp–Henri-Pierre Roché, 1918–1959* (Geneva: Mamco, 2012).

16 Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, eds., *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (Boston, MA: Da Capo, 1989), p. 136.

17 There are around 300 copies of Duchamp's *Boîtes-en-valise*, divided into seven series numbered A to G, each different and handmade by Duchamp (or, later, by his entourage), up to 1968.

galleries and the art market system insofar as these boxes were multiples while simultaneously being originals. And while they largely contributed to the dissemination and therefore to the notoriety of Duchamp's work, they also directly alluded to a salesman's suitcase, to "commercial travelers," a theoretically unflattering allusion that nevertheless pleased Duchamp because it debunked the role of artist. As Harriet and Sidney Janis pointed out, the *Boîtes-en-valise* had the advantage of offering the beholder a retrospective view of Duchamp's oeuvre, a composite portrait of the artist.<sup>18</sup> The boxes thus saved time for anyone who wanted to grasp Duchamp's work in a glance, "summing up" both the artist and his oeuvre.

Beyond this famous series and its significance, it might be argued that the main motivation for readymades in particular, and multiples in general, resides in the desire to avoid the pitfall of the "original artwork," one of the foundations of artistic value and commercial success, which has become a golden rule of the market. It should nevertheless be acknowledged that Duchamp changed his mind later, notably in 1964 when he agreed to the production of a limited edition of replica ready-mades—as well as *Three Standard Stoppages* (*Trois stoppages-étalon*) and *Fresh Widow*—in collaboration with Milanese art dealer and critic Arturo Schwarz.

Duchamp's reply to Calvin Tomkins on the marketing of his ready-mades was clear. They were not made "with the idea of producing thousands of them. It was really to get out of the exchangeability, I mean the monetization, one might say, of the work of art. I never intended to sell my readymades."<sup>19</sup>

Duchamp's skittishness with regard to the art market was notorious. In his correspondence with Roché, he made many critical comments about the people who wanted to do business with his art. In one letter, Duchamp mentioned the opening of a gallery in Hollywood by Bill Copley and John Poyardt, commenting in a later letter, dated May 9, 1949, that the pair had spent \$70,000 in one year. On May 29, 1949, he even described Copley's venture as "disastrous," judging it to have been risky and dangerous. In the letter of May 9, he had furthermore told Roché that "the reason is also that I have less and less desire to ham it up and play along with the speculative market in paintings in Paris (and New York)."<sup>20</sup> In a 1952 letter, Duchamp went so far as to tell Roché of his serious doubts about his personal ability to sell his art. "The sales

18 Janis, "Marcel Duchamp, Anti-Artist" (note 11).

19 Calvin Tomkins, *The Afternoon Interviews* (Brooklyn: Badlands Unlimited, 2013), p. 26. The interviews were conducted in 1964.

20 Letter from Duchamp to Roché, May 9, 1949, in Reliquet and Reliquet, *Correspondance* (note 15), p. 91.

game is really one played by merchants, and neither you nor I know how to play. ... I have no 'market' in the 'merchant' sense of the term."<sup>21</sup>

One old, still-notorious incident seems to sum up Duchamp's dissident attitude toward the art market. Just after receiving an inheritance following his parents' death, he carefully organized the sale of a fictional "Marcel Duchamp collection" at the Drouot auction house in Paris in March 1926, playing on the art market system.<sup>22</sup> Assembling major works from Picabia's studio, Duchamp later had fun describing the auction as an "amusing experience," stressing that "until then, no one had had the idea of showing Picabias to the public, let alone selling them, giving them a commercial value."<sup>23</sup>

### Shitting under myself

As to exhibitions that could help establish his reputation just like any other artist, Duchamp's attitude was categorically hostile. "I see no point in shows that burn rather than serve a purpose."<sup>24</sup> When it came to Roché's numerous attempts to promote the artist's work, Duchamp warned, "I beg you to avoid all exhibitions and events regarding me, I wish to remain in peace. The family show revealed the danger of poking my head up."<sup>25</sup> When Duchamp was asked to attend a show at La Hune bookstore in Paris to celebrate the launch of Robert Lebel's recently published biography of him—and for which he produced a now famous poster of his own silhouetted face—he replied in a telegram sent from Cadaqués on May 4, 1959, with the laconic phrase, *JE FAIS SOUS MOI* [Shitting under myself]. In its radical, scatological tone, this res-

21 Duchamp to Roché, April 11, 1952, in Reliquet and Reliquet, *Correspondance* (note 15).

22 The sale on March 8, 1926, included "eighty paintings, watercolors, and drawings by Picabia belonging to Mr. Marcel Duchamp." The twenty-eight-page catalogue, designed by Duchamp himself, listed eighty lots and reproduced fourteen works. Over the signature of Rose Sélavy, Duchamp described the stylistic development of Picabia, his old buddy who participated in hatching this new kind of auction: with the money inherited from his parents, Duchamp decided to make some calculated investments on the art market. In January 1926 he bought eighty canvases, drawings, and watercolors directly from Picabia. The works selected were supposed to represent every stage of his career. The auction was successful, generating substantial profits. Buyers included André Breton and Tristan Tzara. See Francis Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, exh. cat. (Ghent: Ludion Press, 1999), p. 103, repr. (no. 107) p. 104.

23 Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (note 12), p. 73.

24 Letter from Duchamp to Roché, January 23, 1950, in Reliquet and Reliquet, *Correspondance* (note 15).

25 Duchamp to Roché, April 26, 1950, in Reliquet and Reliquet, *Correspondance* (note 15), p. 131. "The Duchamp family show" was how the two letter-writers referred to the exhibition "Duchamp Frères et Soeur: Oeuvres d'Art" at the Rose Fried Gallery in New York, February 25–March 31, 1952. The show made a splash and received attention from the press.

ponse echoed the telegram that Duchamp sent to Tristan Tzara, *PODE BAL* [Balls to you], when invited to attend the Dada Salon in 1921.

Duchamp carefully sought to avoid other traps in addition to the art market, such as the aesthetic appeal of painting on the beholder. He tried to avoid what he called the “retinal” effect of impressionism.<sup>26</sup> He made the radical decision to stop painting in order to avoid repeating himself, as he felt too many artists did. In an interview with Alain Jouffroy done in 1964 and included, that same year, in Jouffroy’s book *Une révolution du regard: A propos de quelques peintres et sculpteurs contemporains*, Duchamp explained why he stopped painting in the following terms: “I stopped half out of laziness, half out of lack of ideas, because ... I don’t paint just to paint. I’ve never considered myself a painter in the professional sense of the word.”<sup>27</sup>

Not dwelling on fame, all the while remaining attentive to it: Duchamp chose his allies and partners with caution and parsimony. He limited his actions and the places destined to receive his works. He relied on knowledgeable friends and collectors of his work, whom he met on his arrival in the United States, notably Peggy Guggenheim, Max Ernst, Frederick Kiesler, the Arensbergs, and Katherine Dreier, not forgetting Alexina (Teen) Sattler, who became his wife in 1954.

## First Papers

On arriving in the United States on June 25, 1942, Duchamp stayed, for roughly one month, with Robert Allerton Parker and his wife Jessica Daves, then with Peggy Guggenheim and Max Ernst at 440 East Fifty-First Street. He began making his fifty boxes (a deluxe edition of twenty boxes followed by an edition of thirty that did not contain an original artwork), thanks to needed materials and documents sent from Paris to New York in the same convoy of ships that carried his friend Peggy’s art collection. The financing of the *Boîtes-en-valise* project first came from Roché, based on an agreement with Duchamp, following their joint purchase of a batch of Brancusi sculptures from one of the auctions of John Quinn’s estate. Duchamp explained in a letter to Roché, dated January 17, 1941, that each box required three weeks of work and that he was finding it hard to obtain leather (during wartime, that is) for the outside case. He expressed his concern about potential sales and was specifically working on the deluxe series, thinking that the

26 Otto Hahn, “Marcel Duchamp, *L’Express*, no. 684 (1964), pp. 22–23.

27 Alain Jouffroy, *Une révolution du regard: A propos de quelques peintres et sculpteurs contemporains* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 117.

first takers were more likely to be rich clients—the first box of the edition was done for Peggy Guggenheim, and was shipped to the United States via Grenoble and Marseille.<sup>28</sup> Duchamp is to be congratulated for his shrewd decision to give his first box to the collector who would later become legendary, but who had not yet opened her London gallery (dubbed Guggenheim Jeune in a nod to Bernheim Jeune). Was Duchamp's gesture a way of thanking Peggy, his kind-hearted American hostess who was also helping to finance Varian Fry's unflagging commitment to the Emergency Rescue Committee? (The committee, founded in 1940, housed and exfiltrated from Marseille [via Fry] at least 2,500 people including many artists and writers, until Fry himself left for the United States in October 1941.<sup>29</sup>) This hypothesis cannot be dismissed, nor can the more trivial one of Duchamp's need to support himself, which he attempted to do during this entire period by seeking out well-heeled clients liable to buy his "boxes."

Duchamp moved to Fifty-Sixth Street, where he rented a separate room in the twentieth-floor penthouse of Frederick and Steffi Kiesler from October 1942 to October 1943.<sup>30</sup> Frederick Kiesler was an Austro-Hungarian stage designer who notably devised the presentation of the *Boîte-en-valise* first exhibited at Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery, whose interior decoration and exhibition design was also Kiesler's doing.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the list of Duchamp's solo (or semi-solo) shows—five, at the rate of roughly one per year from 1942 to 1946—plus his inclusion in fifteen group shows during the same period, reveal his extensive activity in this sphere.<sup>32</sup>

One of the most famous exhibitions was "First Papers of Surrealism" (fig. 95), held from October 14 to November 7, 1942, in a wing of the Whitelaw Reid Mansion (now the New York Palace Hotel) located at 451 Madison Avenue. Duchamp contributed to the exhibition design and the catalogue. It was not only the biggest show of surrealist works ever displayed in the United States, but also the one that announced the arrival in America of artists who had left war-torn Europe. The title referred to the administrative documents ("papers") required for

28 Scarlett Reliquet and Philippe Reliquet, *Henri-Pierre Roché: L'enchanteur collectionneur* (Paris: Ramsay, 1999), pp. 203–4.

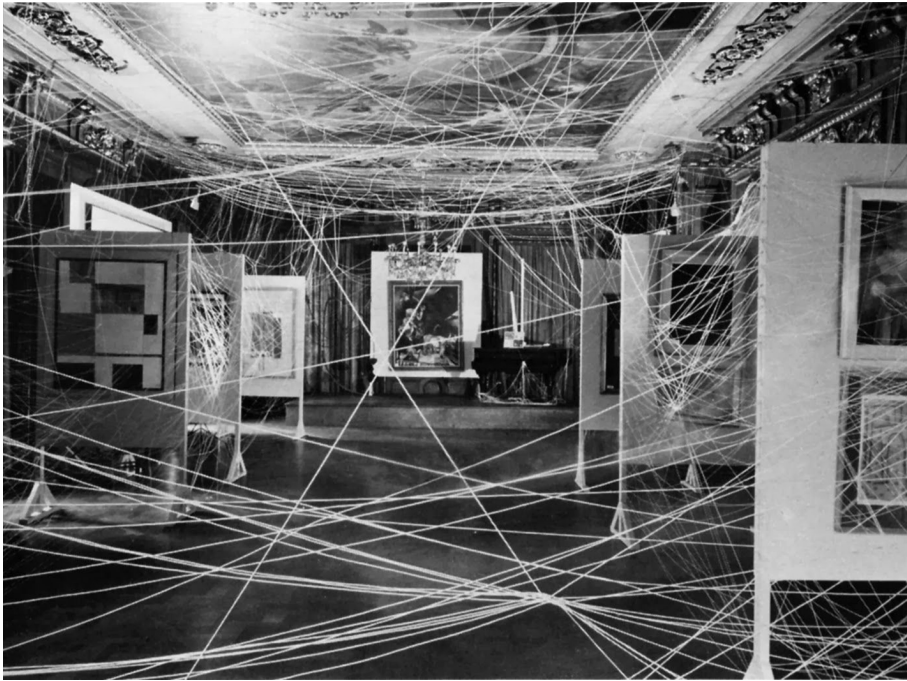
29 See Martin Schieder, "The Transatlantic Crossing By Ship Into Exile During World War II: From Heterotopic Experience to Aesthetic Reflection," in Uwe Fleckner, Maike Steinkamp and Hendrik Ziegler, eds., *Der Künstler in der Fremde: Migration – Reise – Exil* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 283–305, especially pp. 292–95.

30 Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk, eds., *Affectionately, Marcel: The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Jill Taylor (Ghent: Ludion, 2000), p. 230.

31 On the history of the gallery (1942–47), see the monograph edited by Susan Davidson and Philip Rylands, *Peggy Guggenheim & Frederick Kiesler: The Story of Art of This Century* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2005), based on the Kiesler archives at the Frederick Kiesler Center in Vienna.

32 For the list of exhibitions, see Nauman and Obalk, *Affectionately, Marcel* (note 30), p. 228.





95 John D. Schiff, installation view of the exhibition “First Papers of Surrealism,” showing *His Twine* by Marcel Duchamp, 1942, gelatin silver print, 19.4 × 25.4 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

authorization to make the journey and to enter the United States. The income from admission tickets to the show was donated to the children of French prisoners. This was yet another reason why the exhibition was a political event in itself. The opening night was made famous by the installation of a giant labyrinth of twine on the ceiling and among the display panels, devised by Duchamp with the help of Breton, Sidney Janis, the latter’s young son Carroll, and a gang of a dozen children. The labyrinth spurred numerous interpretations of Duchamp’s intentions. The most conclusive outcome of this mischievous installation, which placed great emphasis on the role of the beholder, was to generate a lot of talk about the show and Duchamp,<sup>33</sup> who thereby joined the famous community of surrealist artists in exile: Breton, Ernst, Masson, Lam, Matta, Tanguy, Duthuit, Lebel, Claude Lévi-Strauss, the Walbergs, and others.

33 On this subject, see Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003) and Vick John, “A New Look: Marcel Duchamp, His Twine and the 1942 First Papers of Surrealism Exhibition,” in *toutfait.com. The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal*, 2008, [http://www.toutfait.com/a-new-look-marcel-duchamp-his-twine-and-the-1942-first-papers-of-surrealism-exhibition/#N\\_3\\_](http://www.toutfait.com/a-new-look-marcel-duchamp-his-twine-and-the-1942-first-papers-of-surrealism-exhibition/#N_3_), accessed November 2018.

“20th-Century Art from the Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection” (1949)

Duchamp’s relationship to his work and his fame underwent a shift after his 1954 marriage to Alexina (Teeny) Sattler, the former wife of art dealer Pierre Matisse, himself the eldest son of artist Henri Matisse. This marriage played an important role in the construction of Duchamp’s American reputation.<sup>34</sup> Given the fabulous history of the Pierre Matisse Gallery (1931–89) and its success at selling art to the biggest American collectors of the day (Walter P. Chrysler Jr., A. E. Gallatin, Joseph Hirshhorn, Duncan Phillips, Joseph Pulitzer Jr., Nelson A. Rockefeller, and James Thrall Soby), it is impossible to exclude the hypothesis that Duchamp also benefited from it, via Teeny. Furthermore, the fact that, once they were married, Teeny began conserving documentation on Duchamp’s activities—notably his correspondence, as witnessed by the estate’s archives—is indicative of her professionalism in this sphere. The new attitude is proof that Duchamp—in conjunction with his wife—henceforth paid greater attention to what he called “things,” and to everything liable to constitute a reliable record of his work.

Duchamp’s loyalty was certainly another asset in his successful career in the United States. When he arrived in New York on June 15, 1915 (having avoided the draft due to a heart murmur), at the invitation of Walter Pach, he was introduced by Pach to the Arensbergs, who housed him until he moved to 1947 Broadway. It was at the Arensbergs’ place that he first met the entire American avant-garde and other Frenchmen living in New York (notably Henri-Pierre Roché). They would become his main patrons. In a letter to his sister Yvonne Chastel, sent on September 21, 1944, Duchamp wrote that he had not seen the Arensbergs since 1936, their move to California and their failing health having made a meeting impossible since his return to America in 1942.<sup>35</sup> On October 17, 1944, the Arensbergs deposited their collection, including thirty-seven works by Duchamp, with the University of California. But the deed of gift stipulated that the university would erect a building to house the museum, which ultimately proved unacceptable.

34 Alexina Sattler was the daughter of a well-known ophthalmologist who headed a hospital as well as a clinic; in 1929 she married the art dealer Pierre Matisse, after having toyed with an artistic career herself. Matisse, after a brief training in Paris (where he notably worked at the Galerie Barbazanges-Hodebert), left for New York in December 1924. In November 1931 he opened his own gallery in the Fuller Building, running it successfully for over fifty years until his death in 1989. Matisse notably organized the “Artists in Exile” show in 1941. Whereas his gallery represented European and American surrealists, Matisse’s clients were the major American collectors and museums. Sattler and Matisse divorced in 1949. She inherited a large number of artworks from him, which remained in her possession.

35 Naumann and Obalk, *Affectionately, Marcel* (note 30), p. 241.

An exhibition titled “20th-Century Art from the Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection” was organized by the Art Institute of Chicago from October 20 to December 18, 1949. Exhibits 52 to 81 in the museum show were works by Duchamp, the two most heavily represented artists being him and Brancusi. The Arensberg collection contained almost three-quarters of Duchamp’s works. In a letter he wrote to Roché on November 14, 1949, Duchamp explained that he had been invited to Chicago and had spent three pleasant days there. He visited the show twice (the second time in early December). “The Arensberg show is truly remarkable. Brancusi has an entire room, and so do I, an entire room for my works.” His second visit to the room featuring his works reinforced the favorable impression: “Did I tell you that I was struck by the freshness and good condition of most of my canvases, seen in the museum’s strong lighting?”<sup>36</sup>

This was a period when Duchamp wondered whether it would be better to sell his youthful works (paintings and drawings from 1909–10) to French or American collectors. These works, incidentally, were unsigned, so Jacques Villon signed the attestations. Duchamp notably offered them to Walter Arensberg, who finally bought two. The artist stated that, “Those two things will above all contribute earlier dates to the chronology of my paintings in his collections.”<sup>37</sup> In a letter to Roché dated June 13, 1950, Duchamp claimed that the Arensbergs were “delighted” with this purchase. It is worth noting that Duchamp himself, on Roché’s advice, set prices on those of his early works that remained to be sold. That was also the year—1950—that Duchamp, as a trustee of the Arensberg Foundation, gave his approval to the donation of the Arensberg collection to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

On October 27, 1950—seven years before the deadline they had set themselves for donating their collection—the Arensbergs finally contacted the museum in Philadelphia and began negotiations that were successfully concluded in 1951.<sup>38</sup> The museum’s Duchamp rooms were officially opened on October 16, 1954, and featured eighty-eight works including photos, objects, drawings, and so on. Duchamp thereby entered the museum world by gathering his works in a single place, demonstrating his determination to concentrate, rather than scatter, his oeuvre.

36 Letter from Duchamp to Roché, December 8, 1949, in Reliquet and Reliquet, *Correspondance* (note 15).

37 Walter Arensberg bought two oils on canvas, *Church at Blainville* (1902) and *Portrait of Marcel Lefrançois* (1904), both now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. See Reliquet and Reliquet, *Correspondance* (note 15), p. 108.

38 Aware that they were getting older, the Arensbergs wanted to make arrangements for a final home for their collection, but did not live to see the opening of the Duchamp rooms in the Philadelphia Museum of Art on October 16, 1954. Louise died in 1953, Walter on January 29, 1954.

For an artist, museums constitute a step toward fame. And this issue was crucial to Duchamp, whatever he may have claimed. Which raises the question of the compatibility between Duchamp's incontrovertible attraction to museums and his sincere distaste for self-exhibition, while ultimately winding up as a hallowed artist in a museum. When asked by Robert Lebel about the very word "museum," Duchamp replied with one of his familiar dodges: "I use the word in the sense of hospice or asylum for the blind, the deaf-and-dumb, the elderly, and the mad. Because museums are made for artists, right? ... Furthermore, isn't it better to be shut up if you're mad, whether dead or alive? It's too dangerous outside."<sup>39</sup>

### *The Large Glass*

On many occasions, Duchamp showed that he was highly interested in the question of museums, simultaneously as a commemorative institution and a site of (re)presentation. His personal involvement inspired him to found the Société Anonyme, Inc., with Katherine Dreier in 1920. Dreier was another great art patron and collector of Duchamp and Man Ray (fig. 96). The Société Anonyme was the United States' first, self-proclaimed, museum devoted to living artists. Experimental right from the start, the museum initially occupied a two-room apartment on West Forty-Seventh Street in New York. Its collection grew to roughly 800 items, and in 1941 it moved to Yale University, enriching the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery. The Société Anonyme folded in 1950, after having organized over eighty exhibitions in pursuance of its goal to disseminate modern art, making it available to all. Although Duchamp wrote thirty-three entries for the catalogue of the collection donated by Dreier, published in 1950, he only actively participated in the management of the collection and the museum until 1928, leaving Dreier at the helm. However, it was as executor of his friend's will that he oversaw part of the dispersal of Dreier's collection after she died in 1952.

It was Dreier who bought Duchamp's *Large Glass*, and who commissioned his last painting, *Tu m'* (1918). In 1944 she and he published, in collaboration with Roberto Matta Echaurren, a major explanatory article on *The Large Glass*, titled "Duchamp's Glass: An Analytical Reflection." And it was Dreier again who decided to place *The Large Glass* on long-term loan with the Museum of Modern Art in New York, from May to October, 1944. The loan was part of an ambitious group show, titled "Art in Progress," to celebrate the museum's fif-

39 Entry for "Musée" in the glossary of the catalogue of the 1977 Duchamp retrospective at the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.



96 John Schiff, *Interior View of Katherine S. Dreier's West Redding Home, "The Haven"*—Library with Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass and Tu m'*, 1941. New Haven, CT, Yale University Art Foundation.

teenth anniversary. The head curator of painting and sculpture, James Thrall Soby, who also oversaw the exhibition, allotted *The Large Glass* an important place in the show. It should not be forgotten that the glass had cracked while being moved sometime between 1927 and 1931, and that this show was its first appearance since its restoration in 1936. Its display at MoMA, after such a long absence, indeed sparked surprise.<sup>40</sup> As a logical consequence, MoMA bought Duchamp's *Passage from Virgin to Bride* (*Le Passage de la vierge à la mariée*) from Walter Pach in December 1945; it was the first Duchamp painting to be bought by a museum, for that matter. In comparison, the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris

40 "Art in Progress: 15th Anniversary Exhibition, Built in the USA," May 24–October 22, 1994, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



bought its first Duchamp, *The Chess Players* (1911), from Jacques Villon in 1954. Appointed executor of Dreier's estate following her death on March 29, 1952, Duchamp sought to bequeath *The Large Glass* to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as he explicitly stated in a letter to Roché dated May 7, 1952.<sup>41</sup> That is what transpired in 1953. Moreover, Duchamp arranged for several other donations of works from Dreier's collection to various museums. He was very active and fully aware of the fact that his own works had to be assembled and concentrated in a single museum. He demonstrated that he could be very consistent and coherent on this issue.

### Curator/critic

Duchamp's solo shows and participation in group exhibitions (in which he was heavily involved), like his contributions to magazines, formed the basis of his reputation, which literally ballooned once he agreed to give dozens of interviews.

For his exhibitions, he would find a beguiling theme that struck people's minds and sparked curiosity. He was included in the "Duchamp, Duchamp-Villon, Villon" show—which he mischievously dubbed "The Duchamp Family"—held at Yale University from February 25 to March 25, 1945, later traveling to other university museums in Virginia, California, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Maine. When it came to another exhibition along the same lines, which he organized at the Rose Fried Gallery in February to March 1952, titled "Duchamp Frères et Soeur: Oeuvres d'Art," Duchamp admitted that it required a lot of his time (he contributed to the organization and edited the catalogue). His explanation of the show's success was ironic: "It was popular because the Americans display family spirit."<sup>42</sup> Yet on January 15, 1952, he had written to Dreier, regarding interviews leading up to the show, "The circus continues."<sup>43</sup> Five years later he participated in a large exhibition on the same theme, "Three Brothers" (Jacques Villon, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, and Marcel Duchamp), organized by the Guggenheim Museum in 1957 and curated by its then director, James Johnson Sweeney.

Duchamp also provided editorial advice for several issues of the magazine *VVV*, published between 1942 and 1944.<sup>44</sup> Edited by David Hare

41 Letter from Duchamp to Roché, May 7, 1952, in Reliquet and Reliquet, *Correspondance* (note 15), p. 139.

42 Duchamp to Roché, March 15, 1952, in Reliquet and Reliquet, *Correspondance* (note 15), p. 129.

43 Naumann and Obalk, *Affectionately, Marcel* (note 30), p. 306. It was Duchamp's last letter to Dreier, who died on March 29, 1952.

44 Three issues of *VVV* were published, one of which was a double issue: 1 (June 1942), 2–3 (March 1943), and 4 (February 1944).

with the assistance of Breton, Duchamp, and Ernst, *VVV* was one of the few publications to disseminate surrealist works. Art, poetry, sociology, anthropology, and psychology were featured in the various issues, each of which was made unique by contributions from the likes of Ernst, Breton, Giorgio de Chirico, Matta, Lévi-Strauss, and Tanguy.

At the request of *Vogue*, in 1943 Duchamp designed a cover for the commemorative Independence Day (Fourth of July) issue, *Genre Allegory (George Washington)*, but the editors turned it down. The work, bought by Breton,<sup>45</sup> has remained famous for its superimposition of three images: a profile of George Washington, a map of the United States, and the star-spangled banner. Duchamp's articles and contributions to magazines considerably enhanced his renown. In this respect, the March 1945 issue of *View* published an anthology of notes by Duchamp on his work, comprising fifty-four richly illustrated pages, including a poem called "Flag of Ecstasy." Duchamp also designed the front and back covers. Contributors included Breton, Soby, Gabrielle Buffet (Picabia's wife), Man Ray, Meyer Schapiro, and Frederick Kiesler, who produced a foldout of Duchamp's apartment that was inserted into the issue. In April 1952, Winthrop Sargeant published an article in *Life* magazine titled "Dada's Daddy. A New Tribute to Duchamp, Pioneer of Nonsense and Nihilism," clearly attributing paternity of the Dada movement to Duchamp.

So it is clear that Duchamp constructed his own critical legacy, often after the fact, through public statements and the many interviews he granted in the last ten years of his life. During that period he continued to manage his own fate, monitoring and shaping the way people talked about him and his work.

For example, he participated in a three-day symposium on modern art at the San Francisco Museum of Art from April 8 to 10, 1949 (fig. 97), where his *Nude Descending a Staircase* was exhibited. All sessions were recorded (totaling nine hours) and transcribed (amounting to forty-one pages), if never published. Duchamp also agreed to be interviewed by James Johnson Sweeney (1900–1986), then director of the Guggenheim Museum and former head of the department of painting at MoMA (1945–52), at the pace of two hours per week during a six-month period. The book was never published, but the many hours of recordings were used for a series broadcast on the NBC television network starting in January 1956 (30-minute segments). Similarly, during the "Dada 1916–23" show at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York, held in 1953 and featuring twelve works by Duchamp, he granted a long interview to three members of the Janis family (never published, either).

45 The work was reproduced in issue 4 (February 1944) of *VVV*, the magazine of the "surrealists in exile," and was immediately bought by Breton, then living in New York.



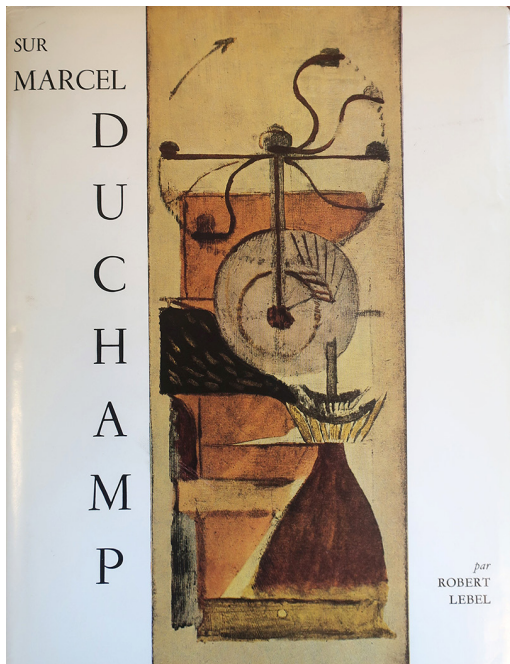
97 Round Table on Modern Art in Session, San Francisco, April 8, 9, and 10, 1949.

Sticking to a public, institutional framework, Duchamp gave an eight-minute talk on “The Creative Act” on April 5, 1958, at the convention of the American Federation of Arts in Houston.<sup>46</sup> In this speech he analyzed the subjective mechanism behind the making of an artwork, ascribing an important role to the spectator, to the eye that the beholder brings to the work.

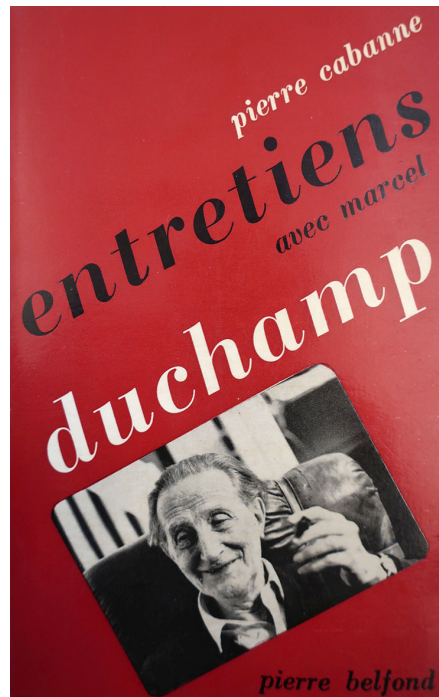
In the same vein, this author would argue that the publication of Robert Lebel’s monograph on Duchamp in 1959 (fig. 98) was a watershed moment, after which a new phase began. As an expert in the history of art and museums, Lebel carried out many preliminary interviews while researching his book. So only after years of preparation was *Sur Marcel Duchamp* published, constituting the first book and catalogue raisonné of his work. American art historian George Heard Hamilton, then head of the art department at Yale, was recruited by Duchamp to translate the monograph into English, published in November 1959 by Grove Press. A further contribution to better knowledge of Duchamp within art circles was the complete translation of the contents of his *Green Box* (*Boîte verte*) by the same George Heard Hamilton and British pop artist Richard Hamilton.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> The original text of “The Creative Act” was published in *Art News* 56, no. 4 (1957).

<sup>47</sup> *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, translated by George Heard Hamilton in collaboration with Richard Hamilton, published in December 1960 by Percy Lund Humphries in London and by George Wittenborn in New York.



98 Cover of Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, Paris/London, 1959.



99 Cover of Pierre Cabanne, *Interviews with Marcel Duchamp*, Paris, 1967.

Thus from 1960 onward Duchamp became a desirable and admired figure, courted by the most prominent contemporary artists.<sup>48</sup> His concessions to the establishment even prompted him to accept honors, awards, and degrees. For example, he was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in New York on February 2, 1960; the next year he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Humanities by Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Pierre Cabanne, who interviewed him at length in 1966 (fig. 99) and questioned him on this stream of awards, asserted that Duchamp was delighted by it.<sup>49</sup>

48 Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg went to the Philadelphia Museum of Art between spring 1957 and fall 1958. Johns, who would play chess with Duchamp and Teeny, bought a work by Duchamp at that time. Several shows were devoted to Duchamp's legacy and his influence on pop and conceptual art, notably "Dancing Around the Bride" at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2012–13, the first exhibition to explore the links between Duchamp and four of the greatest postwar American artists: John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauschenberg.

49 "In 1963 Marcel was delighted to discover that universities were willing to pay him to deliver a lecture on himself. Using slides of his work, he recalled his career and improvised descriptions of works with great wit." Michel de Caso, "Marcel Duchamp, les ready-made et la peinture, II: Ready-made et esthétisme," *La page rectoversée*, no. 24, [http://www.rectoversion.com/contact\\_lapage24.htm](http://www.rectoversion.com/contact_lapage24.htm), accessed November 2018.

Duchamp delivered a brief paper to a symposium titled “Should the artist go to college?” held at Hofstra College in Hempstead, Long Island, in 1960. In this paper he celebrated *The Unique and Its Property* by Max Stirner, a young Hegelian considered to be one of the major anarchist thinkers of his day. Duchamp also gave an address on the question of “Where do we go from here?” in 1961 at the Philadelphia Museum College of Art, in which he concluded that “the great artist of tomorrow will go underground.”<sup>50</sup>

This period of interviews notably included Duchamp’s first televised dialogue, recorded on December 12, 1960, with the popular journalist Mike Wallace, known for his caustic interviews of celebrities.<sup>51</sup> The interview was broadcast on January 18, 1961. Given the high number of homes equipped with televisions by that time, and the number of programs on art, Duchamp’s notoriety was an incontrovertible fact from that date onward.<sup>52</sup> This period, when television first became a tool in presidential election campaigns, was pivotal. In the interview, Wallace brought up Duchamp’s abandonment of the medium of painting, and his reasons for doing so. Duchamp argued that there could be “no actual final value attached to painting, because the aesthetic value changes in[to] money value [*sic*].” As evidence, he cited the price of \$240 for which he sold his *Nude Descending a Staircase* in 1913 and the \$40,000 for which the same painting was insured at the time of the interview.

Reviewing the twenty-odd years of Duchamp’s life after he moved permanently to the United States (1942–60) helps to show how, during a crucial period, the artist slowly acquired a renown that ended in the consecration of his work and his person, under his own amused gaze. That is what his old friend Roché further confirmed when he asserted, “Duchamp is the most untamed, most impulsive embodiment of a free lifestyle, doing exactly what he wants every minute, without being a slave to fame or fortune, and without hurting others.”<sup>53</sup>

50 Quotation taken from Duchamp’s talk at the Philadelphia Museum College of Art, March 1961, translated by Helen Meakins and first published in a special Duchamp issue of *Studio International* 189, no. 973 (January–February 1975).

51 An earlier broadcast, though not in the form of a dialogue, and titled “Conversations with Elder Statesmen,” had in fact featured excerpts from Duchamp’s discussion with James Johnson Sweeney in July 1955 (broadcast July 15, 1956).

52 Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, “On the Hot Seat: Mike Wallace interviews Marcel Duchamp,” *Art History* 23, no. 1 (2000) p. 45.

53 Taken from a tribute to Duchamp written for a planned but never-produced exhibition at the Galerie Louis Carré in 1952. See Roché, *Écrits sur l’art* (note 7), pp. 231–33.



## ART MARKET MONITOR

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### Man Ray Makes a \$3m Record in Paris

November 9, 2017 by Marion Maneker



Man Ray's photograph *Noir et Blanche*, 1926 sold for nearly twice the high estimate today breaking through the \$3m barrier.

100 Man Ray, *Noire et blanche*, 1926. Auction result on *Art Market Monitor*, 2017.

# Surrealism and the Marketing of Man Ray's Photographs in America: The Medium, the Message, and the Tastemakers

Wendy A. Grossman

On November 9, 2017, a print of Man Ray's *Noire et blanche* set a remarkable \$3,125,483.66 record at Christie's auction in Paris, selling for nearly twice its high estimate (fig. 100). It was not only a record for the artist's work in the photographic medium but also for the sale at auction of any vintage photograph. Even as the provenance of this record-breaking photographic print inevitably contributed to establishing its extraordinary value at market—it was initially owned by the preeminent Parisian fashion designer and estimable collector Jacques Doucet—various prints of this work have continued to climb to the top of photography auction sales over the course of the past several decades, indicating a definite trend.<sup>1</sup>

The secure place of *Noire et blanche* in the pantheon of twentieth-century photography long predated this record-breaking sale. Featured in the 2005 publication *Photo Icons: The Story Behind the Pictures*, the work was classified as “one of the most sought-after treasures in the international photographic trade.”<sup>2</sup> With a dozen or so known authenticated vintage prints of this iconic composition in both institutional and pri-

1 I want to express my appreciation to Francis Naumann and Edouard Seblin for their valuable input and encouragement throughout the development of this essay. Thanks also to Steven Manford and Andrew Strauss for taking the time to read and comment on an earlier version, and to Martha Bari for her editorial contributions.

On the history of this photograph, see Wendy A. Grossman and Steven Manford, “Unmasking Man Ray's *Noire et blanche*,” *American Art*, Summer 2006, pp. 134–147; and Wendy A. Grossman, “(Con)Text and Image: Reframing Man Ray's *Noire et blanche*,” in Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble, eds., *Phototextualities. Intersections of Photography and Narrative* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), pp. 119–135.

2 Hans-Michael Koetzle, *Photo Icons. The Story Behind the Pictures* (Cologne: Taschen, 2005), p. 161. Koetzle also notes that *Noire et blanche* was selected for inclusion in Klaus Honnef's 1992 exhibition, “Pantheon der Photographie im XX. Jahrhundert” in Bonn, Germany, cat. exh. (Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1992).

vate hands, it indeed remains a perennial market favorite on those few opportunities when one surfaces for sale.<sup>3</sup>

Like *Noire et blanche*, Man Ray's "rayographs"—the cameraless photographs discovered by chance in his Paris darkroom—have found great success in the modern art market. The signed 1922 rayograph of a spiraling coil and wine glass that sold for \$1,203,750 in 2013 was the first of Man Ray's photographs to break the million-dollar mark at auction. This record held until 2017 when two other photographs—including a print of *Noire et blanche*—left that record in the dust.<sup>4</sup>

Sensational auction records of *Noire et blanche* and individual rayographs notwithstanding, reading those results in terms of their significance for the reception of surrealism in the United States is not a simple endeavor. The works' complex positioning between discourses since their inception and the multi-dimensional creative practice of the protean artist make it impossible to neatly categorize under any rubric either the photographs or the artist. Moreover, the vagaries of photographs at market (vintage vs. modern prints, signed vs. unsigned, rarity,

3 Vintage prints in museum collections include: the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA 1988.422); the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (PH137-1983); the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2002.1577); the Museum of Modern Art, New York (132.1941); the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (O.S.B77.0006); and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (FA 1870). The best-known print in a private collection belongs to Elton John, who also owns one of the even rarer negative, tonally reversed prints of this composition. On John's collection, see Dawn Ades et al., *The Radical Eye. Modernist Photography from the Elton John Collection* (London: Tate Publishing, 2016). A vertically-oriented variant is in the collection of the Getty Museum (86.XM.626.15). Auction records of other vintage prints include: Martin Gordon, New York, May 10, 1977, lot 1011; "Kiki of Montparnasse with African mask," Sotheby's London, March 22, 1978, lot 261; "Kiki and an African Sculpture," Sotheby's Los Angeles, February 6-7, 1980, lot 763; "Kiki and the African mask," Christie's East, New York, November 12, 1980, lot 304; and "Kiki and African Mask," Sotheby's New York, May 25, 1982, lot 444. The photograph began making headlines in 1994 with the earliest auction sale of the Doucet-owned print; bringing in \$354,500, the photograph sold at nearly twice the high estimate. Auction sales of other prints of this image have raised the bar at regular intervals ever since. A diptych of positive and negative prints of *Noire et blanche* sold at Christie's New York for \$607,500 on October 5, 1998, making it the most expensive vintage photographic sale at auction before 1999. Source: "Artnet Top Ten," *artnet*, April 25, 2003, <http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/news/topten/topten4-25-03.asp>, accessed November 18, 2017. As a point of comparison, prior to setting that record, the most expensive photograph sold at auction was Alfred Stieglitz's *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait—Hands and Thimble*, which sold for \$398,500 at Christie's New York on October 8, 1993. See "Stieglitz Photograph Brings Record Price," *New York Times*, October 9, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/09/arts/stieglitz-photograph-brings-record-price.html>, accessed November 18, 2017. Only one other work by Man Ray in any medium has commanded more at auction than the price captured by the recent sale of *Noire et blanche*. His 1916 canvas *Promenade* sold for \$5,877,000 on November 6, 2013, at the Sotheby's New York Impressionist & Modern Art Sale, lot #00008. Even modern prints of *Noire et blanche* have had a modicum of success at auction, despite the cloud of apprehension raised by recent scandals over such works. Scandals concerning the authenticity of modern prints have shaken but not totally disrupted interest in Man Ray's photographs. A posthumous print of *Noire et blanche*, printed in 1993, sold at auction in 2007 for \$15,213, more than twice the high estimate of \$6,708. On scandals over authenticity, stamps, and posthumous prints, see Steven Manford, "Lost Trust: The legacy of Man Ray continues in turmoil," *Art on Paper*, November/December 2007, pp. 43-44.

4 "The Delighted Eye. Modernist Masterworks From a Private Collection," Christie's New York, April 4, 2013. Lot 00017.

quality, provenance, stamp authentication, print size, and extrinsic factors, such as the health of the economy or the whims of collectors at a particular time of sale) make assessing the market for this artist's photographs more of an art than a science.

The text that follows traces the trajectory of these photographs at the nexus of histories of photography, surrealism, and institutional collecting practices in the United States. In the process, it offers new insights into how such photographs, which made their debuts not in the context of the surrealist movement or the reified art world but rather on the pages of fashion magazines, were purged of the "taint" of commercialism historically burdening similar endeavors and came to be held in such esteem. This exploration of the multiple factors and specific tastemakers, mediating agents, and institutions that helped shape the reception of, and market for, Man Ray's photographs in the United States provides a sociological study and historiography of sorts, revealing how shifting attitudes towards the medium as an art form and other elements have impacted the market for his work and continue to do so today.

### A *fautegrapher* at large

Created in the 1920s, Man Ray's *Noire et blanche* and his rayographs faced similar challenges in the art market from the outset. Unlike works of art in other mediums, there was in the early twentieth century virtually no art market for photography in Europe or the United States, despite the diligent efforts spearheaded by impresarios such as the photographer and connoisseur Alfred Stieglitz.<sup>5</sup> While individuals in the European vanguard circles in which Man Ray circulated—such as André Breton, Tristan Tzara, and Peggy Guggenheim—eagerly acquired his photographs, the world was not ready to think of work in this medium as collectable commodities or objects with much intrinsic monetary value. Even the artist's celebrity portraits suffered as commodifiable objects. Discussing this matter in his autobiography, Man Ray noted, "There was no question of payment, of course. As Gertrude Stein said to me, we were all artists, hard up."<sup>6</sup>

Until the conceit of the "vintage" image was established in the 1970s, the devaluation of photography remained well-entrenched. The unsurmountable challenges art dealer Julien Levy famously faced in his

5 See Robert Doty, *Photo-Secession. Stieglitz and the Fine-Art Movement in Photography* [1960] (New York: Dover, 1978); William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1983); *Truth Beauty, Pictorialism and the Photograph as Art, 1845–1945*, Thomas Padon, ed., exh. cat. (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2008).

6 Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1963), p. 131.

attempts to promote surrealism and sell photographs in his New York gallery in the decades following its opening in 1931 are a case in point.<sup>7</sup> While surrealism in any medium was still a hard sell to the American public at that time, photographs within that realm faced an even more forceful headwind. Prior to the exhibition of photographs from Levy's donated collection at the Art Institute of Chicago in the winter of 1976–77, photography had been so devalued that the noted gallerist admitted, “you should have seen how my photographs were stored for many years. In the barn, amid manure.”<sup>8</sup>

However, in order to fully appreciate the historical shift that bolstered the art market success that *Noire et blanche* and the rayographs now enjoy, we need to better understand the contexts and processes through which these works acquired their status and surrealist imprimaturs. Coming of age as an artist in New York in the 1910s, Man Ray was exposed to, and assimilated, a wide range of ideological approaches to modern art that would prime him for the heterogeneous practice he would develop. Although his photographic activities established his avant-garde credentials within Dada and surrealist circles and elicited his greatest acclaim, he looked upon the medium as just one more tool in a creative arsenal that embraced any means through which he could engage in creating inventive expressions. When Man Ray resettled in Paris in 1921 at the age of thirty-one, his photographic skills became indispensable; they not only provided a means to make a living but also filled a void in creative photographic activities in the city and burnished his international reputation at the intersection of the Dada and surrealist movements.

With a hybrid creative practice cross-fertilized by his commercial and fine art activities and a transatlantic career between France and the United States, he occupied a unique space in twentieth-century art history that presaged the eclectic practice of many artists today. Man Ray's iconoclastic stance toward the reification of photography as an art form and his characteristically irreverent attitude toward issues of authenticity, authority, and originality set him apart from his contemporaries in

7 See Julien Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2003); *Dreaming in Black and White. Photography at the Julien Levy Gallery*, Katherine Ware and Peter Barbarie, eds., exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006).

8 Julien Levy, quoted in Nancy Hall-Duncan, “Surrealist Photography at The New Gallery. Conversation with Julien Levy,” *Dialogue* no. 2 (September–October 1979), p. 23. Commenting in 1978 on this shift in the valuation of photography, art critic Hilton Kramer noted, “One of the most striking developments in the recent history of the visual arts in this country has been the elevation of photography to an exalted status. ... Frequently reduced to an ancillary role in the arts ... photography has now been welcomed to the aesthetic sanctum of our culture on a scale that even its most devoted champions of an earlier day might have hesitated to predict.” Hilton Kramer, “The New American Photography,” *New York Times Magazine*, July 23, 1978, pp. 9, 11. Cited in Sandra Zalman, “Another Lens. Surrealism, Photography and Postmodernism,” in *Consuming Surrealism in American Culture. Dissident Modernism* (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), pp. 143–176, here pp. 152–153.



the United States in the first decades of the century. He took great delight in circumventing aesthetic conventions upon which photography had modeled itself, expressing his belief that “a certain amount of contempt for the material employed is indispensable to express the purest realization of an idea.”<sup>9</sup> He was, in his own words, a “*fautegrapher*.”<sup>10</sup> Paradoxically, Man Ray's unorthodox approach toward photography has both fueled and confounded the market for his work in this medium.

Within the elite circle of modern art aficionados drawn to Stieglitz's renowned gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue in New York where photography was promoted as fine art, Man Ray's unconventional approach to the medium and to art-making in general was not warmly received. His free spirit and Dada ethos enjoyed a much more enthusiastic response in Paris, where he relocated in 1921. The discrepancy between Man Ray's reception in Europe and the United States is evident in comments by the Mexican-born caricaturist, art critic, art dealer, and early Stieglitz collaborator Marius de Zayas. Replying from Paris in 1922 to an invitation to contribute to an upcoming issue of Stieglitz's journal *Manuscripts*, he wrote, “I have been thinking a lot about photography on account of the false success that Man Rae [*sic*] has made here among the ‘intellectuals.’ ... And I must say that outside of what you and Sheeler have done in photography I find the rest quite stupid.”<sup>11</sup>

Man Ray, in turn, feigned indifference to the lack of appreciation for his work in the Stieglitz circle. Learning from his American patron Ferdinand Howald of his exclusion from the exhibition “A Collection of Works by Living American Artists of the Modern Schools” that Stieglitz mounted at his Anderson Galleries in New York City in February 1922, the artist responded, “The Stieglitz sale does not mean anything to me—I am delighted not to have been in it.” In a thinly veiled appeal for continued patronage, Man Ray professed, “If I could make an income and have a couple [of] friends to enthuse with me over ideas and things, I should never enter the art market, and never exhibit.”<sup>12</sup>

Having left New York for Paris “under a cloud of misunderstanding and distrust,” as he would later write, Man Ray's resentment toward the lack of appreciation for his work in the United States, not only for his photography but also for what he felt was his most important métier—painting—expressed itself in a strong ambivalence about alle-

9 Man Ray, “L'Âge de la Lumière,” *Minotaure*, no. 2–3, 1933, reprinted in Man Ray, *Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934* (Hartford, CT: James Thrall Soby; Paris: Cahiers d'Art, 1934).

10 Man Ray, quoted by Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 7), p. 256.

11 Letter from De Zayas to Stieglitz, August 3, 1922, ALS, Stieglitz Papers, YCAL. Cited in Marcus de Zayas, *How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York*, Francis M. Naumann, ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), p. 208.

12 Letter from Man Ray to Ferdinand Howell, April 5, 1922. Reproduced in Jennifer Mundy, ed., *Man Ray. Writings on Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2016), p. 78.

giance to his American identity throughout his life.<sup>13</sup> This ambivalence and chameleon-like attitude toward his homeland further confounded the historical reception of his work in the United States.<sup>14</sup> The benign neglect, indifference, or outright dismissal with which Man Ray's work has traditionally been treated in histories of American art until recently have also served to undermine a full appreciation of his contributions to the embrace of surrealist art in the United States.<sup>15</sup> The far more appreciative French have long been happy to claim him as their own, which has undoubtedly influenced the artist's ambiguous place in modernist narratives conventionally constructed along national lines.

### Rayographs forging a collector's market

Ironically, a year after his departure for Paris, a full-page illustrated article in the November 1922 issue of *Vanity Fair* brought Man Ray the attention in his home country that until then had proved so elusive. Titled "A New Method of Realizing the Artistic Possibilities of Photography," the article featured the artist's recently created rayographs (fig. 101) and a small portrait. The bold subtitle reads, "Experiments in Abstract Form, Made Without a Camera Lens, by Man Ray, the American Painter."<sup>16</sup> The text below the artist's portrait concludes with a translated excerpt from the French poet and playwright Jean Cocteau's effusive description of Man Ray's images as "meaningless masterpieces in which are realized the most voluptuous velvets of the aquafortist. There has never been anything like this scale of blacks sinking into each other, of shadows and half shadows. He has come to set painting free again." One can only imagine how pleased (and perhaps somewhat smug) the artist felt by the exposure and accolades. He was undoubtedly gratified that he was identified as a painter, and a well-known one at that.

The story of Man Ray's rediscovery in his Paris darkroom of the cameraless image—famously rebaptized in his own image as a "rayograph"—is legend. Less well known are the roots in fashion that these elusive images share with *Noire et blanche*. Indeed, the fortuitous accident that gave birth to the rayograph occurred while the artist was printing photographs from

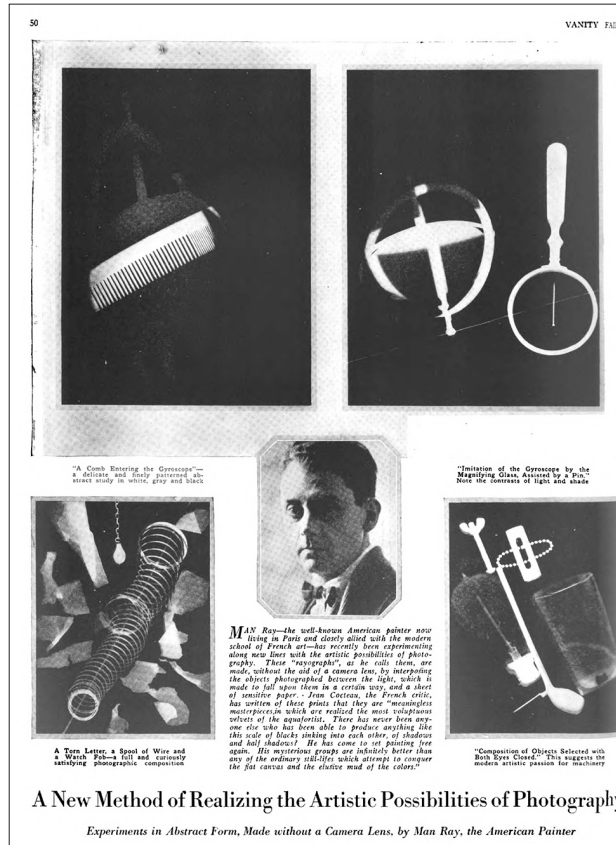
13 Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (note 6), p. 323.

14 On Man Ray's chameleon-like national identity, see Dickran Tashjian, "Man Ray on the Margins," in *A Boatload of Madmen. Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde 1920–1950* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995), pp. 91–109.

15 On the marginalization of Man Ray in American art-historical accounts, see Francis Naumann, *Conversion to Modernism. The Early Work of Man Ray* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), pp. xvi–xvii.

16 "A New Method of Realizing the Artistic Possibilities of Photography," *Vanity Fair*, November 1922, p. 50.

his shoot for the fashion designer Paul Poiret. Recounting in his autobiography the immense joy and playful attitude with which he began to explore the creative potential of the process he associated with his childhood experiments with sun prints, Man Ray wrote, "This was the same idea, but with an added three-dimensional quality and tone graduation. I made a few more prints, setting aside the more *serious* [emphasis mine] work for Poiret, using up my precious paper."<sup>17</sup>



101 "A New Method of Realizing the Artistic Possibilities of Photography," in *Vanity Fair*, November 1922.

Poiret was instantly intrigued by the novel prints Man Ray slipped into the fashion photographs he delivered a few days later. As the artist explained to the designer, "I was trying to do with photography what painters were doing, but with light and chemicals, instead of pigment, and without the optical help of the camera."<sup>18</sup> Although Poiret met

17 Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (note 6), p. 131.

18 Ibid.

Man Ray's timid request for remuneration for the fashion photographs with surprise—"he never paid for photographs and [said] photographers considered it a privilege to work in his house"—the designer happily purchased two rayographs. Accepting "some 100-franc notes from [Poiret's] pocket," the artist was, in his own words "elated. I had never received so much money for my more commercial work."

The fashion connection didn't end there. Among the early aficionados of the rayographs was Frank Crowninshield, the famously art-loving editor of *Vanity Fair*. Under his leadership, the publication had become the premiere magazine combining fashion and art.<sup>19</sup> Clearly taken by these ethereal images and ambiguous compositions hovering between representation and abstraction, he selected four for the article published shortly after his visit to Man Ray's studio. A regular visitor to Paris, Crowninshield was not only the editor of *Vanity Fair* but also a founding board member of New York's Museum of Modern Art. Following his death in 1947, the *New York Times* crowned him "*arbiter elegantiarum* in every field that his ceaseless and urbane activity touched."<sup>20</sup> As such, his excitement about Man Ray's unpredictable images with their lush tonalities and enigmatic floating forms undoubtedly provided added cachet to the work. In a letter to his American patron Ferdinand Howald on May 28, 1922, Man Ray recounted Crowninshield's enthusiastic response to the results of his self-proclaimed technique of "working with light itself" and expressed his delight over the eager reception of his images that had brought new currency to the largely forgotten cameraless process he employed.<sup>21</sup>

The enthusiastic reception of the rayographs was further reflected in some of the earliest exhibitions of Man Ray's photographic work in the United States, where selections of these compositions were featured. This included exhibits staged in New York by the Société Anonyme (1926), the Daniel Gallery (1927), the Art Center (1931), the Brooklyn Museum (1932), and two exhibitions at the Julien Levy Gallery (1932). Outside of New York, they were displayed at the Arts Club of Chicago (1929), the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut (1934), and the Art Center School, Los Angeles (1935).<sup>22</sup>

19 See Amy Fine Collins, "Vanity Fair. The Early Years, 1914–1936," October 10, 2006, <https://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/2006/10/earlyyears>, accessed March 20, 2018.

20 "Frank Crowninshield, *New York Times*, December 30, 1947, p. 22.

21 In a letter to his American patron Ferdinand Howald dated May 28, 1922, Man Ray writes, "It is only a month [since] I've begun to show my things to people who come to see me, and have sold about 12, not including 4 which *Vanity Fair* have taken for a page. Crowninshield the editor came to see me last week and was very enthusiastic." Ferdinand Howald Correspondence, Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH. Reproduced in Mundy, *Man Ray* (note 12), p. 82.

22 See list of exhibitions in which rayographs were included in Emmanuelle de l'Écotais, *Man Ray rayographies* (Paris: Éditions L. Scheer, 2002), pp. 282–283. The exhibitions at the Art Center in

Man Ray's fugitive rayographs found not only a receptive audience but also—in contrast to his other photographic activities—encouraging signs of an incipient market. In the correspondence with Howald cited above, the artist added, “It is only a month [since] I’ve begun showing my [rayographs] to people who come to see me, and I have already sold about twelve, not including four which *Vanity Fair* has taken for a page.” He continues in the missive to discuss the possibility of arranging a show in New York in the fall, noting that his “things [rayographs] are not expensive—they should bring from \$25 to \$50 apiece.”<sup>23</sup> A decade later, he would sell a large-format rayograph for eighty dollars to James Thrall Soby, the author, collector, curator, and patron of the arts who would soon prove to be instrumental in the next phase of Man Ray's career.<sup>24</sup> And in 1940, Peggy Guggenheim purchased four rayographs for \$27.50 each.<sup>25</sup>

Man Ray acknowledged in a 1970 interview with the photographer and collector Arnold Crane that he continued to make a few rayographs into the 1950s and 1960s. However, he no longer had any in his possession since, “in the last ten years ... the Rayographs really found a collectors' market.”<sup>26</sup> In an interview with Crane only two years earlier, the artist offered to sell some to his visitor for one hundred dollars each.<sup>27</sup> Almost a decade later—a year after the artist's death in 1976—they were being sold through a New York gallery for between \$3,500 and \$5,000 a print.<sup>28</sup> When a rayograph sold for \$126,500 in 1990, it was the highest amount paid at auction for a single photograph at the time, further fueling the market demand for these ethereal works.<sup>29</sup>

Although each rayograph is unique—enhancing its market value—Man Ray quickly found a way to expand the financial return for his efforts by photographing the images for the purpose of replication. In 1922, he produced *Champs Délicieux* (Delicious Fields), a limited-edition

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New York and the Wadsworth Atheneum are incorrectly dated in de l'Écotais's listing.

23 Ibid.

24 Letter from Man Ray to Julien Levy, February 10, 1933. Reprinted in Mundy, *Man Ray* (note 12), p. 107. In the letter, Man Ray thanked Levy for introducing him to Soby. After recounting the sale of the rayograph for eighty dollars, he added, “I enclose a cheque for twenty, to support American photography or whatever you like.”

25 “Art of this Century Inventory,” reproduced in Mary V. Dearborn, *Mistress of Modernism. The Life of Peggy Guggenheim* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), p. 321.

26 Man Ray, interview by Arnold Crane, January 1970. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (hereafter cited as AAA).

27 Man Ray, interview by Arnold Crane, October 1968, AAA.

28 *Man Ray. Vintage Photographs, Solarizations and Rayographs* (New York: Kimmel/Cohn Photography Arts, 1977), laid-in price list.

29 See Rita Reif, “Auctions,” *New York Times*, April 12, 1991, p. C28. In the article's section headed “Rayographs in Demand,” Reif noted that the record-breaking sale of a rayograph in the otherwise lackluster photo sales the previous fall fueled the market demand for these unique works.



tion portfolio of twelve tipped-in-gelatin silver prints made from those negatives. The signed and numbered volumes in paper wrappers of various colors were issued in an edition of forty copies. Tristan Tzara, who had been among the first to see Man Ray's rayograph experiments, contributed the preface, *La photographie à l'envers*, in which he celebrated the works as "projections surprised in transparency ... of things that dream and talk in their sleep." Borrowing from the strategies of print-makers and making his singular works more accessible (and marketable) in this replicated format, Man Ray created what has become a seminal publication in the worlds of book art and photography. Even as Man Ray's original rayographs continue to draw competitive bidding and command significant prices at auction, so too do the twelve gelatin silver prints Man Ray made from negatives of the originals and compiled in these albums. As a measure of the continuing value of the portfolios today, four of the numbered editions that came up for auction since 1999 have attracted strong interest. The volume auctioned in 1999 (signed edition 25/40) sold for \$183,720, while the album up for sale in 2014 (signed edition 34/40) sold for \$281,000.<sup>30</sup>

### The surrealist imprimatur

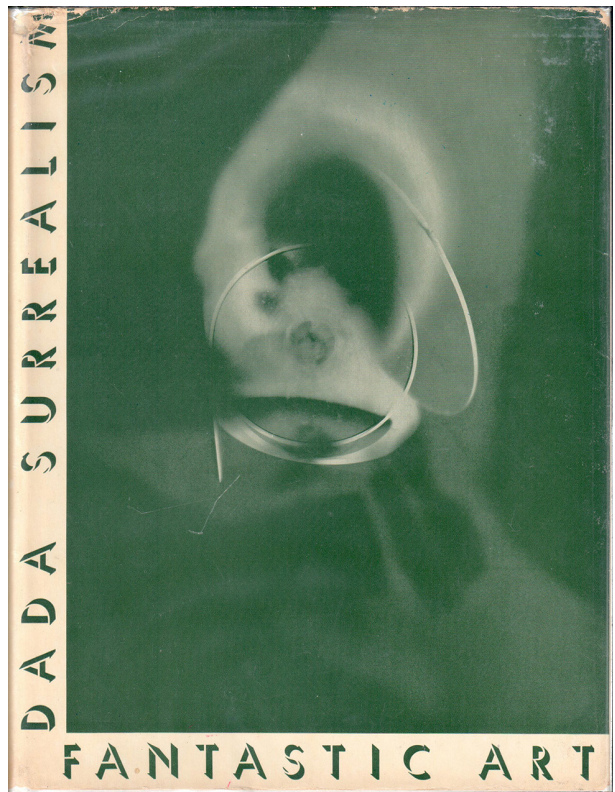
Despite Tzara's effusive embrace of the illusory rayographs at the time of their creation as "pure Dada creations,"<sup>31</sup> their dreamlike qualities, projected illusions of depth and time, estrangement of objects from context, and reliance on chance juxtapositions also made them surrealist expressions *avant la lettre*. The rayographs were furthermore infused with new significance in the context of the surrealist movement, which embraced photographic activities wherein the medium was used to sabotage or subvert its ostensibly faithful transcriptive or indexical quality. Subsequent to the reproduction of a rayograph in *La Révolution Surréaliste* (April 25, 1925) illustrating an article dedicated to "The Activity of the Surrealist Research Bureau," a number of writers commented on these works as expressive of central preoccupations of surrealist thought.<sup>32</sup>

30 "La Photographie. Collection Marie-Thérèse et André Jammes." Sotheby's London, October 27, 1999, Lot 00247; "Photographs." Sotheby's New York, April 2, 2014, Lot 00108. Auction records from "The Price Database," *artnet*, <https://www.artnet.com/price-database/>, accessed November 11, 2017.

31 Tristan Tzara, cited in Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (note 6), p. 129.

32 *La Révolution Surréaliste*, April 25, 1925, p. 31. Breton, Louis Aragon, Robert Desnos, and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes all addressed the surrealist qualities of the rayographs. See "Man Ray," in *Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice*, Angelica Zander Rudenstine, ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1985), pp. 489–490.

102 Cover of the catalogue for the exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," 1936.



The surrealist imprimatur the rayographs acquired in Paris was assimilated into the reception of these inventive compositions across the Atlantic. This was reflected in their appearance in a series of influential exhibitions and publications in the 1930s that introduced the surrealist movement to an American audience. Foremost amongst these were two exhibitions at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1932—"Surréalisme" and the artist's first solo photography exhibition in New York—and the illustration of two rayographs in Levy's pioneering 1936 publication *Surrealism*.<sup>33</sup> With five rayographs in the Museum of Modern Art's landmark 1936 exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism"—one of which was selected to adorn the catalogue cover (fig. 102)—Man Ray was touted in the press as the "surrealist prophet" upon arrival in New York for the exhibition's opening.<sup>34</sup>

33 On the two exhibitions at the Julien Levy Gallery, see Ware and Barbarie, Nancy Hall-Duncan, "Surrealist Photography" (note 7), pp. 41–46 and pp. 63–65. In Julien Levy, *Surrealism* (New York: Black Sun Press, 1936), a pair of rayographs were reproduced as plates 37–38, unpaginated.

34 *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, Alfred H. Barr Jr., ed., exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936). According to the catalogue's checklist, Man Ray lent three rayographs, Tristan Tzara lent one, and another one was lent anonymously, p. 229. Following the exhibition, the museum

In the decades following Man Ray's initial experiments, the artist's growing body of rayographs slipped easily between overlapping artistic realms, peppered throughout a range of publications and exhibitions. "Cubism and Abstract Art," MoMA's precursor exhibition to "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" and an event largely considered key in establishing the museum's pedigree, featured two rayographs. Calling the artist "a pioneer in abstract photography," Barr writes in the accompanying catalogue that "many of [the rayographs] are in fact consummate works of art closely related to abstract painting and unsurpassed in their medium."<sup>35</sup> Barr's assessment was further reinforced by the appearance of three rayographs the next year in the museum's exhibition "Photography: 1839–1937," an event widely recognized as having produced the first major historical survey of the medium.<sup>36</sup>

Man Ray's rayographs followed a distinctive trajectory in narratives about the artist's protean creative practice, whether alongside or independent of his larger body of work in the photographic medium. Indeed, his rayographs are not incongruous even at exhibitions or in publications dedicated specifically to his paintings, objects, or films.<sup>37</sup> Notably, for example, the inclusion of a select group of rayographs in his retrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1966—which was clearly organized to draw attention to Man Ray's work in every medium other than photography—was apparently considered *de rigueur*.<sup>38</sup>

Half a century after the debut of Man Ray's rayographs—at a time when closer attention began to be paid to surrealist photography as a phenomenon in and of itself—a number of these inscrutable images were further insinuated through exhibitions into the surrealist paradigm and canonized in the United States within that framework. In the catalogue of the 1979–80 traveling exhibition "Photographic Surrealism," curator and author Nancy Hall-Duncan featured a 1923 rayograph as the opening plate, asserting that these "ghostlike traces of chance encounters of objects were among the photographic equivalents for the surrealist

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acquired one of the rayographs Man Ray lent (1923;252.1937). The celebration in the press of the arrival of Man Ray as the "surrealist prophet" is cited in Neil Baldwin, *Man Ray. American Artist* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1988), p. 204.

35 *Cubism and Abstract Art*, Alfred H. Barr Jr., ed., exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936), p. 170.

36 *Photography. 1839–1937*, Beaumont Newhall, ed., exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1937). The catalogue for this exhibition was for half a century the primary textbook used in teaching the history of photography. The fifth edition in 1982 was completely revised and enlarged and went through eleven printings, the last one in 2009. On this exhibition, see Allison Bertrand, "Beaumont Newhall's 'Photography 1839–1937' Making History," *History of Photography*, no. 21/2 (Summer 1997), pp. 137–146.

37 See de l'Écotais, *Man Ray rayographies* (note 22).

38 *Man Ray*, Jules Langsner, ed., exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art), 1966.



103 Man Ray, *Le Violon d'Ingres*, 1924, gelatin silver print, 48.2 × 36.8 cm.  
New York, Rosalind & Melvin Jacobs Collection.  
Courtesy Pace/MacGill Gallery, NYC.

technique of automatic writing.”<sup>39</sup> The place of these works in the related discourse was cemented in “L’Amour Fou: Photography & Surrealism”—the 1985 exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, that was a watershed for surrealist photography—with nine rayographs displayed and reproduced in the catalogue.<sup>40</sup> In Jane Livingston’s catalogue essay “Man Ray and Surrealist Photography” (the only chapter dedicated to a single photographer), the author celebrates the artist as a “meta-surrealist,” examining a range of his images that exemplified and even, like the rayographs, presaged key aspects of surrealist ideology.<sup>41</sup>

39 *Photographic Surrealism*, Nancy Hall-Duncan, ed., exh. cat. (Cleveland/New York: New Gallery of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, OH), 1979, p. 8.

40 *L’Amour fou. Surrealism and Photography*, Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston, eds., exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art; New York: Abbeville Press, 1985), pp. 50 (figs. 41–42), 124–127 (figs. 113–115), 191 (fig. 169), 230–231 (figs. 224–225, 227).

41 Livingston, “Man Ray and Surrealist Photography,” in *ibid.*, pp. 113–147, here, p. 133.



Thus adopted as embodiments of the surrealist ethos and seen through the light of this movement in new scholarship, Man Ray's rayographs entered the nascent photographic art market in the 1970s and 1980s as standard-bearers of photographic surrealism and therefore closely bound to the reception of the movement. Perceptive photo aficionados avidly began to seek out these mysterious prints of undecipherable floating objects for their collections, a phenomenon reflected in the enduring demand for rayographs in the market.<sup>42</sup>

The unique quality and market value of Man Ray's rayographs are perhaps best revealed in his ingenious 1924 hybrid composition *Le Violon d'Ingres* (fig. 103), an image largely celebrated as one of the artist's most quintessential surrealist expressions that has no equal among his creations.<sup>43</sup> Morphing the body of his lover Kiki into a form evocative of both the odalisques of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and the French classical painter's musical instrument of choice, the artist created a visual and verbal pun on the French colloquialism for a hobby, *le violon d'Ingres*. With the curvilinear f-holes created by burning the shapes on the photographic paper through a hand-cut template, the original print was, in the artist's own words, "really a combination of photo and rayograph—an *original* like the rayograph."<sup>44</sup> As such, it is truly *sui generis*, defying constraints of the photo market. Indeed, as Man Ray scholar and dealer Francis Naumann rightly observes, "any discussion of the value of Man Ray photographs should take into consideration how his iconic works transcend the limitations imposed on a market by the medium. His *Violon d'Ingres*, for example, is not merely a photograph, but an icon of modern art, one that unquestionably transcends the photographic medium."<sup>45</sup> Given that the unique large-scale print of *Le Violon d'Ingres* has remained in a private New York collection since its initial acquisition in 1962 and few of the related prints have come to auction, the market potential for Man Ray's photography has yet to be fully tested.<sup>46</sup>

42 Among the top one hundred Man Ray photographs at auction listed on *artnet* (note 3), rayographs (including the *Champs Délicieux* and *Electricité* portfolios) account for thirty-six.

43 See Kirsten Hoving Powell, "Le Violon d'Ingres. Man Ray's Variations on Ingres, Deformation, Desire and de Sade," *Art History*, no. 23 (December 2003), pp. 772–799; and David Bate, "The Oriental Signifier," in *Photography and Surrealism. Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), pp. 112–144.

44 Letter from Man Ray to Rosalind and Melvin Jacobs, September 3, 1962, Rosalind and Melvin Jacobs Archives, New York.

45 Francis M. Naumann, personal correspondence, April 10, 2018. For a discussion of the history of this iconic work and an analysis of the original print, see Francis M. Naumann, "Man Ray's *Le Violon d'Ingres*, 1924"; and Paul Messier, "A Technical Analysis of *Le Violon d'Ingres*," in *The Long Arm of Coincidence: Selections from the Rosalind and Melvin Jacobs Collection*, exh. cat., Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York (Göttingen: Steidl, 2009), unpaginated.

46 This original print was acquired directly from the artist in 1962 by the astute New York collectors Rosalind and Melvin Jacobs. See *The Long Arm of Coincidence* (note 45) and *Sweet Dreams and*



## Contextualizing the American reception of *Noire et blanche*

The trajectory of *Noire et blanche* similarly illustrates the changing signification of Man Ray's photographic works and their place within various art-historical narratives and discourses. Conceived in collaboration with American industrial designer George Sakier—the owner of the African mask featured in the image and an art director at Paris *Vogue* at the time—and debuting in 1926 in Paris *Vogue* (fig. 104), the photograph found its initial audience in the European fashion world rather than the international avant-garde or the art market.<sup>47</sup>



104 Paris *Vogue* 7,  
no. 5, 1926.

*Nightmares. Dada and Surrealism from the Rosalind and Melvin Jacobs Collection*, Bonnie Clearwater, ed., exh. cat. (North Miami: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000). The interest in this composition led Man Ray to produce an edition of eight smaller prints (plus three artist's proofs) from a copy negative of the original in 1970, one of which sold at auction in 2005 for \$135,509, almost twice its high estimate. "Photographs," auction cat., London, Sotheby's London, November 15, 2005, lot 76.

47 See Grossman and Manford, "Unmasking Man Ray's *Noire et blanche*" (note 1).

Although records for sale prices of *Noire et blanche* prior to the rise of a photographic market in the 1970s are scarce, there is no doubt that the price paid for this photograph over the past several decades is a far cry from what the work would have commanded in 1926, the year in which Doucet is presumed to have purchased his print.<sup>48</sup> While there is no account of what the French couturier paid for the photograph he acquired two years after purchasing Pablo Picasso's groundbreaking *Les Femmes d'Alger*, records show that in 1922 he paid 200 French francs for Man Ray's study of *Femme renversée à la cigarette* and twenty-five francs each for two portraits of Francis Picabia.<sup>49</sup> The fashion designer was among a handful of prescient collectors and tastemakers at the time who saw beyond deep-seated biases concerning the value of the medium as a collectable commodity and unreservedly added photographic works to their art collections.

At the same time, it is likely that the initial prints Man Ray provided for reproduction in *Vogue* (May 1926), *Variétés* (July 1928), and *Art et Décoration* (November 1928) were perceived by the magazine editors as illustrative or ephemeral material more than art objects in their own right, and thus were handled with little regard to their financial value. In Man Ray's 1963 autobiography *Self Portrait*, he recounts with dismay his initial attempts at remuneration for his photographs. While "an editor of a literary and art magazine took [emphasis mine] some prints for publication," the editor of a fashion magazine "offered very little" for his fashion pictures, claiming that they were "free publicity for [the fashion designer] Poiret."<sup>50</sup> The perception that photographs submitted to mass publications for reproduction were ephemeral in nature is underscored by the fact that, once reproduced, they were frequently placed in the publication's archives or simply discarded rather than returned to the photographers who created them.

The compelling nature of the imagery of *Noire et blanche*—characteristically idiosyncratic and resistant to easy interpretation—helped make this one of Man Ray's best-known works and contributed to its phenomenal ascent at auction, even as debates persist over the meaning of this now canonical image. In the elegantly composed and multilayered interplay of the composition—organic with inorganic forms, black with white, light with shadow, European with African—Man Ray posited

48 See Phillippe Garner, "Man Ray's 'Noire et blanche' from the collection of Jacques Doucet," in "Stripped Bare. Photographs from the Collection of Thomas Koerfer," Christie's Paris, November 9, 2017, pp. 20–23.

49 Ibid., p. 22. On Doucet as art collector, see François Chapon, *Mystère et splendeurs de Jacques Doucet* (Paris: Jean-Claude Lattès, 1984).

50 Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (note 6), p. 131.

the disembodied white-painted face of his lover and muse Kiki (Alice Prin) and the darkly stained Baule-styled female portrait mask from the Ivory Coast as dialectical embodiments of the “ultramodern” and the “ultra-primitive.” He thus invoked a formal and psychological dialogue between differentiation and parity, challenging fixed binary notions implied in the black-and-white photographic process itself.<sup>51</sup>

As I have argued elsewhere, the African mask featured in *Noire et blanche* carried different valences for American and European audiences, with meanings derived from distinctive relationships to fraught histories of colonialism and slavery and the manner in which such objects were employed by vanguard artists on either side of the Atlantic.<sup>52</sup> Captioned simply “Woman With A Mask” in the *New York Times* article announcing the exhibition at the Art Center in New York in March 1931 where the photograph had its American debut, it received none of the celebration of difference and exoticism extolled in the photograph’s appearance in Paris *Vogue*. It was unceremoniously slipped in alongside modernist photographs by European luminaries such as Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Herbert Bayer, Cecil Beaton, and Florence Henri in the full-page illustrated review of “The First Comprehensive Exhibition of Foreign Commercial Photography, Representing Fifty Leading Photographers of Eight European Nations.”<sup>53</sup> By representing Man Ray within this framework, the exhibition ironically—and no doubt inadvertently—circumvented the virtual embargo of his photographic work by the self-designated gatekeepers of modernist photography in the United States, even as

51 The ambiguous and provocative nature of the image is reflected in the range of interpretations it has evoked and its unstable place in art-historical narratives over the past century. Simultaneously celebrated and disparaged for embedded critical issues of race, gender, and representation, *Noire et blanche* has become a paradigmatic symbol of modernism and its inherent irresolvable contradictions. It has been construed alternately as an extension of the early modernist impulse to universalize and neutralize difference, as a reflection of contemporary attitudes toward race and gender, or simply as formalist interplay. See Livingston, “Man Ray and Surrealist Photography” (note 41); Whitney Chadwick, “Fetishizing Fashion/Fetishizing Culture. Man Ray’s *Noire et blanche*,” *Oxford Art Journal*, no. 18/2, 1995, pp. 3–17; and Alexandre Castant, *Noire et blanche de Man Ray* (Paris: Éditions Scala, 2003). Among the unarguably most notable roles *Noire et blanche* has played in contemporary discourse is its promotion as the photographic paragon of the modernist primitivist enterprise, prominently featured in scholarship over the past several decades on the appropriation of non-Western objects by Western artists. See Marianne Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 34–36; David Bate, “Black Object, White Subject,” in *Photography and Surrealism* (note 43), pp. 172–202; and Wendy A. Grossman, *Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pp. 2–4; 29; 129–131.

52 See Grossman, *Man Ray*, *ibid.*

53 “The First Comprehensive Exhibition of Foreign Commercial Photography, Representing Fifty Leading Photographers of Eight European Nations,” *New York Times*, March 1931, p. 107. According to the short caption accompanying the photo essay, the exhibition was assembled by Abbott Kimball of Lyddon, Hanford and Kimball, an advertising agency in New York.

it obfuscated his nationality and further blurred lines between art and commercial uses of the medium.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the not uncommon perception today that “*Noire et blanche* is a photograph exemplary of surrealist art,”<sup>55</sup> its place in the reception of surrealism either in Europe or the United States was far from a *fait accompli*. While the photograph’s dreamlike quality, disembodied heads, and incongruous juxtapositions led to an ahistorical characterization of the work as emblematic of the surrealist movement in scholarship over the past several decades, the photograph initially was largely an outlier in surrealist activities. With the exception of its reproduction in the Belgian avant-garde journal *Variétés* (July 1928) and inclusion in the “Exposition Minotaure” at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1934, there is little trace of the photograph’s presence in surrealist pursuits in Europe or the United States between the wars.<sup>56</sup>

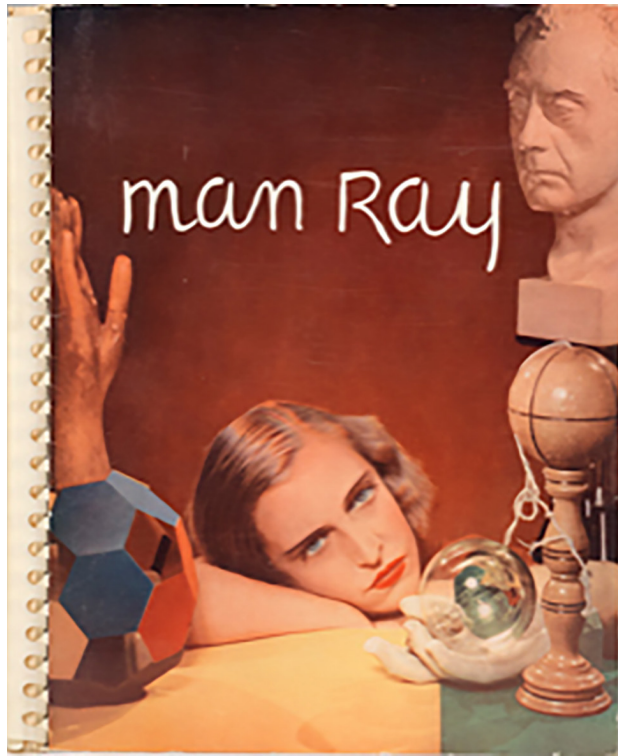
Indeed, *Noire et blanche* remained largely outside conventional narratives of surrealism until relatively recently. Consequently, the photograph is totally unaccounted for on the pages of some of the most influential exhibitions and publications on surrealism in the United States over the course of the twentieth century. Unlike the artist’s rayographs, *Noire et blanche* is nowhere to be found in the catalogue for MoMA’s 1936 “Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism” exhibition. Nor would it appear in the museum’s subsequent exhibition and accompanying catalogue, William Rubin’s *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage* (1968). Rubin similarly overlooked this photograph in his ensuing exhaustive tome, *Dada and Surrealist Art* (1985).<sup>57</sup> One might find these curatorial and editorial decisions particularly surprising given that MoMA has in its own collection one of the rare and historically most significant prints of *Noire et blanche*, which (as discussed below) was gifted to them in 1940 by James Thrall Soby in a bequest that included a significant number of Man Ray’s most iconic photographs.

54 In another ironic turn three-quarters of a century later, it was this composition that was chosen by the United States Postal Service in 2013 to represent Man Ray in its “Modern Art in America” stamp series. See “U.S. Postal Service Dedicates Modern Art in America, 1913–1931 Forever Stamps,” U.S. Postal Service, March 7, 2013, [http://about.usps.com/news/national-releases/2013/pr13\\_033.htm](http://about.usps.com/news/national-releases/2013/pr13_033.htm), accessed March 14, 2018. Full disclosure: I was consulted on the selection of the photograph to represent Man Ray for this series.

55 Man Ray, *Noire et blanche*, 1926, toned gelatin silver print, mounted on plywood, Amsterdam, *Stedelijk Museum*, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/collection/18827-man-ray-noire-et-blanche>, accessed February 7, 2018.

56 It is, however, interesting that the Belgian Surrealist E. L. T. Mesens acquired a print of *Noire et blanche*, perhaps the one exhibited in Brussels in 1934. Mesens’s print was acquired by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1981. See note 2.

57 Barr, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (note 34); William Rubin, *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1968); William Rubin, *Dada and Surrealist Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985).



105 Cover of Man Ray, *Man Ray. Photographs 1920-1934*, Hartford, CT, 1934.

### The institutionalization of Man Ray's photographs

Soby, the writer and art collector who was introduced to Man Ray by Julien Levy in 1933, collaborated with the artist a year later to publish the first monograph of his work in this medium, *Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934* (fig. 105), advancing him the money to have the volume printed.<sup>58</sup> Artfully produced under Man Ray's direction, the large-format, spiral-bound publication featured eighty-four of what have become some of the artist's most emblematic photographs—including *Noire et blanche* and nineteen rayographs. The five thematic sections each opened with poetry and essays (in both English and French) by leading figures of the Dada and surrealist movements.<sup>59</sup>

Lewis Mumford's review of *Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934* in the *New Yorker* was decidedly unenthusiastic about Man Ray's

58 Man Ray, *Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934* (Hartford, CT: James Thrall Soby/Paris: Cahiers d'art, 1934).

59 Contributors were André Breton, Paul Éluard, Marcel Duchamp (written under his famous pseudonym "Rose Sélavy"), and Tristan Tzara.



experimental engagement with the photographic medium. “Living in Paris,” the literary critic began, “Man Ray has become slightly legendary. Those who wish to preserve the legend should not look into the book of photographs by him, 1920–1934, published by James Thrall Soby at Hartford.”<sup>60</sup> Echoing derogatory sentiments about Man Ray’s photographs expressed over a decade earlier by de Zayas, Mumford characterizes the artist as “an extremely adroit technician, who has done almost everything with a camera except use it to take photographs. ... I cannot think of a single trick anyone has done during the last fifteen years that Man Ray does not show in this book, and for all I know, he may have done the trick first.”<sup>61</sup> Mumford’s critical view notwithstanding, the publication has become an essential primary source of great historical and market value. First editions in good condition sell for close to \$4,000, while Dover Publication’s 1980 facsimile reprint version still remains in print.

Soby utilized many of the same images in the publication to organize an exhibition in 1934 at the Wadsworth Atheneum where he served as a consultant, an endeavor partly intended to help promote the book. Under the leadership of visionary director Chick Austin, as Oliver Tostmann discusses in his essay in this volume, the museum had become a beacon for modern art. It not only mounted the first show of surrealist art in the United States in 1931 but also produced a number of notable events in 1934. In addition to Man Ray’s exhibition, the Wadsworth Atheneum held the first major Picasso retrospective, debuted the world premiere of Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson’s opera *Four Saints in Three Acts*, and *Serenade*, the first ballet George Balanchine choreographed in America, was performed in the museum’s theater.

In the wake of these events, Man Ray’s two-week exhibition from October 15 to November 1 has received curiously little attention.<sup>62</sup> The only evidence of the show in the museum’s own archives is a calendar listing in their bulletin and a clipping of a review in the local Hartford newspaper.<sup>63</sup> Headlined “Photographs by Man Ray / Comprehensive Exhibition of the Parisian’s Experimental Work,” the article provides a measured review of the exhibition. The newspaper’s drama critic,

60 Lewis Mumford, “The Art Galleries, Critics and Cameras,” *New Yorker*, September 29, 1934, pp. 49–51. Man Ray’s response to what he saw as Mumford’s “ill-informed review” was sent to the *New Yorker* but never published. See Man Ray, letter to the editor, *New Yorker*, October 12, 1934. Reprinted in Mundy, *Man Ray* (note 12), pp. 122–124.

61 Mumford, “The Art Galleries” (note 60), pp. 49–51.

62 An exhibition and publication in progress by Man Ray research scholar Steven Manford is anticipated to redress this lacuna.

63 Wadsworth Atheneum, ed., “Report for 1933 and Bulletin Vol. XII, No. 2, October–December 1934,” p. 39, Archives of the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.

T. H. Parker, writes, "Man Ray's abstractions and hyperrealist photographs you will like or dislike largely in accord with your reactions to abstraction and surrealisme [*sic*] in themselves. It is apparent from Man Ray's own preface to the book ... that the photographer is thoroughly 'simpatico' to both."<sup>64</sup> Following an overview of the work in the show, the article draws attention to the section featuring what is called "Man Ray's ingenuity photographically, and his interesting experiments in X-ray and other pioneering paths."<sup>65</sup> The mischaracterization of the rayographs as "experiments in X-ray" notwithstanding, the author's appreciation of this aspect of Man Ray's work is reflected in the observation that "This section of the exhibit ... best typifies the onward and upward movement in contemporary photography and in retrospect may someday stand as the beginning of new vistas in this medium."<sup>66</sup>

In 1940, Soby made a bequest to the Museum of Modern Art of the Man Ray photographs he had acquired through working with the artist.<sup>67</sup> This resulted in the museum acquiring one of the most important collections of the artist's photographs to this day, including a print of *Noire et blanche* and a number of his most celebrated rayographs. Soby was to have a long and significant relationship with the museum, serving in various capacities from committee member, curator, adviser, department chair, to trustee over the course of almost three decades. Appointed to the museum's Acquisitions and Photography committees the same year he gifted Man Ray's photographs, he stood in a unique position to shape the reception and narrative of the artist's work. Nonetheless, Soby's interests appear to have been mainly directed elsewhere, including his writing and curatorial activities related to his major collection of contemporary painting. This is reflected in the 1961 exhibition and publication *The James Thrall Soby Collection of Works of Art Pledged or Given to the Museum of Modern Art*, whereas the earlier bequest of Man Ray's photographs was only mentioned in passing in Alfred Barr's introductory text.<sup>68</sup> Not included in either the exhibited or illustrated works, Man Ray's photographs were totally ignored in the celebration of Soby's activities with the museum.

64 T. H. Parker, "Avery Shows Photographs by Man Ray/Comprehensive Exhibition of Parisian's Experimental Work Opens Art Museum Today," *Hartford Courant*, October 15, 1934, p. 117.

65 Wadsworth Atheneum, "Report" (note 63), p.39.

66 Ibid.

67 See "Photographs from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art," auction cat., New York, Sotheby's New York, October 22–23, 2002, p. 26.

68 Alfred H. Barr Jr., "James Thrall Soby and his Collection," in *The James Thrall Soby Collection of Works of Art Pledged or Given to the Museum of Modern Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), pp. 15–20, here p. 19.

The Museum of Modern Art's outsized role in creating a genealogy of surrealism in the United States within the framework of its shifting narratives of modernism has been studiously examined, most notably by Sandra Zalman in *Consuming Surrealism in American Culture*.<sup>69</sup> In a similar vein, the museum has been instrumental in "[t]he cultural transformation of photography into a museum art," occupying for the majority of the twentieth century what Christopher Phillips characterizes as the "Judgment Seat of Photography."<sup>70</sup> The museum assumed this mantle in 1937 with the exhibition "Photography: 1839–1937," which "signaled MoMA's recognition that implicit in photography's adoption by the European avant-garde was a new outlook on the whole spectrum of photographic applications."<sup>71</sup> This exhibition and accompanying publication provided for most of the twentieth century a decisive voice in defining the history of this medium, as Phillips notes, "along lines consistent with the conventional aims of the art museum."<sup>72</sup> The manner in which the museum has situated—or sidelined—Man Ray's photographs within its various narratives of modernism, surrealism, and photographic history is rooted in the overlaps or tensions between its institutionalization of these related narratives.

While many of Man Ray's most radical images that helped shape the ethos of surrealist photography have been ignored in the various narratives of modernism the museum has constructed, his rayographs appear to have conveniently lent themselves to multiple interpretations at the nexus of Dada, surrealism, and modern art. Featured in the series of didactic exhibitions and publications launched in 1936 by "Cubism and Abstract Art," followed by "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," and capped with "Photography: 1839–1937," Man Ray's rayographs emerge as a notable link between those events. *Noire et blanche*, on the other hand, has had a less illustrious history within the museum's early efforts in constructing its narratives on modernism.<sup>73</sup>

Not surprisingly, MoMA's vision for what constituted museum-worthy photographic art did not, in many respects, align with the transgressive photographs most appreciated by Man Ray's surrealist peers and prominently featured in their publications. Indeed, the artist's iconoclastic approach to the medium, which he embraced for its conceptual rather than representational qualities, was largely at odds with the ideas

69 Zalman, "Another Lens" (note 8).

70 Christopher Phillips, "The Judgment Seat of Photography," *October*, no. 22 (Autumn 1982), pp. 27–63, here p. 28.

71 Newhall, *Photography. 1839–1937* (note 36); Phillips, *ibid.*, p. 32.

72 Phillips, *ibid.*, p. 33.

73 Although *Noire et blanche* appeared in the early editions of *Photography. 1839–1937*, somewhere between then and the printing of the fifth revised and enlarged edition in 1982, it disappeared.

about photography as fine art being promoted by MoMA for most of the twentieth century. Despite the museum's trove of some of the artist's most iconic works, it has never held a major Man Ray exhibition or published a monograph of its stellar collection of his photographs.<sup>74</sup> To the contrary, these lacunae and the periodic de-acquisition of his photographs from its collection leave one wondering about its commitment to promoting the artist or, at the very least, its appraisal of photographic surrealism and his important contribution to this phenomenon.<sup>75</sup>

### A Hollywood ending

In the three decades following Soby's bequest of Man Ray's photographs to MoMA, the artist's photographic career took a back seat to other events and activities in his life. Forced to flee Paris in the face of the German occupation, he settled in Hollywood where he spent a decade focused on advancing his reputation as a painter and downplaying the photographic activities he feared were eclipsing that goal.<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, he notably included both a selection of rayographs and a print of *Noire et blanche* (titled here *Composition*) in his exhibition in 1941 at the Frank Perls Gallery in Los Angeles, his first exhibition since returning to the United States.<sup>77</sup>

Although Man Ray at no time abandoned photography, the medium would never again become the principal *métier* in his creative practice, even as it continued to define his reputation in the art world and the market. Fortunately, most of the work he had left behind in

74 Upon Man Ray's death in Paris on November 18, 1976, MoMA hastily mounted an undocumented exhibition of a selection of his work from November 18 to December 7. The only recorded exhibition of Man Ray's photographs linked to the Soby bequest was relegated to a curatorial fellow and, according to the museum's press release "Man Ray's Radical Experimentation in Photograph is Explored" (in which the artist's birth name is misspelled as Rudnitzky), took place from March 16 to August 22, 2000. No publication accompanied the exhibition: [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_press-release\\_387011.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_387011.pdf), accessed November 29, 2017.

75 "Photographs from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art," auction cat., New York, Sotheby's New York, October 22–23, 2002, Lots 17–24, 26; "Photographs Including Property from the Museum of Modern Art," auction cat., New York, Christie's New York, October 10, 2017, Lots 154–155.

76 See Merry Foresta, "Exile in Paradise. Man Ray in Hollywood, 1940–1951," in *Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray*, Merry Foresta, ed., exh. cat. (Washington, DC: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution/New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), pp. 273–309; Dickran Tashjian, "'A Clock that Forgets to Run Down.' Man Ray in Hollywood," in *Man Ray Paris-LA*, Pilar Perez, ed., exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Track 16 Gallery/Robert Berman Gallery), 1996, pp. 13–113.

77 Frank Perls Papers and Frank Perls Gallery Records, ca. 1920–1983, AAA. Baldwin (*Man Ray. American Artist*, note 34, p. 239) notes that this "was the first of many Man Ray exhibitions in California yielding no commercial benefit."

France survived the war, as the artist gratefully discovered during his short reconnaissance trip to Paris in 1947. He returned to his adopted city in 1951, welcomed by the French as an *éminence grise* of the prewar avant-garde. Even so, as he lamented to Arnold Crane during one of the Chicago lawyer's 1968 visits, he had few buyers willing to pay the \$100 price tag he was then insisting on for his photographic prints.<sup>78</sup>

Crane's collection, which grew over the next decade and a half to be one of the most significant collections of modern photography in private hands in the United States, was one of nine international collections that the Getty Museum in Los Angeles acquired in a stealth purchase in 1984. A game-changing event that transformed the photographic landscape, the acquisition valued at \$20 million was touted in the press as "the single largest purchase in the history of the burgeoning international photography market."<sup>79</sup> Securing Crane's collection, which included 175 photographs by Man Ray acquired over the course of the collector's friendship with the artist in his last years, was a particular coup for the museum with an important impact on the artist's legacy.<sup>80</sup> Combined with photographs from the Sam Wagstaff collection procured in the same mass acquisition and additional purchases by the museum, the three-hundred-plus photographic works by Man Ray in the Getty's collection today have made it unrivaled in the United States for its depth and quality.<sup>81</sup>

One year after the remarkable Getty acquisition, the exhibition "L'Amour Fou: Photography & Surrealism" provided not only a watershed moment for surrealist photography in general but also for Man Ray's photographs in particular. Advocating for the aesthetic merits of surrealist photography within a larger critique of the formalist biases of modernist art history, the exhibition played a key role in putting the photographic activities of surrealism back on the map. And the photographer most prominently featured in this endeavor was Man Ray, commanding not only the catalogue cover and extensive representation but also a dedicated chapter.

It was not only the artist's rayographs, as mentioned previously, that benefitted from treatment in "L'Amour Fou." The display of positive

78 In the taped conversation, Man Ray stated that unless people were willing to purchase a photograph for what they would pay for a drawing or watercolor, he wasn't interested in selling. Man Ray, interview by Arnold Crane, June 12, 1968, AAA.

79 Jeffrey Hogrefe and Paul Richard, "Getty Gets the Pictures. Photo Collections Valued at \$20 Million Purchased by the Museum," *Washington Post*, June 8, 1984, p. B1.

80 On Crane's collection, see *Photo Graphics. From the Collection of Arnold H. Crane*, exh. cat. (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Center, 1973). See also Crane's photographs of Man Ray and short text on the artist, Arnold H. Crane, *On the Other Side of the Camera* (Cologne: Könemann, 1997).

81 *The Thrill of the Chase. The Wagstaff Collection of Photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum*, Paul Martineau, ed., exh. cat. (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016).



and negative versions of *Noire et blanche* and their reproduction across a two-page spread in the exhibition catalogue provided a definitive repositioning of this work within contemporary narratives and discourses of surrealism.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, this pairing would be picked up five years later in an exhibition on surrealist art at the University of California Art Museum, Berkeley, that drew on the earlier source.<sup>83</sup> That the photograph's newfound fame coincided with a synergistic relationship between an expanding photographic market and a renewed interest in surrealism is hardly coincidental. Ironically, however, Livingston argued in her essay that *Noire et blanche* was an example of how "Some of Man Ray's most celebrated surrealist photographs prove, on reflection, to be among his least successful."<sup>84</sup> If one is to search for prime examples of a disconnect between the evaluations of art historians and the art market, we need look no further.

Ensuing exhibitions and high-profile auction sales—most notably the Smithsonian Institution's 1988–89 traveling show, "Perpetual Motif," and Sotheby's 1995 Man Ray Estate auction—have served to introduce a new generation to the artist, whose unorthodox approach to art-making and radical use of the photographic medium seem to resonate with today's postmodernist sensibilities.<sup>85</sup> Currently, with collectors freshly primed for rare prints by Man Ray, the artist continues to ascend to the top of the auction leader board in the "classic" or pre-digital photography category with three photographs surpassing the million-dollar mark. Sales of his photographs persist in breaking records even as the photography market itself has ostensibly reached a plateau.<sup>86</sup>

This exegesis detailing historical factors that shaped the reception of and market for Man Ray's photographic work in the United States is only a microscopic slice of a larger story yet to be told, one with more variables in the medium, the message, and the tastemakers than can be

82 Livingston, "Man Ray and Surrealist Photography" (note 41), here pp. 138–139 (figs. 123–124).

83 *Anxious Visions. Surrealist Art*, Sidra Stich, ed., exh. cat. (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1990), p. 59.

84 Livingston, "Man Ray and Surrealist Photography" (note 41), here p. 125.

85 *Perpetual Motif*, 1988 (note 76); Sotheby's London, *Man Ray. Paintings, Objects, Photographs. Property from the Estate of Juliet Man Ray, the Man Ray Trust and the Family of Juliet Man Ray*, March 22–23, 1995, Sale 5173.

86 Less than six months prior to this record-breaking sale, yet another Man Ray photographic print broke the unprecedented \$2 million record, this time a little-known hand-colored vintage print of a tearful woman, once owned by Robert Mapplethorpe. Third on the list is a rayograph sold at auction in 2013. "The Price Database," *artnet*, <https://www.artnet.com/price-database/>, accessed November 22, 2017.

According to an *artnet* news analysis from April 2018, after reaching a peak in 2013, "the photography market has come full circle to its 2010 levels." Tim Schneider, "How Far Has the Photography Market Really Come?" *artnet*, no. 19 (April 2018), <https://news.artnet.com/market/photography-market-data-1269191>, accessed April 19, 2018.

fully accounted for here.<sup>87</sup> What has been demonstrated through this investigation into the discursive contexts over the past century framing his rayographs and *Noire et blanche* is how the oscillating reception of the artist's work in the photographic trade was integrally connected to shifts in the status of photography within the market for surrealist art. Examining these works at the nexus of histories of photography, surrealism, institutional collecting practices, and auction results, we gain a greater appreciation of the forces that shaped this market for his work both historically and today.

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87 Indeed, while the artist made over 14,500 negatives, only a few of the resultant photographs have achieved the iconic status of those considered within this essay's selective framework. A perusal of the photographs on the list of the one hundred top prices for works sold at auction holds few surprises. In addition to prints of *Noire et blanche* and an array of rayographs (both individual prints and the *Champs Délicieux* and *Électricité* portfolios), demand for Man Ray's work doesn't stray far outside the confines of rare prints of other iconic works such as *Larmes* (Glass Tears) and some of the best-known solarized portraits and female nudes.

## “A New Phase of the Offensive”: The 1936 Joan Miró Retrospective at the Pierre Matisse Gallery

Élisa Sclaunick

When Joan Miró went to the United States for the first time in 1947, several of his works had already been acquired by major public and private collections. He discovered that he had become what Barbara Rose called “a hero of the American avant-garde.”<sup>1</sup> The interest was mutual, as Miró was openly enthusiastic about the explorations being carried out by young American artists.<sup>2</sup> Miró’s importance and influence in America, despite the fact that he remained in Europe during World War II (unlike many artists in exile), convey the scope of the work accomplished by Pierre Matisse as an art dealer, notably by creating and sustaining a market at a time when the New York art scene was rapidly, radically changing, spurred by certain critics such as Clement Greenberg.<sup>3</sup>

To interrogate the dealer’s work and his relationship to the artist, it has been decided to focus here on the retrospective show held in Matisse’s gallery from November 30 to December 26, 1936. The retrospective will be studied primarily through unpublished letters between the two men. Their close, extensive correspondence, made necessary by geographical distance, could sometimes be stormy, often due to delays in replies—the chaos of historical events sparked misunderstandings that had to be cleared up by constant reestablishment of mutual trust. This correspondence takes readers to the heart of the men’s collaboration, to

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1 Barbara Rose, ed., *Miró in America*, exh. cat. (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1982), p. 5.

2 In an interview with Francis Lee, Miró stated, “I admire very much the energy and vitality of American painters. I especially like their enthusiasm and freshness. This I find inspiring. They would do well to free themselves from Europe’s influence.” Francis Lee, “Interview with Miró,” *Possibilities*, no. 1 (Winter 1947–48), reprinted in Margit Rowell, ed., *Joan Miró: Selected Writings and Interviews* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986), p. 204.

3 For that matter, Greenberg published a monograph on Miró as early as 1948. See Clement Greenberg, *Joan Miró* (New York: Quadrangle Press, 1948).

the making of artworks and exhibitions and how they were received.<sup>4</sup> Addressing the Miró retrospective organized by Matisse in 1936 offers a glimpse of their alliance, their friendship, their conception of the profession of dealer, and their opinions on, for example, surrealism, as well as their strategies for ensuring the promotion and appropriate reception of an oeuvre whose reputation was still insecure.

### Pierre Matisse, Joan Miró's dealer

Pierre Matisse met Joan Miró in 1930, two years after his Paris dealer, Pierre Loeb, had introduced Matisse to Miró's work by giving him a canvas titled *Painting* (*Peinture*).<sup>5</sup> At that time, Matisse was working with Valentine Dudensing, for whom he scoured Europe to buy canvases for resale in New York,<sup>6</sup> and he organized Miró's first solo show in the United States.<sup>7</sup> The following year, on November 4, 1931, Matisse opened his own gallery, in the Fuller Building on the corner of Fifty-Seventh Street and Madison Avenue, an address he never left (although he moved from the seventeenth floor to larger premises on the fourth floor in 1947). Matisse and Miró signed their first contract in 1934,<sup>8</sup> remaining loyal to one another until the artist's death in 1983. The terms of the contract between Pierre Loeb, Pierre Matisse, and Joan Miró were summed up by the artist to his New York dealer in the following terms: "From *April 1, 1934*, onward, for a period of one year, I will turn over all of my output to you for *two thousand francs* (2,000 frs.)<sup>9</sup> per month; you will share this output with Pierre Loeb, who will retain *one quarter* as against your share of *three quarters*." In the same letter, Miró wrote:

4 The forthcoming edition of unpublished letters will be titled *Pierre Matisse et Joan Miró: Ouvrir le feu, Correspondance croisée, 1933–1983*, edited and with an introduction by Élisabeth Sclaunick, published by François-Marie Deyrolle, Strasbourg. The correspondence is held in the Pierre Matisse Gallery collection at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

5 Joan Miró, *Painting*, 1927, oil on canvas, 28¾ × 36¼ in. (73 × 92 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, gift of Pierre Matisse in memory of Pierre Loeb, 1984. Sabine Rewald recounted how Matisse first reacted to the gift by putting the painting in a closet, only taking a new look at it much later. Rewald, "Pierre Matisse: Faithful Son, Fearless Dealer," in Sabine Rewald with Magdalena Dabrowski, eds., *The American Matisse: The Dealer, His Artists, His Collection*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), pp. 3–23, here p. 11.

6 For details on the contractual relationship between Pierre Matisse and Valentine Dudensing, see John Russell, *Matisse Father & Son* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), p. 52.

7 The show ran from October 20 to November 8, 1930, and featured twelve oils on canvas by Miró. See Valentine Dudensing, ed., *Joan Miró*, exh. cat. (New York: The Valentine Gallery, 1930).

8 Miró refers to this contract in his letter dated April 29, 1934, quoted below (note 12). The broader context behind the signing of the contract is given in Russell, *Matisse Father & Son* (note 6), pp. 113–15.

9 Given the effects of inflation, the purchasing power of 2,000 French francs in 1934 was equivalent to roughly US \$1,700 in 2018.

“I am very happy, my dear Matisse, to let you have a share in my output. It is you who has always organized my shows in America, a land that seems to promise a happy future for us all. You also know that for a long time now I have had the friendliest feelings for you, as well as for your brother-in-law and Madame Duthuit, not to mention my admiration for Henri Matisse. I should be truly happy to share my output between you and Pierre Loeb, a close friend of long standing.”<sup>10</sup>

Friendship and esteem were the basis of Miró’s professional relationship with his dealers, who were workmates (he thus asked Matisse to behave as a beholder, and he awaited the dealer’s “personal opinion”<sup>11</sup> on works he sent him). They were also allies, because the arrival of Pierre Matisse marked the beginning of “a new phase of the offensive”:<sup>12</sup>

“I am well aware that it is not easy to handle my paintings. It calls for almost as much courage as it takes for me to paint them. Above all, we must all three—Pierre Loeb, you, and myself—be guided by an absolute faith. As the son of a very great painter, you know better than I what it means to lead the life of an artist. You have witnessed both the long struggle and the eventual triumphant success.”<sup>13</sup>

The metaphors of combat and struggle against adversity that populated their letters constituted a common ground among the three men. Miró stressed the difficulty of the task Loeb and Matisse would have to accomplish, namely to create a market and bolster recognition of his oeuvre.<sup>14</sup> The American public found the Catalan artist disconcerting. During his first solo show at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in 1932, he was described as “a delightful and genuine artist whose work, up to this point, has proved unaccountably difficult to Americans.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Joan Miró to Pierre Matisse, April 29, 1934. [Translator’s note: The latter part of this English version is taken from Russell, *Matisse Father & Son* (note 6), p. 114.]

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Miró to Matisse, November 16, 1936.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Miró to Matisse, April 29, 1934. As Russell explains (*Matisse Father & Son*, p. 113), “Times were bad, all over Europe. There was among thoughtful people an almost universal and well-founded fear that the entire continent of Europe would shortly be on the skids and quite possibly never recover. For this and other reasons, Miró was anxious to have a firm base in the American market. Pierre Loeb, for his part, could no longer bear the entire brunt of his contract with Miró.”

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Russell, *Matisse Father & Son* (note 6), p. 114.

<sup>14</sup> Once again according to Russell (*Matisse Father & Son*, note 6, p. 113), there were very few Miró collectors in the United States at that time.

<sup>15</sup> *New York Sun*, November 5, 1932, quoted in William M. Griswold, ed., *Pierre Matisse and His Artists*, exh. cat. (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 2002), p. 157.



The difficulties inherent in such a singular oeuvre were complicated by others related to the historical context of the day. The men's collaboration took place during a turbulent period that was marked by the Spanish Civil War: Pierre Loeb in Paris received the monthly payments made by Matisse in New York<sup>16</sup> (which amounted to slightly over one hundred dollars in 1936<sup>17</sup>); Miró sometimes sent letters to one dealer, sometimes to the other, who thus had to share the information provided by the artist about his work<sup>18</sup> in order to manage things despite the obstacles. By October 10, 1936, however, Matisse no longer wanted to effect financial transactions through Paris. He wanted to deal directly with the artist, freeing himself from Loeb as the go-between. He denied any "animosity" toward Loeb, explaining his position by the fact that he henceforth owned the "majority of [Miró's] works," and dangling the vision of America as the "largest market" for them even before World War II broke out.<sup>19</sup> On several occasions, he assured Miró that he was "the linchpin of it all."<sup>20</sup> On August 29, 1936, he wrote, "My dear Miró, let me just say how happy I am to be handling your work. It is a joy for me, and a compensation for a profession that is not always pleasant. Rest assured that I will always act in your best interests in all things."<sup>21</sup>

When he wrote those lines, Matisse was enthusiastically preparing the Miró retrospective, his own gallery's fourth solo show of the artist's work.<sup>22</sup> Epistolary exchanges between the two men show that Miró was heavily involved in the preparation of the show, from the choice of works to the way they were to be hung, and from the catalogue to the critical essays it contained. Even if Matisse had the final word, making unilateral decisions on most of these points—at the risk of irritating Miró—the two men were driven by the same desire to hit hard with a "sensational" exhibition. In order to do so, they attacked on several fronts.

16 Letter from Miró to Matisse, August 9, 1936.

17 Or roughly \$1,800 in 2018. Letter from Matisse to Miró, October 28, 1936.

18 Letter from Matisse to Miró, August 29, 1936.

19 Letter from Matisse to Miró, October 10, 1936. "There is every reason to believe that the largest market for your work is to be found here and that we can manage to expand it; it is here that the greatest effort should be made."

20 Letter from Matisse to Miró, December 26, 1936.

21 Letter from Matisse to Miró, August 29, 1936.

22 Prior exhibitions at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York were: "Joan Miró, Drawings and Paintings on Paper," November 1–25, 1932; "Miró, Paintings," December 29, 1933–January 18, 1934; and "Miró, Paintings and Works on Paper, 1933–1934," January 10–February 9, 1935. Two catalogues include a chronological list of exhibitions organized by Pierre Matisse at his gallery: William M. Griswold, ed., *Pierre Matisse and His Artists*, exh. cat. (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 2002, chronology by Alessandra Carnielli and Margaret Loudon); and Pierre Schneider, ed., *Pierre Matisse passeur passionné, un marchand d'art et ses artistes*, exh. cat. (Paris: Mona Bismarck Foundation, 2005, chronology by Élia Pijollet).

## The retrospective: Attacking at the right moment

To start, the choice of date was critical for both of them. Miró viewed it from the standpoint of the work schedule he rigorously followed in his studio, thinking of the canvases he wanted to put on show. Matisse, meanwhile, moved the exhibition forward to late fall, aware of the publicity that could be generated around Miró's work by a group show, "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," scheduled to open at the Museum of Modern Art in New York on December 7, 1936.<sup>23</sup> Seizing every opportunity, Matisse got ahead of the artist in trying to create a bang, since he could not "just wait, like French dealers, for a client to come in and decide to buy a painting."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Matisse actively contributed to the MoMA show, and thereby to the institutional and public recognition of Miró. Indeed, one of the fifteen works by the Catalan artist on show—*Rope and People I* (*Corde et personnages I*)<sup>25</sup>—had been donated in 1936 to MoMA by Matisse, who also lent three gouaches done in 1935–36. Matisse's letters describe the critical reaction to the MoMA exhibition, strategically stressing that people "greatly admired the artists who naturally outclassed that gang" (meaning the surrealists). He mentioned in passing that Miró's works were hung in the same room as those of Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, and Hans Arp.<sup>26</sup> These details are significant because the two men felt there was a negative side to the show, despite the high profile it gave to the works. Even though it had the advantage of providing a diachronic view that placed Miró in the tradition of old masters such as Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Hans Baldung, Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and Albrecht Dürer, the show was also, unavoidably, associated with the surrealist movement at a time when, they both felt, it was losing both steam and appeal. When Matisse first mentioned the show, on August 29, 1936, he immediately discussed his ambivalence about linking Miró to surrealism, which, he said, "had just about run its course" and was in danger of "falling into the hands of those who merely exploit it," but which nevertheless represented "one of the most [interesting] movements in art since the end of the war."

23 Organized by Alfred H. Barr Jr., the show ran from December 7, 1936, to January 17, 1937.

24 Letter from Matisse to Miró, October 28, 1936. In this respect, Sabine Rewald's comment on the difference between American and European collectors may be enlightening: "At Brummer, the proprietor's brother explained how American collectors differed from Europeans: they bought art because it appealed to them, not as an investment; they regarded the money spent on art as money lost; and they spent money on art in France, not in the United States." See Rewald and Dabrowski, *The American Matisse* (note 5), p. 3.

25 *Rope and People I*, March 27, 1935, oil and rope on card mounted on wood, 41¼ × 29⅜ in. (105 × 75 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of the Pierre Matisse Gallery (Matisse's name was not mentioned in the catalogue).

26 Letter from Matisse to Miró, January 22, 1937.

Whereas, being an art dealer, Matisse might have been pleased at the high standing accorded to surrealist artists, he expressed his anxiety over how he could explain such work to the public. He therefore queried Miró about it, so that he could “give a sane and rational account” that would “head off misunderstandings.”<sup>27</sup> Their correspondence on the MoMA exhibition reveals that Matisse was party to the public and critical reception of Miró’s oeuvre, not only for the shows he organized at his own gallery, but also by making works available and explaining them. He was a key, privileged intermediary with the major American museums. Miró’s letters confirm Matisse’s legitimacy, because the artist praised the dealer’s “perceptiveness” with respect to his work, someone who was furthermore able to offer immediate commentary “as a *friend*” (Miró’s emphasis).<sup>28</sup> Thus the dealer’s view converged, indeed merged, with the artist’s in their letters. As Miró wrote:

“I agree with what you think about surrealism—that school has gone as far as it possibly can. Now the careerists and weak artists are moving in to profit from it, and it’s up to you, the worthy dealers, to be wary of them despite whatever short-term commercial advantages there may be. In fact, in all movements or schools, it is only the *man* that counts, everything else is stupid or a joke. It is only the *individual* with great human strength who stands out, all the others are just silly puppets.”<sup>29</sup>

### The retrospective: Stressing uniqueness

A few months previously, several of Miró’s works were included in MoMA’s “Cubism and Abstract Art” show.<sup>30</sup> MoMA was therefore a crucial institution in making Miró known in the United States. However, since the museum’s role was to place artists in a historic context, Miró always found himself linked to movements, even though his work could not properly be described as cubist or abstract (on the contrary, he asserted his attachment to reality), and even though his relationship to surrealism was complex. Miró and Matisse wanted to win recognition without tying the artist to any movement. Matisse wrote:

27 Matisse to Miró, August 29, 1936, quoted in Russell, *Matisse Father & Son* (note 6), p. 122.

28 Miró to Matisse, September 28, 1936.

29 Ibid. [Translator’s note: Here, as elsewhere, Miró’s French misspellings have been silently corrected in English. This passage is partially translated somewhat differently in Russell, *Matisse Father & Son* (note 6), p. 122.]

30 The exhibition ran from March 2 to April 19, 1936.

“My dear Miró, we must create a very big bang this time, in order to show that among all this fuss over schools and “isms,” only authentic things matter. The American eye is childish, allowing itself to be distracted by all that glitters. So let’s exploit that weakness, since it’s for the right cause. Your show will really shine, I guarantee it!”<sup>31</sup>

This game of being part of, yet standing aloof from, avant-garde movements bore fruit. Miró’s oeuvre acquired prestige by being linked to key moments in art history, but the unique path trod by the Catalan artist (who transcended categories and unsettled the beholder by constantly questioning and redefining his own style) was probably crucial in the long run. First of all, it meant that Miró emerged as an exceptional artist, like Salvador Dalí and Pablo Picasso; furthermore, his transcendence of all “schools” increased his importance in the eyes of young artists in the United States. According to Barbara Rose, his roots in his native soil of Catalonia helped turn him into a model for Americans seeking to produce an American art, despite Miró’s connection to the Paris scene.<sup>32</sup> Mounting a retrospective exhibition therefore seemed the best strategy for reaching beyond movements and demonstrating an individual development, in what the artist described as “a *human* and *lively* way, not at all literary and intellectual, which is a sign of something stillborn, rotten, destined to swiftly die away.”<sup>33</sup> Matisse echoed Miró, describing the retrospective as a good move for “presenting the public with the natural development of [your] oeuvre up to its most recent expression.” It was also a tactical move: “With the retrospective nature of the museum’s exhibition and the Picasso retrospective [at the Valentine Gallery],<sup>34</sup> I thought this show would have much more impact, and its success confirmed my thinking.”<sup>35</sup> Matisse thereby exploited his knowledge of the American public and of current cultural events in order to turn Miró into an essential artist alongside Picasso and Dalí.

### The hanging: Creating a bang despite disagreements

From November 30 to December 26, 1936, Matisse exhibited thirty-nine works by Miró (twenty-seven oils on canvas, eleven gouaches, one watercolor), from the 1918 portrait labeled *Man with a Derby* (*The*

31 Letter from Matisse to Miró, October 28, 1936.

32 Rose, *Miró in America* (note 1), p. 20.

33 Letter from Miró to Matisse, 28 September, 1936. [Translated somewhat differently in Russell, *Matisse Father & Son* (note 6), p. 122.]

34 “Picasso 1901–1934, Retrospective Exhibition,” Valentine Gallery, New York, October 26–November 21, 1936.

35 Letter from Matisse to Miró, December 26, 1936.

*Chauffeur*) (*Portrait d'Heriberto Casany* [*Le Chauffeur*]))<sup>36</sup> to several recent works. He brought together works that were highly different in handling, revealing a clear development from the 1922–23 *Flowers and Butterfly* (*Fleurs et papillon*, listed in the catalogue as no. 5) to the 1933 *Painting* (no. 13), both of which were reproduced in the catalogue.<sup>37</sup> Only one catalogue entry (no. 27, *Painting* [*Peinture*], 1936) referred to Miró's works on Masonite, a technique using the application of tar and sand that the artist developed in the summer of 1936. Miró grappled with his materials in an embrace that was simultaneously loving and bellicose. Even before he made them, Miró suggested that Matisse wait for these works “of great material strength and expressive power, to be included in the exhibition.”<sup>38</sup> After shipping them, Miró made the following recommendations to Matisse: “As you can see, the material is very sturdy. Don't worry if stones fall off here and there. *This is what I intended*. Losses of that kind will make the paintings look less like “*objects of beauty*.” In exchange, they *will take on a whole new power*. The surface of the paintings will look like a battered old wall with a great potential for eloquence.”<sup>39</sup>

For Miró, producing a handsome exhibition was not the point. He used a boxing metaphor when complaining about the absence of these new paintings in the show, writing to Matisse:

“Also, I am surprised that you have not included any of my recent pictures. Allow me to say that in my opinion this was a big mistake. ... I had worked with enthusiasm, and with complete faith in this exhibition, in the belief that the ensemble of the show would be simply sensational. I am very much hurt that you did not back me up by showing the full range of my work, thereby delivering the K.O. to that whole bunch of pansies and incompetents.”<sup>40</sup>

Not having received them in time, Matisse couldn't include all those paintings in the catalogue, but he worked out a strategy for displaying them anyway. As he explained, “I always had two on show, which I changed often. That's how Chrysler bought his.”<sup>41</sup> Walter P. Chrysler (a major collector who notably supported MoMA) also bought the *Por-*

36 Also known as *Portrait of Heriberto Casany*, 1918, oil on canvas, 27<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (70 × 62 cm), Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth.

37 *Flowers and Butterfly*, 1922–23, tempera on plywood, 32 × 25<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (81 × 65 cm), Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama. *Painting*, 1933, oil on canvas, 54<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 63<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (130 × 162 cm), private collection, USA.

38 Letter from Miró to Matisse, August 9, 1936.

39 Miró to Matisse, November 16, 1936, quoted in Russell, *Matisse Father & Son* (note 6), p. 123.

40 Miró to Matisse, December 14, 1936, quoted in Russell (note 6) p. 123.

41 Matisse to Miró, December 26, 1936.



trait of *Heriberto Casany*. Matisse reported to Miró what became of his works, here stressing the importance of the buyers. "I have just sold a second picture in the recent series to a Chicago collector. The canvas sold to Chrysler was sent to Chicago to be shown with the rest of his collection in the new premises of the Art Club [January 8–31, 1937]."<sup>42</sup> Matisse thus justified his decisions by such sales, pointing out that "none of last year's pictures on cardboard had been seen, and they, too, were very popular. It is strange, and also highly significant, that the pictures sold during the show cover your entire output 1926–1933–1935, and 1936."<sup>43</sup> Miró's works slowly entered major collections and big American museums. The financial magnate Armand G. Erpf gave *Still Life – Glove and Newspaper* (*Nature morte – Le Gant et le journal*, 1921) to MoMA in 1955, while *Personages Attracted by the Forms of a Mountain* (*Personnages attirés par les formes d'une montagne*, 1936) entered the Baltimore Museum of Art in 1951 thanks to a bequest by an American collector of the surrealists, Saidie Alder May. *Dog Barking at the Moon* (*Chien aboyant à la lune*, 1926) and *Painting (Fratellini)* (*Peinture [Fratellini]*, 1927) were given to the Philadelphia Museum of Art by art collector and dealer A. E. Gallatin.<sup>44</sup> On January 22, 1937, Matisse assessed the outcome of the retrospective:

"I sold many gouaches and am about to place the painting of *Figure Attracted by the Forms of a Mountain* in a major collection here. ... I think people are beginning to notice that in all the fuss over surrealism there are only a few important figures, who govern the scene, and that you are one of them."<sup>45</sup>

In order that Miró see for himself that the show was "very impressive," Matisse sent photographs of the hanging, as well as press clippings of "divided" opinions.<sup>46</sup> Both men were alert to reactions to the retrospective, and Miró had even given instructions in terms of publicity. On November 16, 1936, he asked Matisse to send invitations to the show to "people of great interest" to him—friends, art critics, and collectors (including Ernest Hemingway, Alexander Calder, the photographer Carl

<sup>42</sup> Matisse to Miró, January 5, 1937.

<sup>43</sup> Matisse to Joan Miró, December 26, 1936.

<sup>44</sup> *Still Life—Glove and Newspaper*, 1921, oil on canvas, 45 × 35¼ in. (116 × 89 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Armand G. Erpf, 1955. *Personages Attracted by the Forms of a Mountain*, 1936, tempera on Masonite, 12 ½ × 19 ¾ in. (32 × 50 cm), Baltimore Museum of Art, bequest of Saidie A. May, 1951. *Dog Barking at the Moon*, 1926, oil on canvas, 28¾ × 36¼ in. (73 × 92 cm), and *Painting (Fratellini)*, 1927, oil on canvas, 51¼ × 38¼ in. (130 × 97 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin collection.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Matisse to Miró, January 22, 1937.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

van Vechten, *New York Sun* reporter and critic Henry McBride, Mr. and Mrs. Shaw McKean, Nadia Sokolova, and composers George Antheil and Edgard Varèse).<sup>47</sup> Matisse and Miró were particularly concerned about the opinions of influential people such as James Johnson Sweeney, the art historian and critic who curated shows at MoMA; Sweeney would organize the first MoMA retrospective of Miró's work in 1941, and the essay he wrote for that show had a lasting influence on reactions to Miró's work by the American public, notably artists.<sup>48</sup> His positive response to Matisse's retrospective was a measure of its success, as the dealer reported to Miró.

### Publications: Creating a bang despite disagreements

In order that the retrospective have the desired impact—and perhaps to increase attendance, but especially to leave a lasting impression—both men expressed concern about publications that would appear around that time. Miró mentioned the magazine *Minotaure* and several times expressed his wish that Christian Zervos, editor of *Cahiers d'art*, would publish “a major article” on his recent work, probably so that the retrospective would make an impact on the Paris art scene.<sup>49</sup> Both men inevitably paid special attention to the catalogue of the show, on which they worked together. Matisse made two comparisons in order to enable the artist to picture the catalogue: he referred to the catalogue of the 1936 Picasso show at Zwemmer's in London, whose cover was black and white, and to the cover that Miró did for issue 25 of *Transition* (Fall 1936), in blue and black. Although the two men agreed, in theory, on these precedents, strong tensions arose. First of all, the adjectives they used to describe the project were diametrically opposed. Matisse wanted to make “a very big bang” by producing “a really alluring catalogue,”<sup>50</sup> which sparked certain reservations on Miró's part. The artist asked the dealer to “refrain from anything artistic” when it came to advertising (i.e., posters) and the catalogue. Although he said he trusted Matisse, Miró strongly recommended that things be done with “maximal simpli-

47 Letter from Miró to Matisse, November 16, 1936.

48 Rose, *Miró in America* (note 1), p. 20. (Sweeney, like Ernest Hemingway, had already written about Miró's work for the solo show held at the Pierre Matisse Gallery from December 29, 1933, to January 18, 1934.)

49 Letter from Miró to Matisse, August 9, 1936. “Before going you should talk to Zervos about doing a major article on me, perhaps published at the same time as the New York show, which would be good.” Miró reminded Matisse of this idea on September 28, 1936. Issue 8–10 of Zervos's magazine, *Cahiers d'art*, dated 1936 (but distributed in 1937) included an article by Jacques Viot (“Un ami, Joan Miró”) and an interview of Miró by Georges Duthuit (“Où allez-vous Miró?”).

50 Letter from Matisse to Miró, October 6, 1936.

city and *minimal artistic spirit*."<sup>51</sup> But Miró's proposed design did not reach Matisse in time, so the dealer was obliged to make decisions. In the spirit described above, the cover was black and white, with a handprint against a white ground, being distinctive from the rest of the space in shades of gray. Miró's name was written on it, not in "that lettering [used] by architects,"<sup>52</sup> but in the form of a handwritten signature in red, on the upper right. Some of the works on show were reproduced in black and white against a background that was sometimes blue, sometime red, opposite a list of all the works on view. Matisse was aware that the catalogue he produced strayed from the artist's expectations, as he conceded: "I think that, despite being somewhat elaborate, it remains dignified and unfussy."<sup>53</sup> In order to win Miró over to these editorial decisions, Matisse reported in the same letter that Sweeney and their other friends liked the catalogue. Miró's discontent was not assuaged, and was perhaps exacerbated by the delay in receiving his copies of the catalogue. On December 14, he expressed lively anger over the signature (too unlike his own) and the colors ("rather too reminiscent of the French flag").<sup>54</sup> At the same time—too late—he sent his design for the catalogue, a poster, signatures, and long-awaited paintings. The two men's collaboration on the retrospective was thus severely hampered by long delays in receiving correspondence and artworks, made worse by the political situation in Europe. Out of pragmatism, and in a rush, Matisse tried to reach Miró multiple times, in vain: Miró apparently not having received a letter sent to Barcelona, Matisse sent another to Paris (on October 6, 1936) and a telegram to Montroig del Camp (the following day) to urge Miró to send him the paintings and the design for the cover of the catalogue. The Catalan government took a long time to send the works to Paris, and then French customs took a long time to authorize their dispatch to the United States. Meanwhile, the date for the show was moved forward.

Given Miró's harsh criticism, Matisse wrote a letter on December 26 in which, after explaining that he only received the material two days before the show opened, he replied to the artist's complaints point by point:

"As to my choice of colors, it was based on impact rather than the colors of the French flag. ... As to the signature, I was forced to do one myself. I did not try to copy yours exactly for two reasons. It wasn't necessary for the signature to be exact in order to have the

<sup>51</sup> Letter from Miró to Matisse, November 16, 1936.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Matisse to Miró, December 8, 1936.

<sup>54</sup> Miró to Matisse, December 14, 1936, quoted in Russell, *Matisse Father & Son* (note 6), p. 123.

intended impact, and I thought it would be better to have a made-up signature rather than something very close that would not go with the rest of the catalogue.”<sup>55</sup>

His repeated use of the term “impact” shows that Matisse, like Miró, wanted to “hit hard.” They nevertheless differed on the way to do so, probably because they did not have the same ideal audience in mind, and also probably because Matisse could not ignore the financial repercussions or promotional aims of the catalogue. He therefore wrote like as an art dealer:

“If you think the catalogue lacks simplicity, I’d say I agree with you. ... This catalogue is a souvenir that people will keep on their bookshelves at home. ... And don’t forget that all this costs me a lot of money, which I spent unhesitatingly. It would have been much easier to make a simple card and hang the pictures the way they do on rue de Seine, unframed or with plain wood frames. That’s not my style. Artists and two or three art lovers might like that, but not here, and we have to reach whatever public there is, after all!”<sup>56</sup>

Miró also made recommendations regarding the frames for his pictures, advising “maximum *simplicity* and *severity*. They should not look in any way ‘artistic.’”<sup>57</sup> Matisse defended his choices by reminding the artist—who had not yet set foot in the United States—that the art scene and art market were very different from those in Paris.<sup>58</sup> The dissension between the two men melted, however, once they deemed that the offensive had attained its goal. Matisse asserted that “the bang you wanted to create has been made, don’t worry. Not with the pictures you thought, but it has nevertheless been done. The museum has bought ‘the Catalan landscape’ for its own collection.”<sup>59</sup> Given the show’s success, Miró acquiesced:

“Based on what I’ve read, the show went very well; friends who saw it also told me that it was very well organized and excellently presented. If I was worried at first, that was because I was afraid that

<sup>55</sup> Matisse to Miró, December 26, 1936.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Miró to Matisse, November 16, 1936, quoted in Russell, *Matisse Father & Son* (note 6), p. 123.

<sup>58</sup> Matisse to Miró, December 26, 1936. “Do not forget, my friend, that New York is not the rue de Seine, and that an exhibition done with the modesty and simplicity of Pierre’s gallery would not have the same impact here.”

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. *The Hunter (Catalan Landscape)*, 1923–24, oil on canvas, 25½ × 30½ in. (65 × 100 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. This painting was exhibited at the museum (on loan from Simone Kahn), not exhibited at the Pierre Matisse Gallery.

the latest pictures wouldn't be exhibited, which I felt was of capital importance for reaching our goal, which we met. I was absolutely determined to hit hard in order to smash that gang of impotent men. You were a great help, and I hope we'll get them in the end.”<sup>60</sup>

This retrospective could be considered exemplary of Matisse's efforts regarding Miró's work in the United States. As a man who was “active and far-seeing” (to borrow Miró's terms of praise),<sup>61</sup> he employed his knowledge of the American market and of Miró's oeuvre in order to carry out offensives that landed it in the greatest private and public collections. He was also able to spur orders for monumental commissions—including the restaurant of a luxury hotel in Cincinnati.<sup>62</sup> Matisse established links with influential players on the New York art scene and notably exploited the proximity of museums to skillfully write Miró into the history of art. Just as people were slowly coming to feel that “the School of Paris [was] over,” Matisse turned Miró into “the most important representative of that European school”<sup>63</sup> by, for example, seeing that “the first things to come from Europe since the start of the war”<sup>64</sup> were works by Miró in 1945, and by taking advantage of the aura of surrealism and its leader: in 1959, Matisse brought the names of André Breton and Joan Miró together in a publication he produced for the exhibition “Constellations,” in which the poet's parallel prose accompanied gouaches done by the artist during World War II.<sup>65</sup> The dealer thereby reinforced his own efforts by issuing, in addition to catalogues, fine art publications aimed at book lovers. Pierre Matisse thus emerges as a timely strategist, advancing on several fronts with Miró at his side. Indeed, the artist participated in every battle, and the two men's relationship—in the apt words of Jacques Dupin, who knew them well—was “a unique alliance and partnership.”<sup>66</sup>

60 Letter from Miró to Matisse, January 12, 1937.

61 Miró to Matisse, November 16, 1936, quoted in Russell, *Matisse Father & Son* (note 6), p. 122.

62 In 1947 Miró was commissioned to paint a large mural for the restaurant of the Terrace Plaza Hotel in Cincinnati.

63 Letter from Matisse to Miró, August 16, 1946.

64 Matisse to Miró, February 2, 1945.

65 *Constellations*, with poems by André Breton opposite gouaches by Joan Miró, would be published by Pierre Matisse in 1959.

66 Jacques Dupin, “Joan Miró et Pierre Matisse,” in Schneider, *Pierre Matisse* (note 22), p. 53.





106 Steve Schapiro,  
*René Magritte and  
Alexander Iolas*, 1965.

## René Magritte in the United States: Reconciling Business and Art

Julie Waseige

After the Second World War, René Magritte embarked on a lengthy correspondence with Alexander Iolas, an art dealer of Greek descent based in New York. At a time when Magritte was gearing up to hand over the rights to the majority of his future paintings to Iolas, the first exchanges between the two men feature a series of negotiations in which Magritte clarifies the terms of their future collaboration. In a letter to Iolas dated March 2, 1950, Magritte stresses the importance of finding a balance between the necessity of meeting market demand and preserving his artistic freedom. The letter was prompted by his indignation at Iolas's request for him to paint a picture of roses in order to gain favor with a certain woman who "could be of great help" to them:<sup>1</sup>

"You sell pictures and I earn my livelihood from my work. Both you and I have chosen these occupations. Like you, I would like to sell a large number of works. But not just anything. I could obviously earn a great deal of money by producing a certain kind of painting for wealthy people with no taste, and you could make more money by selling such atrocities. But we must strike a happy medium: we must reconcile business and art! And if we wish to gain maximum benefit, let us not confuse art and business. This is why you must tell me as accurately as you can which of my works have the greatest chance of being sold, and that does not mean that works which are unsold (such

<sup>1</sup> The woman in question was Fleur Cowles, founder of *Flair Magazine*, the new leading art journal of the time. Twelve issues of the journal were published between February 1950 and January 1951, with contributors including Jean Cocteau, Tennessee Williams, Simone de Beauvoir, Gloria Swanson, John O'Hara, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bernard Baruch, Gypsy Rose Lee, the Duchess of Windsor, Lucien Freud, Salvador Dalí, Colette, and Saul Steinberg. Letter from Alexander Iolas to René Magritte, February 25, 1950, Menil Archives, The Menil Collection, Houston (hereafter cited as Menil Archives).

as the superb gouache *Le bain de cristal*<sup>2</sup>) should be torn up. This way, there will be no misunderstandings that could jeopardize our business dealings and our respective ideas of what is fair.”<sup>3</sup>

These brief words sum up the complex issue of the boundary between art and business which runs through the twenty-one years of correspondence between Magritte and Iolas. Between 1946 and Magritte’s death in 1967, the two men exchanged around four hundred letters—a testimony to the most loyal and enduring business relationship in the painter’s career (fig. 106).<sup>4</sup> In addition to shedding light on the correspondents’ personalities, this collection of handwritten letters provides a counterbalance to the tendency to label Magritte in the postwar period as a “commercial painter.” This tendency is apparent not only in recent readings of history, but also in attitudes expressed at the time. In the late 1950s, Magritte moved into an opulent villa and adopted a bourgeois lifestyle, taking full advantage of the successful sale of his work, first in the United States, then in Belgium. This raised many an eyebrow, particularly in the surrealist milieu, with its deeply anti-bourgeois stance and rejection of the commercialization of art. Magritte was scorned by his surrealist peers, one of whom, Marcel Mariën, produced and distributed a leaflet titled “Grande Baisse” (Great Bargain Sale) at a retrospective of Magritte’s work held at the Knokke Casino in Belgium in 1962. In this spoof announcement signed “René Magritte,” which presented a list of works for sale at cut-rate prices, Mariën attacked Magritte’s habit of turning out numerous repeats of his work in order to satisfy multiple requests, concluding facetiously, “Art lovers are invited to place their orders immediately. Spread the word: there will not be enough mystery for everyone.”<sup>5</sup>

### Status of the variant

The term “variant” was used by Magritte to describe works that revisited earlier themes, while developing them in new ways. For instance, Magritte’s first painting titled *The Empire of Light* (*L’Empire des lumières*)

2 *The Glass Bath* (*Le bain de cristal*, 1949), gouache on paper, 46 × 33 cm.

3 Letter from René Magritte to Alexander Iolas, March 2, 1950, Menil Archives.

4 This essay provides a selection of excerpts from the letters exchanged between René Magritte and Alexander Iolas. (Translator’s note: where possible, stylistic errors in letters written by Iolas have not been corrected in order to remain faithful to the original wording.)

5 The leaflet, measuring 33.9 × 16.4 cm, comprised a text by Marcel Mariën and a photomontage by Leo Dohmen of an image of the Belgian 100-franc banknote in which the head of King Leopold was replaced by that of Magritte. It was distributed during the exhibition “XVe festival belge d’été: L’œuvre de René Magritte” held at the Casino Communal de Knokke, Belgium, in 1962.

of 1949 was followed by twenty-six new variations, or variants, painted in oil or gouache up until 1964. The basic premise of all of these works is the same: an image that evokes both day and night, with a night sky surmounted by a sunlit sky. The variants differed in size and format, the depiction of clouds, vegetation, and houses, and in aspects such as the presence or absence of a lake in the foreground. The focal point of Mariën's criticism of Magritte in "Grande Baisse," this practice of variants did not only develop in response to the American market—Magritte had also explored its possibilities prior to the late 1940s, such as for an exhibition at the Galerie Lou Cosyn in Brussels in 1947, which included a large number of paintings from his *Shéhérazade* series of "woman-pearl objects."<sup>6</sup>

While Magritte's variants clearly had a commercial purpose when produced to satisfy multiple demands for a particular work, they were also central to his philosophy of painting. Indeed, they allowed him to develop and refine ideas implicit in the work that were made visible by the act of painting. Magritte repeatedly stated his need to "correct" his images, and this correction process inevitably led to the creation of series. While the artist occasionally "received" imagery through instantaneous visions,<sup>7</sup> the way in which his ideas took shape most often required numerous sketches and sometimes numerous painted versions, which he saw as more or less successful. Repetition and correction allowed him to finally achieve a result that fulfilled his desire to evoke, in the most powerful way possible, the "mystery of the world"—the only goal he ever professed to pursue. Magritte's correspondence with Iolas, and especially with his family and friends, bears witness to this quest for the "right" image: incorporating drawings and sketches in his letters, he frequently asked his friends for advice, at times retracing the entire process of research that informed his paintings.

Bearing this in mind, it would therefore be a mistake to regard Magritte as no more than a business-minded artist who was content to reproduce endless variations of his work to meet market demand.<sup>8</sup> It is also important to point out that his variants were primarily executed in

6 "Magritte," Brussels, Galerie Lou Cosyn, May 31–June 21, 1947.

7 Magritte claimed to have received "instantaneous visions" that inspired a number of his works, including *Time Transfixed* (*La durée poignardée*, 1938), *Golconda* (*Golconde*, 1953), and *The Wrath of the Gods* (*La colère des dieux*, 1960).

8 It is interesting to note that only one exact copy of a painting by Magritte exists. In 1948, Magritte painted two identical canvases, both titled *The Flavor of Tears* (*La saveur des larmes*). Marcel Mariën, in his text "Le jumeau d'Amérique. Une mystification exemplaire ou l'art de combler les musées," states that Magritte made this copy for an art enthusiast who had seen the original at Magritte's studio, but it had already been sold. Mariën points to Magritte's precarious financial situation as justification for this copy. Marcel Mariën, "Le jumeau d'Amérique. Une mystification exemplaire ou l'art de combler les musées," in Marcel Mariën, *Le radeau de la mémoire* (Brussels: Les Lèvres Nues, 1988), pp. 301–306.

gouache, a quick-drying medium that yields fast results. Yet only one sixth of Magritte's gouaches were produced for Iolas, who had a strong preference for oil paintings as a presentation medium for new, original images. The gouaches that Magritte sent to Iolas were generally commissioned by a client or intended as gifts, and were only very rarely intended to be shown in gallery exhibitions.

While it is undeniable that Magritte followed his dealer's advice in order to please the American market and that this at times led to the production of variants, a study of their correspondence and of Magritte's work in the postwar period reveals a more nuanced picture of the situation. Their letters, the majority of which are conserved in the archives of the Menil Collection,<sup>9</sup> document Magritte's first interactions with Iolas, the planning of one-man shows, the type of works that Magritte sent to the United States in accordance with the tastes of Iolas and his clients, details of sales, shipping, insurance, payment arrangements, contract negotiations, and the ways in which Magritte's work was promoted in cultural spheres through publishing and retrospectives at art museums—in short, a whole set of mechanisms that help us to understand the context in which Magritte's work gained access to the American market and the international success that followed.

In 1965 and 1966, one of the largest retrospectives of Magritte's work held in his lifetime took place in the United States. This traveling exhibition titled "René Magritte" was the first major event to include works from both European and American collections. The choice of New York's Museum of Modern Art for the first leg of the show was a sign of official recognition, especially since no other Belgian painter had ever been honored with a retrospective at this world-famous institution in his own lifetime.<sup>10</sup> For Magritte, however, acknowledgement in the United States was not new. In 1947, Claude Spaak, after a visit to MoMA, stated in the Brussels art journal *Les Arts plastiques*, "It may provoke a smile to learn that not far from two James Ensors, I had the pleasure of discovering a work by René Magritte. No man is a prophet in his own country. ... The Americans accord Magritte an importance that many Belgians still deny him."<sup>11</sup> Not only was Magritte's work

9 More than 300 letters representing approximately three-quarters of the known correspondence between Magritte and Iolas are conserved in the archives of the Menil Foundation in Houston, Texas. This collection was a gift of the estate of Iolas to the Menil Foundation through the intermediary of André Mourgues in January 1979.

10 This retrospective was held at the following art institutions in the United States: the Museum of Modern Art, New York, December 15, 1965–February 27, 1966; Rose Art Museum (Brandeis University), Waltham, April 3–May 1, 1966; Chicago Art Institute, May 30–July 3, 1966; Pasadena Art Museum, August 1–September 4, 1966; and the University Art Museum (University of California), Berkeley, October 1–November 1, 1966.

11 Claude Spaak, "The Museum of Modern Art of New York," *Les Arts plastiques*, August–September, 1947, p. 237.



exhibited at MoMA, but it attracted praise from the American press from the time of his first exhibition at the Hugo Gallery in 1947. In his review of the “René Magritte” show in April 1947, *New York Times* critic Edward Alden Jewell wrote, “The Hugo Gallery performs a service by bringing together so many excellent canvases by René Magritte, whose surrealism is of a high order, imaginatively and with respect to the craftsmanship involved.”<sup>12</sup> In Belgium, however, it was not until 1954 that the artist first gained recognition when a retrospective was held at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.<sup>13</sup> Magritte’s success in the United States can be largely attributed to the efforts of Iolas, whom he first met in the aftermath of the Second World War.

### Initial interaction with Alexander Iolas and the first exhibitions at the Hugo Gallery (1946–1948)

In 1946, Magritte faced financial hardship and the rejection of his work. During the war, his struggle to sell his paintings had led him to produce forgeries of works by artists such as Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Max Ernst, which he sold with the help of his friend Marcel Mariën.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, he embarked on his “Surrealism in Full Sunlight” project—a radical new departure that was stylistically close to impressionism, with a shift to a lighter palette. In this work, Magritte sought to celebrate the joyful side of life in reaction to the stifling atmosphere in Belgium under Nazi occupation. Also known as his “Renoir period,” this new style was not greeted with the expected enthusiasm: on the contrary, Magritte found himself alienated from the majority of his fellow surrealists, including André Breton.<sup>15</sup>

Magritte’s financial and artistic difficulties in the postwar years provide the background for his first dealings with the Hugo Gallery in New York. The artist’s first contact with Alexander Iolas, a great admirer of his work, dates from 1946, when Magritte was virtually unknown

<sup>12</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, “Work by Mestrovic: Yugoslav’s Sculpture at Metropolitan. Chagall, Magritte and Others,” *New York Times*, April 13, 1947, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> The retrospective exhibition titled “René Magritte” was held at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, May 7–June 1, 1954.

<sup>14</sup> The production of forgeries was confirmed in a number of letters exchanged between Magritte and Mariën, published in René Magritte, *La destination: Lettres à Marcel Mariën (1937–1962)* (Brussels: Les Lèvres Nues, 1977).

<sup>15</sup> Breton did not condone the new direction in Magritte’s painting style, openly condemning his work during the 1947 “Exposition internationale du Surréalisme” in a text published in the exhibition catalogue: “It is difficult not to equate this gesture with that of a (backward) child, who, wishing to ensure a pleasant day, thinks he can lock the barometer needle at the ‘fair weather’ position.” André Breton, “Devant le rideau,” in *La Clé des champs* (Paris: J.-J. Pauvert, 1967), pp. 107–108, p. 10.

in the United States. Not only was he not a member of the group of surrealist émigrés in New York, his work had only rarely been exhibited. Iolas's desire to represent him in the United States thus comes across as a personal challenge. Commenting on Iolas's approach, the artist William Copley observed, "I think he [Iolas] and Julien Levy were the most astute in the sense of being able to recognize talent at an early period."<sup>16</sup> The parallel with Julien Levy is no coincidence, since Levy was the first advocate of surrealism in New York in the interwar period. Levy staged two solo shows of Magritte's work at his gallery in 1936 and 1938—both of which were unsuccessful, putting an end to their collaboration.<sup>17</sup> Looking back, it is clear that Iolas was the first art dealer to have truly championed Magritte's work in the United States and the only one to have supported him over a long period.

Born in Alexandria in around 1908, Iolas trained as a classical ballet dancer in Europe before emigrating to the United States around 1940, when he joined the New York's Ballet Theater Company as a soloist.<sup>18</sup> He was forced to abandon dance in 1944 due to injury, and one year later opened the Hugo Gallery in New York in partnership with his friend Maria Hugo (formerly the Duchesse de Gramont). Iolas had sole control of the gallery's management and his newfound passion for art dealership led him to open his own establishment in New York, the Iolas Gallery, in 1953. In addition to Magritte, his stable included Max Ernst, Roberto Matta, Victor Brauner, William Copley, Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint Phalle, Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Takis, Jannis Kou-nellis, Paul Thek, Ed Ruscha, Les Lalannes, and Andy Warhol, who, incidentally, exhibited his work for the first time with the Hugo Gal-

16 Interview with William N. Copley by Paul Cummings, January 30, 1968, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, in *Alexander the Great: The Iolas Gallery, 1955–1987*, exh. cat. (New York: Paul Kasmin Gallery, 2014), p. 57.

17 The exhibition "René Magritte" was Magritte's first one-man show in the United States, organized by Julien Levy at his New York gallery at 602 Madison Avenue, January 3–20, 1936. Around two thirds of the twenty works exhibited were small-format variants executed in oil paint, which greatly disappointed Levy. Magritte had nevertheless endeavored to adapt his work to its destination, both in the visual aspect (such as by using words translated into English in his word paintings) and format. Malcolm Gee explains that the choice of format was not only dictated by the art market, but also by the mode of transportation and the presentation of the works as part of a collection. Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market Between 1910 and 1930* (New York/London: Garland Publishing, 1981), p. 8. Julien Levy held a further exhibition of Magritte's work at his New York gallery in January 1938. The show comprised five paintings he had purchased from the 1936 exhibition and eleven that had originally been sent to New York by E. L. T. Mesens in 1936 for the exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" at MoMA, but had not been exhibited.

18 Many important details of Iolas's biography remain unclear, with multiple versions existing of certain events, giving his life a mythic quality. His exact birth date is unknown, but is likely to be between 1907 and 1912.



107 René Magritte, *The Harvest*, 1943, oil on canvas, 60 × 80 cm. Brussels, Musée Magritte.

lery in 1952. This list of names attests to the instrumental role that Iolas played in the promotion of artists who are now household names.<sup>19</sup>

An analysis of the first two Magritte exhibitions at the Hugo Gallery, held in 1947 and 1948, provides a glimpse into a line of approach that would remain in place until December 1956, the date at which Magritte and Iolas signed an exclusivity contract. The earliest record of Magritte's contact with the Hugo Gallery is a telegram he sent on February 27, 1946, in which he suggests holding an exhibition in December of that year. The exchange of letters that followed finalized arrangements for the show, although it was finally postponed until April 1947.<sup>20</sup> Conceived as a retrospective, it mainly featured works from the collections of Claude

<sup>19</sup> To highlight the important role played by Alexander Iolas as an art dealer, an exhibition devoted to his work was held in 2014 at the Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York. The exhibition catalogue offers interesting insights into his personality (see note 16).

<sup>20</sup> "René Magritte," New York, Hugo Gallery, April 7–30, 1947.

Spaak and Alex Salkin, two close friends of Magritte.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Magritte had enlisted Salkin to represent him in his dealings with Iolas in New York. To supplement these works, Magritte sent Iolas a group of paintings that had not been sold in Brussels, all recent and executed in the “Surrealism in Full Sunlight” style.<sup>22</sup> But since Magritte was unfamiliar with transatlantic freight procedures, the works were held up at customs. As a result, the paintings exhibited were primarily in his earlier style, with the addition of five works from the “sunlit” period, including *The Harvest* (*La moisson*, fig. 107), which were already on consignment at the gallery.<sup>23</sup>

In May 1947, soon after this initial “test” exhibition, Iolas wrote to Magritte with his own report on the show’s success, providing a list of the works that most appealed to visitors. Mentioning *The Fair Captive* (*La belle captive*), *The Healer* (*Le thérapeute*), *The Red Model* (*Le modèle rouge*, fig. 108), and *Treasure Island* (*L’île au trésor*), he explained in somewhat broken French that “this is the direction that should be followed in subsequent works.”<sup>24</sup> This short phrase with which Iolas sought to steer the work that Magritte produced for the American market is of key importance as it introduced a new dynamic to their correspondence: from that time onward, Iolas would give explicit instructions on the type of paintings he considered “beautiful” and well suited to American tastes.<sup>25</sup> For his part, Magritte clearly understood that if he wished to sell his work he would need to listen to Iolas, who offered valuable guidance in understanding the preferences of his clients. In his reply, Magritte stated, “I think it would be better to wait until your visit so that we can decide together what is most suitable for your clientele and, on this basis, choose the works that you wish to take on.”<sup>26</sup>

21 Their earliest correspondence concerned the planning of this first exhibition at the Hugo Gallery. In his letters, Iolas appears hesitant, unsure as to whether to present only recent work, in line with his aim of developing a future market for Magritte’s work, or to mount a retrospective to show the American public the broad range of his work. He finally chose the second option. Magritte and Iolas asked two Belgian collectors of Magritte’s work, Claude Spaak and Alex Salkin, to loan a number of paintings from their collections and to offer others up for sale. Their agreement enabled Iolas to put together the 1947 show comprising paintings executed between 1926 and 1946.

22 These unsold works came from the exhibition titled “Magritte” held at the Galerie Dietrich in Brussels, November 30–December 11, 1946. For the first two exhibitions at the Hugo Gallery, Magritte sent Iolas works that had not been sold at his Brussels exhibitions. However, the situation was reversed after 1949, with the painter sending the majority of his work to the United States before offering unsold works to the European market.

23 Five of the “sunlit” works had been brought over to the United States for Peggy Guggenheim by an American GI in 1945 or 1946 to be held on consignment at the Hugo Gallery.

24 Letter from Iolas to Magritte, May 5, 1947, Menil Archives.

25 In many of his letters, Iolas specifies the paintings he considers “beautiful,” “sublime,” or “unprecedented” in an effort to encourage Magritte to focus on certain compositions rather than others.

26 Magritte to Iolas, May 21, 1947, Menil Archives.





108 René Magritte, *The Red Model*, 1935, oil on canvas mounted on cardboard, 60 × 45 cm. Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne.

On November 12, 1947, following two visits by Iolas to Brussels, Magritte wrote a letter in which he discusses the constant struggle he experienced in his work: the balancing act between art and business. While explaining that by following Iolas's recommendations he was able to “hit the right note” and “meet all of the objectives,” he took care to clarify his position:

“I am not suggesting that it is easy—in my case—as it is impossible for me to focus solely on “commercial” considerations. Indeed, I cannot abandon my main objective: this has always been a search for true poetic density, a certain mental substance that is necessary for mankind living in these times. I can make my point clearer by means of an example: to be able to produce another *Térapeuthe* [*sic*] (fig. 109), I had to find a way of justifying this copy in my own mind. I was able to enrich the original idea: the first *Térapeuthe* [*sic*] seems weak in





109 René Magritte, *The Healer*, 1946, gouache on paper, 47.1 × 34 cm. Private collection.

comparison to the new rendition, which, this time, is titled *Le Libérateur* (fig. 110)... This painting uses dark colors and stark shadows to give the objects represented the greatest possible density. In this way, I believe I can meet all of the objectives we have set ourselves.”<sup>27</sup>

In this excerpt, Magritte touches on a subject that would become a recurrent theme in his letters: the necessity for variants to enrich, even to correct, the original image—otherwise, they had no reason to exist. Magritte was not alone in producing variations of his work; many artists have exploited this practice for commercial purposes. He did, however, take pains on many occasions to justify their importance to him as a way

<sup>27</sup> Magritte to Iolas, November 12, 1947, letter divided into two sections conserved in two separate collections: the Menil Archives and a private collection.



110 René Magritte, *The Liberator*, 1947, oil on canvas, 100 × 80 cm.  
Los Angeles, County Museum of Art.

of improving on earlier images. Thus, with *Le Libérateur* (*The Liberator*, 1947), Magritte was offering Iolas a new iteration of *The Healer* (1946) that surpassed the original. Iolas, meanwhile, sought to defend his wish for paintings that were commercially viable. In a letter dated November 21, 1947, he tried to allay Magritte's concerns by explaining that, in his view, only "poetic" painting was saleable:

"My dear friend, in your letter you write that it is difficult to produce commercially oriented paintings. I agree that it is poetic painting you must pursue, and of a very high quality. That alone will sell, and that is the only kind I have asked of you."<sup>28</sup>

28 Iolas to Magritte, November 21, 1947, Menil Archives.

He continues:

“No, you must not worry about the business side of things. I will take care of that for you when I receive paintings of the same standard as *Le modèle rouge*, *L’avenir*, and others like these. I am not asking you to copy earlier paintings, but, rather, not to abandon the poetic and mysterious quality of your earlier paintings, which by their compact style are far more Magritte than those in the Renoiresque technique and coloring, which everyone thinks is outmoded. The word “outmoded” is not exactly the word I wish to use, but as my French is not very good, I hope you will understand the idea I am trying to get across—what I mean is “less Magritte.” In any case, I am sure that the second *Thérapeute* is magnificent and I am pleased to hear that you find it superior to the first.”<sup>29</sup>

In this letter, Iolas asks Magritte to paint more “Magrittes,” a term he equates with a period prior to the 1940s. He mentions *The Red Model* (1935) and *L’avenir* (*The Future*, 1936), two paintings that were shown in the first exhibition in 1947, loaned by Spaak and Salkin. These paintings are rendered in a dark palette dominated by shades of black, brown, and deep blues and greens. Iolas preferred these hues to the “Renoiresque coloring,” by which he meant the use of a lighter and more vibrant palette.

Magritte’s second one-man show at the Hugo Gallery took place in May 1948. This time, he was more successful in targeting the preferences of the American public, as advised by Iolas. On March 11, Magritte had sent Iolas a selection of recent works painted between 1947 and February 1948 that were stylistically similar to his earlier work and bore no trace of the “Surrealism in Full Sunlight” technique, except for the use of a considerably lighter palette. Iolas had made it very clear to Magritte that the “sunlit” paintings would have no chance of finding a buyer in New York. “Most importantly,” he wrote, “do not send me any multicolored works, there is no hope of selling them. It is simply out of the question for me to promote them or to develop a market of potential customers for your Renoiresque works.”<sup>30</sup> Abiding strictly to this request, Magritte even removed *Alice in Wonderland* (*Alice au pays des merveilles*, 1946) from the selection as its style was deemed too similar to the “sunlit” period. With each subsequent exhibition, Iolas kept Magritte informed of the reception of his work and specified the works that he considered “unsaleable.” After the second exhibition, he shipped back to Magritte all of the pain-

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Iolas to Magritte, February 5, 1948, Menil Archives.

tings using the bright palette of the “sunlit” period, as well as all those featuring the “leaf-bird” and anthropomorphic canon motifs.

The second show also gave Magritte the chance to insist on the importance of the exhibition catalogue, a subject that was regularly discussed in their correspondence. His catalogues generally included a list of works, several reproductions, and a text written by a friend or fellow surrealist, with Marcel Duchamp and André Breton among contributors.<sup>31</sup> The catalogue of the second exhibition featured a poem by Paul Éluard, commentaries on each work by Jacques Wergifosse<sup>32</sup> translated into English, and reproductions of six drawings.

Soon after the opening, Iolas wrote to Magritte, “Just a short note to let you know that your exhibition opened with great success and I hope that this will be the beginning of a solid and prosperous collaboration between us.”<sup>33</sup> Adding to Iolas’s enthusiasm were positive reviews in the press, which would continue with subsequent shows. The *New Yorker* wrote, “For the most part, real wit and poetic feeling are behind his work, and, combined with his extraordinary technique, they result in some extremely striking paintings. Certainly, Magritte is a man who deserves to be far better known over here than he is.”<sup>34</sup>

It is intriguing to note that six days after receiving Iolas’s letter confirming the favorable reception of his work in New York, Magritte held his first one-man show in Paris at the Galerie du Faubourg.<sup>35</sup> Now fifty years of age, Magritte had already weathered a number of bad experiences at Paris galleries and the belated recognition of his work in New York left him unimpressed. The previous year, he had been ostracized by André Breton, who had vehemently opposed the “Surrealism in Full Sunlight” project. Appalled by the dramas in the Parisian cultural scene, Magritte had launched into an offbeat painting experiment when invited for the first time to hold a solo show in Paris. In barely two months, he produced seventeen canvases and around a dozen gouaches featuring deliberately vulgar, provocative, and comical subjects intended to shock the Parisian art-going public. These works have become

31 Marcel Duchamp contributed to the exhibition “René Magritte” held at the Iolas Gallery in New York (March 2–28, 1959) with the following statement printed on the invitation to the opening: “Magritte en cher, en hausse, en noir et en c u leurs [sic].” (Translator’s note: this phrase employs a series of puns suggesting that Magritte’s works were expensive, the prices were rising, and that Magritte was duping the public.) André Breton wrote the preface to the catalogue of the exhibition “Magritte” held at the Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock, May 15–June 30, 1964.

32 Jacques Wergifosse (1928–2006) was a poet from Liège, Belgium, who first met Magritte in 1944 when he was sixteen years old. They became friends, with Wergifosse becoming an ardent defender of Magritte’s work, particularly during his “Surrealism in Full Sunlight” period, which was almost unanimously rejected.

33 Iolas to Magritte, May 5, 1948, Menil Archives.

34 “The Art Galleries: Background Stuff,” *New Yorker*, vol. XXIV/12, May 15, 1948, p. 61.

35 “Magritte: peintures et gouaches,” Paris, Galerie du Faubourg, May 11–June 5, 1948.



known as Magritte's "Vache" period. Unsurprisingly, not a single work was sold and visitors were scandalized, as shown in the many insulting comments left in the gallery's guest book. While the exhibition itself was a surrealist act, it was also highly risky on a professional level, with Magritte even describing it as a form of "suicide."<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, considering the possibilities now offered him by the American market, this exploit may be seen as a way for him to break free from the dictates of Paris at a time when the center of the international art world had begun to shift to New York.<sup>37</sup> Following his Paris exhibition, Magritte wrote to the art collector Pierre Andrieu:

"If another exhibition in Paris brings as little financial reward, I will make no effort in the future to make my painting known in France as, fortunately, I am well provided for by my exhibitions in America, which (thank God!) means that I am not obliged to concern myself with the chicaneries of the Paris art scene."<sup>38</sup>

### *Modus operandi*

The United States now took center stage. The first two exhibitions at the Hugo Gallery laid the foundations for a strategy that would evolve in the years to come. In this period, Iolas insisted on viewing works before purchasing them, either by traveling to Magritte's studio in Brussels or by making his selection once shipments arrived at the gallery. This *modus operandi* soon changed to avoid transportation costs for works that did not appeal to him: he first requested preliminary sketches—allowing him to influence the final result—after which he preferred to receive photographs or postcards for a greater appreciation of colors. Finally, in 1952, Iolas asked Magritte to return to their original arrangement and to send all of his proposed works to New York, realizing that the only reliable way of judging them was to see them with his own eyes.<sup>39</sup>

For the early exhibitions, Magritte shipped his canvases rolled up to facilitate transportation and reduce costs. On arrival in New York, they were mounted on stretchers, framed, and varnished. Magritte informed

36 Stated in a letter from Magritte to Louis Scutenaire, June 7, 1948, quoted in David Sylvester and Sarah Whitfield, *René Magritte. Catalogue raisonné*, vol. 2, *Oil Paintings and Objects 1931–1948* (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator, 1993), p. 167.

37 The notion of the relocation of the center of the art scene from Paris to New York from 1945 is strongly endorsed by Serge Guilbaut in his book *Comment New York vola l'idée d'art moderne* (Nîmes: Éditions Jacqueline Chambon, 1983).

38 René Magritte to Pierre Andrieu, July 18, 1948, Centre Georges Pompidou MNAM-CCI, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Paris.

39 Stated in a letter from Iolas to Magritte, October 15, 1952, Menil Archives.



Iolas in advance of the number of stretchers required and their dimensions. However, after a number of mishaps, Iolas asked Magritte to send his stretched paintings in packing crates, as rolling the canvas when the paint was not fully dry caused crackling on the picture surface, making the works less attractive and less “saleable.”<sup>40</sup>

As regards the sale of paintings, the two men came to an agreement for the second show that allowed Iolas to purchase works of his choice at fifty percent of the sale price, to be paid in cash in advance. For this show, Iolas purchased thirteen paintings at the “contract price” of one half of the “market price.” The price varied according to the medium (oils were worth more than gouaches) and the size of the works. The obligations of this contract price were to become a source of considerable tension, as Iolas, while promising to purchase paintings outright, did not pay up immediately. The first signs of strain appeared early on, with many of Magritte’s letters expressing his discontent with Iolas’s failure to reply to him within a reasonable time, protesting that he was not paid quickly enough and that Iolas never followed through on his promise to visit him in Brussels. Iolas offered a variety of explanations, ranging from being overburdened with work, suffering from toothache, narrowly escaping an accident with a truck, and being bedridden with the flu. The language barrier complicated the situation: since Magritte did not speak English, Iolas was the only person at the gallery who could reply to his letters in French—another justification for the slow replies.<sup>41</sup> Hearing so little news, Magritte feared that the gallery was experiencing difficulties or had lost interest in his work, or that the art market was in decline. Iolas thus spent much of his time reassuring Magritte of his good intentions, reminding him that he was fighting tooth and nail to promote him, and restating his high opinion of his work and its enthusiastic reception in the United States.

Exchanges of this kind exemplify the tone of their correspondence until at least December 1956, when the exclusivity contract was concluded. Magritte repeatedly emphasized the benefits of establishing an official contract, first endeavoring to convince Iolas that since he already purchased the majority of his works each year, he could effectively take sole control of their sale,<sup>42</sup> then arguing that such a contract

<sup>40</sup> Stated in a letter from Iolas to Magritte, December 28, 1950, Menil Archives.

<sup>41</sup> Stated in a letter from Iolas to Magritte, May 1, 1954, Menil Archives.

<sup>42</sup> In 1949, Magritte shipped all of the oil paintings he had produced that year to Iolas. In contrast to gouaches, Iolas always favored oils. Seeing himself as Magritte’s official agent well before the signing of their exclusivity contract, Iolas felt he had a monopoly on Magritte’s new works. This did not take into account the position of Magritte himself, who sold several major works to other collectors at times when he considered that Iolas lacked responsiveness, or disappointed him. While their contract officially gave Iolas control of all new works, Magritte, unbeknownst

would enable him to give up his bread-and-butter work (portrait painting and commercial illustration) and devote himself entirely to the creation of “masterpieces” for the American market.<sup>43</sup>

### The exclusivity contract and its consequences

Even though Iolas had long resisted the idea of signing a contract, having always worked on the basis of mutual trust, the two men finally came to an agreement, putting together a rough draft of the contract on Christmas Eve 1956. It stipulated that in return for an annual sum of \$4,000 paid in three installments Magritte would send Iolas between twenty and twenty-five paintings.<sup>44</sup> Magritte retained the right to continue his own portrait painting, interior design work, illustrations, and lithographs, and to sell paintings that were not reserved by Iolas to Belgian clients only. He could also sell past works and had the right to ownership of three of his paintings annually after the gallery had made its selection.<sup>45</sup>

From the moment that Magritte and Iolas agreed on a contract, the often strained tone of their letters mellowed as Magritte had at last obtained what he had been seeking for almost ten years. The correspondents frequently complimented each other, with Iolas praising the high quality of Magritte’s painting and Magritte commending Iolas on his efficient management and tireless efforts to promote his work. Their exchanges convey a deep sense of trust, even in financial matters. It is interesting to note that Magritte received far higher remuneration than he had expected, at times receiving up to \$10,000 per year, a considerable increase from the \$3,000 he was paid on average prior to the contract.

Furthermore, once the terms of their deal were set, Iolas began to offer more and more suggestions to guide the direction of Magritte’s

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to Iolas, continued to produce works for other collectors, two of the most important of whom were Barnett Hodes and Harry Torczyner. Magritte made a practice of not dating, or backdating, these works so as not to arouse the suspicion of his dealer. He warned the collectors to use great discretion when loaning the paintings for exhibitions. See, for example, the letter from Magritte to Barnett Hodes, February 4, 1957, Menil Archives; letter from Magritte to Harry Torczyner, November 14, 1960, quoted in Harry Torczyner, *L’ami Magritte. Correspondance et souvenirs* (Antwerp: Bibliothèque des Amis du Fonds Mercator, 1992), p. 172.

43 In several of Magritte’s letters seeking to negotiate a contract, he uses the word “masterpiece” as if trying to convince Iolas of the benefits to be gained. See, for example, his letters to Iolas dated March 9, 1951, and March 29, 1956, Menil Archives.

44 This sum met with Magritte’s expectations. Six years earlier, he had calculated that “according to the cost of living,” he required a minimum annual income of \$3,000 to afford him a decent livelihood, equivalent at the time to around 150,000 Belgian francs, in return for handing over all of his recent works to Iolas. Letter from Magritte to Iolas, June 30, 1950, Menil Archives.

45 Contract signed between Magritte and Iolas, December 24, 1956, Menil Archives.

work. He did not hesitate to list the works he wished to receive, stating his preferred themes for possible variants, as well as their format and dimensions. On November 10, 1958, Iolas wrote, "In addition to the works I reserved on my visit to your studio, I will need in June between six to eight paintings of medium size (40 figures<sup>46</sup>) in portrait and marine format."<sup>47</sup>

However, when Iolas began to give such specific instructions for Magritte's future work by ordering paintings, he was met by fierce resistance, with Magritte making it clear that he was only prepared to make variations of his works if that they were not merely copies, but were as good as, or better than, the original. Interestingly, Magritte only complied with Iolas's demands to a limited extent: as his letters reveal, he had no intention of blindly accepting the *desiderata* of his dealer, maintaining that his freedom of choice was of paramount importance to him. For his part, Iolas was willing to listen to whatever Magritte had to say, provided he gave reasons for refusing his requests. For instance, in September 1957, he informed Iolas that he could only produce three of the five large-scale paintings commissioned, explaining that "if I had to produce these five large paintings it would become a production line, the work of a decorator, and that would put me off painting altogether."<sup>48</sup>

Once Magritte provided Iolas with a sufficient number of works each year to furnish exhibitions, the exhibitions increased in frequency, with eight shows held between 1957 and 1967 at Iolas's galleries in New York, Paris, and Geneva.<sup>49</sup> While prior to 1956, Magritte had complained about the irregularity of shows, the new faster pace did not suit him either. Magritte began to sense the limitations of their contract as the pressure to "produce" conflicted with his poetic ambitions. When Iolas informed him that he did not have enough works to put together a "sensational show," the artist explained his predicament in several important letters from 1959. On January 17, 1959, Magritte made his position plain:

46 "40 figures" corresponds to painting dimensions of 100 × 81 cm or 100 × 73 cm.

47 Iolas to Magritte, November 10, 1958, Menil Archives.

48 Magritte to Iolas, September 25, 1957, Menil Archives.

49 Exhibitions held from 1957 at Iolas's galleries: "René Magritte," New York, Iolas Gallery, February 3–28, 1957; "René Magritte," New York, Iolas Gallery, March 31–April 19, 1958; "René Magritte," New York, Iolas Gallery, March 2–28, 1959; "René Magritte. Recent Works. 1960–1961–1962," New York, Iolas Gallery, May 3–26, 1962; "René Magritte," Geneva, Galerie Alexander Iolas, October 7–31, 1963; "Magritte. Le Sens Propre," Paris, Galerie Alexander Iolas, November 12–December 7, 1964; "Magritte. Le Sens Propre," New York, Iolas Gallery, January 11–February 6, 1965; and "Les images en soi," Paris, Galerie Alexander Iolas, January 10–February 11, 1967.

“It is not possible to hold a major exhibition every year if by major exhibition we mean a large number of new paintings with great poetic force. However, if that means painting numerous variants of past works, it may be achievable. Indeed, it is possible for me to produce a large number of variants of past works every year, but it is impossible to decide in advance whether or not I will be able to create such a large number of new paintings and to guarantee that they are of a high standard.”<sup>50</sup>

When Marcel Mariën distributed his “Grande Baisse” pamphlet, he was publicly denouncing this production of variants that coincided with Magritte’s newfound success:

“What was most problematic was that he was working under the orders of others, and to meet demand he made copies of his most popular works—he who had always detested the idea of painting as a manual job and had once even stated that if ever he became wealthy he would only paint occasional pictures that were of particular importance to him.”<sup>51</sup>

While Mariën’s position seems justified, it is important to place his fierce reaction in a broader context, considering that Magritte was well aware of this unresolved question, as expressed in a letter to Iolas from 1959:

“I think that there are *enough* paintings in the world, to the point that I am even a little disgusted. New paintings are not worth being seen if they do not bring us *necessary ideas*. Moreover, the variants that I can produce of my earlier works must not be simple copies, but creations in their own right, which correct imprecisions or weaknesses in the original work.”<sup>52</sup>

Here we see Magritte pursuing his quest for “necessary ideas.” His poetic and philosophical explorations did not cease once he gained access to the American market, nor did he limit himself to repeating pictures that had already proved successful. He continued to question the representation of the object and to paint new imagery that sought to challenge and disrupt the viewer’s habitual psychological responses. Indeed, Magritte produced some of his pivotal works during his “American period,” such as his first rendition of *The Empire of Light* (fig. 111) in 1949. In the

50 Magritte to Iolas, January 17, 1959, Menil Archives.

51 Marcel Mariën, *Le radeau de la mémoire* (Brussels: Les Lèvres Nues, 1988), p. 178.

52 Magritte to Iolas, October 19, 1959, Menil Archives.



111 René Magritte, *The Empire of Light*, 1949, oil on canvas, 50 × 60 cm. Private collection.

early 1950s, he explored the theme of petrification in a series of works painted in a monochrome palette of grays. In 1952, he pushed the exaggeration of scale to the extreme in a number of masterworks, such as *The Listening Room* (*La chambre d'écoute*) and *Personal Values* (*Les valeurs personnelles*, fig. 112). The same year, he launched *La carte d'après nature*, a series of theoretical publications in which he continued an investigation he had begun in 1933 on the subject of “elective affinities.” In 1956, he embarked on another series titled *A Place in the Sun* (*La place au soleil*), focusing on the superimposition of forms. He continually searched for new ways of making everyday objects strange and unsettling, refining his pictorial vocabulary through the repetition of motifs, such as the man in a bowler hat, which appears in many works that have gained cult status, including *Golconda* (*Golconde*, 1953) and *The Son of Man* (*Le fils de l'homme*, 1964).

Magritte's pictorial technique, developed and honed over several decades, appears to have been enhanced through contact with the American market—or, perhaps, this new audience motivated him to pay greater attention to workmanship. In addition to Iolas's insistent request





112 René Magritte, *Personal Values*, 1952, oil on canvas, 77.5 × 100 cm.  
San Francisco, Museum of Modern Art.

for works that were “very, very well painted,”<sup>53</sup> Magritte was now able to devote himself full-time to painting. This is by no means insignificant, as summarized by his closest friend Louis Scutenaire: “Magritte is a great painter; Magritte is not a painter.” Magritte was above all a thinker of images who found his medium of expression in painting rather than writing. He often claimed that the act of painting was a dull process of secondary importance, only valuing the image itself. For him, it was enough for the viewer to be able to recognize the compositional elements—consequently, some of his more hastily produced works are lacking in stature.

From the late 1940s, Magritte’s paintings began to reflect his improved living standards brought about by his contract with Iolas, thanks to which his previous yearly income had tripled, sometimes quadrupled. Now able to focus on his own projects, he painted every day at fixed times, always dressed in a suit. The surrealist ethos of the young Magritte, who was ardently opposed to bourgeois values and the commercializa-

53 Stated in a letter from Iolas to Magritte, April 5, 1951, Menil Archives.

tion of art, now had to coexist with that of a man in his fifties who had endured a life of financial hardship and who had finally found a way of making a living from his art while pursuing his poetic aspirations.

Iolas was by no means unaware of Magritte's personal preoccupations. He had championed his work for twenty-one years, encouraging him in many letters to produce only "the best"—according to what Iolas considered to be new, poetic, well-crafted paintings. As the artist William Copley pointed out, Iolas also actively defended other artists such as Max Ernst and Victor Brauner at a time when their work attracted little interest: "It was more a personal loyalty, I think too, and his friendship for them, and his understanding of what they were trying to do."<sup>54</sup> Those who knew Iolas did not describe him as an entrepreneur or a businessman despite the fact that he was at the helm of several galleries. He was, rather, perceived as a man who approached all aspects of his life with passion, seeing art exhibitions as performances and paintings as the cast of the show. His motivation was based on emotional ties—his clients were his friends, their works were his children. André Mourgues, Iolas's companion for twenty-five years, explained that if one wished to buy a painting from him, one had to have eyes rather than ears; speculators were not welcome. Consequently, the circulation of Magritte's work remained limited. Apart from Iolas's family and that of William Copley, the de Menil family were among Iolas's most loyal clients and among the most important collectors of Magritte's work—their archives have been of key importance in ensuring the preservation of his legacy in the United States. The Menil Collection in Houston, Texas, houses one of the world's most precious collections of Magritte's work, which began in the late 1940s thanks to Alexander Iolas.<sup>55</sup>

Magritte had many opportunities to change dealers in order to earn a higher income,<sup>56</sup> but he chose to remain loyal to Iolas—it is as if the

<sup>54</sup> Interview with William N. Copley by Paul Cummings, January 30, 1968, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, quoted in Copley, *Alexander the Great*, exh. cat. (note 16), p. 58.

<sup>55</sup> While the aim of this essay is to concentrate on the interaction between Magritte and Iolas, it is interesting to note that in addition to Iolas's clients, other collectors had a significant impact on the American art scene. They include the Chicago lawyer Barnet Hodes and the Belgian lawyer Harry Torczyner, who lived in New York, for whom Magritte produced a large number of works from 1956 onward.

<sup>56</sup> One such person who encouraged Magritte to do so was Harry Torczyner, whom he first met in 1957. They soon became friends, with Torczyner remaining a keen supporter of Magritte's work in the United States, taking on the role of intermediary in dealings with Iolas. On many occasions, Torczyner advised Magritte to pull out of the "Iolassian regime," as other dealers were prepared to offer him better conditions, even proposing up to \$15,000 per year at a time when Magritte was earning \$10,000 with Iolas. Despite these offers, Magritte refused to forsake his dealer. In a letter to Torczyner dated October 24, 1960, Magritte clearly expressed his loyalty to Iolas: "I thank you for the new proposal to sign a major contract with a gallery in New York City. However, it would be impossible for me to play such a nasty trick on Iolas, who has promoted my painting (and done so very well) for the past thirty years! Iolas has given me no reason to betray his faith in me (whether or not this is based on self-interest). He would, I believe,

role Iolas played as a dealer without really being one was enough to earn Magritte's trust. In his interaction with the American market, Magritte succeeded in reconciling art and business, in preserving the poetic force of his most important works and remaining a sincere artist while managing to satisfy the demands of his dealer. It was something of a compromise, which allowed Magritte to pursue his pictorial explorations and to continue to translate into images his discoveries that sought to "evoke the mystery of the world."

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accept that 'from time to time' I sell works to individuals in America if he were informed of it, but 'by and large' we honor our respective commitments, within the limits of human possibility (taking into account a great many unforeseeable factors). Nonetheless, perhaps it is possible, in the public interest ('Interest' with a capital 'I'), to organize an official collaboration between Iolas and the gallery that proposes a contract with me? If you consider this aspect of the issue worthy of attention, perhaps we could arrive at a 'rather agreeable' solution?" Harry Torczyner, *L'ami Magritte. Correspondance souvenirs* (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator, 1992), p. 167.

*Femme Maison: Louise Bourgeois,  
the Norlyst Gallery, and Feminist Surrealism  
in America, 1943–1947*

Daniel Belasco

The little-known Norlyst Gallery created an important context for the promotion of surrealist women artists in the United States. Unlike most other galleries in the 1940s, the Norlyst was owned and operated by artists—Elenore Lust and Jimmy Ernst—who endowed the enterprise with an experimental vision and agenda. From its opening in March 1943 to its last show in May 1949, the Norlyst combined social consciousness with European avant-garde art and the American fantastic. This essay, the first history of the Norlyst, is structured in three sections: an introduction to the protagonists of the Norlyst, an overview of its exhibition program, and an analysis of its exhibition of surrealist women artists in America, with Louise Bourgeois discussed as a case study of how the Norlyst distinguished itself from other New York galleries of the time, especially Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century.

The Norlyst and Bourgeois exemplified some of the characteristics of the second wave of surrealism in the United States, during and after World War II, with its mood of existential gravity and new thinking that the amplification of women's voices could counteract masculine militarism. As André Breton wrote in *Arcane 17*:

“This crisis is so acute that I can see only one solution: the time has come to value the ideas of women at the expense of those of men, the failure of which is revealing itself so tumultuously today. It is up to artists, in particular—if only as a protest against this scandalous state of affairs—to ensure that all that stands out in the feminine system of the world predominates over that of the masculine system.”<sup>1</sup>

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1 André Breton, *Arcane 17* (Paris: Union Générale, 1965), p. 62 (translation mine).

Embodying this mandate, the Norlyst supported little-known contemporary women artists, many of them working in the mode of surrealism. By reconstructing the activities of the Norlyst, we can trace its impact on the expansion of surrealism in America and its convergences with feminist positions in contemporary art.

### Origins of the Norlyst Gallery and its place in surrealist New York of the 1940s

Elenore Lust and the Norlyst Gallery rarely appear in histories of the movement or the period.<sup>2</sup> Lust is referred to as a “girl” in Peggy Guggenheim’s memoir, and “Elenor” in Jimmy Ernst’s memoir.<sup>3</sup> The indexes of both books omit her entirely. What we do know about her biography is sourced in several dozen personal documents and newspaper clippings in her archive.<sup>4</sup> Lust, born in Indiana in 1909 and raised in Chicago, was brought up in an artistic household—her mother being an artist and friend of Louise Nevelson—and went on to pursue a career in the arts, earning a BA from New York University in 1935. She continued her artistic training at the Art Students League, studying under Russian-born cubist Morris Kantor and Vaclav Vytlačil, who was one of the first American followers of Hans Hofmann. According to her résumé, Lust exposed herself to a range of influences, studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw on a fellowship from the New York-based Kosciuszko Foundation in 1938, and with Arshile Gorky in New York and Diego Rivera in Mexico. Contemporary sources describe her as unconventional and irreverent. In one anecdote, she enrolled her large sheepdog in the Art Students League because it was not allowed to accompany her.<sup>5</sup> By the early 1940s Lust had earned a modest reputation as a decorative muralist and sharp-eyed portraitist. Painting in a whimsical style with elongated lines recalling the work of Marie Laurencin, Lust’s subjects ranged from landscapes to artists and children. She played an active role in the National Association of Women Artists (NAWA), which advocated for gender equality, and won several commissions and prizes. Lust injected a psychoanalytical strain of thought to

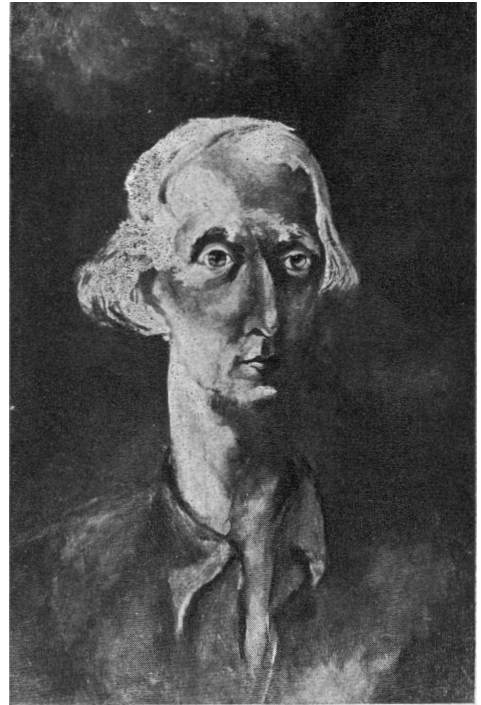
2 The only notable discussion of the Norlyst Gallery appears in Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

3 Peggy Guggenheim, *Out of This Century. Confessions of an Art Addict* (New York: Anchor Books, 1980), p. 223; Jimmy Ernst, *A Not-So-Still Life. A Memoir* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1984), p. 231.

4 Most of the information presented here derives from the Elenore Lust papers held in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, and the memoir of Jimmy Ernst, and is corroborated with other archival and published sources when possible.

5 Ernst, *A Not-So-Still Life* (note 3), p. 231.





113 Elenore Lust, *Portrait of Max Ernst*,  
ca. 1942, Washington, DC, National  
Museum of Women in the Arts,  
reproduced in *The Art Digest*,  
December 15, 1943, p. 23.

NAWA when she presented a talk titled “The Unconscious, Color and Forms in Painting.”<sup>6</sup> Still, she aspired to make a larger impact on art and society.

The life of Lust’s collaborator and lover, Jimmy Ernst, is more well known because of his own career as a painter, and his famous father. Ernst was born in Cologne in 1920, the son of artist Max Ernst and art historian and journalist Luise Straus. He emigrated to the United States in 1938 and later became part of a welcoming committee of sorts for the surrealists who began arriving in New York after the fall of France. His father’s then wife Peggy Guggenheim hired Jimmy to be her secretary to assist in cataloguing her collection and planning for her gallery Art of This Century. At this point Ernst was still quite young, in his early twenties, with interests in publishing, design, and painting. Despite working at the center of the New York art world, he wanted to leave the “family business” and forge his own creative legacy.<sup>7</sup>

The lives of Elenore Lust and Jimmy Ernst intersected in the spring of 1942, when Max Ernst became infatuated with Lust. Peggy Guggenheim must have been annoyed, and wrote an unflattering portrayal of

6 Annual Exhibition of the National Association of Women Artists, American Fine Arts Galleries, New York, April 1943.

7 Ernst, *A Not-So-Still Life* (note 3), p. 229.

Lust in her memoir: “A very wild and crazy girl, who was either perpetually drunk or under the effects of Benzedrine. She was very funny, quite pretty, and full of life; but she was terribly American, and at that time seemed to be nearly off her head.”<sup>8</sup> It’s unclear how they met or how long the affair lasted, but Lust did manage to paint an extraordinary portrait of Ernst (fig. 113), which might have been the pretext for their involvement. According to Jimmy, Max claimed she was the best portrait painter in America, and invited her to work in a nearby studio in Wellfleet on Cape Cod, Massachusetts.<sup>9</sup> The oil on canvas captures the magnetic artist’s angular features and riveting gaze, seeming to illustrate Guggenheim’s observation that when Max was excited about a woman “his eyes would nearly pop out of his head with desire.”<sup>10</sup> The relationship seems to have ended by the time that Peggy joined Max in Cape Cod, and in an oedipal twist, by the end of the summer Jimmy became Elenore’s lover.

Lust also painted Jimmy’s portrait with an “assertive” row of streetlights that he especially liked, perhaps as a metaphor for a new path of illumination.<sup>11</sup> That year Jimmy moved into Elenore’s apartment on Central Park South and set up a painting studio.<sup>12</sup> Theirs was a mutually beneficial relationship. He gained personal independence with her support, and she acquired contacts to elite artists through his connections. They were passionate about the liberating qualities of surrealism, but both seem to have felt, in Ernst’s words, “not important enough” to be considered part of the movement’s inner circle.<sup>13</sup> Lust had recently divorced her stockbroker husband and had some means at her disposal. And Ernst had time on his hands after he quit *Art of This Century* in January 1943. According to Ernst, it was because of the emotional strain from the breakup of Guggenheim and his father, who had fallen in love with Dorothea Tanning.<sup>14</sup> According to Guggenheim, Ernst quit during the jurying for the gallery’s “Exhibition by 31 Women,” apparently out of concern that Lust’s submission would be rejected.<sup>15</sup> Soon after, she took matters into her own hands and opened a gallery to create opportunities for unknown artists.

8 Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 3), p. 223.

9 Ernst, *A Not-So-Still Life* (note 3), p. 230.

10 Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 3), p. 223.

11 Lust’s portrait of Jimmy Ernst was shown in the 1943 Annual Exhibition of the National Association of Women Artists, New York, and singled out for praise in *Art Digest*. See M.R. [Maude K. Riley], “Women Artists Hold 51st Annual Exhibition,” *Art Digest*, April 15, 1943, p. 12. Lust included both portraits in her solo show at the Norlyst Gallery in December 1943. See “Elenore Lust on Her Own,” *Art Digest*, December 15, 1943, p. 34.

12 Ernst, *A Not-So-Still Life* (note 3), p. 238.

13 Ernst, p. 234.

14 Ernst, p. 238.

15 Guggenheim, *Out of This Century* (note 3), p. 233.

In early 1943, Lust rented a rundown first-floor loft on a commercial block at 59 West Fifty-Sixth Street in midtown Manhattan. Ernst installed and repaired a good deal of the storage racks, lighting, and walls, and the young American artist Charles Seliger helped with the painting. The name of the gallery, Norlyst—an abbreviation of Elenore Lust's own name—was one that she used to sign her paintings, such as her portrait of Max Ernst, and asserted her identity as the owner, though the gallery was commonly associated with her much younger partner with a famous name. According to Ernst, the do-it-yourself Norlyst aimed to be financially sustainable by borrowing work by well-established artists and selling affordable work by emerging artists.<sup>16</sup> There are scant extant sales records however, so it is impossible to determine whether this business model succeeded. The Norlyst aimed to be a less rarefied and more community-oriented version of Art of This Century, combining its forward-thinking aesthetics and provocative installations with the values of access, education, and social justice. Yet, unlike Guggenheim's gallery, which segregated abstraction and surrealism in separate galleries, the Norlyst mixed styles and media in surprising juxtapositions, including exhibitions of photography and other forms of visual and vernacular culture.

Lust and Ernst's own varied professional experiences fostered the Norlyst's open-minded program. At the same time that she ran the gallery, Lust worked as an art educator, creating an art therapy program in the psychiatric department of Mount Sinai Hospital and teaching art at the Brooklyn Museum Art School and the progressive Elisabeth Irwin High School (a.k.a. The Little Red School House). The gallery exhibited art by children, including a show of childhood drawings by Philip Evergood and another of paintings by six-year-old Michael Conrad that was written up in the *New Yorker*.<sup>17</sup> The Norlyst also hosted didactic shows arranged by the Council Against Intolerance in America.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile Ernst worked for Warner Brothers as an assistant in the advertising department, and used images from a Norlyst exhibition of post-World War I German rearmament posters to promote the Hollywood film *Hotel Berlin*. The Norlyst played to a wartime audience eager for entertainment by exhibiting popular culture, such as actress Paula Laurence's wire caricatures, George Herriman's comic strip *Krazy Kat*, and Crockett Johnson's *Barnaby* cartoons from the left-wing daily

<sup>16</sup> Ernst, *A Not-So-Still Life* (note 3), p. 240.

<sup>17</sup> Leslie Norris and John McCarten, "Young Master," *New Yorker*, November 8, 1947, pp. 26–27.

<sup>18</sup> The first in the series of shows, "The Negro in American Life," was held at Art of This Century in 1944. Subsequent exhibitions at the Norlyst included "The Jew in American Life" (October 1945) and "Tolerance Can Be Taught" (January 1947).



114 Photographer unknown, left to right: Frederick Kiesler, Paula Laurence, Jimmy Ernst, unknown, Elenore Lust, and Crockett Johnson at the Norlyst Gallery, ca. 1943. Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art.

newspaper *PM* (fig. 114). The Norlyst also presented live art, such as jazz jams and Joseph Cornell's "Film Soirée"—a screening of his collection of trickfilms and nickelodeon shorts.<sup>19</sup> Lust and Ernst looked beyond the realm of fine art to exhibit a wide range of visual and material culture.

Where does the Norlyst fit in to the history of surrealist art in America? An answer could begin with its midtown location. The Norlyst was several blocks from the commercial gallery district of East Fifty-Seventh Street, yet strategically positioned within a lively nexus of surrealist New York. André Breton's studio apartment was a few doors down, at number 45.<sup>20</sup> Chez Larré, a popular French restaurant where Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, and David Hare planned *VVV*, and Breton met Elisa Claro, was located across the street at number 50. To join the creative ferment of these nearby interactions, Lust and Ernst attempted a splash for the Norlyst's first show, "Adventures in Perspective." They ran ads in the *New York Times*, *View*, *Cue*, and other

19 Polly Koch and Ecke Bonk, *Joseph Cornell/Marcel Duchamp ... in resonance* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 1999), p. 288.

20 Breton moved into this apartment around October 1942 after he and Jacqueline Lamba separated. He remained there until around June 1945. Thanks to Fabrice Flahutez for clarifying this chronology.

publications, some bearing the cheeky tagline, “We know what’s going on, do you?”<sup>21</sup> The press release insisted that the gallery was “unprejudiced” and open to “free art expression.”<sup>22</sup> The show included early public displays of paintings in the style of surrealism by future abstract expressionists, including Mark Rothko’s *Oedipus*, Adolph Gottlieb’s *The Embrace*, and William Baziotès’s *Leonardo da Vinci’s Butterfly*. There were also *objet trouvé* constructions like Joseph Cornell’s *Soap Bubble Set* and Louise Nevelson’s *Napoleon*. Following this show, the Norlyst became a hangout for Americans on the fringes of surrealism and presented a handful of notable solo painting exhibitions by émigrés and American surrealist artists, including Jimmy Ernst, Boris Margo, and Gabor Peterdi, who were at odds with, or not fully embraced by, the surrealist movement. Lust also threw parties in her apartment, where Nevelson recalled running into Mondrian.<sup>23</sup>

One time that the Norlyst borrowed work from a major surrealist, it gained a public relations coup while confirming its renegade status. Ernst convinced Los Angeles-based Man Ray to hold a small show at the Norlyst, abetted by Duchamp who encouragingly wrote, “[The] gallery is in a very good location and very popular with the small collector.”<sup>24</sup> Man Ray agreed, and the Norlyst placed its largest-ever ad in *View*, with the text “Recent Drawings, Photographs, Watercolors by Man Ray,” accompanied by a small image of the artist’s photograph *Self-Portrait with Half Beard* (1943).<sup>25</sup> But, in the end, apparently for spatial reasons, Man Ray’s watercolors and drawings were installed in the smaller room, and his photographs and rayograms appeared in the main room alongside work by six other artists—Erwin Blumenfeld, Joseph Breitenbach, Alan Fontaine, David Hare, George Platt Lynes, and Rolf Tietgens—in a group show of experimental photography titled “Captured Light.”<sup>26</sup> Lust attempted to reassure Man Ray that it was still his show, because “these other men are definitely derived from your

21 *VVV*, no. 2–3 (March 1943), p. 142.

22 “New Art Gallery to Open in New York City,” press release, March 1943, Elenore Lust papers (note 4).

23 Louise Nevelson, *Dawns + Dusks* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1976), p. 90.

24 Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk, eds., *Affect/Marcel: The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), p. 237.

25 The advertisement appeared in *View*, no. 3/4 (December 1943), p. 138. The photograph had been reproduced in an earlier issue with the second part of his irreverent essay “Photography Is Not Art,” *View*, no. 3/3 (October 1943), pp. 77–78, 97.

26 The show opened in December 1943. The second “Captured Light” exhibition opened in June 1944 and presented an expanded field of twenty photographers that included Carlotta Corpron and Ruth Bernhard, paired with contemporary paintings. The third “Captured Light” opened in January 1945 and presented experimental work and documentary images from the Photography department of the American Women’s Voluntary Services. Lust later opened a dedicated photography gallery space, one of the first in New York City. Indian filmmaker D. R. D. Wadia received a notable early show in this space.



work.”<sup>27</sup> But the argument fell short. Some months later, Man Ray wrote dealer Julien Levy, “[I]t was the nicest piece of sabotage I have ever suffered.”<sup>28</sup> Indeed, an estimated 1,000 people visited during the two-week run.<sup>29</sup> Such impudent moves confirmed perceptions of the Norlyst as a scrappy operation that was no competition at all for the major New York galleries dealing with surrealist artists.<sup>30</sup>

### Support for women artists

Perhaps the most significant legacy of the Norlyst was its promotion of women artists. Its opening show “Adventures in Perspective” affirmed this commitment, with twelve women among the fifty artists. Over its six-year run, the Norlyst presented solo shows by at least forty-nine women like Louise Nevelson, Louise Bourgeois, Jacqueline Lamba, and Lotte Jacobi, and included many more in group exhibitions. These artists worked in diverse movements and styles, among them surrealism, abstraction, social realism, and folk art, and media like textiles and photography. To clarify the profile of the women artists supported by the Norlyst, it is useful to consider the eight artists to have shown in both the Norlyst and one of the two all-women shows at Art of This Century: Virginia Admiral, Louise Bourgeois, Ronnie Elliott, Fannie Hillsmith, Jacqueline Lamba, Anna Neagoe, Louise Nevelson, and Janet Sobel. While they were peripheral figures in Art of This Century, the Norlyst gave solo shows to six of them. These artists created work stimulated by the mythopoetic and automatist tools of surrealism yet remained outside the market for surrealist art in America. Most were artists like Lust herself, who reacted to surrealism in their own way, rejecting its literary, allusive quality and seeking a more abstract visual structure. The Norlyst specialized in giving women their first solo shows and boosting their professional and commercial prospects. Exhibitions by Nevelson and Lamba, in particular, demonstrate how the Norlyst furnished an alternative space for the commingling of surrealist and feminist sensibilities.

Long interested in esoteric art and mystical thought, Nevelson tuned into a new consciousness then infiltrating New York in the early 1940s.

27 Letter from Elenore Lust to Man Ray, January 12, 1944. Man Ray letters and album, Getty Research Institute, Santa Monica, California. Thanks to Martin Schieder for sharing a copy of this letter.

28 Letter from Man Ray to Julien Levy, October 4, 1944. Julien Levy Gallery records, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Thanks to Miriam Cady for providing a scan of this document.

29 Bruce Downs, “Exhibit of the Month. Captured Light: Experimental Photography,” *Popular Photography*, September 1944, pp. 32–33, 95–97.

30 Julien Levy called it a “bargain basement.” Ernst, *A Not-So-Still Life* (note 3), p. 242.



115 Photographer unknown, view of the exhibition “C\*I\*R\*C\*U\*S” at the Norlyst Gallery, 1943. Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art.

“It was almost like you were breathing the air of surrealism,” she said.<sup>31</sup> Nevelson became a connoisseur of the bizarre and disregarded, famously discovering an ornately decorated shoeshine stand and informing Museum of Modern Art director Alfred H. Barr Jr., who borrowed it for a festive Christmas display in the lobby, justifying its inclusion as a surrealist object.<sup>32</sup> Around the same time, Nevelson began to construct surrealist found-wood assemblages. Her dealer, Karl Nierendorf, disliked their rough facture, however, calling the works “refugees from a lumberyard.”<sup>33</sup> Of a different mind, Lust and Ernst included one of them in their opening exhibition and a month later presented Nevelson’s first exhibition of found-wood assemblages. Titled “C\*I\*R\*C\*U\*S,” the environmental installation included Nevelson’s figures, vintage French and American circus posters, sand and marbles on the floor, and recorded band music (fig. 115).<sup>34</sup> A sculpture of a clown presided over

31 Nevelson, *Dawns + Dusk* (note 23), p. 88.

32 A photograph and excerpt from MoMA’s press release appeared in *VVV*, no. 2–3 (February 1943), pp. 84, 90.

33 Ernst, *A Not-So-Still Life* (note 3), p. 242.

34 “Circus,” press release, April 1943. Elenore Lust papers (note 4). The posters were borrowed from the Levi Berman collection, which was later donated, in 1964, to the now defunct Washington Gallery of Modern Art. See, for example, Edward Alden Jewell, “Art World Victim of

the group of sculptures representing animals, trapeze artists, and other big top denizens. Visitors were encouraged to interact with the pieces, which had movable parts, audio components, and flashing light bulb eyes, ostensibly for therapeutic and educational purposes. Nevelson's display of disparate objects and materials, arranged to jar new psychic connections, may have been inspired by the "First Papers of Surrealism" exhibition at the Whitelaw Reid Mansion, or the kinetic gallery in *Art of This Century*. Though no works sold, the project confirmed Nevelson's interest in the visual, non-narrative aspects of surrealism, and she worked with greater formal concision on a new series of abstract wood constructions, which Nierendorf presented the next year.

Like Nevelson, who had divorced in 1941 after a long separation from her husband Charles Nevelson, Jacqueline Lamba strove to emerge from a failing marriage, in her case, to Breton. She had studied at the École de l'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs and the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris and established an artistic reputation through her involvement in several major international surrealist shows. They had arrived in America in July 1941 and Lamba, who was fluent in English, expanded her social circle in New York. Her growing confidence allegedly irritated Breton, and they separated in fall 1942.<sup>35</sup> During her decade in America, Lamba began to paint larger canvases in a biomorphic style, presenting this new work in *Art of This Century*'s opening show and "31 Women." But it was the Norlyst that mounted Lamba's first solo exhibition, in April 1944. According to her friend Isabelle Waldberg, Lamba was excited by the opportunity and determined to speak in her own voice, even if "women do not have a chance in life."<sup>36</sup> In advance of the exhibition, a full-page photo of Lamba ran in *VVV*, presenting her as an autonomous artist and a pioneer of the subjective abstract imagery that became the basis of abstract expressionism.<sup>37</sup> The opening was crowded, as the surrealists celebrated the public accomplishments of an overlooked one of their own. Included in the exhibition were eleven oil paintings, among them the ethereal abstractions *In Spite of Everything Spring* (fig. 116) and *Behind the Sun*. She also showed a pastel and four drawings, one of which was sold to Julien Levy.<sup>38</sup> In a statement published in the brochure, she espoused a controlled use of automatism to

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Circus Fever," *New York Times* (April 23, 1943), p. 13.

35 Salomon Grimberg, ed., *Jacqueline Lamba: In Spite of Everything, Spring*, exh. cat., East Hampton, Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center (New York: Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, 2001), pp. 20, 91.

36 Letter from Isabelle Waldberg to Patrick Waldberg, March 15, 1944, in Grimberg, *Jacqueline Lamba* (note 35), p. 23.

37 *VVV*, no. 4 (February 1944), p. 17.

38 Invoice from the Norlyst Art Gallery, April 26, 1944. Julien Levy Gallery records (note 28).



116 Jacqueline Lamba, *In Spite of Everything, Spring*, 1942, oil on canvas, 114 × 154.4 cm. Private collection.

attain formal coherence: “It is necessary to eliminate with increasing severity everything which does not aim at the *direct* realization of this emotion and at its *objectifications*.”<sup>39</sup>

### Case study: Louise Bourgeois

Over the course of 1945 the climate around surrealism began to change in New York. *VVV* ceased publication and *View* became a general-interest cultural magazine. Germany surrendered in May and the émigrés began returning to Europe. That summer Jimmy Ernst and Elenore Lust ended their relationship. He moved out and she took sole responsibility for the Norlyst, repositioning the gallery as a locus for artists melding automatism and abstraction, an emerging style also promoted by influential new gallerists Betty Parsons and Samuel Kootz. In late 1945 and early 1946, Lust placed ads in three issues of *View* that announced the Norlyst as a source of surrealist and “sur-abstract”

39 Jacqueline Lamba, trans. Lionel Abel, in Elenore Lust, ed., *Jacqueline Lamba*, exh. cat., New York, Norlyst Gallery (New York: Norlyst Gallery, 1944). See Elenore Lust papers (note 4).



paintings by Jimmy Ernst, Anna Neagoe, and Nemesio Antunez.<sup>40</sup> The Norlyst increasingly presented solo shows of female artists who worked in Stanley William Hayter's print workshop Atelier 17, and explored the techniques of surrealism and imagery in abstract, biomorphic, and mythical patterns. It was at this time that Lust began to present the art of Louise Bourgeois.

A review of Bourgeois's career in the 1930s and 1940s confirms her stylistic evolution that bridged the psychological underpinnings of surrealist art and the symbolism of the American environment. Bourgeois was born in France in 1911 and studied math and art at the Sorbonne. Starting in 1933 she apprenticed in various ateliers, and in 1936 took a job managing painter Yves Brayer's studio and moved into an apartment at 31 rue de Seine. Coincidentally, Breton opened the Galerie Gradiva on the ground floor of the same building the next year. Bourgeois was too shy to approach any of the surrealists coming and going, but she paid close attention and stored up impressions and resentments.<sup>41</sup> After moving out of the building she maintained a keen interest in surrealism. In early 1938 the "Exposition internationale du surréalisme," with its central hall of disquieting mannequins at the Galerie des Beaux-Arts, must have made an impact on Bourgeois, and she discussed it with Brayer weeks later.<sup>42</sup> She disdained the "theatricality" of the surrealists and other artists who wanted to be fashionable, critiquing surrealism as dealing only with "literary problems" and not "plastic problems."<sup>43</sup> Bourgeois preferred the discipline and structure of Picasso.<sup>44</sup>

That spring she also began to purchase prints and drawings at auction, selling them in a space within her father's tapestry shop on boulevard Saint-Germain. There she first met American art historian Robert Goldwater. Bourgeois described their courtship: "In between conversations about surrealism and the latest trends, we got married."<sup>45</sup> In October 1938, Bourgeois sailed to the United States to meet Goldwater, who had already returned for the start of the fall semester at New York University, where he was then an instructor. In New York and their summer residence in Easton, Connecticut, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, they socialized with many surrealists and other modernists,

40 *View*, no. 5/5 (December 1945), p. 18; *View*, no. 5/6 (January 1946), p. 18; and *View*, no. 6/2–3 (March–April 1946), p. 49.

41 Robert Storr, *Intimate Geometries. The Art and Life of Louise Bourgeois* (London: Monacelli Press, 2016), p. 74.

42 Letter from Louise Bourgeois to Colette Richarme, March 7, 1938, in Louise Bourgeois, *Louise Bourgeois. Destruction of the Father Reconstruction of the Father. Writings and Interviews 1923–1997*, Marie-Laure Bernadac and Hans-Ulrich Obrist, eds. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), p. 27.

43 Letter from Bourgeois to Richarme, August 6, 1939. See Bourgeois, *Louise Bourgeois* (note 42), p. 35.

44 Louise Bourgeois, diary note, March 6, 1939. See Bourgeois (note 42), p. 40.

45 Letter from Bourgeois to Richarme, September 1938. See Bourgeois (note 42), p. 30.



especially Masson, Duchamp, and Breton. She admired their ideas, and some of them supported her projects, but still she did not personally like many of her artistic elders.<sup>46</sup> Despite her previous preference for cubist structures, she nevertheless began to adopt surrealism's literary quality in her work in New York, as she started mining her personal experiences and memories for subject matter and imagery.

The mid-1940s was a productive period for Bourgeois. She continued her work in painting while initiating ambitious multi-element projects in printmaking and sculpture. She began to exhibit drawings, prints, and paintings in museum group shows and competitions in New York. In seeking gallery support, Bourgeois seems to have first found it with the Norlyst. Based on her diaries, Bourgeois and Lust began meeting in August 1944.<sup>47</sup> In September Bourgeois sent the painting *Natural History* to the Norlyst for a group exhibition.<sup>48</sup> This was an important transitional work, both stylistically and professionally. The compartments for pictographs of birds, trees, and plants are a taxonomical means to structure memories of a summer of childcare, gardening, and property management. In December, the Washington, DC, dealer David Porter viewed *Natural History* at the Norlyst and included it in his signal exhibition "Personal Statement: Painting Prophecy 1950."<sup>49</sup> Lust tried to help Bourgeois in other ways, offering professional advice and suggesting that she seek out Betty Parsons, even though Lust already had some of her work in inventory.<sup>50</sup> Bourgeois began to show with more established dealers, but remained in contact with Lust, participating in at least one group show while attending openings and other events at the gallery.<sup>51</sup> The Norlyst's vibrant, open spirit perhaps encouraged Bourgeois to mount two important early exhibitions that articulated the psychological themes that would preoccupy her during her long career.

Bourgeois installed "Documents France 1940–1944: Art-Literature-Press of the French Underground" at the Norlyst one month after V-E

46 For example, after meeting with Breton several times in April and May 1944 she became frustrated with his unreliability—a personal judgment. See, especially, the diary note of May 16, 1944, Louise Bourgeois Archive, the Easton Foundation, New York (hereafter cited as Easton Foundation). Thanks to Maggie Wright for making these diaries available for study.

47 Bourgeois and Lust may have met in the early 1940s at the Art Students League, where they both studied under Vaclav Vytlačil.

48 The title and dates of the exhibition are presently unknown. "I see Red—*Nat. History* at Norlyst Gallery—" Bourgeois, loose sheet, September 26, 1944 (LB-1156), Easton Foundation (note 46). See also Bourgeois, *Louise Bourgeois* (note 42), p. 41.

49 Dairy notes, December 5 and 7, 1944. Easton Foundation (note 46).

50 Diary note, February 3, 1945, Easton Foundation (note 46).

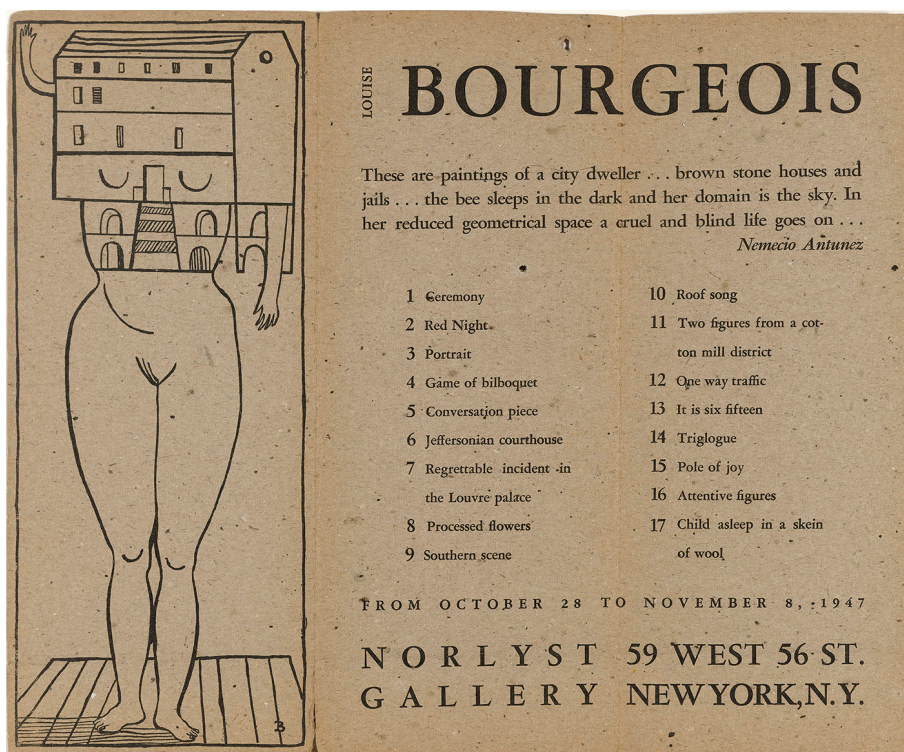
51 Based on notes in Bourgeois's diaries of 1944 through 1947, Easton Foundation (note 46). In September 1947, she participated in the Norlyst's group show "Seaboard & Midland Moderns," featuring New York and Midwestern artists, which traveled to several regional universities. "Seaboard & Midland Moderns," press release. Elenore Lust papers (note 4).

(Victory in Europe) Day. She used her bibliographic skills, as well as personal connections with French and American scholars and archivists, along with Duchamp and Pierre Matisse, to borrow materials from a previous exhibition at Columbia University's Maison Française and add to it from other collections to create a personal tribute to the Resistance. The show honored the intellectuals, poets, and painters who remained in France, fighting a war both internally and externally. It included paintings by Bonnard and Picasso, and publications by Paul Éluard, Louis Aragon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gertrude Stein, and the Midnight Press. Such materially diverse and politically-charged displays were by now familiar at the Norlyst, which served as something of a community center for cultural activists. The exhibition marked the end of a difficult period for the artist, who had been agonizingly disconnected from her family and friends for six years. In fall 1946 Bourgeois began working at Atelier 17, then in Greenwich Village, and became part of a group of printmakers like Nemesio Antunez, Fannie Hillsmith, and Gabor Peterdi, with whom she felt some commonality and also showed at the Norlyst.<sup>52</sup>

With the anxieties of the war over, Bourgeois accepted her adopted surroundings. Her prints and paintings become full of architectural and totemic forms and images, anthropomorphic amalgams of buildings and bodies that visualize her experiences as an artist, mother, and immigrant. She wrote, "Even though I am French, I cannot think of one of these pictures being painted in France. Every one of these pictures is American, from New York. I love this city, its clear-cut look, its sky, its buildings, and its scientific, cruel, romantic quality."<sup>53</sup> In October 1947, the Norlyst gave Bourgeois a solo show of such paintings. The seventeen landscapes and portraits depicted diverse subjects, portraying fantastic human forms and mechanical and architectural imagery. Not all the titles listed in the brochure have been matched with known paintings, so the following is a series of short descriptions of some of the paintings from the exhibition that were subsequently published. *Regrettable Incident in the Louvre Palace* reminds us of its martial origin, making the building look like a prison camp. *Roof Song* is a self-portrait characterization on the top of her New York apartment building, where she began to experiment with wood sculpture. *One Way Traffic* is more organically formed, and relates to her drawings of the time, with topographic waves and shifts between interiority and exteriority. *It Is Six Fifteen* could refer to her early morning routine of childcare duties. The totemic figure, a fusion of plant and human, presides over an enclosed,

<sup>52</sup> Thanks to Christine Weyl for providing information about the locations of and participants in Atelier 17 in New York.

<sup>53</sup> Diary note, March 18, 1947, Easton Foundation (note 46).



117 Announcement for an exhibition of paintings by Louise Bourgeois at the Norlyst Gallery, New York, 1947, featuring *Femme Maison*, 1947, line block. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

claustrophobic space. *Red Night* has a dreamlike quality of a reclining figure drifting on a bed in space. *Red Room* relates to the sculptures she was just beginning at the time, which are precarious, forms carved from wood that exist in fragile relationship to each other. The printed announcement included a poetic quotation by Antunez that describes the urban alienation visualized in the grotesque fusions of the female body and domestic architecture, which seem to echo the artist's ideas about her work.<sup>54</sup>

The announcement was illustrated by Bourgeois's drawing of a female nude with a house in place of a head (fig. 117). The image, which she also made as a painting, is known today as *Femme Maison*, one of an eponymous series that includes four other paintings from 1946–47. Each of the *Femme Maison* paintings conveys a different mood. One has the poise of

<sup>54</sup> Antunez's brief text is an apt verbalization: "These are paintings of a city dweller ... brown stone houses and jails ... the bee sleeps in the dark and her domain is the sky. In her reduced geometrical space a cruel and blind life goes on," in *Louise Bourgeois: From October 28 to November 8, 1947* (New York: Norlyst Gallery, 1947). She wrote the phrase "These are the paintings of a city dweller" in a diary note, October 14, 1947, Easton Foundation (note 46).

classical symmetry. Another suggests a rural dialogue. And a third depicts the stress of urban life. There is a strong association between these paintings and the Norlyst show. Contemporary critical observations noted several paintings with images of hybridized female nudes and architectural renderings, which indicates that one or more paintings from the *Femme Maison* series were included in the show. A reviewer in *ARTnews* wrote, “A whole family of females proves their domesticity by having houses for heads.”<sup>55</sup> A newspaper critic wrote that Bourgeois’s “favorite house symbol” recalled “Dalí’s bureaus superimposed on nudes.”<sup>56</sup> These reviews interpret the hybrid paintings as related to both surrealism and femininity. However, no work with the title *Femme Maison* appears anywhere on the announcement. A mystery surrounds these paintings. If they were displayed in the Norlyst, when and why did Bourgeois alter their titles?<sup>57</sup> Was *Femme Maison* a private term that Bourgeois used at the time, or was it invented and applied retroactively? These questions have not yet been fully researched or resolved.<sup>58</sup>

The artist’s own interpretations of the work seem to be consistent. On the back of one of her copies of the Norlyst announcement, she inscribed a note, writing that she was ignored, unheard, and unseen.<sup>59</sup> Years after their production, Bourgeois publicly stated that these images were self-portraits<sup>60</sup> that expressed her timidity at the time, as an artist who felt discriminated against because of her sex.<sup>61</sup> She did not have the “poise or objectivity” to speak up and defend herself. She fled and hid away.<sup>62</sup> The *Femme Maison* figures represent women who used the tools and materials of domestic labor and the structures of domestic space for self-expression and emotional control. The paintings also seem to be informed by a critique of the surrealist mode of distorting female bodies for erotic and decorative purposes. Other female artists in the

55 *ARTnews*, no. 46/9 (November 1947), p. 42.

56 *New York Sun*, October 31, 1947. Elenore Lust papers (note 4).

57 The earliest published reference to a painting titled *Femme Maison* that I have found is in Lucy Lippard, *From the Center. Feminist Essays on Women’s Art* (New York: Dutton, 1976). The credit line is “Femme/Maison—To Carletto.”

58 The *Femme Maison* (private collection) with red background may originally have been titled *Conversation Piece*, based on an archival photograph labeled as such in Bourgeois’s hand. The one with the pink background (Collection Louise Bourgeois Trust) may have been titled *Attentive Figure*, based on the label of an archival slide, however, given the imagery of the “house” element in the painting, it seems likely that it could have been *Jeffersonian Courthouse*. Thanks to Maggie Wright for this information.

59 Bourgeois text, undated, ca. 1947 (LB-0689), Easton Foundation (note 46).

60 “Interview. Paolo Herkenhoff in Conversation with Louise Bourgeois,” in Robert Storr, Paolo Herkenhoff, and Allan Schwartzman, eds., *Louise Bourgeois* (London/New York: Phaidon Press: 2003), p. 24.

61 Donald B. Kuspit, *Bourgeois. An Interview with Louise Bourgeois* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), p. 38.

62 Eleanor C. Munro, *Originals. American Women Artists* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), p. 163.



1930s and 1940s also explored the motif of the hybrid woman-house to resist surrealism's sexist rhetoric, creating intimate works that examined the vulnerable yet creative condition of women in the home. Claude Cahun photographed herself resting in a cupboard—a refuge or confinement. Sonia Sekula published a poem and drawing on the theme of the womb and the home in *VVV*.

Some three decades later, women artists and critics rediscovered the paintings and drawings in Bourgeois's *Femme Maison* series, transforming them into icons of American feminist art. Lucy Lippard placed the drawing from the Norlyst brochure on the cover of her landmark book of feminist criticism, *From the Center* (1976). Finally finding an audience that understood the formal and poetic significance of her visual metaphors, Bourgeois used the name *Femme Maison* for the title of a show at the Renaissance Society, Chicago, in 1981 and of new sculptures in the 1980s and 1990s, unique fabric works in the 2000s, and printed editions in 1984 and 1990. Any interpretation of Bourgeois's oeuvre hinges on an analysis of these images and this theme, which conveys the social pressures, not innate sexual characteristics, linking women to the home. These paintings provided an analytical, existentialist dimension to the American surrealism of the 1940s and an essential link between the queer avant-garde of Claude Cahun and the institutional feminism of Judy Chicago.

After Bourgeois's painting exhibition, Elenore Lust continued to present solo shows by surrealist-influenced women artists, including Pennerton West (November 1947), Ronnie Elliott (November 1947), Esphyr Slobodkina (May 1948), Lotte Jacobi (October 1948), and Quita Brodhead (April 1949), before closing the gallery in May 1949. By that time abstract expressionism had emerged as the dominant style and a younger generation of New York artists started opening new cooperative galleries. Lust must have been ready for a major personal change. She quit her job at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, bought a decommissioned military jeep, sailed to Europe, and drove from France to South Africa. She lived in Cape Town and taught in a few secondary schools until 1956, when she returned to New York and earned a master's degree in art education from New York University. Lust then relocated to southern New Jersey to teach high school art in several suburban school districts until she retired in 1979. Though she donated her papers to the Archives of American Art in 1988 and 1991, Lust's obituary in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* made no mention of the Norlyst Gallery and her contributions to the careers of some of the most significant American artists of the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>63</sup>

63 S. Joseph Hagenmayer, "Elenore Lust. World Traveler, Painter, Teacher," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 24, 1997, p. 95.

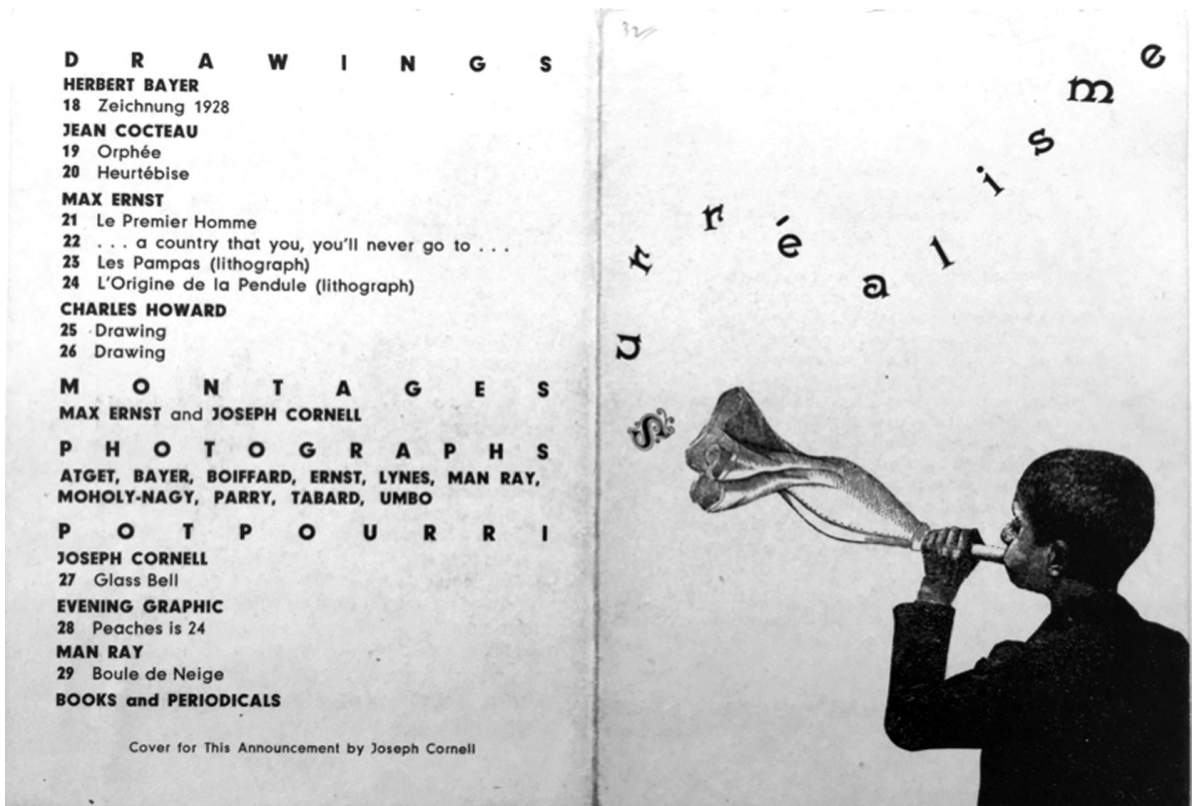


Perhaps it could be said that the Norlyst, as the creative endeavor of a woman seeking her independence, was a manifestation of a *Femme Maison*. Like Bourgeois's images, the anti-elitist Norlyst was a hybrid creature. It was European and American. Male and female. Abstract and representative. High and low. With a sharp sensitivity toward the visual culture of racial, ethnic, and sexual difference, the Norlyst blended disparate iconographies and social settings into a new entity that provided a platform for both progressive change and an expanded definition of art. The significance of the Norlyst was as much sociological as stylistic. In this regard, its major influence was to serve as one of the rare venues in New York City to support young women artists who responded to surrealism while remaining independent of any official group or movement, thus fostering significant bodies of work that would be retrospectively considered landmarks of feminist art.<sup>64</sup>

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64 See for example Ann Gibson, "Louise Bourgeois's Retroactive Politics of Gender," *Art Journal*, no. 53/4 (Winter 1994), pp. 44–47.

### III. Galleries / Dealers



118 Announcement for the surrealist exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1932, cover illustration by Joseph Cornell. Mr. and Mrs. Allan C. Balch Art Research Library, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

## Julien Levy: Progressive Dealer or Dealer of Progressives?

Anne Helmreich

This essay investigates whether Julien Levy, the gallerist responsible for many of the initial commercial exhibitions of surrealist artists in the United States, was a progressive dealer—that is, a dealer who created new strategies and practices to bring modern art to the marketplace—or whether he was a dealer who used well-established strategies and practices to bring new forms of art forward. The binary embedded in this question is both false, in that rarely do a dealer's identity and practices occupy just one end of the continuum described here, and necessary, as a means by which to critically approach the roles taken by Levy and to resist the hagiography that so often surrounds dealers who have championed avant-garde art well ahead of broader market trends.<sup>1</sup> This question is significant not only for the study of Levy and surrealism, but also for advancing our understanding of the historical formation of the art market, which has often been occluded by myths and other decoys, many of which have been generated by actors within the market themselves. Here, I am concerned with Levy's tenure as the owner and director of an art gallery that carried his name, making the man synonymous with his business—a conflation that Levy eagerly facilitated.

1 This tendency emerges from two trends in secondary literature—first, a preoccupation with retelling intriguing “stories” associated with the art market, recounted in texts such as Laura de Coppet and Alan Jones, *The Art Dealers* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1984), which includes the following observation: “Dealing art requires an engaging personality as well as instinct, and we found personality in abundance” (see p. 12); and second, that much of the history of art dealers has been written by dealers themselves, with all the biases that come from firsthand narration and a lack of critical perspective as to causality, as in the case of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, who explained to the interviewer Francis Crémieux, “I recently realized that, fundamentally, it is great painters who create great art dealers. Each great period of painting has had its dealer. There was Durand-Ruel for the impressionists. There was Vollard for those who came afterwards.” Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler with Francis Crémieux, *My Galleries and Painters*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Viking Press, 1961), p. 32.

## The dealer and the gallery

Julien Levy is of central concern to a project addressing how surrealism unfolded in the United States, given the significant leverage that mediating agents such as dealers, collectors, and museum professionals and their boards deployed in introducing the artists and the aesthetics associated with this movement into a North American context. Levy was a key node in a network that connected many European artists to opportunities in the United States and bound together many US-based supporters of the movement, including curators and patrons.<sup>2</sup> Architect Philip Johnson, who first met Levy through the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art, recalled that “Julien went on to Surrealism, and he carried the flag until the Museum of Modern Art caught on.”<sup>3</sup> Levy founded the Julien Levy Gallery at 602 Madison Avenue, New York City, in 1931. In January 1932, immediately on the heels of the surrealist display “Newer Super-Realism” held at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, the young dealer staged an exhibition titled “Surréalisme,” featuring work by Joseph Cornell (who designed the exhibition announcement), Salvador Dalí, and Max Ernst, as well as Eugène Atget, Herbert Bayer, Man Ray, and László Moholy-Nagy (fig. 118).<sup>4</sup> This show not only defined a constellation of artists who would henceforth carry the label of “surrealist” in the US context, but also laid the foundation for ongoing relationships for the dealer. Levy continued to show many of these artists in group and solo shows, and also organized the first New York presentations of artists such as Leonor

2 The biography presented here is drawn largely from Levy’s autobiography, Julien Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1977); Levy’s interview with Paul Cummings (May 30, 1975), transcribed by Deborah M. Gill, held in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; and the recent studies, Ingrid Schaffner and Lisa Jacobs, eds., *Julien Levy: Portrait of an Art Gallery* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Katherine Ware and Peter Barberie, eds., *Dreaming in Black and White. Photography at the Julien Levy Gallery* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); and Gaëlle Morel, “Julien Levy. A Market-Maker, and Photography,” *Études photographiques*, no. 21 (December 2007), pp. 6–29. For a timeline of key exhibitions associated with surrealism in the United States, see Marshall N. Price, “Chronology of Surrealism in the United States,” in Isabelle Dervaux, ed., *Surrealism USA* (New York: National Academy Museum, 2005), pp. 172–185.

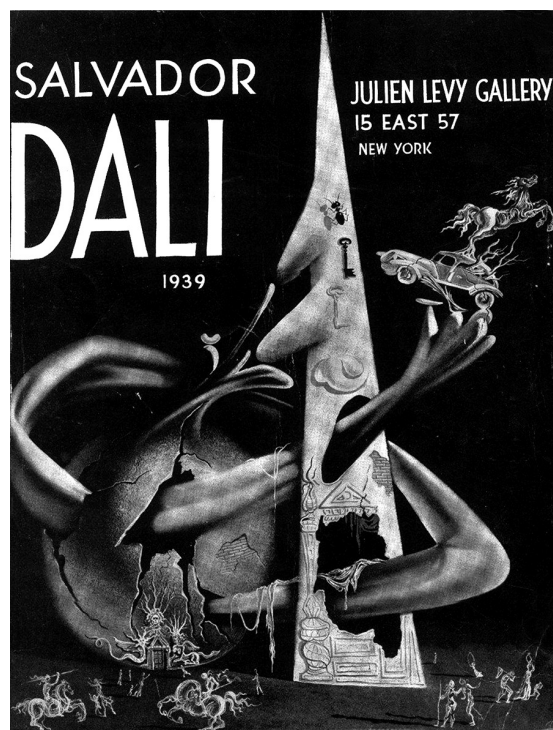
3 Lisa Jacobs, “Reminiscences,” in Schaffner and Jacobs, *Julien Levy* (note 2), p. 172.

4 In a letter of December 28, 1931, to Herbert Bayer, Levy explained his initial intentions: “I had planned an exhibition of paintings and montages by Max Ernst for January, but after receiving your letter I have decided to rearrange this and put on a group show illustrating the modern tendencies [*sic*] in the ‘surrealiste’ manner and including some of your drawings and watercolors in the front room. The group will be Max Ernst, Picasso, Bayer, and probably an American named Charles Howard. In the back room will be a group of modern photographs illustrating the same tendency [*sic*]. I think this will make one of the most exciting shows in New York this season, and I hope it will make sales in spite of bad times. My gallery is so much larger than I originally planned that there will be plenty of room for a big exhibition.” Box 3, Folder 8 (Herbert Bayer), Julien Levy Gallery Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives (hereafter cited as Levy Gallery Records, PMAA).





119 Announcement for an exhibition of paintings by Salvador Dalí at the Julien Levy Gallery, 1934. Mr. and Mrs. Allan C. Balch Art Research Library, Los Angeles, Los Angeles Museum of Art.



120 Cover of the catalogue for the Salvador Dalí exhibition, 1939. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute.

Finí, Frida Kahlo, and René Magritte. For example, in November 1932 he organized Max Ernst's first solo exhibition in the United States, during which he held a screening of Dalí and Luis Buñuel's film *Un Chien andalou* (1929) as part of his project to promote photography and cinema as fine art. In 1934 and 1939 he held exhibitions of the work of Dalí; the latter show was accompanied by a catalogue that provided a platform for the artist to explain (or obscure) his paranoiac pictures (figs. 119 and 120).

In 1937 Levy moved to 15 East Fifty-Seventh Street and restructured the finances of the gallery, while continuing his program of contemporary American and European art that encompassed the surrealist circle as well as artists he dubbed "modern Romantics," who included Eugene Berman, Pavel Tchelitchew, and Leonid Berman. In parallel, he advanced his project to introduce new media into the fine arts context and to explore whether film could become a commodity in the gallery context—at the same time that MoMA was putting together its

Film Library (founded in 1935) and, as noted by media historian Bill Mikulak, was beginning to consider cartoons as worthy of being taken “seriously as an art form,” and also that Walt Disney was facilitating the sale of cels used to produce animated films.<sup>5</sup> In March 1939 Levy staged simultaneous exhibitions of works by Dalí and original watercolors used for Disney’s cartoon *Ferdinand the Bull*, which was released in 1938.

In 1941, Levy explored the market on the West Coast, working in collaboration with dealer Howard Putzel, who had become affiliated with Peggy Guggenheim in the late 1930s. The archive of Levy’s correspondence held by the Philadelphia Museum of Art suggests that the two men began corresponding in 1934.<sup>6</sup> Putzel shared Levy’s enthusiasm for the art of Dalí and Ernst, and persuaded the New York dealer of the potential of first San Francisco, then Los Angeles, as promising markets.<sup>7</sup> As a result, Putzel organized an exhibition of Ernst’s work on behalf of Levy at the Stanley Rose Bookshop and Gallery in Hollywood in 1935.<sup>8</sup> Six years later, Levy took his exhibitions to the West Coast, presenting a surrealist show followed by a neo-Romantic collection at the Courvoisier Galleries in San Francisco, which had built a reputation for showing original artworks from Disney animations. In Los Angeles, he briefly assembled a series of exhibitions featuring the surrealists, including Dalí and Tamara de Lempicka, whose husband Baron Kuffner financed the West Coast venture.

Back in New York, Levy relocated the gallery to 11 East Fifty-Seventh Street in 1942 and, during his brief military service, formed a partnership with the Durlacher Brothers firm, whose director Kirk Askew, a former Harvard classmate, managed his gallery for him.<sup>9</sup> After a year, Levy took up the reins of the business again, moving to 42 East Fifty-Seventh Street and continuing his focus on contemporary American and European art, and his interest in surrealist artists. His exhibitions included “Through the Big End of the Opera Glass,” held in December 1943, featuring works by Joseph Cornell and Marcel Duchamp, and the first solo show of Dorothea Tanning in April 1944. The gallery closed in 1949; the last recorded exhibition was devoted

5 Bill Mikulak, “Mickey Meets Mondrian. Cartoons Enter the Museum of Modern Art,” *Cinema Journal*, no. 3 (Spring 1997), pp. 56, 57, 66. See also Bill Mikulak, “Disney and the Art World. The Early Years,” in Maureen Furniss, ed., *Animation. Art and Industry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp. 111–130.

6 Box 21, Folder 33 (Howard Putzel), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

7 Letter from Howard Putzel to Julien Levy, January 7, 1935, and May 7, 1935, Box 21, Folder 33 (Howard Putzel), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

8 Letter from Putzel to Levy, May 31, 1935 (written on “Stanley Rose Bookshop and Gallery” stationery), Box 21, Folder 33 (Howard Putzel), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

9 Letter from Levy to R. Kirk Askew, August 8, 1942, Box 2, F. 10 (Correspondence File L), Durlacher Bros. Records, Getty Research Institute, Getty Center, Los Angeles.

to the work of American artist David Hare, whose sculptures had also been shown at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century and the Hugo Gallery in New York.

### Julien Levy's reputation and formation

While this range of activities gives some sense of Julien Levy's profile, we can gain more insight into his reputation by reviewing how he was regarded by his peers. Particularly revelatory is a letter written to Levy by the American collector Duncan Phillips in 1932, one year after Levy opened his gallery. In it, Phillips expresses his thanks to Levy for lending a painting by Eugene Berman to his museum, and recalls with pleasure a recent visit to Levy's gallery during which he was able to see works by Salvador Dalí and other surrealists. Phillips ends by complimenting Levy: "[W]hat a fortunate thing that men of your culture and artistic sensibilities are now dealers instead of the older commercial type."<sup>10</sup>

Phillips appears to be pointing to Levy's training and artistic formation which contrasted with the way in which many dealers of the previous generation, such as Roland Knoedler, had mastered the business through on-the-job training with mentors (fostered by family connections) that led to positions of increasing responsibility. Levy, born in New York, had studied at Harvard University in the mid-1920s, focusing first on literature, then art, with the encouragement of Paul J. Sachs, an investment banker and collector turned museum professional.<sup>11</sup> Steve Watson, in his contribution to Schaffner's and Jacobs's study of Levy's gallery, underscores the links between Levy's aesthetics and accomplishments and this Harvard circle, which also included A. Everett "Chick" Austin Jr., who went on to become the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum.<sup>12</sup>

Central to Levy's Harvard experience was his participation in Sachs's pioneering "museum course," which nurtured a notable list of protégés, including Alfred H. Barr Jr., Richard Howland, and John Walker. As part of his teaching program, Sachs encouraged his students to learn from art dealers, as well as collectors, scholars, and museum professionals. As Sachs's assistant Agnes Mongan recalled, "Sachs made us understand very clearly that [dealers] were people to be respected."<sup>13</sup> Art

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Duncan Phillips to Levy, February 23, 1932, Box 21, Folder 18 (Phillips Memorial Gallery), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

<sup>11</sup> Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 2), pp. 9–11.

<sup>12</sup> Steve Watson, "Julien Levy. Exhibitionist and Harvard Modernist," in Schaffner and Jacobs, *Julien Levy* (note 2), pp. 80–95.

<sup>13</sup> Sally Anne Duncan, "Harvard's 'Museum Course' and the Making of America's Museum Profession," in *Archives of American Art Journal*, no. 1/2 (2002), p. 12. See also Sally Anne Duncan and Andrew McClellan, *The Art of Curating. Paul J. Sachs and the Museum Course at Harvard* (Los

historian and museum professional Richard Howland, in his class notes from 1932, transcribed Sachs's description of art dealer Joseph Brummer as a "man of integrity, knowledge ... [who] above all has the ability to see through an object and recognize what is underneath ... a great connoisseur, the type of dealer who is extremely rare, from whom one can learn a great deal."<sup>14</sup> The same year, in 1932, students in the program visited the dealers/commercial firms Duveen Brothers and Wildenstein & Co. as part of a class tour of important museums and collectors in Philadelphia and New York.

Another distinctive aspect of this course was its object-based approach, which included a hands-on component designed to help the young scholars recognize the role and significance of medium. This approach suited Levy, who was also deeply engaged with photography, experimenting with the medium in a research laboratory at Harvard.<sup>15</sup> While a student, Levy also developed an interest in film, fostered by art historian Chandler Post. The Harvard network sustained Levy throughout his career—for example, he assisted Chick Austin in organizing the 1931 surrealist exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum, which preceded his own commercial gallery show on the same theme. After closing in New York, Levy's surrealist exhibition traveled to Harvard, where it was shown at the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art, which had been founded in 1929 by Lincoln Kirstein, Edward Warburg, and John Walker. Warburg was also a patron of Levy's gallery, purchasing books on photography, including two that Levy described as "copies of the *La revue surréaliste* reproducing photographs by Atget, without an article, yet proving he was discovered and adopted by the Surréalistes [*sic*] and his influence on them."<sup>16</sup> Levy, looking back on his career in a 1975 interview, acknowledged that by the time he opened his gallery, "I knew a whole crowd of museum directors ... which may have been a help."<sup>17</sup>

As Levy's biographer Carolyn Burke also points out, another important network that served his professional development was located in Paris.<sup>18</sup> Julien Levy was introduced to this network through a sequence of relationships triggered by his father Edgar A. Levy. Levy senior was a real estate developer in New York and an occasional art collector. The dealer, in his autobiography, claims that in 1927 he persuaded his father to acquire Brancusi's marble *Bird in Space* then on display at the

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Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2018).

14 Duncan, "Harvard's 'Museum Course'" (note 13), p. 12.

15 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 2), p. 11.

16 Letters from Levy to Edward Warburg, January 28, 1932, and February 25, 1932, Box 26, Folder 24 (Edward Warburg), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

17 Cummings interview with Levy, 1975 (note 2), p. 4.

18 Carolyn Burke, "Loy-alism. Julien Levy's Kinship with Mina Loy," in Schaffner and Jacobs, *Julien Levy* (note 2), pp. 61–79.

Brummer Galleries in New York in an exhibition curated by Marcel Duchamp.<sup>19</sup> Through this intervention Levy became acquainted with Duchamp, who went on to invite the young man to come to Paris to meet with Man Ray because of Julien's interest in experimental film, which had been nurtured at Harvard. This trip to Paris was decisive for Levy as there he met the avant-garde figure Mina Loy, who at the time was being subsidized by Peggy Guggenheim to operate a lampshade and novelty business, as well as Loy's daughter and business manager Joella, whom he married the same year. When Levy decided to open an art gallery four years later, he would activate and reinvest in the social and artistic network formed on that first visit to Paris; the ties fostered through Loy and her circle would remain a pivotal node in his network.

Upon Levy's return to the United States, he initially worked in his father's business, then took a position with the Weyhe Gallery and Bookstore, which had been founded in 1919 by German book dealer Erhard Weyhe. The gallery focused on modern and contemporary prints and drawings. While with Weyhe, Levy organized photography exhibitions, including a 1930 show of the work of Eugène Atget, whom he had met earlier in Paris through Man Ray. The exhibition was coordinated to coincide with the release of the monograph *Atget, Photographe de Paris* (1930), which Levy had persuaded Weyhe to publish. Levy also assembled an exhibition of the work of Berenice Abbott, who had rescued Atget's archive after his death in 1927.

In 1931, Julien and Joella Levy decided to establish an art gallery using funds left to him from his mother. In his autobiography, Levy described it as an opportunity to bring together his interests in "art, cinema, and photography."<sup>20</sup> The press release announcing the gallery's opening explained that "[T]he gallery plans to present a series of interesting exhibitions of paintings, drawings, and sculpture, but, believing it to be high time that photography as an art be given the sanction of a gallery, will in particular devote itself to and specialise in photography."<sup>21</sup> Through this same vehicle, Levy also explained that the inaugural exhibition "American Photography Retrospective" had been put together "in cooperation with Alfred Stieglitz."<sup>22</sup> By this time, Stieglitz had closed his Gallery 291; in 1925 he opened a new venture, The Intimate Gallery, which brought forward the work of a small circle of contemporary American

19 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 2), pp. 18–19. The Brancusi sculpture was first owned by the modernist collector John Quinn, who purchased it directly from the artist; upon Quinn's death, it was acquired by the Brummer Gallery. Levy was cognizant of the significance of this provenance. The work is now held in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Accession no. 1996.403.7ab).

20 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 2), p. 46.

21 Box 33, Folder 8 (Press Releases), ca. November 1931, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

22 Ibid.



painters and photographers, including Georgia O’Keeffe, Arthur Dove, and Paul Strand. Levy visited The Intimate Gallery as well as its successor space, An American Place, which Stieglitz opened in 1929, and in his autobiography went as far as to describe Stieglitz as his self-assigned “godfather.”<sup>23</sup> As recent scholarship has clearly established, Levy played a critically important role in promoting photography as a fine art, even though his photographic sales were meager.<sup>24</sup>

For his second exhibition, Levy turned to painting, specifically the work of Italian artist Massimo Campigli, presenting his first solo show in the United States. To organize the exhibition, Levy returned to Paris. In his autobiography he claims that when he and Joella sailed to Europe in summer 1931, “[W]e had no notion of where to buy paintings. An advertisement in a magazine led me to the gallery of Jeanne Bucher.”<sup>25</sup> Levy’s anecdote warrants further scrutiny, and may be an example of the dealer’s own mythmaking, for although Bucher did not make her first visit to the United States until 1935, she had already established a connection, via the journal *Cahiers d’art*, to the Weyhe bookstore where Levy had worked.<sup>26</sup> Bucher had launched her art business in 1925 with a library/gallery installed in Pierre Chareau’s interior design store. Bucher represented many of the artists associated with cubism, including Picasso. She was also an art publisher, and in 1926 issued Max Ernst’s portfolio of collotypes after frottage, titled *Natural History*. In 1929, she opened her own space next door at 5 rue du Cherche-Midi, where she continued to promote artists such as Picasso, Braque, Gris, and Léger, until the Depression finally forced her to sell the gallery in 1932. She went on to open a second gallery, on the boulevard du Montparnasse in 1935 in collaboration with Marie Cuttoli, which lasted until 1939 when France was drawn into war with Nazi Germany.

For this first painting show, Bucher consigned Campigli’s work to the American dealer, and Levy also sought out works by the painter in American collections, such as that of Maude and Chester Dale—a strategic means of reassuring potential buyers of the validity of their choice, as it was shared by prominent collectors. The Levy archive at the Philadelphia Museum of Art shows that Bucher and Levy continued to work together throughout the 1930s.<sup>27</sup> In addition, according to Levy,

23 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 2), p. 17. For more on Stieglitz’s galleries, see Sarah Greenough, *Modern Art and America. Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2000).

24 Morel, “Julien Levy” (note 2).

25 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 2), p. 59.

26 Christian Derouet, “A New York,” in Christian Derouet, ed., *Jeanne Bucher, Une galerie d’avant-garde 1925–1946. De Max Ernst à de Staël* (Strasbourg: Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, 1994), p. 160.

27 Box 14, Folder 2 (Galerie Jeanne Bucher), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

Bucher “furnished us with an introduction to Max Ernst,” which would become a relationship of key importance given that Ernst’s first solo show in the United States was held at Levy’s gallery.<sup>28</sup>

On this same trip to Europe in 1931, Levy met dealer Pierre Colle, who had opened the Galerie Pierre Colle the previous year. In his autobiography, Levy describes Colle as “a close associate of mine, quite like a Paris partner, as I was to be his unofficial partner in New York.”<sup>29</sup> At this time, Colle was working closely with Salvador Dalí, and at the Parisian gallery Levy saw his painting *The Persistence of Memory* (1931), which he acquired. This painting went on to play a starring role in the Wadsworth Atheneum surrealist exhibition as well as Levy’s own surrealist show.

Even though Levy occasionally reached out to other dealers, as in the case of Bucher, Colle, and Stieglitz, who clearly had a desirable genealogy as well as access to key artists, in his writings he generally takes the position of a self-made man, striking out on his own or relying on his personal ties to artists, including a good-natured willingness to drink and carouse alongside them. In his memoirs he recounts that photographer Lee Miller “introduced me to the salons of what was then *tout Paris* [and] showed no hesitation when I led her into some of the toughest night dives.”<sup>30</sup> He states that when making the Atlantic crossing to Europe in 1936, he shocked his fellow dealer Étienne Bignou by choosing not to travel first class, like their clients. In this passage, Levy further burnishes his legend as a solo operator with a tendency toward bohemia by asking himself why he did not avail himself of first class travel: “[W]hy did I not stay in this friendly and upholstered atmosphere? Why did I negate all the connections and advantages that should have kept me safe? I thought, ‘I must change patterns, find new patterns for the gallery—go far afield.’”<sup>31</sup> This mythmaking, which largely places Levy as the central character in his own narrative, is shorn of context and the ways in which he was able to leverage a succession of networks.

While the field would benefit from further research into Levy’s roster of exhibitions and the relationships with artists, collectors, and other dealers he drew upon to realize them, at this juncture in my argument I will return instead to perceptions of the dealer held by his contemporar-

28 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 2), p. 64.

29 Ibid., p. 70. Further research is needed on the history of Pierre Colle as a dealer. For a brief overview, see Dior, *Le Bal des artistes*, Musée Christian Dior, ed., exh. cat., Granville Musée Christian Dior (Versailles: Artlys, 2011), pp. 32–33. Further research is also needed to ascertain how and why Levy relied so heavily on Bucher and Colle, and did not turn to other potential Paris-based dealers, such as Pierre Loeb (Galerie Pierre), Camille Goemans (Galerie Goemans), and Christian Zervos (Galerie des Cahiers d’Art), whose names are not indexed in the Levy correspondence held at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

30 Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (note 2), p. 122.

31 Ibid., p. 161.

ies, focusing on Duncan Phillips' description of the dealer, written one year after the gallery had opened: "What a fortunate thing that men of your culture and artistic sensibilities are now dealers instead of the older commercial type."<sup>32</sup> Levy's embeddedness within what cultural historian Steve Watson has described as the circle of the "Harvard Modernists,"<sup>33</sup> allied with his family's connections, bolstered his reputation as a cultured man with an artistic sensibility. But Levy's commercial ties should not be overlooked. His gallery project grew directly out of his work for the Weyhe Gallery and relied heavily on his business ties and agreements forged with other dealers, as evidenced in his gallery inventories and correspondence. Therefore, rather than perceive Levy as anti-commercial—that is, as repudiating the marketplace and the commodification of art, as Phillips' quote might suggest—we should see him as part of a wave of dealers that dates back to at least the end of the nineteenth century, who integrated the selling of art with the cultivation of expertise and whose possession of specialized knowledge allowed, and indeed encouraged, them to frequently cross over between the commercial art world, the scholarly world of the emerging discipline of art history, and the museum world.<sup>34</sup>

Levy cemented his reputation as an expert in surrealism by publishing a monograph on the subject in 1936, written very much in the style of a surrealist manifesto.<sup>35</sup> This was a striking way for the dealer to establish his bona fides—for the artists, it demonstrated a sympathetic understanding of, and even participation in, their circle by adopting their complex visual and rhetorical tactics; for those outside this circle, it positioned the dealer as a unique interlocutor.

### Gallery practice: Spaces, exhibitions, and networks supporting surrealism

Launching an art gallery in 1931 was an act of bravery considering the context of the Great Depression, which had been triggered in part by Black Tuesday, the crash of the United States Stock Market on October 29, 1929. By 1931, the crisis had become international, precipitated by the declining productivity of the American economy and waves of bank failures that extended from the United States to Europe. Levy com-

32 Letter from Duncan Phillips to Levy, 23 February 23, 1932 (note 10).

33 Watson, "Julien Levy" (note 12), p. 80.

34 For more on the professionalization of art dealing, see Anne Helmreich, "David Croal Thomson. The Professionalization of Art Dealing in an Expanding Field," *The Getty Research Journal*, no. 5 (2013), pp. 89–100.

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

plained about market conditions to Jeanne Bucher in February 1932, “I will never make money on Campigli in such a bad year. Really, you have no idea how things are going wrong here. We cannot seem to get started.”<sup>36</sup> The same month he wrote to Herbert Bayer, “[O]ur Surréaliste Exhibition was a great success, the most successful of all our exhibitions. There were crowds of people here every day. The notices in the press were both numerous and laudatory.”<sup>37</sup> Here, Levy equates success with attendance figures and critical reception. Yet he also notes in his letter to Bayer, “Unfortunately, even though people came in large numbers, they felt, in this terrible season, unable to spend anything. From the show I sold practically nothing, merely some photographs, and a great many of the Surréaliste magazines.”<sup>38</sup> This report would have come as no surprise to Bayer, for Levy, when describing his plans in November, had already asked Bayer to drop the price of his works, suggesting to offer “the watercolors from fifty to seventy-five dollars each, and the drawings at thirty-five dollars each,”<sup>39</sup> adding in a December letter that “times are so confused and depressed here, and getting worse every day, that it is difficult to know how to handle pictures, and the more expensive the more difficult.”<sup>40</sup> It is clear from this letter that Levy believed that “a group show illustrating the modern tendencies [*sic*] in the ‘surrealistic’ manner” would be more successful than his original plans for a solo show by Max Ernst.<sup>41</sup> His intent appears to have been to create a sensation, which was more achievable through a group effort.

It did not help that Levy faced considerable competition in the New York market for modern European and American art. Several firms that had been founded in the nineteenth century to promote American art, such as the American Art Association, the Babcock Galleries, and the Macbeth Galleries, were still quite robust. As already noted, the Weyhe Gallery focused on prints and drawings, as did Kennedy & Company. A number of Paris-based firms also had branches in New York City, including the Bignou Gallery, founded by Étienne Bignou, who served as the agent for American collectors Chester Dale and Albert Barnes; the Brummer Gallery, which handled a wide range of material from medieval to modern art; the Durand-Ruel Gallery, founded by Paul Durand-Ruel;

36 Letter from Levy to Jeanne Bucher, February 10, 1932, Box 14, Folder 2 (Galerie Jeanne Bucher), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

37 Letter from Levy to Herbert Bayer, February 12, 1932, Box 3, Folder 8 (Herbert Bayer), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

38 Ibid.

39 Letter from Levy to Bayer, November 21, 1931, Box 3, Folder 8 (Herbert Bayer), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

40 Levy to Bayer, December 28, 1931, Box 3, Folder 8 (Herbert Bayer), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

41 Ibid.

and the Jacques Seligmann Gallery, which had added contemporary European painting to its stock to meet the tastes of the New York art scene (the firm was responsible for bringing Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* to New York in 1937). The American dealer Valentine Dudensing had likewise sought to bring contemporary European art into the New York market and arranged for Pierre Matisse, son of the painter, to act as his agent in the mid-1920s. By 1931, Pierre Matisse struck out on his own. The firm Knoedler & Company, which was established as a branch of the Paris-based house of Goupil in the mid-nineteenth century, also handled contemporary American and European art although they sought to build a reputation as specialists in old masters in the early twentieth century. A number of "homegrown" businesses were also devoted to the contemporary scene, including the previously mentioned An American Place run by Stieglitz; Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century; Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery, dedicated to the promotion of modern American art and American folk art; the Marie Harriman Gallery, focusing primarily on French post-impressionism and the School of Paris; and the Midtown Galleries, founded in 1932 to specialize in contemporary American Art.

How, in this context, could an art dealer carve out a niche for a new business? As suggested, Levy turned to the well-developed strategy of dealer expertise, becoming a spokesperson for surrealism—a role he continued to hone well after the demise of his gallery through lectures, ongoing involvement in exhibitions, and the publication of his autobiography. Ingrid Schaffner argues that Levy's other methods of cultivating the market warrant a reputation for prescience, stating that "Levy's enterprise during the 1930s and early 1940s can be seen to anticipate the great New York art galleries of the late 1940s and the 1950s, those under the direction of such dealers as Sidney Janis, Sam Kootz, and Betty Parsons."<sup>42</sup> Schaffner continues:

"Levy codified the rituals of contemporary gallery commerce, from sending out press releases and snappy announcement cards to throwing opening-night cocktail parties. The gallery regularly published brochures with essays by famous writers and critics, who established an instant context for an artist's works. Levy created a buzz that attracted the smart set, collectors, curators, press, other artists, who then generated reviews, gossip, speculation, and—most significant for the artists whose works were on view—interest and sales."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ingrid Schaffner, "Alchemy of the Gallery," in Schaffner and Jacobs, *Julien Levy* (note 2), pp. 21–22. Levy, in his interview with Paul Cummings in 1975, credits himself with several



However, if these practices are examined from the vantage point of the 1880s and 1890s rather than the 1940s and 1950s, we can see that they were not new at all, but in fact well-established, having evolved alongside the use of rotating exhibitions as the primary sales vehicle for commercial art galleries. Specially designed invitation cards, private viewing parties, press events, exhibition catalogues penned by leading critics, the cultivation of critics, the careful placement of articles and gossip, and even uniquely designed spaces, were strategies already put in place by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> James McNeill Whistler, for example, for his retrospective exhibition held at the Goupil Galleries in London in 1892, designed the invitations, posters, and sandwich boards, as well as overseeing the production of the catalogue, which assembled quotes about his work from prominent critics. He worked closely with the gallery manager David Croal Thomson to select not only the works for the exhibition but also the members of society to be invited to the opening.<sup>45</sup> The result, as reported by Whistler's colleague Joseph Pennell, was a popular success: "Some hundreds of cards of invitation were issued, and it really seemed as if every recipient had accepted the call. Literally, crowds thronged the galleries all day, and it is quite impossible to describe the excitement produced."<sup>46</sup> In other instances, Whistler designed his exhibition spaces to ensure that his works were displayed to their best advantage.<sup>47</sup>

The answer to the question regarding the progressive nature of Levy's profile and reputation is therefore not an origin story, but rather one of shaping well-rehearsed strategies to suit his particular context. In other words, while heroic narratives of modern art may imply that dealers of progressive art should be as original as the artists they represent, historical perspective reveals that dealers like Levy did not so much invent as adopt and adapt to trends around them.

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inventions, including the curved wall in his gallery (p. 13), writing reviews of his gallery on behalf of critics (p. 15), and "then I invented another thing which was the cause of my downfall. I invented the cocktail opening." (p. 15).

44 For more on the rise of the commercial art gallery and the use of these strategies, see Pamela Fletcher, "Shopping for Art. The Rise of the Commercial Art Gallery, 1850s–90s," in Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, eds., *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, 1950–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 47–64.

45 See, for example, "David Croal Thomson to James McNeill Whistler, February 24, 1892"; "Whistler to Thomson, 1/14 March 1892"; "Thomson to Whistler, March 4, 1892"; "Whistler to Thomson, March 5, 1892"; and "Thomson to Whistler, March 8, 1892," in Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort, and Nigel Thorp, eds., *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1955–1903*, online edition, University of Glasgow. See also Georgia Toutziari, ed., *The Correspondence of Anna McNeill Whistler, 1855–1880*, online edition, Centre for Whistler Studies, University of Glasgow, 2003, <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>, accessed July 4, 2018.

46 Joseph Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1908), p. 121.

47 David Park Curry, "Total Control. Whistler at an Exhibition," in Ruth Fine, ed., *Studies in the History of Art. James McNeill Whistler, A Reexamination* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1987), pp. 67–82.

Levy located his gallery, when it opened in 1931, in the heart of the emerging mid-town gallery district, in close proximity to many of the galleries already mentioned. Midtown Manhattan became a thriving commercial and entertainment district in the 1920s and 1930s, and despite the Depression major construction took place in the neighborhood, including Radio City Music Hall (opened in 1932) and the RCA building (1933).

Visitors to Levy's first gallery on Madison Avenue would have arrived via an elevator to the third-floor space, which included a front showroom (painted white), a center showroom (in Harvard red), and a small office and storeroom at the rear.<sup>48</sup> Using his father's contractors, Levy invested considerable funds and attention to the physical environment.<sup>49</sup> Work orders document that Levy requested "absolutely perfect" walls, which were curved.<sup>50</sup> He later noted that the curved walls "led the traffic of the gallery. ... You had to move and see each [painting] individually. To some extent the others were there but they faded in the curve."<sup>51</sup> He devised an innovative system that combined the framing and hanging of photographs, and commissioned custom-designed display cases to exhibit books, magazines, and portfolios.

The fashionability of Levy's gallery was underscored by a 1938 article in *Vogue* featuring several leading commercial dealers—Knoedler's, Valentine Dudensing, Marie Harriman, Carroll Carstairs, Felix Wildenstein, Durand-Ruel, and Levy. The article, echoing Duncan Phillips's impression of the dealer, implicitly contrasted Levy with the older generation of dealers, such as Durand-Ruel. It opened with a description of Durand-Ruel's premises "The walls of the Durand-Ruel Gallery are covered with dull brown velvet, the lighting is not good, and if the place is crowded as it frequently is, there is really little chance to see the pictures."<sup>52</sup> The next paragraph, devoted to Levy's gallery, depicted "a gallery principally for the sophisticated and for the young. The newly planned walls are broken up artfully, dipping and waving and straightening out again. The rug is dark wine, the walls white, the effect is naked and modern."<sup>53</sup> When Levy moved to 15 East Fifty-Seventh Street in 1937, he retained the curved wall, and his press release called attention to what he described as "a startling innovation in gallery design—the walls are curved, the curves deriving from the shape of a painter's pal-

48 Cummings interview with Levy, 1975 (note 2), p. 14.

49 Julien Levy Gallery, Time and Material Order, Edgar A. Levy Construction Co., September 8, 1931, Box 33, Folder 1 (Julien Levy Gallery "1930s"), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

50 Time and Material Order, Order 3871, Edgar A. Levy Construction Co., Julien Levy Gallery, September 8, 1931 Box 33, Folder 1 (Julien Levy Gallery "1930s"), *ca.* October 1937, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

51 Cummings interview with Levy, 1975 (note 2), pp. 13–14.

52 Sallie Saunders, "Middle Men of Art," *Vogue* New York, vol. 91, iss. 6 (March 15, 1938), p. 102.

53 *Ibid.*



121 F. M. Demarest, *Curved walls in the Julien Levy Gallery at 15 East 57th St., ca. 1937/1942*, gelatin silver print, 19.2 × 24.4 cm. Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago.

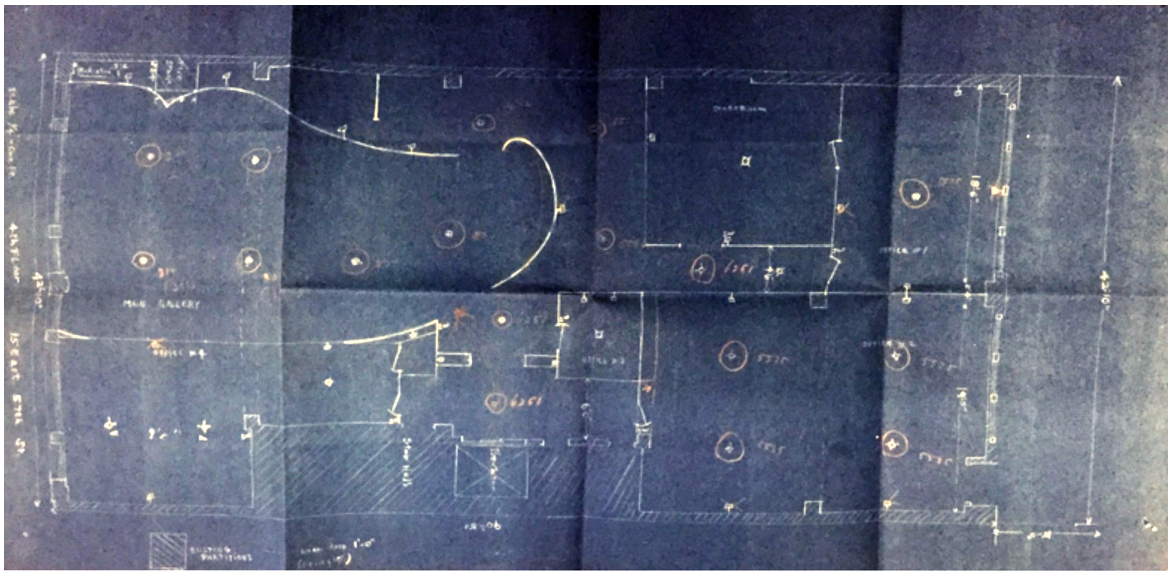
ette. This shape appears not only decoratively effective, but practical too.”<sup>54</sup> (figs. 121 and 122)

Levy clearly wanted to retain these physical features of his gallery, which the *Vogue* author had seen as “modern.”<sup>55</sup> As art historian Nancy Troy has made clear in her book *Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France* (1991), over the course of the early decades of the twentieth century modern art and modern design became closely intertwined, as exemplified by the “Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau” organized by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret for the Exposition of Decorative Arts in Paris in 1925.<sup>56</sup> Marilyn Friedman’s study *Selling Good Design: Promoting the Early Modern Interior* (2003) continues the narrative in the context of the United States. In 1928, for example, Macy’s department store, in collaboration with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, held the International Exposition of Art in Industry, which promoted the new aesthetic. The same year Lord & Taylor held a similar exhibition that sought to

<sup>54</sup> Box 33, Folder 8 (Press Releases), ca. October 1937, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

<sup>55</sup> Saunders, “Middle Men of Art” (note 52).

<sup>56</sup> Nancy J. Troy, *Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France, Art Nouveau to Le Corbusier* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 193–196.



122 Julien Levy Gallery, East Fifty-Seventh Street, blueprint. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives, Julien Levy Gallery records.

“determine the reaction of the American public to modern art in all its developments and to ascertain whether there is sufficient interest here to justify activity on the part of American artists, manufacturers, and merchants in the production and presentation of such merchandise as a business venture.”<sup>57</sup> More than 300,000 people viewed its displays, which included a study designed by Pierre Chareau.<sup>58</sup> It was also at this time that Saks Fifth Avenue’s department store hired Frederick Kiesler to dress their windows, and that Norman Bel Geddes designed the Franklin Simon store window displays.<sup>59</sup> Geddes was sympathetic to Levy’s enterprise, writing to the dealer in 1932 to apologize for having missed the screening of *Le Chien andalou*, adding, “I am most interested in everything you are doing. You have one of the few fresh points of view regarding galleries and what they can accomplish.”<sup>60</sup>

57 Emily Orr, “Beautiful Objects for General Consumption. The New York Department Store and Modern Design in the 1920s,” *Cooper Hewitt*, June 2, 2017, <https://www.cooperhewitt.org/2017/06/02/beautiful-objects-for-general-consumption-the-new-york-department-store-and-modern-design-in-the-1920s/>, accessed July 4, 2018.

58 Marilyn F. Friedman, *Selling Good Design, Promoting the Early Modern Interior* (New York: Rizzoli, 2003), pp. 61–62, 70.

59 For more on Kiesler’s work and, in particular, his collaboration with Peggy Guggenheim on the creation of the gallery Art of This Century, see Don Quaintance, “Modern Art in a Modern Setting. Frederick Kiesler’s Design of the Art of This Century,” in Susan Davidson and Philip Rylands, eds., *Peggy Guggenheim and Frederick Kiesler. The Story of Art of This Century* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2004), pp. 206–273.

60 Letter from Norman Bel Geddes to Levy, November 29, 1932, Box 3, Folder 17 (Bes), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

Levy's desire to interject his business into the project to integrate modern art and modern design in contemporary living is exemplified by his attempt to sell ornamental articles. When he launched his gallery in 1931, he worked with manufacturers to produce decorative objects featuring photographs, such as cigarette cases and lamps.<sup>61</sup> He explained to the editor of *House & Garden* that "as my place is an Art Gallery and not the shop of a decorator I don't plan to execute orders myself, but will introduce and display models and suggestions, and act as an agency for decorators."<sup>62</sup> In short, Levy's practices and the aesthetic they embodied were consonant with this new movement uniting modern design with high-end commercialism and reflected his wish to target a specific audience, described by *Vogue* as the "sophisticated" and "young."<sup>63</sup> Geddes, and Duncan Phillips before him, confirm that this tactic allowed Levy to set himself apart from other gallerists.

As the articles in *Vogue* and *House & Garden* might suggest, Levy also turned to the modern world of advertising to advance his cause. Both these magazines were Condé Nast publications, and Levy maintained regular correspondence with *Vogue*'s inventive art director M. F. Agha; Levy lent Agha a copy of the magazine *La Révolution surréaliste* and exhibited Agha's photographs.<sup>64</sup> Agha and Condé Nast were also on Herbert Bayer's invitation list for Levy's January 1932 surrealist exhibition.<sup>65</sup> Bayer, then working as the director of a Berlin advertising agency with offices in New York, also used his press connections to secure notices of the exhibition.<sup>66</sup> To attract further attention to the artists he represented, Levy also forged contacts with specialist art journals, such as *Creative Arts*, as well as more general readership publications like *Vanity Fair*.<sup>67</sup>

In the early 1940s Levy became the secretary for a new publication, *View*—a literary and art magazine founded by Charles Henri Ford and a vehicle that was highly sympathetic to his project. The October–November 1941 issue, for example, was an "All-Surrealist Number" edited by Nicolas Calas, and several issues were dedicated to artists represented by Levy, including Max Ernst, who was featured in April 1942 through

61 See Invoices from George Henne, Box 14, Folder 8 (George Henne), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

62 Letter from Levy to Margaret McElroy, November 12, 1931, Box 15, Folder 23 (House and Garden), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

63 Saunders, "Middle Men of Art" (note 52).

64 Box 1, Folder 7 (M. F. Agha), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA, see letter of December 18, 1932, regarding the loan of the magazine *La Révolution Surréaliste*; letters of October 8, 1932, and April 4, 1933, refer to the preparations for showing Agha's photographs at Levy's gallery.

65 Letter from Herbert Bayer to Levy, January 14, 1932, Box 3, Folder 8 (Herbert Bayer), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

66 Ibid.

67 For the *Vanity Fair* correspondence, see Box 26, Folder 12, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.



illustrated essays about the artist by André Breton, Leonora Carrington, Sidney Janis, Parker Tyler, Henry Miller, and Nicolas Calas, as well as Levy and Ernst himself. Levy, in his role as interlocutor, contributed a note about Ernst's creative process, specifically the artist's Freudian memories of children that he had metaphorically locked away when faced with the destruction of war, and had later drawn upon when, "hungry and disheartened in Paris, and wondering what more of his lean resources might be tapped, he was to remember those secret places in his head, and the children, and was to find the true material for his painting."<sup>68</sup> Fittingly, original collages by Ernst for sale at the Julien Levy Gallery were advertised on the first page of this special issue. The May 1942 issue of *View* was partly dedicated to Pavel Tchelitchew and timed to coincide with the Levy Gallery's exhibition of the artist's work held from April 21 to May 18. But Levy's relationship to *View* was not exclusive. His was one of many galleries advertising in the pages of the magazine; his notice for Ernst collages appeared alongside advertisements for the Bignou, Pierre Matisse, and Nierendorf galleries, and the catalogue for Ernst's exhibition at the Valentine Gallery featured as the journal's centerfold. The issue concerning Tchelitchew was also partitioned to include a section about Yves Tanguy, who was then being exhibited at the Pierre Matisse Gallery.

In 1944, Levy resigned from *View* after his colleagues complained of his "complete, and apparently uncompromising, disinterest,"<sup>69</sup> stating that he could no longer afford the advertising fees.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps tellingly, the first advertisements in *View*'s October and November 1945 issues were for the Hugo Gallery, which was at the time hosting "The Fantastic in Modern Art," an exhibition presented by *View*.<sup>71</sup>

Accounting records for the Julien Levy Gallery, which start from 1937, suggest that Levy did not invest a great deal in paid advertising.<sup>72</sup> Instead, he cultivated relationships with the press and issued his own press releases, a skill he had acquired while working at Weyhe's gallery. Moreover, he regarded his exhibitions as advertising in and of themselves, as implied in a letter to Jeanne Bucher describing the success of

68 Julien Levy, "The Children Inside and the Children Outside," *View*, no. 1 (April 1942), p. 31.

69 Letter from Parker Tyler to Levy, February 21, 1944, Box 26, Folder 16, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

70 Letter from Levy to Tyler, February 23, 1944, Box 26, Folder 16, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA. Levy was still listed as a sponsor for the New Jazz concert presented by *View* in December 1944, and the December 1944 issue included a photo-essay by Man Ray, who was described as having a "retrospective exhibition of his work, paintings, drawings, rayograms, at Julien Levy's early next year." See "Table of Contents," *View*, no. 4 (December 1944), p. 109.

71 *View*, no. 3 (October 1945); *View*, no. 4 (November 1945).

72 See the Bernard Reis & Company Reports, 1937–1939, Box 33, Folder 1; 1941/Box 33, Folder 2, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

his surrealist exhibition: “It was written about nearly every day. And then the crowds in the gallery. Of course we only sold photos and magazines, but as advertising, it was more than excellent.”<sup>73</sup>

Levy’s press releases have left an important written trace of how he wished to position his roster of artists. The *Vogue* article from 1938 provides an important contextual clue for decoding the rhetorical strategy that Levy deployed in these texts. The article describes the dealer’s enthusiasm for surrealism and neo-Romanticism, stating, “His keen and almost glittering eye, focussed on the Parisian scene, may discover this decade’s Cézanne [*sic*] at any moment—a possibility that keeps him and his clients slightly feverish at all times.”<sup>74</sup> Cézanne had faced an indifferent future until the dealer Ambroise Vollard organized a major exhibition that secured his reputation.<sup>75</sup> Levy’s press releases suggest a canny awareness of how he could promote his artists as new to the art scene, while also suggesting that they, like Cézanne, could stand the test of time. In his press release for the surrealist exhibition, for instance, he asserted that “an exhibition of these pictures is sensational, as [was] the showing of the first Cubists”—indirectly pointing to Picasso and Braque, who were by then recognized as modern masters.<sup>76</sup> In the press release for Max Ernst’s solo show in November 1932, he observed: “His work is well known throughout Europe and represented in all the important modern collections and in several museums.”<sup>77</sup> This was arguably a significant exaggeration given that current records indicate that it was not until 1934 that a European museum—the Kunsthaus Zurich—acquired an artwork by Ernst. Levy’s goal was evidently not to accurately represent museum holdings, but to leverage the prestige of permanent collections in order to render the artist collectable and investment-worthy. In one of the press releases for Dalí’s 1933 exhibition, he closed with the assertion that Dalí’s “mastery of technique and imaginative power ranks him as one of the most significant European painters since Picasso.”<sup>78</sup> Note the genealogy Levy is creating here, one that was aided by and mirrored the narrative constructed by Barr at MoMA.

In short, Levy recognized the cultural legitimacy conveyed by the modernist past and contemporary museums. In his 1975 interview, he declared that it was “splendid” that the first surrealist exhibition in the

73 Letter from Julien Levy to Jeanne Bucher, February 10, 1932, Box 14, Folder 2 (Galerie Jeanne Bucher), Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

74 Saunders, “Middle Men of Art” (note 52).

75 For more on Vollard’s activities, see Rebecca A. Rabinow, ed., *Cézanne to Picasso. Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant-garde* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006).

76 Box 33, Folder 8 (Press Releases), ca. January 1932, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

77 Ibid.

78 Box 33, Folder 8 (Press Releases), ca. November 1933, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

United States was held at the Wadsworth Atheneum, adding that “commercially speaking, the best idea is to have a museum do it. That gives you prestige and then you try to do the follow-up, the business end.”<sup>79</sup> That business end could, in fact, be handled directly in the space of the museum. In a letter to Chick Austin of March 15, 1935, on the subject of Eugene Berman drawings from the gallery then on view at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Levy advised, “Should any likely customers be interested, the prices generally run between forty-five and fifty unless otherwise marked.”<sup>80</sup> In Levy’s network, the museum and the market were not distantly related, but closely intertwined.

## Conclusion

Forming this network between museum and market into which Levy inserted artists associated with surrealism, and establishing and disseminating surrealism’s public profile within New York’s collector community—thereby linking the “young” and “sophisticated”<sup>81</sup> to surrealism—were the major achievements of the Julien Levy Gallery. Financially, the enterprise was never secure. Launching a luxury retail business in the midst of the Depression was challenging, and much of Levy’s stock was on consignment from artists and other dealers, and most of the artists he handled were also represented by other galleries (an exception to this was his contract with Arshile Gorky in 1944 to be his exclusive dealer.<sup>82</sup>). Levy sometimes borrowed from collectors, a strategy that brought audiences and prestige to his exhibitions but did not necessarily translate into ready sales. Accountants’ records from the period from 1937 to 1941 reveal that Levy was kept afloat by loans from his father, the critic and patron James Thrall Soby, and Eleanor Howard, who had worked briefly as Levy’s assistant before marrying Soby. The Sobys were compensated with shares in the gallery (fig. 123), but when they wanted to cash out their interest in the business, Levy was forced to pay them via art works because he was cash poor.<sup>83</sup>

In sum, Julien Levy was arguably both a progressive dealer and a dealer of progressives. He utilized practices that dealers had developed over the preceding century, such as rotating exhibitions, specially designed

79 Cummings interview with Levy, 1975 (note 2), p. 17.

80 Letter from Levy to Mr. A. E. Austin, March 16, 1935, Box 26, Folder 23, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

81 Saunders, “Middle Men of Art” (note 52).

82 Letter from Levy to Arshile Gorky, December 20, 1944, Box 14, Folder 19, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.

83 JALJAV Inc., December 31, 1942; letter from Jim Soby to Levy, March 14, 1943 (and subsequent correspondence through June 1943), Box 24, Folder 24, Levy Gallery Records, PMAA.



123 Stock certificate for the Julien Levy Gallery held by Eleanor Howard Soby. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives, Julien Levy Gallery records.

spaces, cultivated expertise, carefully groomed rhetoric, and collaborations with the press, translating them to the context of 1930s and 1940s New York. But Levy was also inventive and adaptable, strengthening and extending networks he had established in Paris and Harvard, responding to the confluence of modern art and modern design, and recognizing opportunities to collaborate with museums and subsequently building their profiles and collections.



124 A copy of the exhibition catalogue for "Artists in Exile," Pierre Matisse Gallery, 1942, signed by the artists. Private collection.



## The Commercial Strategy of the Pierre Matisse Gallery After 1945: Promoting Individual Artists' Careers at the Expense of the Careers of Surrealists

Marianne Jakobi

“Don’t scold me too much if I had to lower the prices in Rome substantially.”<sup>1</sup> Unlike what we might think, this is not taken from a letter from a dealer to an artist but from a petition by Yves Tanguy to his gallerist Pierre Matisse that immediately raises the issues of the methods used to sell works of art, the works’ prices, the rights of foreigners, and so on. Pierre Matisse engenders many questions as he was one of the most distinguished art dealers and gallery owners in the United States and, above all, a key figure in the development of a market for the surrealists.<sup>2</sup>

A famous gallerist, editor of exhibition catalogues, and letter writer, Matisse succeeded in establishing himself on the American art market as the standard-bearer of European—and more specifically Parisian—artists. Among the assorted artists he championed, such as Henri Matisse, Balthus, Jean Dubuffet, and Zao Wou-Ki, there were many surrealists or artists who participated in surrealism. Matisse’s particular approach was to focus on the artists themselves, at the expense of supporting the internationalist and revolutionary avant-garde movement that surrealism had been. It was this strategy of promoting personal careers—such as

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Yves Tanguy to Pierre Matisse, March 3, 1955, Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (hereafter cited as APML). [All quotations from documents in the APML are own translations.] Having arrived in New York in 1925, Pierre Matisse opened his own gallery in 1931, which he would run until 1989, the year that the gallery’s archives were donated to the Pierpont Morgan Library. See the website of the Morgan Library & Museum, which lists all the materials in the archives of the Pierre Matisse Gallery, <https://www.themorgan.org/pmg>, accessed April 11, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Recent exhibitions and publications have brought up to date the close links between Pierre Matisse and the artists he exhibited in his gallery. See, in particular, John Russell, *Matisse, Father and Son* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999); Pierre Schneider et al., eds., *Pierre Matisse – Passéur Passionné. Un Marchand d’Art et ses Artistes*, exh. cat. (Paris: Mona Bismarck Foundation, 2005); Charles E. Pierce, ed., *Pierre Matisse and his Artists*, exh. cat. (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 2002); Sabine Rewald, Magdalena Dabrowski, eds., *The American Matisse. The Dealer, His Artists, His Collection. The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009).

those of Joan Miró, Yves Tanguy, Alberto Giacometti, Roberto Matta, and Wifredo Lam—that I would like to analyze here through the study of two types of sources. First, the voluminous correspondence between the gallerist and the surrealist artists, which includes letters, technical notes, and telegrams, but also lists of selected and purchased works, customs declarations, and photographs. These archive documents contain information on the art market (commercial transactions, the organization of exhibitions, and so forth), the genesis of works, and the reactions of the public, collectors, and critics. The other source that offers a better understanding of the gallerist's commercial strategies lies in the exhibition catalogues and the editorial policy Matisse adopted to secure a place for the works of the surrealists on the American scene. All these documents reveal how the market behaved toward the surrealists from the time of their American exile. How did Matisse succeed in becoming the dealer of the surrealists at a time when other galleries were already major players on the New York market? Indeed, from the time Julien Levy's gallery opened in 1931, the American public had been able to see the works of Salvador Dalí, Man Ray, and Max Ernst. The opening of Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery in 1942, and the exhibition "First Papers of Surrealism" held between October 14 and November 7 of the same year at the Whitelaw Reid Mansion, also raised their profile among the public at large and stimulated growing interest in the market—but on what basis? What types of contract and financial arrangements did Matisse have with each of the five surrealists represented by his gallery? What role did exhibition catalogues play in the reception of these artists in New York in the period following 1945? In order to begin to answer these questions, we should first consider the significance of 1945 as a moment of rupture, or continuity, among artists.

In his book, *Nouveau monde et Nouveau mythe*, Fabrice Flahutez describes the key role played by the galleries owned by Julien Levy and Pierre Matisse for surrealism in the United States from the time of the surrealist artists' American exile.<sup>3</sup> Although Matisse's gallery was involved in the emergence of a surrealist market in America, did it improve the living conditions of its exiled artists? This question was crucial in 1945, when many of the exiles had not received the financial aid from those who had promised them assistance on their arrival in the United States. We know that during World War II, Matisse had opened his gallery to artists in exile, particularly the surrealists. From March 3 to 28, 1942, he mounted a now famous group exhibition whose title may be seen

3 Fabrice Flahutez, *Nouveau monde et nouveau mythe. Mutations du surréalisme, de l'exil américain à l'Écart Absolu* (1941–1965) (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2007), p. 14.

as taking a political slant in an America that still felt little concerned by the seemingly remote war in Europe.<sup>4</sup> The choice of the title “Artists in Exile” was a strong signal in favor of the grouping of these artists of very diverse practice, as dissimilar as André Breton’s *Poème-objet* (*Poem-Object*) from paintings by Piet Mondrian, “abstraction’s holy man.”<sup>5</sup> This exhibition, which assembled fourteen artists, highlighted the massive presence of surrealists in New York at that time among other exiled artists. Thus, we see in a group photograph taken by George Platt Lynes (fig. 124), from left to right in the first row, Ossip Zadkine seated between Matta and Tanguy, and in the second row, Mondrian between Breton and André Masson. Leaving aside differences in style, generation, and nationality, these artists would meet up in Pierre Matisse’s gallery, which provided the surrealists in New York with a place of welcome and a social base throughout the war. In 1945, another group photograph, probably taken in Matisse’s apartment after the war had ended, features surrealists like Breton, Matta, and Tanguy. We may wonder why, while assisting the surrealists on a personal level in exhibitions and publications, Matisse never attempted to organize a large-scale surrealist exhibition in which he could have welcomed other artists too.

#### 1945: A surrealist year at the Pierre Matisse Gallery?

In 1945, when Matisse was organizing exhibitions of works by surrealist artists, he enjoyed great prestige among American art lovers. A partner of the American dealer Valentine Dudensing since 1925, in 1931 he opened his own gallery at 41 East Fifty-Seventh Street in the heart of Manhattan, where he presented the works of numerous contemporary artists. The fame of his name (linked with that of his father Henri Matisse) and the quality of his judgment in the creation of his exhibitions ensured his gallery was at the forefront of the New York modern painting scene. However, he was faced with growing competition. An initial appraisal of his activities highlights certain strategic constants in the exhibitions he mounted: from the opening of his gallery to its closure in 1989, Matisse preferred individual shows (out of a total of 207, thirty-seven were dedicated to Joan Miró, seventeen to Marc Chagall, and twelve to Jean Dubuffet) to group exhibitions, which were three times less numerous. These gave the New York public the opportunity to admire a wide range of works by recognized artists—such as Chagall,

4 Pierre Matisse, ed., *Artists in Exile*, exh. cat. (New York: Pierre Matisse Gallery, 1942). See texts by James Thrall Soby and Nicolas Calas in this catalogue.

5 Letter from Pierre Matisse to Henri Matisse dated the Sunday before the exhibition preview, March 1, 1942, quoted in Russell, *Matisse, Father and Son* (note 2), p. 201.

Miró, Henri Matisse, Georges Rouault—and those less well known—Theodore Roszak, Stefan Knapp, and Rufino Tamayo. Matisse did not restrict his practice to presenting Western contemporary art, but also embraced that of Africa, Oceania, and pre-Columbian America. These exhibitions were accompanied by catalogues that, initially just lists of work titles, progressively developed to include reproductions of works and above all essays by artists, art critics, and influential intellectuals.

In 1945 Matisse held ten exhibitions in his gallery, half of which were devoted to surrealists. The year opened with “Constellations” (January 9–February 3), the first of two shows dedicated to Miró, in which the series of gouaches painted in 1940–41 was presented alongside ceramics and lithographs, demonstrating the diversity of the techniques practiced by the artist.<sup>6</sup> At the time of the exhibition, Matisse sent Miró a long letter in which he explained his conception of the role of the dealer: “Personally, I can see only one way to be a dealer, and that is to stay friends with the painters”; and of the advantage to the artist not to have to put up with “the worries and obligations that the sale of paintings to different dealers and art lovers engenders.”<sup>7</sup> It was with this declaration of friendship, which was not devoid of a degree of self-congratulation by the dealer, that an almost too clear-cut distinction appeared between art market professionals on one hand, and artists and collectors on the other. This same differentiation, which kindles a balance of power, can be seen in relation to another of the gallery’s artists, Jean Dubuffet.<sup>8</sup> But, with the success of “Constellations,” Miró became the representative of the new European painting praised to the skies by Clement Greenberg, a fact that Matisse did not fail to write to him: “You are therefore doubly concerned, not only for your personal artistic future, but as the most important representative of this European school.”<sup>9</sup> It is clear from this just how much Matisse considered surrealism a school of style and not an avant-garde art form. In line with the general thinking in the United States, Matisse was of Greenberg’s opinion that formalism appeared as the only destination toward which painting was heading. This was to clearly become the case for almost all of America’s artistic and intellectual milieu, and it is this that explains the gallerist’s efforts to isolate the

6 Miró, “Constellations,” exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, January 9–February 3, 1945. For details, see Fabrice Flahutez, “La genèse des Constellations. Une circulation de sens entre Breton et Miró de 1940 à 1959,” in *La Fabrique du titre*, Marianne Jakobi, Pierre-Marc de Biasi, and Laneyrie-Dagen, eds. (Paris: CNRS, 2012), pp. 335–46.

7 Letter from Matisse to Joan Miró, January 17, 1945, APML.

8 On the Pierre Matisse Gallery and the balance of power between the gallerist and Jean Dubuffet, see Marianne Jakobi, “Un Artiste et un Marchand Collectionneurs. Première Lecture de la Correspondance Inédite entre Jean Dubuffet et Pierre Matisse,” *Histoire de l’art*, no. 44 (1999), pp. 93–107.

9 Letter from Matisse to Miró, August 16, 1946, APML.

125 Checklist for the March 1945 exhibition of works by Roberto Matta at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. New York, The Morgan Library and Museum.



artists from the groups of which they were members. During “Constellations” in January 1945, correspondence informs us that the works were selling very well (\$700 each), and Matisse was delighted with the fact that a longstanding surrealist had visited the exhibition twice and “inspected the gouaches one by one”: the artist was Dalí.<sup>10</sup> In the face of this success, Matisse organized a second exhibition, of lithographs, the following month, from February 5 to 25. His interest in the surrealists became stronger every day, despite his avoidance of mounting a group exhibition about which he felt less sure of maintaining control. Yet putting on solo shows was at the very least equally daring and risky as the question of personal promotion among the surrealists had been proscribed in Breton’s Surrealist Manifesto of 1924. That did not prevent him, however, from presenting paintings by Matta from March 12 to 31, 1945, under the title “Matta/Paintings, 1944–1945” (fig. 125). It included

<sup>10</sup> Matisse to Miró, February 2, 1945, APML.



the very large *Xpace and the Ego* (1945, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris), which he had repainted at the request of Breton in particular, who had considered it too little consonant with surrealist poetics. Even so, Matisse offered him \$150 a month to take all of his production; this compares unfavorably with the \$200 a month that Peggy Guggenheim was paying Breton to advise her on her art purchases.<sup>11</sup>

In spring 1945, another surrealist was put in the spotlight in the Pierre Matisse Gallery. From May 8 to June 2, it was the turn of Yves Tanguy, while during the winter an exhibition of recent paintings was dedicated to Wifredo Lam. This show coincided with the artist's arrival in Haiti, and preceded exhibitions that were held in the Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince and in the Galerie Pierre in Paris a year later. Thus, the year 1945 represented an undertaking by Matisse on behalf of the surrealists, at least Lam, Matta, Miró, and Tanguy, and one that the gallerist wished to continue. This succession of exhibitions is interesting and prompts the question of whether the facility with which Matisse took these artists under contract was not in fact due to the contemporary disintegration of the group and to the distance that Breton put between himself and his former friends, whose personal directions and decisions fell apart during the difficult years of exile.

### Miró, the star of the Pierre Matisse Gallery

During the interwar years, while Dalí personified surrealism on the American art scene, Matisse championed another surrealist. Miró was the artist to whom he devoted the greatest number of one-man shows, offering him two per year almost every year. Matisse had been highly enthusiastic about Miró's painting since 1932 and implemented what would become the distinctive aspect of his practice as a dealer: he favored a contract that allowed him to hold the exclusive rights of representation in the United States and first choice of the artist's production. This method was the opposite of the traditional commission-based selling of a work of art, of visiting sales rooms, and of the placement of works on deposit in a gallery. For Matisse, this type of contract had above all the advantage of eliminating any competitors, meaning that he could avoid having to do business with other dealers with whom he would have had to share his rather disorganized accounts, while, conversely, guaranteeing his artist financial security. In order to analyze exactly the reality of the right to be the first to see a new work, to refuse certain works, to make a possible specific payment depending on the type of painting

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11 Flahutez, *Nouveau monde* (note 3), p. 14.

126 Advertisement for the March–April 1959 exhibition of works by Joan Miró at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. New York, The Morgan Library and Museum.



(based on its dimensions and materials), and to compare the regularity of payments by their dealers, it would be fascinating to make a comparative study of the links between Miró and his other dealers. As Miró's dealer in New York in the 1930s, Matisse succeeded in making him one of the stars of his gallery (fig. 126). Convinced of the artist's potential, in a letter dated March 3, 1935, written to his father, Matisse said, "I sold a small Miró yesterday, which makes the 12th—little by little the critics will end up admitting that he has talent."<sup>12</sup> As well as this not insignificant question for a dealer, the extract clearly demonstrates the interest Matisse had in the Catalan painter's output. In 1938, Matisse sent Miró \$165 a month in exchange for two-thirds of his production, and he did not hesitate to take serious risks by getting money to him in Catalonia

12 Letter from Pierre Matisse to Henri Matisse, March 3, 1935, APML.

during the occupation. Later, from 1945 to his death in 1989, Matisse devoted twenty-seven solo exhibitions to Miró. His understanding of the role of the dealer also broadly took into account the importance of generating publicity and communications through the American press. The gallerist was always sure to invite many critics and key figures in the art world to exhibition previews.

### Rivalries between dealers

Following the success of January's exhibition, Matisse organized another, of lithographic works, from February 5 to 25, 1945 (also titled "Constellations").<sup>13</sup> In August 1946, he made Miró the proposition of buying everything the artist had produced between 1942 and 1946, then to sign a two-year contract (1947–49), while Pierre Loeb, who had been his dealer since 1925, would become his representative in France.<sup>14</sup>

The logistical support that Matisse developed to establish Miró's production in New York was only achieved with difficulty, and not without more or less intentional hindrances created by the dealers Pierre Loeb and Aimé Maeght in Paris. Certain issues were raised, such as the exclusivity of rights and the conformity of tariffs, sales price, and purchase price of the works. Matisse's letters demonstrate his irritation at Loeb, who sold works to Americans at large international events like the Venice Biennale. But this did not prevent the pair from reaching agreement at the start of the 1950s to oppose the painter's demand for an increase. On January 28, 1952, Matisse wrote to Miró, "Following a comparison with previous prices, it seems to us that the increase in the purchase price of these paintings is rather sudden and would risk unfavorably influencing first collectors, then speculators."<sup>15</sup> This is valuable information for understanding Matisse's sales strategy, which clearly differentiates two types of potential buyers: on one hand a category that would have no interest in financial speculation, and, on the other, those motivated by nothing else. The extract from the letter also reveals that Matisse believed that any signs of change in the supply and demand of Miró's work would first become visible in the behavior of the painter's

<sup>13</sup> "Constellations," New York, Pierre Matisse Gallery, February 5–25, 1945.

<sup>14</sup> "Please be kind enough to confirm that as of April 1, 1934, onward, and for a period of one year, I will turn over all of my output to you for *two thousand francs* (2,000 frs.) per month; you will share this output with Pierre Loeb, who will retain *one quarter* as against your share of *three quarters*. ... At the end of this first year, the contract may be renewed from year to year, subject to three months' notice on either side. As of April 1, 1935, I reserve the right to increase Pierre Loeb's share in my output to 50%, if that is his wish." Letter from Joan Miró to Pierre Matisse, November 5, 1933. See Russell, *Matisse, Father and Son* (note 2), p. 119.

<sup>15</sup> Matisse to Miró, January 28, 1952, APML.

collectors. The impact as envisaged by Matisse of an increase in the sales price of works of art demonstrates the complexity of the art market and the difficulty of understanding how it really functions. Whereas on this occasion Matisse managed to avoid raising the price he paid Miró for his works, which would have necessitated increasing the gallery price in agreement with Loeb, his rivalry with his colleagues in general was often antagonistic. For example, the rapport between the two dealers grew acrimonious when Matisse wrote to Loeb on November 19, 1947, to say, “[W]hat you suggest offers all the advantages of a contract—including first choice of the production—but without the responsibilities that this implies. There is no reason for me to be burdened alone with all the responsibility of such a contract with Miró.”<sup>16</sup> Faced by the growing difficulties between Matisse and Loeb, the latter preferred to renounce his function as Miró’s dealer in Paris, while Matisse kept his exclusivity on sales in the United States.

### Artistic techniques difficult to sell

Correspondence reveals specific disagreements over the sale of ceramics in the United States: this technique aroused differing reactions in the artist and his dealer. On January 17, 1945, Miró wrote that he hoped to sell his large vases for \$1,300 and the smaller ones for \$900 each.<sup>17</sup> Despite the success of “Constellations,” the ceramics could only be sold with difficulty. A year later, on February 2, 1946, the gallerist asked Miró if he would be willing to lower his prices, respectively to \$750 and \$600. In his reply, Miró tried to persuade Matisse by reminding him that “although ceramics may not generally fall within the province of a picture dealer, they are a very beautiful form of art, and one with which it is possible to do very good business.”<sup>18</sup> Matisse cannot have been very convincing to potential buyers as a few months later, on June 8, 1946, he informed the painter that he could not include the ceramics in their contract, and two years later, on June 2, 1948, stated, “I have already told you that, in order to encourage their sale, I will only take 10% in commission. ... It should also be borne in mind that this type of object is not easy to sell.”<sup>19</sup> The medium of ceramics shows just how much Matisse’s philanthropic nature needs to be put into perspective. He was first and foremost a dealer and the praise he showered on Miró in all their correspondence was above all for the artist’s works and, specifi-

<sup>16</sup> Matisse to Loeb, November 19, 1947, APML.

<sup>17</sup> Which would respectively represent about €15,000 and €11,000 in 2018 values.

<sup>18</sup> Matisse to Miró, February 2, 1946, APML.

<sup>19</sup> Matisse to Miró, June 2, 1948, APML.

cally, the medium that sold easily, that is to say, painting. Ceramics also raised the question of the authorship of works produced in partnership. Who was the creator, the painter, or the ceramist? “The agreements that you have with Artigas have been piled on top of those between us and it seems to me that these works fall into the sphere represented by our contract,”<sup>20</sup> wrote Matisse, inasmuch as he considered that the only thing that counted was the invention of the forms, for which Miró was responsible. In other words, from a legal standpoint, the dealer was defending the idea of the conception of a piece over its creation.

Engraving, like pottery, also caused disagreement between the two men. Between 1954 and 1961, their correspondence bears out that the gallerist’s stock of engravings by Miró was difficult to shift in a market that was little propitious to prints, and even more so for the artist’s ceramic wares, which did not seem to hold the attention of the American public.<sup>21</sup> Whereas huge ceramic wall panels were ordered by UNESCO in Paris in 1957–58, by the World’s Fair in Osaka, by Barcelona Airport in 1970, and by the Kunsthaus in Zurich in 1971, no order was forthcoming in the United States.

Nonetheless, Matisse succeeded in establishing Miró’s reputation on the art scene in America. For example, in 1947, when the Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris acquired its first “Miró” thanks to a gift from the artist and Loeb, Matisse had already “placed” works by the surrealist painter in important museums and private collections.<sup>22</sup> The reception given by the American public to Miró’s oeuvre partly contributed to his success and indirectly to his recognition at the 1954 Venice Biennale, where he was awarded the Grand Prize for engraving. It was the result, said Matisse, of “more than twenty years of devoted collaboration.”<sup>23</sup>

### Artists in exile: A growth market?

Although Miró’s works were a sure source of income for Pierre Matisse before and after World War II, the gallerist took the risk of opening his gallery to other artists, in particular the surrealists in exile. In Tanguy’s case, relations between the two went way back. They met at high school, the Lycée Montaigne in Paris, lost sight of one another, and

20 Matisse to Miró, May 26, 1956, APML.

21 Which is curious given that Miró won the Grand Prize for engraving at the Venice Biennale in 1954.

22 The first work by Miró to enter the collections of the Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris was *The Bull Race (La Course de taureaux)* (October 8, 1945), oil on canvas, 114 × 144 cm. Gift of the artist and Pierre Loeb, 1947, inv. AM 2763 P.

23 Matisse to Miró, May 26, 1956, APML.



then met again at the exhibition “Objets surréalistes” at the Galerie Charles Ratton. Then, in 1939, Tanguy wrote to Matisse to say that he was intending to leave France for New York. Three months after his arrival, the gallerist mounted his first exhibition of Tanguy’s work and offered the painter a regular income in return for a part of his production<sup>24</sup>. After this first exhibition at the Matisse Gallery, a process of institutionalization of Tanguy’s painting began: his works were shown in American museums in Connecticut (the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford), in Chicago (the Arts Club of Chicago), and on the West Coast (San Francisco Museum of Art). During the years Yves Tanguy spent in the United States,<sup>25</sup> his correspondence was often related to business matters. One letter is particularly enlightening on his financial relationship with Matisse, and on the rate at which his paintings were finding sales. As from January 1948, Matisse proposed to share the income from each sale “equally after having established a price list together.” The substitution of monthly payments by commissions was less demanding for Matisse, as the prices that Tanguy commanded—as their correspondence indicates—rose almost 500% between 1940 and 1946. This commercial proposition put an end to the “arrangement” that “was a form of protection that allowed the dealer not to reveal a lack of sales (the usual self-respect), and the painter not to worry about a slow rate of flow.”<sup>26</sup> The letter from which this extract is taken then discusses the difficulties faced by a gallerist in times of slow sales: “After all, I see no reason why the artist should not share the dealer’s worries when the paintings are not selling. Perhaps that would help him forget his own.”<sup>27</sup> Had Matisse previously offered Tanguy a sum of money in exchange for works as he had done for Miró? What is certain is that Tanguy enjoyed a certain freedom to sell his work abroad. In 1953, he told Matisse of the sales he had recently made: “Sold *Construire, détruire* in Rome to Professor Lionello de Lisi of Genoa—you probably know him—good collection—for \$1200,” and apologized for having had to “lower the prices.”<sup>28</sup> This letter clearly demonstrates the margin of freedom Tanguy employed in selling his own works abroad even though Matisse was his regular dealer. In Tanguy’s case, the business relationship with his dealer shifted from a monthly payment to a commission on sales.

24 Isabelle Dervaux, “Tanguy en Amérique: Réception et Fortune Critique,” in André Cariou, ed., *Yves Tanguy. L’univers surréaliste*, exh. cat. (Quimper: Musée des Beaux-Arts; Barcelona: Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya; Paris: Somogy, 2007), p. 177.

25 André Cariou, “L’exil américain, 1940–1946,” in *ibid.*, pp. 170–75.

26 Matisse to Tanguy, December 10, 1947, APML.

27 *Ibid.*

28 Tanguy to Matisse, March 3, 1955, APML.

With regard to Roberto Matta, Matisse wanted to exhibit his work in 1942, following the closure of the Julien Levy Gallery and the group exhibition “Artists in Exile” that he organized in his own gallery. It also seems that Matisse proposed giving Matta a monthly sum in return for all the artist’s work, but to no avail.<sup>29</sup> From March 12 to 31, 1945, Matta’s works were on show in the Pierre Matisse Gallery under the title “Matta/Paintings, 1944–1945.” Although the gallerist mounted five exhibitions of Matta’s work between 1942 and 1947, Matta was the surrealist artist with whom his links halted most quickly, just before Matta left for Chile. The impression given is that, between them, the pair were unable to hit it off.

It was also in 1942 that Lam, at Breton’s recommendation, joined the artists represented by the Matisse Gallery: “After having thought it over and particularly on account of your advice, and of your description of Pierre Matisse as a friend, I am in agreement with you to make this sacrifice and I have resolved on him, while hoping that you may be able to make him raise the price so I can improve my working conditions.”<sup>30</sup> Breton defended the painting of his friend and brother in misfortune, with whom he had embarked on the *Capitaine Paul-Lemerle* in March 1941 to travel to the United States via Martinique with André Masson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Victor Serge. Hardly had Lam arrived in Cuba after a twenty-year absence than he began painting with gouaches, given that he did not have the means to buy oils. Matisse then offered to pay Lam thirty dollars for each gouache<sup>31</sup> at a time when Lam was still not yet known. Increasingly intrigued by the gouaches that Lam sent him from Havana, Matisse quickly raised his prices and sent a check for \$250 instead of the \$180 promised. He also proposed that the gouaches in the next exhibition should remain in his possession except for those that he sold, while also paying seventy-five dollars for each sale.<sup>32</sup> In exchange for this very real assistance to Lam, Matisse asked for the exclusive sales right: “On your side, you give me the right of representation for your gouaches and the right of first sight on new works.”<sup>33</sup> This indication that a change had taken place in their contractual relations is borne out by another source. In a letter to Breton, Lam states, “After having received my first batch, Matisse offered me \$75 for each gouache sold out of the 40 that belong to me, also that he should be my sole

29 Schneider et al., *Pierre Matisse – Passeur Passionné* (note 2), p. 178.

30 Letter from Wifredo Lam to André Breton, July 1, 1942, APML.

31 “I commit to putting on an exhibition of your gouaches in my gallery and to immediately buying outright a set of ten gouaches of the same size as those you sent to Mr. Breton for a sum of three hundred dollars.” Letter from Matisse to Lam, July 10, 1942, APML.

32 “I propose to put gouaches from Group A at \$75, as was agreed in our previous letters.” Letter from Matisse to Lam, November 11, 1942, APML.

33 Letter from Matisse to Lam, September 18, 1942, APML.

representative for my gouaches in the United States and to give me a second exhibition of gouaches in 1943, definitely buying 10 from me for \$500. He's paying me \$100 more for the 10 selected for the exhibition from November 17 to December 5, 1942."<sup>34</sup> The gallerist then agreed to increase the prices and above all not to change them while organizing his exhibitions. The rest of the letter is of great interest because it reveals that Matisse created a hierarchy to choose Lam's works:

"[On] 11 November, after receiving the second batch, which, due to his demand for variation, is composed differently, he offered me a classification (that he said was agreed with you and Barr) of 50 gouaches in three groups. A: the group of 20 gouaches of which 10 go to him, 10 to me, and for which he will pay me \$75 for each one sold, as in his letter of 18 September. Then, Group B, which contains 23 gouaches that he wants to offer as sketches, or colored drawings, and for which he will pay me \$40 for each sale. Group C containing the 7 others is entirely rejected."<sup>35</sup>

Matisse defined the price of works on the basis of his perception of their value, taking into consideration that the gouaches in Group B, in particular, allowed him to encourage customer loyalty by means of a gift. The commercial ties between the gallerist and Lam were therefore reliant on the sale of works. This was the reason why Lam regularly opposed Matisse, suggesting they draw up "a little contract" instead of relying on "risky and irregular sales."<sup>36</sup> Lam then concentrated on his large manifesto painting *The Jungle*, which measures 240 centimeters high by 225 wide (94¼ × 90½ inches) and features totemic figures. The canvas was exhibited at the second Lam exhibition at the Matisse Gallery but it found no buyer and the commercially disappointing show prompted the gallerist to suspend his dealings with Lam, an act that once again shows the real value of the "words of affection" he addressed here and there in letters to his artists. But in March 1945 Lam received a check from the gallerist for \$441 and, at the end of April, Matisse informed him that *The Jungle* had been sold to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Following an exchange of letters whose main subject was financial demands, Matisse's reply was quick to arrive: "After all the complications, the acquisition of this picture by this museum is of the

34 I have Fabrice Flahutez to thank for this reference. Letter from Wifredo Lam to André Breton, January 22, 1942, Fonds Breton, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris.

35 Ibid. The "sale" referred to is of gouaches in Group A, for which the gouaches in Group B were offered as inducements.

36 Matisse to Lam, July 26, 1943, APML.

greatest importance and may lead to other good things in the future.”<sup>37</sup> In 1946, while staying in New York, where he met Pierre Matisse, Lam turned to the London Gallery, a British bastion of surrealism.<sup>38</sup> His works were later exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London and in Havana at the first solo exhibition dedicated to his art shortly after his departure from Haiti.<sup>39</sup> However, Matisse continued to show Lam’s work: for his fourth solo exhibition at the gallery included *Hermès Trismégiste* (1945) and some of the *Canaima* series alongside a Kota reliquary and a Kanak roof spire. The juxtaposition of the painter’s works with tribal art prompted Lam to adopt a “primitivist” vision. In parallel to the painter’s recognition in Cuba, the United States, in Europe (Great Britain, Belgium, Sweden, France), and Japan, Matisse gave the artist four other exhibitions, of which the last took place in Lam’s lifetime, in June 1982, presenting a choice of “Early Works, 1942 to 1951.” Thus, with regard to these artists in exile, the gallerist established relations of varying length on the basis of contracts that were relatively less favorable to the artists than one might have thought: for a monthly stipend for Tanguy and Matta in exchange for all of their production, and for irregular payments to Lam based on sales of his works. As part of these tacit contracts, the organization of exhibitions complemented by catalogues was a powerful argument to convince the artists to remain with his gallery and to develop a market of collectors/buyers of the works of these surrealist artists.

### The exhibition catalogue as an advertising strategy

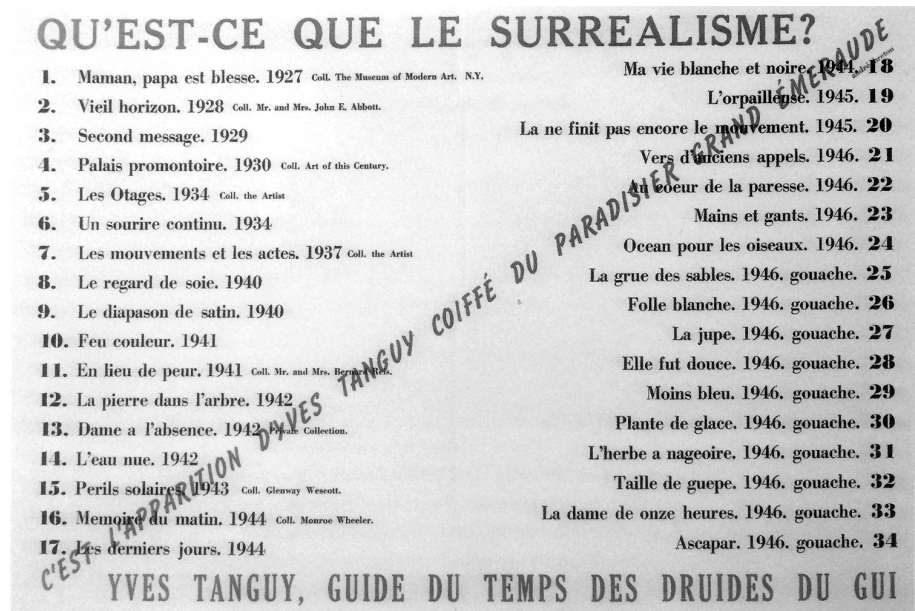
With the aim of reaching a specific and cultivated public with an appreciation of European art, particularly art that bore the cachet of Paris, and who were therefore potential buyers, Matisse placed great value on exhibition catalogues. To match what he supposed were the expectations of the public and of the artist presented, he focused either on the surrealist dimension, as with Tanguy, or on the individual trajectory of an artist, as he did with Giacometti, who was then viewed through the prism of existentialism.

The catalogue of the exhibition “Yves Tanguy. Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings, Gouaches and Drawings, 1927–1946,” held from

37 Matisse to Lam, May 25, 1945, APML.

38 See the thesis by Caterina Caputo, “Collezionare, Esporre, Vendere. Strategie di Mercato e Divulgazione dell’Arte Surrealista tra il 1938 e il 1950. Il Caso della London Gallery,” under the supervision of Alessandro Nigro, Florence University.

39 Matthew Gale, “Offshore 1946–1952,” in Catherine David, ed., *Wifredo Lam*, exh. cat. (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2015), pp. 36–45.



127 Checklist for the November 1946 exhibition of works by Yves Tanguy at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. New York, The Morgan Library and Museum.

November 5 to 30, 1946, made direct reference to the surrealist movement with this question written in capital letters (fig. 127): “What is surrealism?” And the reply: “It’s the appearance of Yves Tanguy wearing on his head the large emerald-green bird of paradise.”<sup>40</sup> Tanguy was the only surrealist artist exhibited at the Matisse Gallery to be directly associated with Breton’s movement in the exhibition catalogues.<sup>41</sup> However, this incursion of surrealism remained a one-off event in the gallerist’s catalogues and correspondence.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Quotation previously published in André Breton, ed., *Documents* 34, no. 2 (Brussels, 1934).

<sup>41</sup> This was already the case for the exhibition “Yves Tanguy” (November 5–30, 1946) at the Matisse Gallery, for which the catalogue assembled all of Breton’s writings on Tanguy, and the layout was arranged by Duchamp on almost one hundred pages illustrated with thirty-eight paintings and twenty-one drawings, the limited edition featuring originals (either etchings or drawings).

<sup>42</sup> If we are to believe a letter written to Jean Cassou, the director of the Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris, the gallerist considered Tanguy as an individual and no longer as one of the members of the surrealists. Hence, Pierre Matisse offered Cassou the gift of *The Palace of the Windowed Rocks* (*Palais aux rochers des fenêtres*), 1942, one “of his best works if not the most important.” Matisse wrote, “You have learned of the premature death of the painter Yves Tanguy, one of the purest figures of the last thirty years, and, owing to the general stampede of the public, enflamed by their attempts to outdo each other, allowed to fall into oblivion, neglected and unrecognized. I firmly believe that a reversal will soon occur, which, moreover, is beginning to make itself felt.” Letter from Pierre Matisse to Jean Cassou, quoted in the catalogue *Yves Tanguy. L’univers surréaliste*, André Cariou (note 24).



In Giacometti's case, by publishing the artist's writings, Matisse conceived a type of catalogue that was to become the gallery's trademark. The catalogue of the first solo exhibition dedicated to Giacometti offers an excellent illustration of the phenomenon.<sup>43</sup> Matisse deflected the proclamatory value of surrealist writings by erasing the social and political component of creation by means of a request for a purely biographical text and a formal description of the sculptures.<sup>44</sup> In the manuscript hand-illustrated by the artist, which has a mnemonic function, the drawings provide a means to associate, inventory, and record sculptures already made by the artist. Published in the catalogue of the 1948 exhibition, this text includes deletions, crossings out, and corrections that illustrate the writing process. Some of the drawings of sculptures made from memory stimulated Giacometti to add comments, for example: "[T]hese two objects are very slender in profile." So as to be able to retranscribe the effect of "transparent construction," he made "cages with constructions empty on the inside." In addition to this didactic aspect meant for a specific public, one that he was attempting to create, the gallerist made a doubly strategic editorial decision: by adding Jean-Paul Sartre's manifesto text "La Recherche de l'Absolu" also published in *Les Temps Modernes*,<sup>45</sup> he showed on one hand the importance of his star artist defended by one of the most influential intellectuals in Paris, and, on the other, he revealed to the American public Giacometti's existentialist rather than surrealist dimension. This manner of propelling American visitors to the gallery into the artist's creative process was repeated in the catalogue to Giacometti's second solo exhibition in the Matisse Gallery.<sup>46</sup> Once again, this emphasis on the artist's work seems to have responded to a specific expectation of the American public. At the same moment, Thomas Hess, who defended the work of artists like Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, David Smith, and Ad Reinhardt, also chose to focus on the writings of artists and to shed light on the creative process, in particular through the magazine *ARTnews*. The

43 Although Pierre Matisse and Giacometti both attended the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in the early 1920s and their age and training were similar, they did not write to one another until 1936, and only met much later. The catalogue is from the "Alberto Giacometti Exhibition of Sculptures, Paintings and Drawings" held at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, January 19–February 21, 1948.

44 In 1937, Pierre Matisse presented his first work by Giacometti, *Woman Walking (Femme qui marche)*, in his gallery beside works by Brancusi, Gris, Picasso, Miró, Bonnard, Maillol, and Despiau.

45 Jean-Paul Sartre, "La recherche de l'absolu," in *Les Temps modernes*, no. 28 (1948), reprinted in *Situations III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), pp. 289–305.

46 Dated "Stampa, 28 XII 50," this text was published accompanied by "*petits écrits*" and drawings addressed to Pierre Matisse for preparation of the catalogue of the exhibition "Sculptures, Paintings and Drawings," held December 21 to 31, 1950, at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. Quoted in Michel Leiris and Jacques Dupin, eds., *Alberto Giacometti. Écrits* (Paris: Hermann, 1997), pp. 51–63.

tack taken was very much to raise the awareness of the public of the production of the artist, who had been put in the spotlight by reviews and exhibition catalogues. In Matisse's case, the commercial stakes were substantial, as he was also promoting himself by making public his written exchanges with his artists, who, like Giacometti, used them as an opportunity to discuss artistic experimentation. This astonishing catalogue, featuring facsimiles of drawings and an extract from a letter, also makes it possible to understand the value and function given to titles:

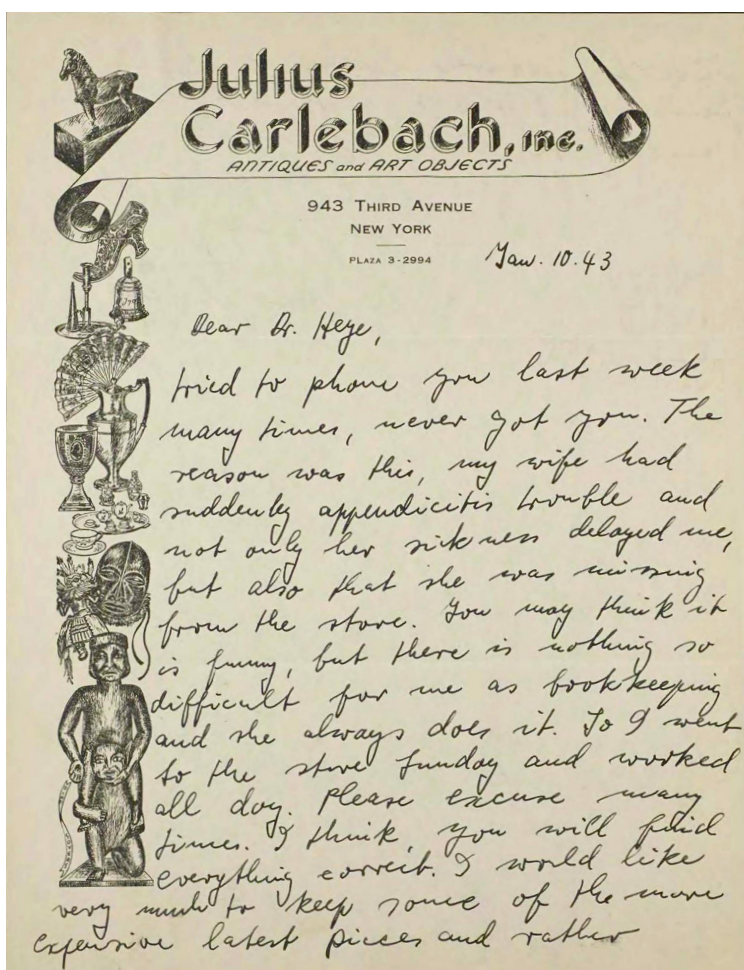
“So, if I want to give a title that is more than just a simple indication (for example, place I, II and III, or Composition I, II and III, or others of the same type), it would be necessary to add a little explanation for each sculpture and stick it on! Something that wouldn't be all that bad and which I have already thought about several times”<sup>47</sup>

Thus, the catalogues at the Pierre Matisse Gallery shifted between being archive documents, works of art, and forms of advertising. From the standpoint of the art market, the invention of these catalogues by Pierre Matisse brought his gallery significant added value.

*In fine*, Pierre Matisse hosted many and regular solo exhibitions in his gallery: dedicated to Matta until 1947, to Tanguy until 1963, to Giacometti until 1964, to Lam until 1982, and to Miró until 1987. His correspondence reveals that his commercial strategies were more honed to match the characteristics of the artist in question—his methods of production, his celebrity in the United States—than they were a general policy for purchasing works from artists. Matisse thus chose to build up the reputation of an artist by concentrating on his unique qualities and avoiding the political dimension of the surrealist group. In this way, he made himself the gallerist of certain surrealists without ever becoming the gallerist of surrealism.

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47 Ibid.



128 Letter from Julius Carlebach to George G. Heye, January 10, 1944.  
Washington, DC, National Museum of the American Indian.

## Julius Carlebach (1909–1964) and the Trade in So-Called “Primitive” Arts

Florence Duchemin-Pelletier

“A chubby, affable little gentleman”<sup>1</sup> whose taste mainly leaned toward old German chinaware and quaint curios:<sup>2</sup> surviving accounts by the surrealists and their friends do not sketch a very flattering portrait of dealer Julius Carlebach (1909–1964). When not describing this character’s crafty simplicity, such descriptions are short on details, offering only meager scraps to feed a researcher’s appetite.<sup>3</sup> In short, Carlebach acquired the features of a ghostly name: disembodied, but recurring. Claude Lévi-Strauss recalled that even after the surrealists set Carlebach down his path, the antiques dealer clung to a culpable attraction to everything old-fashioned.<sup>4</sup> Worse, after a felicitous digression into modern art, he abandoned those things that had appealed to the group in order to invest in the African art market, with no consideration for his more modest clients. “[N]o new Eskimo masks—he is now venturing into Negro items, having just bought an entire collection of them,” wrote Enrico Donati to André Breton in 1947. “Carlebach himself increasingly drips with sweetness and smiles as his prices climb—all nonsense.”<sup>5</sup>

This picture may seem too extreme, given Carlebach’s closeness to the surrealist group in New York. Above all, however, it generates two sur-

1 Claude Duthuit, “Esquimaux ou des Arts Derniers,” in Claude Duthuit, ed., *Les Esquimaux vus par Matisse: Georges Duthuit, Une fête en Cimmérie*, exh. cat. (Le Cateau-Cambrésis/Paris: Musée Matisse/Hazan, Paris 2010), p. 14. Although this description comes from Claude Duthuit, it certainly reflects the view of his father, Georges Duthuit. Dorothea Tanning, meanwhile, described Carlebach as a “small, shiny man, soft-spoken but politely adamant.” Dorothea Tanning, *Between Lives: An Artist and Her World* (New York: Norton, 2001), p. 65.

2 Private communication in 1974 from Claude Lévi-Strauss to Edmund S. Carpenter. See Edmund S. Carpenter, *Two Essays: Chief and Greed* (North Andover, MA: Persimmon Press, 2005), p. 116.

3 As witnessed by his obituary in the *New York Times*, October 14, 1964, “Julius Carlebach, of Gallery Featuring Primitives, Is Dead.”

4 Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 116.

5 Letter from Enrico Donati to André Breton, May 7, 1947. Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris (hereafter cited as BLJD), BRT C 1806–1814.

prises: first, descriptions of the dealer are relatively rare, which has the effect of bringing just a few annoyed comments to the fore; next, they are not remotely like accounts by other collectors, from Morton D. May to Nelson A. Rockefeller, which are much more favorable. If the two versions have rarely been correlated, that is because the fragmentary nature of accounts complicates any biographical task. To which should be added the probable disappearance of archives of Carlebach's gallery,<sup>6</sup> and the discredit long attached to financial activities—it should be recalled that dealers in ethnographic objects do not enjoy the same symbolic favor as gallery owners. Whereas the former make deals with looters, the latter work with and for artists, which spares them the opprobrium of commercialism. Finally, we must factor in the narrative role played by “Carlebach the novice” in tales of surrealist discovery, since it was indeed Max Ernst who convinced the antiques dealer to break up a set of spoons by homing in on one Haida spoon, thereby demonstrating Ernst's superior eye—a convenient occasion for surrealism to perform its revelatory function.<sup>7</sup>

There is obviously no question of denying André Breton, Georges Duthuit, Robert Lebel, Roberto Matta, Isabelle Waldberg and several other initiates the merit of their accomplishment, namely their ability to transform our view of things. Furthermore, there is little doubt that Carlebach's interest in non-Western objects was reinforced by the enthusiasm of his new buyers, and even less doubt that his curiosity about modern art was triggered by contact with them. But the character also needs to be fleshed out, in terms of both his personality and his business and curatorial practices. Carlebach, who formed an efficient team with his wife, Josefa, was not a simple purveyor of artifacts, devoid of enthusiasm and intelligence. He had an early career before emigrating to the United States, and he continued to occupy a place in the world of primitive arts long after the surrealists departed. We shall see, for example, that while it is true he was initially drawn to older periods—and after all, Charles Ratton didn't share Breton's tastes, either—he was in no way ignorant of ethnographic matters.

6 In contrast to the archives of Charles Ratton's gallery, which were preserved by his successor and thus enabled Philippe Dagen to conduct significant research into Ratton's life, Carlebach's personal archives do not appear to have survived. The author has nevertheless identified over twenty-five collections that contain some of his correspondence with collectors, study of which may shed light on details of his business activity. See Philippe Dagen and Maureen Murphy, eds., *Charles Ratton: L'invention des arts primitifs*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée du Quai Branly, 2013).

7 An account given by Dorothea Tanning is typical in this respect: “There ensued an argument like a tug-of-war for the goat-horn beauty (the shopkeeper thought it was seal tusk), and Max found himself talking of the great and wonderful art of the so-called primitives ... while the other listened in utter fascination, putting in a question now and then. ... In the end, [Carlebach] sold the spoon.” Tanning, *Between Lives* (note 1), p. 69. Marie Mauzé's research is a rare example of serious documentation into Carlebach's relationship with the surrealists. See, in particular, Marie Mauzé, “Les esprits du silence,” in Duthuit, *Les Esquimaux vus par Matisse* (note 1).



The essential thing ultimately entails grasping the highly particular figure of Carlebach, whose wide range of activities and experiences shaped his relationship to objects. What were his affinities for series and corpuses of items? How much expertise did he have? What was his relationship to the various players in the art world? To what extent did he serve as pivot between the gallery sphere and the museum sphere? It is indeed Carlebach’s reflexiveness with respect to his trade—his specific position within a chain of cooperation and his agile moves beyond his normal fields of competence—that distinguish this atypical, slightly rebellious figure from his more sensible counterparts.

Describing Carlebach, about whom we know so little, nevertheless remains a tricky exercise: it’s a question of digging up scraps. Written accounts, for a start, are an invaluable resource. While most of them bear on the post-surrealist period (to be briefly discussed here), they supply useful information on the dealer’s personality and the kind of links he sought to maintain with collectors and artists. Colorful anecdotes and grateful acknowledgments are all aids in correcting our picture of Carlebach, even if caution is required, given the fragility of memories. Next come institutional archives, which provide key elements. Carlebach’s correspondence with George G. Heye, held in the archives of the National Museum of the American Indian, provides details on material and human exchanges between the two men, as well as their different approaches to objects. Then, drawing up a list of other archive collections, even when they could not be consulted, helps to trace the extent of Carlebach’s social circle. Finally, press clippings, the tool most suited to this biographical essay, make it possible not only to establish a chronology for his antiques shop and gallery, via its various moves and exhibitions, but also to observe Carlebach’s media strategies and their impact. Placed all together, these fragments help to fill gaps in the dealer’s previously known career, from his early contacts with non-Western objects to the firm establishment of his New York gallery via his encounter with the surrealists and modern art. Carlebach’s path will thus be followed sequentially here, dwelling on his methods, strategies, and convictions in order to shed further light on his contribution to the history of the trade in so-called primitive arts.

### First steps in Lübeck, Hamburg, and Berlin

At a young age, Joseph Hirsh Zwi (Julius) Carlebach became familiar with ancient arts and non-Western objects, both ritual and secular, as well as ethnology as a tool of knowledge about societies. As a child he eagerly visited the ethnology department in the museum of Lübeck

Cathedral, even getting to know its curator, Richard Karutz.<sup>8</sup> He soon began studying art history and ethnology at the universities of Berlin, Vienna, and Hamburg, which he financed by offering his services to regional museums.<sup>9</sup> He was notably behind the founding of a Jewish department in his home town's museum in 1931–32, an experience that shaped his future vision of the profession of dealer—Carlebach had come across an orphan collection in the Lübeck museum, stripped of all connections to the practice of Jewish worship, whether at home or in the synagogue. He therefore sought to copy the methods employed in other departments of the museum devoted to non-Western fields, making a strong effort to contextualize things. He avoided rare items or curios in favor of sets of objects. He introduced a comparative dimension by diversifying places of origin and cultivating a more complex view of Jewish societies, stressing both their unique and their shared developments down through history.<sup>10</sup> The apprentice curator thus became profoundly convinced of the need to educate the general public. “In order to combat anti-Semitism, we want to explain Jewish customs at the museum.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1933, Carlebach left the museum world and moved to Berlin to begin dealing in art.<sup>12</sup> At the time he favored antiquities, classical European art, and old furniture, but he was not insensitive to folk art. Visitors to his shop were liable to come across peasant earthenware as well as Sumerian votive tablets, Egyptian jewelry, Flemish primitive

8 The ethnographic department of the Lübeck museum opened in 1893, but its collection is older, part of it coming from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cabinets of curiosity. Richard Karutz was appointed head of the department in 1896 and helped to enlarge the collection considerably. Although he left Lübeck for Stuttgart in 1921, Karutz continued to head the department, from a distance, until 1928. Under his guidance, the collection grew from 4,000 to 20,000 objects from Africa, Asia, Oceania, the Americas, Indianoecania, and Europe. Ancient artifacts, notably Egyptian, were also part of the collection and could have been seen by Carlebach.

9 Meyer Levin, “Pensacola Jail Now Art Gallery; Typifies Growth of Local Museums,” *Tampa Bay Times*, October 6, 1957, p. 42.

10 City of Lübeck, “Ausstellung über jüdisches Leben – Sammlung Julius Carlebach,” *Lübeck Fenster*, 2002, <http://www.luebeck.de/aktuelles/presse/pressediensarchiv/view/2002/11/020846rk/>, accessed November 2018.

11 Tobias Kühn, “Von der Rolle. Bad Segeberg: Gemeinde erhält Sefer Tora aus dem Museum zurück,” *Jüdische Allgemeine*, 2007, <http://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/3839>, accessed November 2018.

12 Itzhak Shohar dates this move to the late 1920s. His assertion must nevertheless be treated cautiously, since Shohar was a close friend of Josefa Carlebach and relied basically on her memories. He is mistaken, for example, about the year the couple left for the United States, and about the New York gallery's first address. To which it might be added that such an early move would have required many back-and-forth trips between Lübeck, Hamburg, and Berlin. Finally, in 1953 Carlebach celebrated the twentieth anniversary of his career in the art trade. See Itzhak Shohar, “Julius and Josefa Carlebach, a personal recollection,” in *African, Oceanic and Pre-Columbian Art, Including Property from the Lerner, Shohar and Vogel Collections*, sale catalogue, Sotheby's New York, Friday, May 11, 2012, pp. 178–79; and “Carlebach celebrates 20th anniversary as dealer in Ethnic Art,” 1953, Smithsonian Institution, archives, Box 290, Folder 7, Julius Carlebach, 1955.

paintings, and Japanese netsuke.<sup>13</sup> In 1934, Carlebach placed an advertisement in *Palästina Nachrichten* magazine stating that he bought and sold “exotic arts,” especially from Africa and the South Seas.<sup>14</sup> This new tack was probably prompted by his new assistant and thereafter partner, Josefa Silberstein (1901–2000).<sup>15</sup> The young woman had studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin, frequented the Ethnological Museum, and in fact took a particular interest in non-Western ritual items.<sup>16</sup> According to Josefa’s close friend Itzhak Shohar, she was the one with anthropological expertise, and provided the necessary connoisseurship on such items in both Berlin and New York. It is of little importance whether Carlebach was immediately convinced of their artistic value or whether he let Silberstein manage that section. By agreeing to display such pieces, he was recreating the large collections he had seen since childhood in ethnographic museums, steadily educating his eye. This experience would moreover be described later by Carlebach as decisive to his career.<sup>17</sup>

The assembling of thematic groups aimed at specialized trades and businesses was also a crucial step in his career as a dealer.<sup>18</sup> While this angle may have had a financial motive, it reinforced Carlebach’s penchant for series—for aesthetic or thematic sets. Tracing the history of shoes or decorative practices down through the centuries not only developed his skills as a connoisseur, which could be transposed into other realms of art, but also raised the question of continuity and change on a transcultural level. Carlebach would retain these enthusiasms in New York, induced to further extend his approach when it came to major businesses, investors, and museums.

13 *Weltkunst* VIII, no. 14 (January 28, 1934), p. 3; *Weltkunst* VIII, no. 27 (July 8, 1934), p. 5; Fritz Neugass, “Die Julius-Carlebach-Galerie in New York,” *Weltkunst* XXIX, no. 12 (1959), p. 8.

14 *Palästina Nachrichten* 1, no. 11 (September 6, 1934), p. 8.

15 Josefa and Julius were married in 1936.

16 Shohar, “Julius and Josefa Carlebach” (note 12); Bernard de Grunne, “Statuette en ivoire, Lega,” *Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie*, sale catalogue, Sotheby’s Paris, December 14, 2011, <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2011/arts-dafrique-et-docanie/lot.65.html>, accessed November 2018.

17 In 1953 Carlebach stated that his career in “ethnic art” began in Berlin. Extending the period of his involvement further back was obviously useful to his business by way of legitimizing it, yet this short biographical note, written by Carlebach, could also be seen as an introspective effort to identify the origin of his interest in these objects as a dealer. Press release, 1953.

18 *Weltkunst* VIII, no. 14 (April 8, 1933), p. 3; *Weltkunst* VII, no. 46 (November 12, 1933), p. 3; *Weltkunst* IX, no. 35–36 (September 8, 1935), p. 5; Neugass, “Die Julius-Carlebach-Galerie” (note 13), p. 8.

## Exile in New York

The rise of anti-Semitism in Germany forced the Carlebachs into exile. In 1937, Julius emigrated to the United States, boarding *La Normandie* in Southampton, England, on November 3. He told immigration services that he was a professional architect—perhaps out of cautiousness, since he is not known to have studied architecture.<sup>19</sup> Several sources state that Josefa arrived in the months that followed, but it appears that she did not make the crossing until February 15, 1939.<sup>20</sup> She might have remained with her father in Berlin before heading to Le Havre, France, where she boarded the *Ile-de-France* for the United States. On official documents she stated that she was a fashion designer and listed her husband's address as 161 East Fifty-Sixth Street in New York. She had only \$40 with her, but her luggage contained six pieces of Meissen porcelain for which she hoped to get some money.<sup>21</sup> Julius, prior to leaving, had sold two Dutch paintings at auction in order to put a little capital together.<sup>22</sup>

Despite these arrangements, the Carlebachs' financial circumstances in New York were straitened. Shoher states that Julius did not open his own antiques shop right away. He first went into business with a rich German industrialist who had arrived in America with his entire collection. We know almost nothing about this partnership, not even the date it ended. Shoher claims that the rent required for the Fifty-Seventh Street premises was too high for Carlebach, who wound up investing in a place that was smaller, but at least his own. His historic shop apparently only opened in 1942—a date later than the one given by Edmund Carpenter, 1939.<sup>23</sup> Getting close to the right date probably means negotiating between those two assertions. The "Exhibitions in New York" section of *Parnassus* magazine helps to connect the dots.

19 In the same document, Carlebach stated that he would be housed in New York by a friend, a Mr. Bachvaier living on Third Avenue (no trace of whom has been found elsewhere). See "List or manifest of alien passengers for the United States immigrant inspector at port of arrival," November 3, 1937, list no. 16. Posted by the family on the internet, [https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc\\_id=6000000032166272063&](https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc_id=6000000032166272063&) and [https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc\\_id=6000000032166272061&](https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc_id=6000000032166272061&), accessed September 2017.

20 It is hard to imagine that Josefa made a return trip between France and the United States because she declared that she had never previously been to the United States. See "List or manifest of alien passengers for the United States immigrant inspector at port of arrival," February 15, 1939, list no. 4. Posted by the family on the internet, accessed September 2017, [https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc\\_id=6000000032166272063&](https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc_id=6000000032166272063&), and [https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc\\_id=6000000032166272061&](https://www.geni.com/documents/view?doc_id=6000000032166272061&).

21 Shoher, "Julius and Josefa Carlebach" (note 12). Edmund Carpenter also mentioned that the Carlebachs arrived in New York with porcelain and furniture. See Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 116.

22 Sale at the Rudolph Lepke Kunstauktionhaus, April 9–10, 1937. See the online *Datenbank Kunst- und Kulturgutauktionen 1933–1945*, [http://www.lostart.de/Webs/DE/Provenienz/AuktionBet.html?cms\\_param=ABET\\_ID%3D14480](http://www.lostart.de/Webs/DE/Provenienz/AuktionBet.html?cms_param=ABET_ID%3D14480), accessed November 2018.

23 Shoher, "Julius and Josefa Carlebach" (note 12); Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 116.

Between November 1939 and May 1940, a show of Egyptian, Roman, and Greek sculpture, including terracottas from Tanagra, was listed at Julius Carlebach, 104 East Fifty-Seventh Street. This address corresponds to the one given by Shoher, so it must be the first New York premises, which involved a partnership but already carried Carlebach's name.<sup>24</sup> In October 1940, the address changed to 142 East Fifty-Seventh Street, two hundred yards away.<sup>25</sup> The November issue confirms the move, listing an exhibition of old Bohemian glass.<sup>26</sup> Then, strangely, the historic address of 943 Third Avenue appeared fleetingly in December, only to vanish forthwith: between January and May 1941, Carlebach's shop was once again listed as number 142 East Fifty-Seventh.<sup>27</sup> Two hypotheses merit consideration. Work might have begun on Third Avenue in early 1941 and the former premises thus briefly re-occupied, or else Carlebach was able—or obliged—to continue renting the East Fifty-Seventh Street premises. Whatever the case, he decided to remain in a neighborhood known for its antiques stores—a famous photograph by Berenice Abbott shows that Native American objects were already found on the street in 1936.<sup>28</sup> The opportunities that this antiques shop offered Carlebach in the early years were nevertheless limited. Not content to be a shopkeeper, he adopted several lines of attack, promoting himself simultaneously through the written press, radio, and external events. He devised an exhibition titled "5,000 Years of Beauty," first held in 1940 in "a Fifth-Avenue salon" then in 1941 at the Museum of Science and Industry in Rockefeller Center. The event attracted some attention, and a review by journalist Alicia Hart was published in over twenty papers in the United States and Canada.<sup>29</sup>

This attraction, which brought together a Babylon cosmetic kit of alabaster, Egyptian unguent jars and pots, Chinese hair tweezers and mascara bowls, combs, brooches, and hairpins of various origins, plus

24 "Exhibitions in New York," *Parnassus* 11, no. 7 to 12, no. 5 (Nov. 1939–May 1940).

25 "Exhibitions in New York," *Parnassus* 12, no. 6 (Oct. 1940), pp. 39–40.

26 "Exhibitions in New York," *Parnassus* 12, no. 7 (Nov. 1940), pp. 37–39.

27 "Exhibitions in New York," *Parnassus* 12, no. 8 to 13, no. 5 (Dec. 1939–May 1941). The magazine ceased publishing in May 1941.

28 The photograph shows the Sumner Healey Antiques Shop at 942 Third Avenue. The premises were nevertheless put back up for rent in 1938. Nancy Tousley and Berenice Abbott, *The Berenice Abbott Portfolios* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1982), p. 21. The photo can be seen on the website of the New York Public Library, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dc-dfe2-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>, accessed November 2018.

29 Alicia Hart wrote for the *New York World-Telegram*. The original review must thus have appeared there. It was republished between July and September 1940 in several dailies under various titles: "Cosmetic Uses Old As World: Ancient Women Used Costly Perfumes," *Pittsburgh Press*, Pittsburgh, July 19, 1940; "Glorifying Your Self," *Daily Times*, Salisbury, July 20, 1940; "Makeup Really an Old Custom, It's Shown By Relics," *Muncie Evening Press*, Muncie, July 20, 1940; "Cosmetic History Dates Back Ages," *Lansing State Journal*, Lansing, September 26, 1940, and so on.



toothpicks, ear cleaners, and other toiletries, conveys Carlebach's strong penchant for collecting things based on an ethnographic approach.<sup>30</sup> More than series themselves, it was the everyday activities of individuals that captivated him, the very activities that revamp our vision of ancient or remote societies. Carlebach was obviously disinterring a subject that had already been unearthed, and which he hoped would pique the curiosity of the general public, yet the stress on the universality of practices thought to be exclusively European and modern already rang—with respect to his earlier concerns—like a call to revise dominant presuppositions.

### Meeting the surrealists

The story of Max Ernst's discovery of Carlebach's shop in 1943 is well known. Robert Lebel recorded it in one of his notebooks:

“Max Ernst, exiled in New York, entered a little second-hand shop run by a German refugee, Julius Carlebach. He noticed an Eskimo spoon and asked how much it cost, but Carlebach replied that it was part of a collection of spoons from various places and he couldn't break up the collection by selling just one item. Finally, when Ernst revealed his identity, a highly surprised Carlebach agreed to sell the Eskimo spoon for five dollars, but asked Ernst why he was interested only in that one.”<sup>31</sup>

Accounts of what happened next vary. Did Ernst keep the location secret? Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote, “Max Ernst told us about it.”<sup>32</sup> Dorothea Tanning reported that Ernst immediately thought of his associates. “And I have friends who are also interested,” he allegedly said to Carlebach. “Let me know if you get something else.”<sup>33</sup> But Carpenter asserts that Ernst refused to reveal where he made his find: Kurt Seligmann offered to reveal his source of witchcraft illustrations in exchange for the address, but Ernst judged the swap unequal. A determined André Breton nevertheless swiftly managed to locate the store.<sup>34</sup> The details of

30 Some of the items came from South America, Africa, and the Pacific. Illustrations were published on May 14, 1941 in the *Eau Claire Leader* (“Who Said Beauty Culture Was Something New?”) and on May 23, 1941, in the *Asbury Park Evening Press* (“Beauty Culture Aids of Yesteryear on Exhibition”). In addition, on June 6, 1942, Carlebach was a guest on Dave Elman's KWKH radio program, “Hobby Lobby.”

31 Notebook of various entries, Robert Lebel collection, Musée du Quai Branly Archives, Paris.

32 Claude Lévi-Strauss and Didier Éribon, *De près et de loin* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1988), p. 51.

33 Tanning, *Between Lives* (note 1), p. 66.

34 That, at least, is what Carpenter wrote, but it is also possible that Ernst informed only his close friends, including Lévi-Strauss and Breton but not Seligmann, with whom he had less in common. Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 115.

whether or not Ernst's lucky find was passed on is not merely anecdotal, for it reflects a certain competitive attitude within the group. While the surrealists didn't hesitate to pass objects among themselves, they also sometimes snatched things from under the others' noses. It should be noted in this regard that, for a certain number of collectors, getting the scoop and making privileged contact with the work—as concretized by the act of purchase—was often more important than possession itself, made intellectually impossible by the transformation of the object into subject.<sup>35</sup> Acquisition could thus be understood as a symbolic transaction that seals a pact of joint connivance rather than captive domination, making the stakes behind Ernst's discovery clearer.

It should also be kept in mind that the surrealists had been interested in indigenous arts from North America since the 1920s,<sup>36</sup> and that during their exile they tirelessly sought opportunities to activate—to reaffirm—their movement. Far from abandoning the concerns of the 1930s, they invested them with more intense powers: native artifacts, which stemmed from animist and totemic conceptions of the world, would thus become engines of a deeper exploration of processes and values such as hermeticism, black humor, and the marvelous. It is not surprising that Carlebach's gallery managed to become a key location of surrealist life in New York. Whereas the apartment of Bernard and Rebecca Reis, where the surrealists could eat French cuisine, was "a great retreat,"<sup>37</sup> the shops and museums where they got right among objects stood out as realms of great exaltation, of release from growing suffocation.<sup>38</sup> "We have thrown ourselves into the poetic atmosphere of Eskimo masks, we breathe Alaska and dream in Tlingit and make love among Haida totem poles," wrote Isabelle Waldberg. "Carlebach on Third has become the confluence of our desires. For which we pay. Robert has a fine collection. Dolores is spending all her money and André has done his utmost to acquire two of them."<sup>39</sup>

35 On the discourse of collectors, notably their relationship to money and their moral stance, see the fascinating analysis by Brigitte Derlon and Monique Jeudy-Ballini, *La Passion de l'art primitif: enquête sur les collectionneurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008).

36 See Mauzé, "Les Esprits du silence" (note 7) and Florence Duchemin-Pelletier, "Surréalisme et art inuit: la fascination du Grand Nord," *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas* 2, no. 1 (2008), pp. 64–94.

37 William McNaught, "Oral history interview with Rebecca Reis, 1980," *Archives of American Art*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1980, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/-11939>, accessed November 2018.

38 Robert Lebel wrote, "Yes, night-time in New York had little to offer. During the day, at least, we spent much time on 'uncivilized' objects, especially the recently discovered Eskimo masks that three or four of us bought, to the point of finding ourselves penniless." Letter from Robert Lebel to Patrick Waldberg, October 29, 1943, BLJD, Ms Series, Ms 41934 to 41953.

39 Letter from Isabelle Waldberg to Patrick Waldberg, October 14, 1943, in Isabelle Waldberg and Patrick Waldberg, *Un amour acéphale, correspondance 1940–1949* (Paris: La Différence, 1992), p. 105.

The surrealists shopped at other stores in New York. Claude Lévi-Strauss referred to loads of pre-Columbian objects at Macy's, Inca jewelry at Gimbels, and "knickknack shops" on Madison Avenue that concealed treasures in the back of the store. He also mentioned a German baron on Sixth Avenue whose chests were full of Peruvian antiquities.<sup>40</sup> But it was the Carlebach gallery where the members of the group and their friends acquired the rarest items, notably Yup'ik. Indeed, Carlebach had decided to approach one of the most prolific collectors in town in order to fulfill the surrealists' heady demands, namely the founder of the Museum of the American Indian, George Gustave Heye (1874–1957).<sup>41</sup> Thus began a long collaboration between the two men, resulting in access to an unprecedented collection of items (fig. 128).

This is not the place to dwell on Heye's life, amply discussed elsewhere, but it should be recalled that Heye had rapidly assembled a prodigious number of artifacts. For that matter, his demanding passion earned him various labels as an "obsessive" and "rapacious" collector, a "monomaniac" and "buccaneer" who amassed merchandise by the "boxcar."<sup>42</sup> By 1916 he already owned nearly 58,000 items. That was when he decided to create his own museum and to surround himself with a keen team of specialists who searched, prospected, and analyzed for him.<sup>43</sup> The death of his two main backers and the Great Depression obliged Heye to let part of his staff go and to sell a large number of items. He thereby accumulated savings that enabled him to begin buying again in 1935, benefiting from the misfortune of his counterparts who sold their collections cheaply.<sup>44</sup> Ultimately, Heye systematically sold off items considered to be duplicates and bought only "specimens that have never been duplicated."<sup>45</sup> He therefore opened his warehouse

40 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le Regard éloigné* [Paris 1983], p. 349, translated by Joachim Neugroschel and Phoebe Hoss as *The View from Afar* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985); letter from Claude Lévi-Strauss to his parents, January 22, 1942, in Claude Lévi-Strauss, "*Chers tous deux*": *Lettres à ses parents 1931–1942* (Paris: Seuil, 2015), p. 502.

41 It was after encountering Ernst that Carlebach probably decided to get in touch with Heye.

42 Ann McMullen has shown that Heye was obviously not driven solely by a pathological urge to collect but more probably by a sense of mission to preserve. See Ann McMullen, "Reinventing George Heye: Nationalizing the Museum of the American Indian and Its Collections," in Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. 65–105.

43 The museum did not open until 1922, and hardly encouraged attendance: its opening hours were inconvenient and the number of items on show was very limited. As to conservation work, it seems that Heye himself drew up the catalogue and numbered every object.

44 Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2); Ira Jacknis, "A New Thing? The NMAI in Historical and Institutional Perspective," *American Indian Quarterly* 30, no. 3–4 (Summer/Fall 2006), pp. 511–42.

45 The practice of swapping "duplicates" among museums has been attested since the nineteenth century, but Heye took it to another level. See McMullen, "Reinventing George Heye" (note 42), p. 77.



129 Photographer unknown, entrance to the Bronx Annex, 1926. Washington, DC, National Museum of the American Indian.

to dealers and art lovers, and was particularly ready to get rid of Yup'ik masks, which he held in low esteem and described as “jokes.”<sup>46</sup>

At that time, most of the collection of the Museum of the American Indian was stored in an annex warehouse in the Bronx (fig. 129). Carlebach regularly went there to select objects that he bought on approval. He took delivery of them the next week and alerted his buyers according to their respective penchants.<sup>47</sup> If a selected item didn't sell, he would return it to Heye and be reimbursed.<sup>48</sup> Another approach entailed the organization of

46 Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 131. Heye was already selling objects by the late 1930s; Wolfgang Paalen bought a Yup'ik mask from him in 1939. It should also be mentioned that the surrealists had already come across pieces from Heye's collection at Charles Ratton's gallery in 1935 and during the exhibition titled “Ancient Masks and Ivoiries of the Northwestern Coast of America.”

47 Carlebach never offered Yup'ik masks to Claude Lévi-Strauss, who was not inclined to possess such fragile artworks which would thereby make him feel responsible for conserving them for future generations. See Ann Fienup-Riordan, *The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks: Agayuliyararput = Our Way of Making Prayer* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), p. 215.

48 Claude Lévi-Strauss told Edmund Carpenter that Carlebach never had more than two or three pieces of “tribal art” in his shop at a time—while payments were often deferred, it is clear that these purchases on approval were still transactions, and that Carlebach did not yet have the funds to build up a specific stock. Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 116.

convoys to the annex, providing the surrealists with an opportunity to be in direct contact with the objects and choose from among countless specimens. As Roberto Matta reported, “The next morning we left in two taxis—Breton, Duthuit, Lebel, Max Ernst, Lévi-Strauss, and myself—and gathered in the Aladdin’s cave. If you so wished, with a little tact anything could be bought for between 140 and 200 dollars.”<sup>49</sup> The fans were met at the warehouse by Charles O. Turbyfill, a former Heye assistant who was curator of the annex.<sup>50</sup> Turbyfill noted the inventory number of the selected objects and Heye would draw up a bill for Carlebach.<sup>51</sup> The items then went to Carlebach’s premises before being finally delivered to the buyer. Heye scrupulously kept accounts, but the degree of trust between the two men was such that mutual favors were soon being accorded: Heye allowed the surrealists to go on their own to the annex, without Carlebach, and to dispose of items for which no deal had yet been made. “In case my customers pick out anything more at the annex besides the Eskimo masks,” wrote Carlebach, “just let it go, till I am back.”<sup>52</sup>

Officially, the pieces collected by George G. Heye could not be sold, because they had become the property of the museum. Unofficially, however, administrative subterfuge was easy, since the transaction could be authorized as an “exchange.” The museum’s annual report for 1942–43 thus states that Carlebach had received “Northwest Coast duplicate specimens” in exchange for Peruvian textiles, Mexican archaeological pieces, northwest-coast ethnological items, and South American archaeological and ethnological specimens.<sup>53</sup> In 1944–45, it was stressed that, thanks to these exchanges with Carlebach, “the Museum has been

49 Germana Ferrari, *Matta: entretiens morphologiques: Notebook no. 1, 1936–1944* (London/Lugano: Sistan, 1987), p. 149.

50 Although Charles O. Turbyfill had no academic training, he carried out excavations for the museum from 1923 onward. His field notes were apparently as meticulous and “scientific” as those by other members of staff. As his health declined, he was appointed curator of the annex warehouse in 1926. He lived on the premises in a small apartment. Jacknis, “A New Thing?” (note 44), p. 538, note 31; Carpenter, *Two Essays* (note 2), p. 36; Jennifer O’Neal and Rachel Menyuk, “Museum of the American Indian/Heye Foundation Records, 1890–1989,” *Finding Aid, National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center*, 2012, p. 188, [http://nmai.si.edu/sites/1/files/archivecenter/AC001\\_maiheye.pdf](http://nmai.si.edu/sites/1/files/archivecenter/AC001_maiheye.pdf), accessed November 2018.

51 All the drafts are archived in the National Museum of the American Indian (hereafter cited as NMAI Archives), Box 290, Folder 2–7 Julius Carlebach.

52 Letter from Julius Carlebach to George G. Heye, September 1, 1943. NMAI Archives. Everything suggests that the members of the group and their associates were unaware of this relationship. Whereas, in later interviews, Rebecca Reis and Enrico Donati assumed there was “some kind of arrangement” with the Heye Foundation, Roberto Matta and Dorothea Tanning thought instead that Turbyfill was culpably complicit. See Ferrari, *Matta: entretiens morphologiques* (note 49), p. 149; Tanning, *Between Lives* (note 1), p. 70; McNaught, “Oral history interview with Rebecca Reis” (note 37); and Forrest Selvig, “Interview with Enrico Donati,” *Archives of American Art*, 1968, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-enrico-donati-12035> accessed November 2018.

53 Among Turbyfill’s rare comments written on draft documents are the words “archaeology” and “ethnology,” reflecting Heye’s preferences. Annual Report for the period from April 1, 1942, to April 1, 1943 of the Board of Trustees, NMAI Archives.



able to fill in with adequate specimens some regions not before represented in its collection.”<sup>54</sup> It was probably through this channel, and subsequent negotiations over the value of the objects, that Carlebach managed to make some money. In fact, it looks as though he did not speculate on items he bought for the surrealists—the amount he billed them was the same as the one given by Heye.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, Heye didn’t hesitate to raise his prices in the face of the new buyers’ enthusiasm. As Marie Mauzé has pointed out, in a matter of months similar items doubled in price. A so-called swan and white whale mask was sold to Breton for \$42.83 in August 1943, but its twin cost \$86.77 in October when Georges Duthuit decided to buy it.<sup>56</sup>

Returning to the moment when the surrealists first arrived in the United States in the early 1940s, their resources were very limited and all were obliged to find a way to make a living. For a while, Peggy Guggenheim paid Breton a salary of \$200 in exchange for his aid in acquiring artworks.<sup>57</sup> But it was Patrick Waldberg who obtained work for Breton—as well as for Duthuit, Lévi-Strauss, and Lebel—as a newsreader for Voice of America radio.<sup>58</sup> Ernst, meanwhile, found himself in a somewhat different, more comfortable situation, having just married Peggy Guggenheim, who met all his needs. The little he earned from his paintings went straight into Carlebach’s pocket, to Guggenheim’s great annoyance:

“Max got hold of a little man called Carlebach, or rather Carlebach got hold of Max. He let him have his collection on credit and Max paid him whenever he sold a painting. I was very much annoyed that Max refused to contribute to the household expenses. ... Finally, Max reached the point where he would not even put aside money to pay his income tax. Carlebach used to phone Max almost every day to come around to his shop on Third Avenue to see some new things that he had found for him. ... There was no end to his ingeniousness

54 Annual Report for the period from April 1, 1944 to April 1, 1945, of the Board of Trustees. NMAI Archives. Note that the rules changed in 1948: Heye told Carlebach that specimens could no longer leave the museum without the approval of the Board of Trustees. Letter from George G. Heye to Julius Carlebach, August 25, 1948, NMAI Archives.

55 The prices mentioned by Isabelle Waldberg for Yup’ik masks correspond to the ones listed in the NMAI Archives. Waldberg, *Un amour acéphale* (note 39), p. 278.

56 The story of these twin masks is useful in understanding the surrealists’ financial situation during their exile. A conflict apparently arose between Breton and Duthuit because the former wanted to own both masks but the latter foiled him. It might seem surprising that Breton waited so long to buy the second mask, allowing his friend to snatch it up, but that would be forgetting Breton’s limited resources. See Mauzé, “Les esprits du silence” (note 7), p. 51; letters from Heye to Carlebach dated August 12, 1943, and October 12, 1943, NMAI Archives.

57 Fabrice Flahutez, *Nouveau monde et nouveau mythe – Mutations du surréalisme, de l’exil américain à l’“Écart absolu” (1941–1965)* (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2007), p. 12.

58 Robert Lebel, *Le surréalisme comme essuie-glace, 1943–1984 – Œuvres complètes*, ed. Jérôme Duwa (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2016), vol. 1, p. 240.

and his activities. ... Once he found out that I collected earrings, [he] immediately got together a large quantity and began to work on me. But I did not succumb. Of course Max did, and bought me a beautiful pair with Spanish baroque pearls. But I resisted any further efforts on Mr. Carlebach's part, as I considered him sufficiently dangerous with his totem poles and masks."<sup>59</sup>

When the couple separated, Ernst was again destitute. As Lévi-Strauss recalled, "One day Breton phoned to ask me if I had a little money to buy one of Max Ernst's Indian objects, since he no longer had a cent."<sup>60</sup> In general, "someone who had a few dollars would buy a desired object, then tell the others when he was broke."<sup>61</sup> All means were valid to raise some cash—the sale of one's own works, the swapping of fur coats, or trade in old objects.<sup>62</sup> Sometimes items would circulate from one individual to another in order to compensate for missed opportunities—Breton bought a mask from Donati, Lebel loaned another to Isabelle Waldberg to decorate her apartment. Ultimately, it was Duthuit whose situation became the most comfortable in New York. Thus in 1944, "he snapped up primitive and other objects, some of which must have been very expensive,"<sup>63</sup> reported Waldberg, and even "bought Christmas presents" at Carlebach's.<sup>64</sup>

There is not enough space here to list all the objects these people bought from Carlebach, but it should perhaps be pointed out that many of them were frequent visitors to his shop. Ernst, as we have seen, was the first to go there. In addition to his famous kachina dolls, he bought a small group of Yup'ik and Native American items that are now in the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. Breton and Lebel also bought numerous Yup'ik and Inupiaq masks, some of which are now in the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris. A sketchbook of drawings by Lebel makes it possible to attribute most of the purchases of Alaskan masks. Several other collections have been dispersed, notably Dolorès Vanetti's in 1961, Isabelle Waldberg's in the 1960s, Maria Martins's in 2004, Enrico Donati's in 2010–11, and those of Bernard Reis and Roberto Matta at unknown dates.<sup>65</sup> Only Duthuit's collection has remained

59 Peggy Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: The Informal Memoirs of Peggy Guggenheim* (London: André Deutsch, 2005), p. 262.

60 Lévi-Strauss and Éribon, *De près et de loin* (note 32), p. 49.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

62 Carpenter, *Tivo Essays* (note 2), p. 115; Flahutez, *Nouveau monde* (note 57), p. 314.

63 Letter from Isabelle to Patrick Waldberg, October 16, 1944, in Waldberg, *Un amour acéphale* (note 39), p. 277.

64 Duthuit, "Esquimaux ou des Arts Derniers" (note 1), p. 14.

65 The circumstances in which Dolorès Vanetti's and Isabelle Waldberg's collections of masks were sold are unknown, but the former was bought by Nelson A. Rockefeller in 1961. The sale of the latter can be inferred from exhibition catalogues, since objects in the exhibition "Le Masque" at

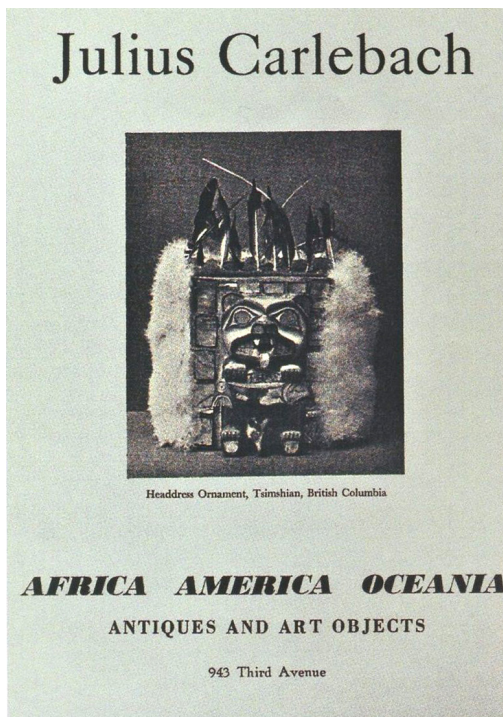
intact. Also worth underscoring is Yves Tanguy’s less well-known interest in Alaskan masks—in a 1946 letter to Breton he mentioned that he was “increasingly delighted with the Eskimo mask.”<sup>66</sup> For that matter, a few years later Tanguy’s partner, Kay Sage, did a watercolor based on a twin of a mask later bought by Breton; her work conveys the evocative power that indigenous art from North America held for the surrealists (fig. 130).<sup>67</sup> Members of the group finally paid Carlebach back by recommending him to their friends and offering him advertising space in their magazine *VVV* (fig. 131).



130 Kay Sage, *No Title*, 1941, ink and watercolor on paper, 35.5 × 26 cm. Houston, TX, Collection of Roy and Mary Cullen.

the Musée Guimet in 1959–60 still belonged to Waldberg yet were listed as “formerly Waldberg collection” in the Galerie Jacques Kerchache’s show of “Art primitif d’Amérique du Nord” in 1965. Maria Martins’s collection was sold at Sotheby’s on June 24, 2004 (*American Indian Art Including Property from the Estate of Paul Peralta-Ramos*). Meanwhile, some pieces in Enrico Donati’s collection were dispersed on May 14, 2010, by Sotheby’s (*Important American Indian, African, Oceanic and Other Works of Art from the Studio of Enrico Donati*), while others were sold by the Donald Ellis Gallery after the Winter Antiques Show of 2011. Note that the gallery also owns a Yup’ik mask that once belonged to Roberto Matta.

- 66 Letter from Yves Tanguy to André Breton, January 31, 1946, BLJD, BRT C 1593. Upon Kay Sage’s death, this mask was acquired by Pierre Matisse, then bought by Eugene and Clare Thew and donated to the Fenimore Art Museum. Note that José Pierre already suspected Tanguy of having been influenced by Inuit art, seeing Tanguy’s hand in the 1929 *Surrealist Map of the World* in which Alaska, Baffin Island, and Greenland are allocated a lion’s share. See José Pierre, “L’art des Eskimo de l’Alaska au regard des surréalistes,” in Jean-Pierre Rousselot, ed., *Les masques Eskimo d’Alaska*, (Saint-Vit: D. Amez, 1995), p. 95.
- 67 The mask in question is a fish mask, Heye inventory number 12/909 (left side—Breton had the right side, inv. 12/910). Since the watercolor is dated 1941, it is highly probable that Sage and Tanguy saw it that year in the exhibition titled “Indian Art of the United States” at MoMA, New York.



131 Advertisement for the Julius Carlebach Gallery, in *VVV*, issue 2–3, 1943.

## The modernist digression

At the end of the war, most of this group of French friends left New York. Carlebach's business flagged. Although in 1945 he could still count on Christmas sales to keep him afloat, by 1946 his finances were sinking.<sup>68</sup> Carlebach no longer bought masks from Heye, limiting himself to small objects such as kachina dolls and pre-Columbian items, which were sure things. In September, he asked for advances on payment from the director of the Museum of the American Indian, ultimately selling more to Heye than he bought from him.<sup>69</sup> In 1947 he confessed his woes, hoping that business would pick up after the summer.<sup>70</sup>

If Carlebach found himself in such tightened circumstances, that was obviously because he had lost several of his best clients. But it was also because he had just made a bold gamble: he opened a gallery of modern art (fig. 132). Since November 1946 he had been asking for Breton's opi-

68 Letter from Julius Carlebach to George G. Heye, December 8, 1945, NMAI Archives.

69 Carlebach to Heye, September 18, 1946, NMAI Archives.

70 Carlebach to Heye, January 11, 1947, and June 28, 1947, NMAI Archives. See also Carlebach's letter to André Breton, September 23, 1947, BLJD, BRT C Sup 163.

nion on who were “the most representative” artists in France.<sup>71</sup> Breton immediately thought of Hans Bellmer, whom he convinced in turn of Carlebach’s merits. “I continue to feel, my friend, that Carlebach being thus disposed, he could do a great deal for you in New York—no other dealer over there could better serve your interests.”<sup>72</sup> This is one of the rare traces of a balanced exchange between Carlebach and the surreal-



132 Vivian Maier, *Untitled*, New York, September 1953. Alta Loma, CA, The Maloof Collection.

ists—better, of recognition of Carlebach’s talent and skill. In a letter to Breton dated February 1947, Carlebach moreover proved that he had learned the modernist lesson by comparing copper birds by the Mound Builders (on whom he hoped to organize a show) to Isamu Noguchi’s aesthetics. He also acknowledged his admiration of Bellmer’s works.<sup>73</sup> The dialogue continued as Breton introduced Carlebach to Mme.

71 Letter from André Breton to Hans Bellmer, November 22, 1946, in *Collection René Alleau: Première partie et à divers*, sale catalogue (Paris: Drouot Hôtel des Ventes, 2009), p. 58.

72 Breton to Bellmer, February 13, 1947, in *Collections I.B. et G.L.*, sale catalogue (Paris: Drouot Hôtel des Ventes, 2007), p. 26.

73 Letter from Carlebach to Breton, February 8, 1947, Atelier André Breton archives. Note, however, that Bellmer complained about not being paid by Carlebach several months after he sent him his drawings. Letter from Hans Bellmer to André Breton, June 19, 1947, BLJD, BRT C 113.



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133 Advertisement for a sale of sculptures by Jacques Lipchitz by the Carlebach Gallery, in *The Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1955.

Loeb and continued to advise him on purchases of artworks—notably Seurat’s drawings—for which the dealer thanked Breton with a gift of kachinas.<sup>74</sup> Donati and Tanguy, having remained in New York, followed these transactions closely—Donati served as a go-between—as well as the opening of Carlebach’s new gallery at 937 Third Avenue.<sup>75</sup> Donati felt that the premises, for which “he helped out as much as possible,” were very good—the space was spare, far from the “jumble” described by Tanning.<sup>76</sup> Donati nevertheless complained about the proliferation of African objects and the rise in prices. “I fear that the gallery has gone to [Carlebach’s] head, and that he is no longer affordable.” Tanguy also commented that little seemed extraordinary, whereas “prices have become ridiculous.”<sup>77</sup>

74 “Mme. Loeb” must have been Silvia Luzzatto, Pierre Loeb’s wife. Letters from Carlebach to Breton, February 28, 1947, and May 16, 1947, BLJD, BRT C Sup 163.

75 The opening probably took place in April 1947, since Carlebach had people write to him c/o Murray’s Antiques from January to March, while waiting for renovation work to be finished. NMAI Archives.

76 Letter from Enrico Donati to André Breton, May 7, 1947. BLJD, BRT C 1806–1814.

77 Letter from Yves Tanguy to André Breton, August 18, 1947, BLJD, BRT C 1595.

Did Carlebach merely seek to enhance the reputation and profitability of his gallery by displaying modern art, or was he acting out of conviction?<sup>78</sup> These two possibilities are not incompatible, and given the number of artists he showed between 1947 and 1951, his intellectual commitment can hardly be doubted (fig. 133).<sup>79</sup> Although certain artists came from the Peggy Guggenheim gallery, such as Peter Busa and Charles Seliger—who met Herbert Read during his show at Carlebach’s in 1948—most were new talents being offered their first solo show.<sup>80</sup> Such was the case with Roy Lichtenstein in 1951, as well as with less famous names such as Alan Wood-Thomas, Bernice Markowitz, Tom Ingle, Oscar De Mejo, and Hilde Weingarten (fig. 134). Some



134 Photographer unknown, installation view of the Hilde Weingarten exhibition at the Carlebach Gallery, January 1949.

78 This question might seem surprising insofar as several New York galleries were in financial difficulty and the profitability of Carlebach’s scheme was far from certain. He was nevertheless a novice in the modern art world and it is not unreasonable to think he had not assessed all the risks involved, notably weaker sales once the surrealists left. Furthermore, this move was part of the process of the transforming of the antiquarian into a gallery owner. The alteration of his premises, the new practices required by dealing with living artists, and the regular program of exhibitions were all factors that effaced the ambiguity of his calling, and subsequently nurtured his work in the realm of so-called primitive arts.

79 Appended here is a non-exhaustive list of exhibitions held at the Carlebach Gallery.

80 Francis V. O’Connor, Melvin P. Lader, and Thomas M. Messer, *Charles Seliger: Redefining Abstract Expressionism* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2003), p. 44. Peter Busa decided to show at Carlebach’s at that time because he was interested in indigenous art from North and South America. See Dorothy Seckler, *Interview with Peter Busa*, Archives of American Art, 1965, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-peter-busa-11686>, accessed November 2018.

people recalled that Carlebach was “more interested in an enthusiastic response than wealthy clients, and he had at least as much time for alert young artists.”<sup>81</sup> Others referred to his benevolent, cheerful disposition. To Joan Mitchell, who unsuccessfully sought a New York gallery in the early 1950s, Carlebach confessed, “Gee, Joan, if only you were French, male, and dead.”<sup>82</sup>

This development in the late 1940s, despite its brevity, is crucial to an understanding of Carlebach’s approach in later years, because that was when the dealer began to establish strong ties with the New York art scene. His job of promoting young artists gave him a broader vision of what remained to be accomplished in terms of winning recognition for ancient and non-Western as well as modern art. It should be remembered that he never entirely abandoned modern art, since his gallery was divided into three distinct spaces—one devoted to modern art, the second to “primitive” arts, and the third to ancient items.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, in 1949 Carlebach tried to transcend this division by organizing a show of contemporary Native American painting.<sup>84</sup> More surprisingly, from October 1948 onward Carlebach’s premises hosted the Haitian Art Center headed by Selden Rodman. This move certainly betrayed the influence, if not the recommendation, of Breton, who had traveled to Haiti several years earlier. Artists such as Philomé Obin, Wilson Bigaud, and Castera Bazile were thus exhibited at 943 Third Avenue, for the Center’s mission was to “extend Haiti’s painting movement into the United States.”<sup>85</sup> It is interesting to note, from a historiographical standpoint, that Rodman claimed credit for Carlebach’s encounter with the surrealists, writing that it was he who introduced the dealer to them—as obviously contradicted by dates and by other accounts.<sup>86</sup>

## The boom years

The 1950s were the years of the inexorable rise of Julius Carlebach as a dealer and public figure. Thanks to his ambitiousness, the small antiques merchant on Third Avenue became a key player on the Ame-

81 Theodore Allen Heinrich, *The Painted Constructions 1952-1960 of Sorel Etrog* (Bern: Staempfli, 1968), p. 74.

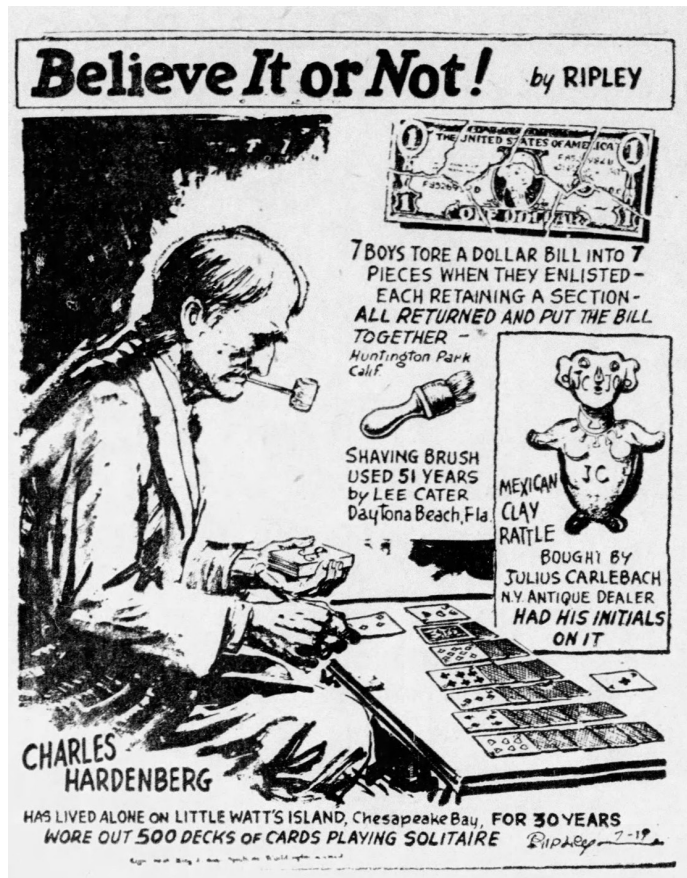
82 Quoted in Patricia Albers, *Joan Mitchell: Lady Painter, A Life* (New York: Knopf, 2011), p. 144.

83 “New Modern Gallery,” *Arts Digest* 21, no. 6 (1947), p. 31.

84 On this occasion Carlebach asked Heye if he had some works he could lend, notably sand paintings. Letter from Julius Carlebach to George G. Heye, August 3, 1949.

85 On this subject see Carlo A. Célius, *Langage plastique et énonciation identitaire: l’invention de l’art haïtien* (Quebec: Presse de l’Université Laval, 2007), pp. 34–36.

86 Selden Rodman, *Artists in Tune with Their World: Masters of Popular Art in the Americas and Their Relation to the Folk Tradition* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), pp. 22–23.



135 Newspaper cartoon mentioning Julius Carlebach, in *The Clarion-Ledger*, July 19, 1946.

rican market for so-called primitive arts (fig. 135). Major collectors beat a path to his door. It was with Carlebach that collectors Jay C. Leff and Emily A. Wingert got their start, as did dealers Merton Simpson and James Economos. Like many gallery owners, Carlebach established friendships with his buyers—mutual trust is essential in the collecting business, especially in a field where authenticity is regularly at issue.<sup>87</sup> Thus Heye himself ultimately took things from Carlebach without seeing them, and sometimes played the role of banker.<sup>88</sup> Josefa Carlebach, meanwhile, became a key interlocutor for prestigious people such

87 See accounts such as those by Irene Roth and Ezekiel Schloss. Irene Roth, *Cecil Roth, Historian Without Tears: A Memoir* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1982), pp. 184–85. See also Gary Graffman, “The Man with the Last Word,” *Connoisseur* 212, no. 848 (1982), pp. 90–91.

88 Charles Ratton did the same with the surrealists. Philippe Dagen, “Ratton, objets sauvages,” in *Charles Ratton: L'invention des arts primitifs*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée du Quai Branly, 2013), pp. 119–46. See also the September 1952 correspondence between Heye and Carlebach, now in the NMAI Archives, which reveals the two men's close ties, going largely beyond the professional sphere.





136 Advertisement for Miller High Life beer, 1954.



137 Frame still from the film *Bell, Book and Candle*, 1958, directed by Richard Quine.





138 Photograph featuring, left to right, Jack V. Sewell, Julius Carlebach, and Morton D. May. "Exhibition and sale of oriental art at the Famous Barr Co. department stores," article in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 16, 1964.

as Helena Rubinstein, Eleanor Ford, and Nelson A. Rockefeller (who described her as one of the major sources of his collection).<sup>89</sup>

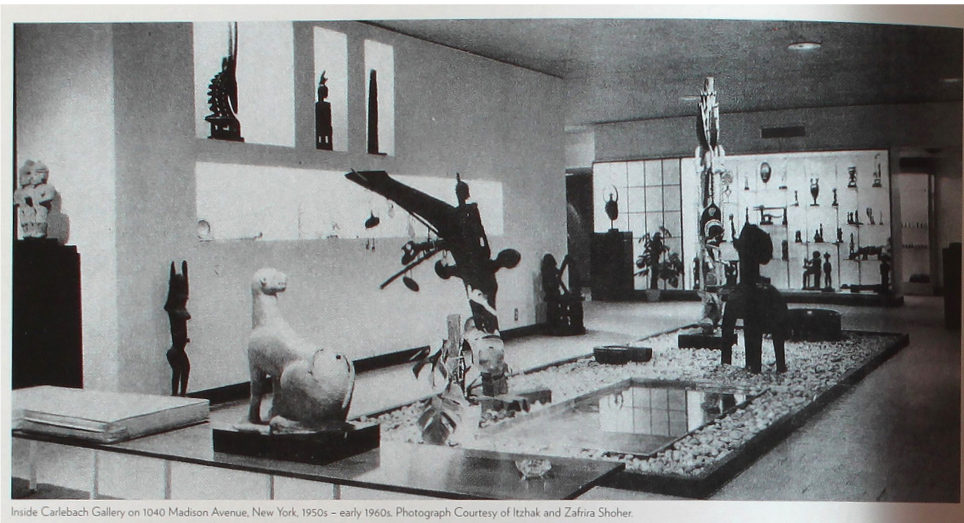
Julius's media profile rose in 1955 when he gave a lecture at the Plainfield Public Library on the influence of primitive arts on modern art.<sup>90</sup> Simultaneously making himself known to the wider public by linking his name and his artworks to Miller High Life beer (fig. 136), then lending his collection for Richard Quine's 1958 movie, *Belle, Book, and Candle* (fig. 137), Carlebach became the leading figure on the market for non-Western arts.<sup>91</sup> His actions should be seen in the context of broader considerations on making artworks more accessible to the general public, which he sought to spearhead. By trying to convince his most important buyers to give their pieces to under-endowed museums, and by advocating the grouping of smaller establishments into cooperatives, Carlebach hoped to see every shopping mall host a museum (fig. 138).<sup>92</sup>

89 Shoher, "Julius and Josefa Carlebach" (note 12). The date when Josefa and Rockefeller met was roughly 1949: the first year of correspondence with the gallery is held in the Rockefeller Archives, New York.

90 The library was then hosting an exhibition of Allen Alpert's collection of African art. "Primitive Art Lecture Heard," *Courier-News*, October 21, 1955, p. 2.

91 He lent a set of eighty-one objects valued at \$75,000, of which the press made a big deal.

92 In 1957, Carlebach addressed the fourth annual Mountain-Plains Museum Conference (University of Oklahoma) on these subjects. Mountain-Plains Museum Conference, *Newsletter* 215–216, 1958. See also Julius Carlebach, "Museum 'Co-Ops,'" *Museum Journal* 1, no. 3 (1958), pp. 67–69.



139 1040 Madison Avenue, in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 14, 1959.

More could be said on these boom years and Carlebach's dynamism, whose new premises on 1040 Madison Avenue, near the Metropolitan Museum of Art, drew crowds (fig. 139).<sup>93</sup> But the main point is the path he had paved since his first New York shop. Carlebach's popularity could be measured not only in terms of profits and media events, but also by his newly acquired influence in the art world—museums, collectors, and companies that wanted to start a collection would no longer reckon without him, thereby validating his status as a connoisseur. The development of his activities via the increasingly complex space of his gallery, and the heightened pace of curating projects, testify to his twin determination to embrace the profession of gallery owner without limiting himself to it; he thereby evolved into a crucial intermediary in the museum system. It was by building bridges between different players and milieus that Carlebach ultimately managed to carve an original place for himself on the so-called “primitive” scene.

## Conclusion

Carlebach's career was based on strong commitments and convictions. It was punctuated by oscillations between his past and current activities, which helped his approach to mature. His concern to assemble objects

<sup>93</sup> The move took place in 1958. The gallery was designed by Slovak architect Ladislav Leland Rado, and drew 700 to 1,000 visitors every Saturday. Meyer Levin, “Primitive Art in Non Primitive Setting,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 14, 1959, p. 8.

along highly varied thematic lines, far from being anecdotal, shaped not only his taste for collecting but also his curiosity with respect to overlooked narratives. It was hardly to be expected that one day Carlebach would become a specialist in peasant art, the history of beauty, and chess games. Yet opportunism is too easy an explanation: Carlebach was drawn to challenges and had a thirst for learning that led him to develop a degree of theoretical as well as visual expertise in a successive series of fields. When Carlebach met Max Ernst, it was not solely for financial reasons—which should not be excluded, yet not viewed as exclusive—that he leapt into the realm of native ritual objects, but because it offered a new field of art and knowledge to be grasped. Similarly, his reticence to break up the set of spoons was due not to an antiquarian's obsessiveness but his reluctance to surrender his efforts at comparative analysis to the first person who came along.

In the museum, Carlebach learned to seek, categorize, and document. In his shop, then his gallery, his buyers' demands spurred him to cultivate a discriminating eye. That was where the surrealist lesson must have been particularly effective—why one mask rather than another? What evocative power, based on what values, did an object hold when considered on its own? This criterion of aesthetic judgment, specific to the modernist paradigm, supplemented the criteria on which he judged ethnographic collections. Ultimately, Carlebach set works apart for their "artistic qualities" alone, independently of their origin, to Heye's great displeasure.<sup>94</sup>

What characterizes the unusual figure of Julius Carlebach, once and for all, is the way he cumulatively deployed his experiences. The more his shop became a gallery, the less he limited himself to the role of gallery owner—his displays moved further afield, into the movies, into department stores, through loans and philanthropic activities.<sup>95</sup> There is every reason to acknowledge his social skills and his ability to feed off his encounters in order to constantly forge new relationships among artistic spheres, to the extent of adopting the stance of intermediary between worlds. Like his last gallery, which underscored correspondences between a heterogeneous group of artworks—not unlike surrealist practices—his many functions and affinities generated productive overlaps. In the end, we should probably revise those accounts left by a few members of the surrealist group in exile (which are partial in both senses of the word), and allow ourselves to view Carlebach as a

94 Letters from Heye to Carlebach, May 14, 1953, and from Carlebach to Heye, April 16, 1954. NMAI Archives.

95 In 1960 Carlebach set up the United World Arts Foundation, "dedicated to the exhibition of art treasures from the cultural and industrial productions of the world's peoples, past and present." "New Gallery-Foundation," *Art Journal* 21, no. 1 (1960), p. 60.



140 Enrico Donati,  
*Totem (Hommage à Julius)*, 1945,  
wood hat blocks, leather, metal,  
and rope, 139.7 × 24.1 × 36.8 cm.  
San Francisco, Fine Arts Museum  
of San Francisco.

close collaborator and valid interlocutor who accomplished more than many other people did. An anecdote about Enrico Donati and his *Totem* (1945) is enlightening in this respect: the artist passed off one of his own sculptures to Carlebach as an authentic Native American work. After successfully fooling the dealer, Donati announced the hoax with a grin. The sculpture was subtitled *Hommage to Julius* (fig. 140). More than just pulling off a hoax, the primitive-art-loving artist probably sought to encourage healthy competition among connoisseurs. Through this amicable rivalry, Donati clearly elevated Carlebach to the status of an expert worth challenging, which implies yet another balanced relationship: there is no point in fooling the ignorant.

## Surrealism on the Rise: The Copley Galleries and Joseph Cornell in Hollywood

Timea Andrea Lelik

William Nelson Copley (January 24, 1919, to May 7, 1996), also known as CPLY, was an artist, writer, gallerist, collector, and patron of the arts. He was one of the two heirs of the newspaper magnate Ira C. Copley, who, after selling his family-owned gas company, built his fortune by acquiring several dozen newspapers in the Midwest and California. Bill Copley, together with his older brother James, were supposed to take over the family business, but young Bill never felt prepared for the lifestyle that had been planned for him, and once the Second World War broke out he enrolled in the army and went overseas. Discharged from the infantry on August 30, 1945, he returned home and married Doris Wead (on September 15, 1945), through whom he met John Ployardt, an animator at the Walt Disney Studios in Los Angeles where he worked on storyboards and set designs. Ployardt disliked his job and was eager to undertake new artistic opportunities, including sparking Copley's interest in art, teaching him technical aspects of painting, and eventually introducing him to surrealism. Years later, when discussing his fascination with the movement, Copley recalled that surrealism "made everything understandable: my genteel family, the war, and why I attended the Yale prom without my shoes. It looked like something I might succeed at."<sup>1</sup> Shortly after his discovery of surrealism, Copley embarked on what became "the most ambitious presentation of surrealist art in Los Angeles ... the significant but short-lived and underappreciated gallery that Copley himself opened in 1948 in Beverly Hills with his brother-in-law, John Ployardt."<sup>2</sup> (fig.141). The Copley Galleries opened their doors in September 1948

<sup>1</sup> William N. Copley. *X-Rated*, Anne Doran and William N. Copley, eds., exh. cat. (New York: Paul Kasmin Gallery New York, 2010), p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Perchuk and Catherine Taft, "Floating Structures: Building the Modern in Postwar Los Angeles," in Rebecca Peabody, Andrew Perchuk, Glenn Phillips, and Rani Singh, eds., *Pacific Standard Time. Los Angeles Art 1945–1980* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), p. 18.





141 Photographer unknown, exterior of the Copley Galleries at 257 North Canon Drive in Beverly Hills, DATE. Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, William Nelson Copley Papers.

on 257 North Cannon Drive, Beverly Hills, to exist only for a brief six months until February 1949. Nevertheless, in this short period the gallery presented works by René Magritte, Joseph Cornell, Roberto Matta, Yves Tanguy, Man Ray, and Max Ernst—in that order—becoming the only gallery on the West Coast exclusively dedicated to the promotion of European surrealist artists. Reminiscing about the time when they started the gallery business, Copley recalled:

“Southern California in 1946 was a most unlikely and certainly a most unnecessary place to proselytize Surrealism. As Man Ray once said, there was more Surrealism rampant in Hollywood than all the surrealists could invent in a lifetime. The natives didn’t know this. The place was an intellectual desert, never mind the film industry’s pretensions to the contrary.”<sup>3</sup>

Los Angeles was a very large community with a lot of wealth but very few collections on a par with those of Walter and Louise Arensberg, Galka E. Scheyer, or Ruth Maitland. There were many antique shops

3 Doran and Copley, *William N. Copley* (note 1), p. 67.

but few galleries (and the ones that existed were mostly focused on Mexican and post-impressionist art), making Copley believe that with the right approach he could turn this paucity around in favor of the surrealists.<sup>4</sup>

Surveying the artistic and political context of the 1930s and 1940s in southern California, this essay contextualizes the founding of the gallery, the exhibitions mounted, and the resulting sales. Emphasizing the strategies that Copley developed to actively promote the artists he represented, it analyzes the market created around these artists, as well as the network built through the gallery to support their practices. And finally, by focusing on Joseph Cornell's exhibition at the gallery, it brings to the fore the mark left by this show on the promotion of Cornell's work in the local context and further evaluates the Copley Galleries' contribution to the dissemination of European surrealism in the Los Angeles area.

### The political and artistic context of the 1930s and 1940s in and around Los Angeles

Modern art was perceived and received differently in Los Angeles compared to other major American art cities such as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. While in close geographic vicinity, artistic production and reception in San Francisco received stimulus mainly from art schools and museums, whereas in Los Angeles the few existing collections were for the most part in private hands.<sup>5</sup> This fact led to a general feeling of mistrust in Los Angeles toward these new movements, which were chiefly associated with non-American trends.<sup>6</sup> In unison with other cities, many of the avant-garde movements were regarded as subversive, communist propaganda,<sup>7</sup> and therefore met with considerable criticism and a certain revulsion from the local community. Consequently, the "postwar suppression of aesthetic and political

4 Ibid.

5 Susan M. Anderson, "Journey into the Sun. California Artists and Surrealism," in Paul J. Karlstrom, ed., *On the Edge of America. California Modernist Art, 1900–1950* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), p. 181.

6 Perchuk and Taft, "Floating Structures" (note 2), p. 21.

7 Ibid. The quote from US representative George A. Dondero's speech titled "Modern Art Shackled to Communism" presented before the House of Representatives reads, "I call the roll of infamy without claim that my list is all-inclusive: Dadaism, futurism, constructionism, suprematism, cubism, expressionism, surrealism, and abstractionism. All these *isms* are of foreign origin and truly should have no place in American art. While not all are media of social or political protest, all are instruments and weapons of destruction. ... Cubism aims to destroy by designed disorder. ... Expressionism aims to destroy by aping the primitive and insane. ... Abstractionism aims to destroy by the creation of brainstorm. Surrealism aims to destroy by the denial of reason."

leftism hindered museum exhibitions of modern art and drove many artists underground, further intensifying the private nature of modern art.”<sup>8</sup> This resulted in “the development of a largely ‘insider’ art world where the interested parties had to find their own way into museum-like homes through personal relationships, word of mouth, or class field trips.”<sup>9</sup> As in architecture, progressive views were mostly represented by private patrons, who made it their mission to disseminate their passion for modern art.

One such patron was Galka E. Scheyer, a collector originally from Germany who was committed to promoting the works of the “Blue Four” (Wassily Kandinsky, Alexei Jawlensky, Paul Klee, and Lyonel Feininger) in the United States. Scheyer moved to Los Angeles in the 1930s hoping to secure Hollywood patronage for these artists, and subsequently dedicated much of her effort to organizing receptions and lectures that brought local awareness to the work of these artists. The fact that commercial success never followed her endeavors illustrates that there was no real market for modernist artworks in the 1940s.<sup>10</sup> Another notable patron of the arts at the time was Ruth Maitland, who enriched her inherited collection of nineteenth-century French paintings with works by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Paul Cézanne, and Henri Matisse.<sup>11</sup>

The most impressive collection of modern art belonged to Walter and Louise Arensberg, which included works by artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Constantin Brancusi, René Magritte, Giorgio de Chirico, Henri Rousseau, Pablo Picasso, and Piet Mondrian. Aware of the limited options for viewing contemporary art, the Arensbergs were open to welcoming guests in their home to present their modern art collection. The curator Walter Hopps recalled that on his visits to their home in the late 1940s, “There was more modern art than I had seen anywhere. No museum in Southern California had anything like their collection.”<sup>12</sup> In his memoirs Hopps explained that “the Arensbergs were far and away the most important collectors ever in the Western United States, and theirs was the first really great collection of the advanced art of the twentieth century.”<sup>13</sup> The Arensbergs hoped for a Museum of Modern Art similar to the one in New York to be built in the West, where their collection, together with those of Ruth Maitland and Galka

8 Rebecca Peabody, Andrew Perchuk, Glenn Phillips, and Rani Singh, “Shifting the Standard. Reappraising Art in Los Angeles,” in Peabody et al., *Pacific Standard Time* (note 2), p. 2.

9 Ibid., p. 7.

10 Ibid., p. 8.

11 Ibid.

12 Walter Hopps, Anne Doran, and Deborah Treisman, eds., *The Dream Colony. A Life in Art* (New York/London: St. Martin’s Press, 2017), p. 31.

13 Ibid.

E. Scheyer, could be donated to form the basis of a permanent collection.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, these plans never materialized and the collections all went in different directions.

Besides the private collectors, the local art scene counted at that time just a handful of commercial players. Earl Stendahl was a candy-maker turned dealer who operated out of his residence in Hollywood and dealt profitably “in pre-Columbian art, most of which he had sold to his next-door neighbour, Walter Arensberg. He also dealt in Tamayo, Siqueiros, and Rivera and occasionally in Impressionists, too.”<sup>15</sup> The existing commercial galleries were mostly located in the lobbies of large hotels spread across Hollywood, Beverly Hills, and downtown Los Angeles. Dazil Hatfield had a gallery in the Ambassador Hotel; Cowie Gallery operated from the downtown Biltmore Hotel, and the Francis Taylor Gallery from the Beverly Hills Hotel.<sup>16</sup> Other players mentioned by Copley are the Frank Perls Gallery in Hollywood, a conservative enterprise but one that still dealt in works by Paul Klee; Ralph Altman, who was a dealer in antiques and primitive art; Paul Cantor, who according to Copley had a “brave gallery but had to become fashionable”; and Paul Wescher, the curator of the private collection of J. Paul Getty and that of actor Vincent Price.<sup>17</sup> Even though he was not mentioned by Copley, another progressive dealer of the time and an early promoter of avant-garde movements was the artist Frederick Kann. Kann moved to Los Angeles in 1943 and established the Circle Gallery in Hollywood where he showed his own work along with that of other abstract artists, and was one of the only dealers to present abstract art at the time.<sup>18</sup>

While his contribution is mostly forgotten today, the dealer Howard Putzel made a significant attempt in the 1930s to show the work of the surrealists in California when the movement was virtually unknown in the galleries.<sup>19</sup> In collaboration with New York gallerist Julien Levy, Putzel organized several shows of European surrealism in the Bay Area (1934–1935) and later in Los Angeles (1935–1938), before moving to Paris and finally returning to New York in 1940. He worked as a director of the Paul Elder Gallery in San Francisco in 1934, where he organized an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Salvador Dalí and arranged

14 After Scheyer's death, her estate donated the works to the Pasadena Art Institute, now the Norton Simon Museum.

15 Ibid., p. 67.

16 Perchuk and Taft, “Floating Structures” (note 2), pp. 16, 68.

17 Doran and Copley, *William N. Copley* (note 1), pp. 67–68.

18 Anderson, “Journey into the Sun” (note 5), p. 181.

19 Melvin Paul Lader, *Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century. The Surrealist Milieu and the American Avant-Garde, 1942–1947*, PhD diss., University of Delaware, 1981 (available from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan), p. 145.

Max Ernst's first show on the West Coast.<sup>20</sup> After one season he moved to Los Angeles in 1935 to become the director of the Stanley Rose Gallery, where he continued presenting surrealist artists. In addition to the Max Ernst show (which was probably the same one he had mounted in San Francisco), he organized a retrospective of works by Joan Miró (October to November, 1935), an exhibition of paintings by Yves Tanguy (November to December, 1935), one of etchings by Salvador Dalí (January 1936), and a group show by Yves Tanguy, André Masson, Joan Miró, and Max Ernst, among others (April 1936).<sup>21</sup> In 1936 he left Rose's gallery to open his own business, the Putzel Gallery, that was located on 6729 Hollywood Boulevard, formerly the Hollywood Gallery of Modern Art.<sup>22</sup> In his own gallery he continued showing avant-garde painters, such as Georges Braque, Marc Chagall, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Henri Rousseau, and Yves Tanguy.<sup>23</sup> While the exhibitions were well received, the works shown were not completely grasped by the public and consequently Putzel closed his gallery at the end of the 1937–1938 season; it appears that “the primary reason was undoubtedly financial, coupled with the lack of appreciation and education in modern art that was apparent in Hollywood at that time.”<sup>24</sup> While Howard Putzel was most likely the first dealer to link European surrealism to California, showing throughout his career many artists who were surrealist in spirit, his program was focused on avant-garde and not exclusively on the surrealists. After shuttering his gallery, Putzel eventually relocated to the East Coast, where he lived until his death in 1945.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Los Angeles also counted three avant-garde bookstores: Stanley Rose's (operating from 1935 to 1939 from Hollywood Boulevard), Jake Zeitlin's (who opened his first bookstore in 1928 on Hope Street near Sixth Street in downtown Los Angeles, moving it twenty years later to La Cienega Boulevard), and Mel Royer's (located at 465 North Robertson Boulevard in West Hollywood). These stores were focal points for cultural events and hosted exhibitions of avant-garde artists. Stanley Rose's bookstore and gallery was a gathering place for artists and writers living in and around Hollywood. His legendary Back Room acted as a small gallery and hosted the earliest exhibitions of avant-garde and modernist artists, such as Philip Guston, Lorser Feitelson, and Helen Lundberg.<sup>25</sup> It was also the first place in

20 Lader, *Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century* (note 19), pp. 146–147.

21 Ibid., p. 149.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., p. 150. For the complete list of names, see *ibid.*, note p. 185.

24 Ibid., p. 153.

25 Catherine Taft, “The Post-Surrealists,” in Peabody et al., *Pacific Standard Time* (note 2), p. 39.



the Los Angeles area to show the work of surrealist artists, at Howard Putzel's initiative. Zeitlin, a major cultural driving force in the region, was the first to exhibit the photographs of Edward Weston and the work of German artist Käthe Kollwitz. Mel Royer produced and sold surrealist pamphlets and literature, and was in fact the first gallery to exhibit Copley's own artworks in 1951.<sup>26</sup> Even though these venues were key disseminators of modern trends like surrealism, trading in surrealist works didn't provide a reliable enough source of income. Copley later explained that Royer made his money by selling high-end pornographic material from the back of his store.<sup>27</sup>

A major initiative to promote contemporary art at an institutional level was the non-profit Modern Institute of Art, which had the ambition to create a local equivalent of New York's Museum of Modern Art. The institute opened on February 12, 1948, at 344 1/2 North Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. Aiming to present works from prominent local collections and to attract major traveling exhibitions from other cities, its inaugural show "Modern Artists in Transition" brought together works by artists such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Marc Chagall, and Marcel Duchamp. Despite support from patrons and the art public, the institute failed to raise the budget needed for the following year and closed down due to financial deficits by spring 1949, leaving the city without sustainable non-profit venues for displaying contemporary art—bearing testimony to the fact that there wasn't enough support from the local community to sustain ambitious public institutions dedicated to avant-garde movements.

Despite the conservative nature of the local artistic community, traces of surrealism had penetrated the Los Angeles area through artworks included in the notable local private collections, as well as through small exhibitions at the Stanley Rose Gallery. Nevertheless, the movement had not been present in a coherent form in any institutional program. In fact, possibly the most organized and well-defined response to European surrealism in Los Angeles in the 1930s was formulated by a local group of artists who called themselves "Post-Surrealists." Conceived as a critique of the European version of surrealism, the group founded by Lorser Feitelson and Helen Lundberg established the basis for an American version of the movement. The radical difference between the two currents was that post-surrealism worked from the conscious mind rather than the subconscious, as the European surrealists did. The post-surrealists sought to elicit a reasoned response in the viewer, who was asked to contemplate the metaphysical ideas expressed in their works. Their first group

26 Perchuk and Taft, "Floating Structures" (note 2), p. 18.

27 Ibid.

exhibition was held in 1934 at Stanley Rose's Centaur Gallery, followed by group shows in San Francisco at the Museum of Modern Art in 1935 and in New York at the Brooklyn Museum in 1936. Works by Feitelson, Lundeborg, and Knud Merrild were also included in Alfred H. Barr Jr.'s exhibition "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" at New York's Museum of Modern Art (even if it was mentioned in the introduction that their presence was an anomaly given that they did not support exploring the power of the unconscious).<sup>28</sup> Other artists who periodically showed with the post-surrealists were Lucien Labaudt and Harold Lehman, with Philip Guston, Grace Clemens, and Rueben Kadish joining later.<sup>29</sup> Feitelson and Lundberg remained, however, the core exponents of the movement and were major figures in popularizing the aesthetics of surrealism not only in Los Angeles but also further afield in the United States. Nevertheless, their approach remained faithful to the cognitive process, which "was insufficiently dramatic to sustain the momentum of [the] public fascination their first exhibitions had generated."<sup>30</sup> While surrealism was not a completely new movement at the end of the 1930s, the continued interest in European surrealism in the United States, and consequently in the Los Angeles area in the 1940s, could also be linked to the war and the physical displacement of European artists. Knowing that some of these artists were living in close proximity was a major factor in Copley and Poyardt's decision to open a surrealist gallery in Hollywood.

### The Copley Galleries

While Copley and Poyardt had no previous experience in running a business, they spent a year researching their strategies. Their first tactical decision concerned the gallery's location, for which they rented a bungalow in Beverly Hills in close vicinity to Hollywood, where they hoped to find their future clientele. After evaluating the existing local art scene as not "particularly exciting,"<sup>31</sup> they sought further advice from the Arensbergs. Copley visited their collection on several occasions and thought that they could provide valuable information concerning the opening of an avant-garde gallery. In a letter requesting an interview with the patrons, Copley and Poyardt explained the underlying operating principles of their future gallery:

28 Richard Candida Smith, *Utopia and Dissent. Art, Poetry, and Politics in California* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 14–15.

29 Taft, "The Post-Surrealists" (note 25), p. 39.

30 Smith, *Utopia and Dissent* (note 28), p. 11.

31 Letter from William N. Copley and John Poyardt to Walter C. Arensberg, December 15, 1947, Box 5, Folder 31, Arensberg Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

“We are writing to ask you for an interview and for advice concerning our plans for opening a commercial art gallery in Los Angeles. ... Briefly, we intend to emphasize quality, and quality alone. We plan to be bold and to concentrate on publicizing both the artists we represent and our gallery, with dignity but with *éclat*. We intend to present art as a dynamic way of living rather than as interior decoration.”<sup>32</sup>

With these goals in mind, the two first approached Man Ray, who was living at that time anonymously across the street from the Hollywood Ranch Market. Due to the volatile political situation, the artist had fled Europe during the Second World War and returned to the United States hoping to find the same success he had enjoyed abroad. But since his expectations were not met, he was open to new artistic opportunities and accepted to show at the Copley Galleries on the condition of 10 percent guaranteed sales. As a token of his gratitude he put the duo in touch with Marcel Duchamp, who was then living in New York (fig. 142). Copley and Ployardt traveled to New York in March 1948 to meet with him.<sup>33</sup> At the time of their meeting, Duchamp had publicly retired from art-making, so instead of discussing his own work he preferred to help them with introductions to other figures in the New York art scene. Copley recalled:



142 Photographer unknown, left to right: Man Ray, Juliet Ray, William Copley, and Marcel Duchamp aboard the S.S. *De Grasse* before their departure for Paris on March 12, 1951. Washington, DC, Archives of American Art, William Nelson Copley Papers.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Doran and Copley, *William N. Copley* (note 1), p. 70.

“Marcel sent us to Alexander Iolas. This was sensible. ... Marcel rightfully assumed we were mad in the sense that Iolas was. He also certainly understood that the passion Iolas had for his artists Ernst, Magritte, Brauner, Berard, et al., didn’t have too much to do with successful industry and commerce. He made us a good match.”<sup>34</sup>

Duchamp also introduced them to Roberto Matta and contacted Max Ernst to ask him to meet with them at his home in Arizona. On their way back from New York to California, Copley and Poyardt visited Ernst and Dorothea Tanning in Sedona and talked to them about their plans to open a gallery, and asked to show both artists’ works in Hollywood. This idea was met with much enthusiasm, and Tanning further presented the idea to Joseph Cornell:

“Some nice lads from Hollywood came here last week. ... They are opening a surrealist gallery and were full of enthusiasm for your work. We all spoke of you, of your own special genius, of their plans for showing it to the west coast public. Well, I hope for their success.”<sup>35</sup>

After these first successful meetings during their trip to the East Coast, several exhibitions were planned for the Copley Galleries. Not all of these eventuated, but the gallery nevertheless hosted six monographic shows in total, in the following order: the first exhibition opened on September 9, 1948, of works by René Magritte consigned through Alexander Iolas of the Hugo Gallery; the second opened on September 28, 1949, of works by Joseph Cornell purchased directly from the artist during Copley and Poyardt’s visit to the Hugo Gallery; the third was dedicated to Roberto Matta and opened on October 18, 1948; the fourth opened in November 1948, showing works by Yves Tanguy and for which the gallery received loans from Pierre Matisse, transforming the show into a mini-retrospective;<sup>36</sup> the fifth ran from December 17, 1948, to January 9, 1949, with works by Man Ray, who was the only artist to be directly involved in the planning and installation of the exhibition; and the sixth and last show, held from January 10 to February 20, 1949, was the first ever retrospective of Max Ernst’s work. This last show was the most elaborate exhibition staged at the Copley Galleries and included loans from Julien Levy, Alexander Iolas, Pierre Matisse, Marie-

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Dorothea Tanning to Joseph Cornell, April 29, 1947, Joseph Cornell Papers, 1804–1986, bulk 1939–1972, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.

<sup>36</sup> Susan Davidson, “A Breton in Connecticut. Yves Tanguy and His American Audience,” in Karin von Maur, ed., *Yves Tanguy and Surrealism*, cat. exh. (Houston: Menil Collection, 2001), p. 188.

Laure, Vicomtesse de Noailles, Al Lewin, and the Museum of Modern Art. Copley planned two other shows, for Dorothea Tanning and Paul Delvaux, but these never came to fruition as the gallery closed due to financial distress.

With regard to the local visibility of these shows, Man Ray recalled in his memoirs that “the openings were attended by all Hollywood. Much whiskey was consumed, few works were sold.”<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, Copley recounted that the shows attracted hardly any visitors and were badly received by the museum world: “We were almost totally ignored. We were attacked by most of the critics. And totally unattended.”<sup>38</sup> In any case, the gallery suffered from extremely poor sales, inevitably leading to its closure. Copley stated in his memoirs that only two works were ever sold—a painting and a gouache by René Magritte, purchased by Stanley Barbie the morning after the opening night.<sup>39</sup> These works were paid for on the spot, but never collected. Copley believed that due to his inebriation, Barbie might have forgotten that he had bought the works, but he nonetheless sent them to him when the gallery closed.<sup>40</sup> As for the other exhibitions, since 10 percent of sales was guaranteed to each artist, Copley ended up being the best customer of his own shows. Consequently, he collected important pieces by the exhibited artists, building up one of the most impressive surrealist art collections in the United States, later to be auctioned at Sotheby’s for a record price.<sup>41</sup>

Despite Copley’s claims, there are in fact sales records of works other than those he purchased for his own collection. According to Man Ray, “besides the large painting, *The Lovers*, which Bill reserved for himself, one other was sold to Al Lewin.”<sup>42</sup> Further records reveal sales following Yves Tanguy’s show at the gallery as well. In an essay discussing Tanguy’s activities in the United States, Susan Davidson mentions Copley’s correspondence with Pierre Matisse concerning the Yves Tanguy exhibition held in Los Angeles. Copley wrote to Matisse:

37 Man Ray, *Self-Portrait* (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1963), p. 355.

38 William N. Copley, oral history interview by Paul Cummings, January 30, 1968, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Rita Reif, “Man Ray Painting Brings \$750,000,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1979, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/11/06/archives/man-ray-painting-brings-750000-bought-by-european-collector-other.html>, accessed July 13, 2018. The article states, “The sale totaled \$6 million, second only for a single-owner art auction in America to the \$6.9 million racked up at the Norton Simon 1973 sale. And 15 artists’ records had been rewritten, including Man Ray at \$750,000. The second highest price of the night was the \$620,000 paid by the Byron Gallery, the New York dealer, for Max Ernst’s *Surrealism and Painter*. The Miró record became \$330,000 with the sale of *Bird Pursuing a Bee and Kissing It* to a Paris dealer, and the Magritte record was changed when David Geffen, the Los Angeles record producer, bought the painting depicting a green apple filling a room entitled *Listening Room*.”

42 Man Ray, *Self-portrait* (note 37), p. 355.



“Just a note to tell you how happy we are with the Tanguy show. The general response here seems to be that this is the most beautiful show we have hung to date. Also it may be proving the turning point in our fortune here. We sold one oil and one gouache the opening night and since then we have two more prospective sales which have fair promise of materializing.”<sup>43</sup>

According to the Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, of the thirty-six works loaned for the exhibition at the Copley Galleries, thirty-four were returned. Two paintings, *When We See* (1941) and *Toward Ancient Calls* (1946), as well as two gouaches from 1946, *Irrational Numbers* and *Complex Numbers*, were noted as sold.<sup>44</sup>

Further sales records concern the gallery’s last and most important show, the Max Ernst retrospective. In Ployardt’s letter to Julien Levy of November 6, 1948, he thanked Levy for his willingness to collaborate in the venture, assuring him that sales would follow Ernst’s well-deserved retrospective.<sup>45</sup> The financial arrangements were set out in a letter dated August 19, 1948:

“[P]ayment one way on all shipments which will include insurance, packing, and framing (when actually necessary, as we find this one of our most frightening expenses); sharing in sales on either a percentage or fixed price basis, whichever would be more attractive to you. We would also appreciate any publicity material (including photographs, etc.) which could be forwarded at our expense.”<sup>46</sup>

While Copley lamented that this show had been the greatest disaster of all because of the enormous effort it had required,<sup>47</sup> in a letter to Julien Levy of March 3, 1949, he stated that “Max’s show was actually a great success, and almost a success financially considering that the expenses involved belonged to a museum [were similar to a museum’s exhibition budget] and not to a gallery.”<sup>48</sup> In this letter, Copley also specified some positive financial details: “Incidentally I owe you money. We sold five

43 Davidson, “A Breton in Connecticut (note 37), p. 188.

44 Ibid, see notes p. 196.

45 Letter from John Ployardt to Julien Levy, November 6, 1948, Box 9, Folder 25, Julien Levy Gallery Records, 1957–1982, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

46 Letter from Ployardt to Levy, August 19, 1948, Box 9, Folder 25, Julien Levy Gallery Records, 1957–1982, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

47 Doran and Copley, *William N. Copley* (note 1), p. 82.

48 Letter from William N. Copley to Julien Levy, March 3, 1949, Box 9, Folder 25, Julien Levy Gallery Records, 1957–1982, Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives.

of the *Microbes* out of the show, at \$90 a piece which at 10% nets to you \$45, for which [a] check is enclosed.”<sup>49</sup>

While the gallery sales did not bring the desired financial success and were not able to maintain healthy functioning of the enterprise, they did eventuate, proving that a small, specialized market for European surrealist works was able to develop during the lifetime of the gallery. At the same time, the effort that went into the presentation and promotion of the shows increased the surrealists’ visibility in Hollywood. While there had been previous endeavors to promote the works of European surrealists by a number of other galleries, they were not sufficient to provide the necessary push to ensure the success of the Copley Galleries project. Nevertheless, even after the gallery closed, Copley continued to promote the artists he had represented, as well as the two shows he had planned for Dorothea Tanning and Paul Delvaux. He explained to Julien Levy that the American Contemporary Gallery (a small commercial outfit that had moved to a new location at the time of Copley’s 1949 letter<sup>50</sup>) was interested in hosting the Delvaux exhibition after the planned Alice Rahon and Tanning shows that Copley was personally helping to finance. He mentioned that he could “speak personally of [the American Contemporary Gallery’s] integrity and can’t think of anyone else who is doing anything here.”<sup>51</sup> Even though his own venture had come to an end, Copley was still actively supporting surrealist artists in the Los Angeles area well into the early 1950s.

### Joseph Cornell at the Copley Galleries

Cornell lived his entire life within a one-hundred-mile radius of New York City. He was a man of great privacy and discretion, who stayed out of the limelight of the art world. He was good friends with Marcel Duchamp, with Duchamp becoming a great promoter of Cornell’s work. Cornell was the type of artist who didn’t thrive on financial success and as a result his relationship with dealers was at times contradictory, as described by his biographer Deborah Solomon: “[H]e resented it when they couldn’t sell his work, and resented it even more when they could.”<sup>52</sup> Cornell also did not enjoy attending the openings of his shows; he preferred working with dealers operating at a distance,

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid. Copley further elaborated in his letter to Levy: “This little Gallery is quite honest and courageous.”

51 Ibid.

52 Deborah Solomon, *Utopia Parkway. The Life and Work of Joseph Cornell* (Boston: MFA Publications; New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997), p. 171.



143 Letter of announcement for the exhibition of works by Joseph Cornell at the Copley Galleries, 1948. Washington, DC, Archives of American Art, William Nelson Copley Papers.

which was perhaps one of the reasons for his collaboration with the Copley Galleries. Copley and Ployardt met Cornell at Iolas's gallery (at that time the Hugo Gallery), and Copley recounted his first impressions of the artist in great detail. He described him as a "gaunt cadaverous Charles Adams-like character"<sup>53</sup> who one day came into the Hugo Gallery and, while hoping to remain unnoticed by the visitors, started unpacking artworks out of paper shopping bags. Copley and Ployardt were instantly mesmerized by the "magical toy-like boxes."<sup>54</sup>

"The boxes astounded us. We would of course have a show of them. He asked no more than a hundred dollars for any one of them. This worried us. They were treasures, conceived of nostalgia and fantasy; nostalgia for childhood, old times and places, and beautiful people long dead."<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Doran and Copley, *William N. Copley* (note 1), p. 71.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 71–72.



144 Photographer unknown, installation view of the Joseph Cornell exhibition at the Copley Galleries, 1948. Washington, DC, Archives of American Art, William Nelson Copley Papers.

This encounter, together with the praise Cornell received from the surrealist circle—Duchamp, Iolas, Levy, Ernst, and Tanning—convinced Copley to buy a stack of boxes and present them in the Copley Galleries. He later remembered that “it took courage to do it at that time, and we thought it was our courage that would win for us.”<sup>56</sup> The invitation to the show and the catalogue strove to be in line with Cornell’s oeuvre, using lettering randomly torn out and resembling a ransom note (fig. 143). The exhibition setting was royal blue and white (fig. 144). Copley and Ployardt rented a white high-wheel bicycle and draped it with blue velvet and included it in the show (fig. 145). The boxes themselves were presented on shelves in niches where bookshelves had existed in the gallery rooms (fig. 146). In Copley’s words, “The result was quite beautiful and publicly disastrous as it proved forbidding and claustrophobic to anyone not already drunk on Cornell and we were

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 75.



145 Photographer unknown, installation view of the Joseph Cornell exhibition at the Copley Galleries, 1948. Washington, DC, Archives of American Art, William Nelson Copley Papers.



146 Photographer unknown, installation view of the Joseph Cornell exhibition at the Copley Galleries, 1948. Washington, DC, Archives of American Art, William Nelson Copley Papers.



the only such two in town.”<sup>57</sup> The opening was well attended but there were no sales and also no visitors during the month of the presentation. Copley later mentioned that they ended up giving the boxes to “good homes, just like puppies.”<sup>58</sup> Cornell blamed the two dealers for this failure as he thought it was the result of the inflated prices the gallery asked. On the prices attributed, Copley explained:

“We were ourselves infatuated with the prices. ... We’d bought them and they were still embarrassingly inexpensive, so much that we had to double the prices just to live with ourselves. We priced them one hundred to two hundred dollars and added a percentage for Cornell.”<sup>59</sup>

After the show, it took several years for Copley to regain Cornell’s trust. Cornell’s works however were the only ones purchased in advance from an artist shown in the gallery, proving Copley’s immediate fascination with the then inexpensive boxes. At that time, the sale of the fifty boxes would also have been one of Cornell’s most notable commercial deals. In his thirteen-year collaboration with Julien Levy (which ended in 1946), the dealer had sold very few works. Years later, Levy recalled that although he was unable to locate his sales book of Cornell’s works, most of the sales were to himself and James Thrall Soby (a short-time partner of the gallery).<sup>60</sup>

While Cornell’s exhibition was not received by the local public the way Copley and Ployardt had anticipated, the gallery was still the first promoter of Cornell’s work in southern California. This show additionally left a deep mark on the young Walter Hopps, who would give Cornell his first real museum retrospective more than fifteen years later. Copley’s interest in and promotion of Cornell did not stop in California. Once he moved to Paris and established the non-profit William and Noma Copley Foundation in 1954 in support of the visual arts, he granted the first award to Joseph Cornell. His promotion of an American artist in Europe is indicative of his devotion to the artists he worked with, as well as his commitment to continuing the efforts he began during his brief gallery years.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Solomon, *Utopia Parkway* (note 52), p. 171.

## Walter Hopps at the Copley Galleries

One of the visitors deeply impressed by the Copley Galleries' shows was the curator Walter Hopps (1932–2005). In his memoirs Hopps related that during high school, when he became interested in art, he could only get information about new and postwar art from books and magazines, as “there was almost no contemporary art worth a damn in the local museums then.”<sup>61</sup> While San Francisco and the Bay Area had more to offer in terms of contemporary art, Hopps still remarked that back in the late 1940s and first half of the 1950s, “so much of what one saw, both in San Francisco and New York, when I finally got there, was still in studios—not even in galleries yet, let alone museums.”<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, Hopps did manage to encounter noteworthy art venues in the late 1940s:

“In 1948, I heard about Copley Galleries, on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, which was owned by an artist called William Copley and his brother-in-law, John Poyardt. Copley was an artist [and] also the husband of six wives, the father of three children, an amazing gallerist, a great collector of Surrealist art, and ultimately a major philanthropist.”<sup>63</sup>

Hopps further described his first impressions of Copley and his early fascination with Cornell's works, which he had seen for the first time at the Copley Galleries:

“I was fifteen and still too young to drive when I first discovered the gallery, but I had a friend take me there for the Joseph Cornell show. I didn't know Copley, and I'd never heard of Cornell, but the show was just magical. ... Not one of them sold. I think Bill bought them all for himself in the end, because they were so cheap. I started searching around for more of Cornell's work in books, but I didn't know what books to look at.”<sup>64</sup>

After becoming acquainted with Cornell's work in the Copley Galleries, Hopps nurtured a lifelong fascination for the work of this artist. In 1955, when living on the East Coast, he went to the Stable Gallery and bought the most expensive Cornell on sale, *Habitat for a Shooting Gallery* (1943), for \$750, wiping out all the family savings.<sup>65</sup> Hopps began

<sup>61</sup> Hopps et al., *The Dream Colony* (note 12), p. 24.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

showing works by Cornell during his time at the Ferus Gallery (which operated from 1957 to 1966 from North La Cienega Boulevard in Los Angeles and where Hopps worked until 1962) and later in 1964 in a group show at the Dwan Gallery (which operated from the Westwood neighborhood from 1959 to 1967 and in New York from 1965 to 1971). Cornell was well into his sixties when he finally received major recognition for his work. The artist never had a retrospective or major museum show before the one mounted by Hopps at the Pasadena Art Museum from January 9 to February 11, 1967. Despite delays in its organization, the show turned out to be a great success. Hopps's presentation shared certain similarities with that of the Copley Galleries show as the boxes were placed on dark shelves with spotlights illuminating them. The *New York Times* described it as the "most dramatic example of [Hopps's] legendary wizardry in matters of installation."<sup>66</sup>

It was also through the Copley Galleries that Hopps became acquainted with the work of other major artists. Hopps mentions in his memoirs that Man Ray had made a "tactical error"<sup>67</sup> in thinking that in Hollywood he would find a clientele for his work among the wealthy movie magnates, an error that Copley seems to have repeated. He further mentioned that the Copley Galleries were almost empty the day he visited the Man Ray show. Copley discussed the works with him and eventually sent the young Hopps on a quasi-prank visit to Man Ray's home.<sup>68</sup> Through Copley's help, Hopps later arranged Marcel Duchamp's show in 1963. "No retrospective of Duchamp had been mounted yet, and Bill Copley was able to put me in touch with Marcel to arrange it,"<sup>69</sup> resulting in one of Hopps's most notable shows to be held at the Pasadena Art Museum. Copley's network thus continued to serve the dissemination of surrealism in southern California well after he had closed the doors of his gallery and officially stopped his activities as a dealer.

## Conclusions about surrealism in Hollywood and the local impact of the Copley Galleries

Surrealism and avant-garde trends were already present in the Los Angeles area during the 1930s in a few forward-looking private collections, as well as in small presentations across the handful of avant-garde bookstores and galleries. A coherent and well-organized response to the European version of surrealism emerged through the American post-surrea-

<sup>66</sup> Solomon, *Utopia Parkway* (note 52), p. 331.

<sup>67</sup> Hopps et al., *The Dream Colony* (note 12), p. 28.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

list group, however this group distanced itself from the ideas brought forth by André Breton's circle. In the beginning of the 1940s, interest in European surrealism was reignited during the war years as a result of the exile of some of the European artists to the United States. Nevertheless, the political climate remained conservative toward avant-garde trends, garnering no substantial interest in the works of these artists.

While the Copley Galleries was not the first venue to locally promote surrealist artists, at the time the gallery opened its doors to the public there was no strong and accomplished market for such artworks (Galka E. Scheyer's efforts in disseminating the works of the "Blue Four" never truly met with financial success, either). Copley and Ployardt's strategy for selling these works was finding new clientele among the wealthy movie moguls living in the Hollywood area. They had hoped that through their conviction and shows they could spark the interest of the local community, which had pretensions to intellectual culture. Unfortunately their efforts did not bring the anticipated success, leading to the closure of the gallery after only six months. Nevertheless, in contrast to the general consensus on its lack of financial success, sales did occur, showing that the gallery contoured a local market for surrealist artworks. Furthermore, the effort invested in mounting six monographic exhibitions for the surrealist artists—with one being the first ever retrospective of Max Ernst's work—positioned the Copley Galleries as the most coherent showcase for European surrealism in Hollywood. In addition, the Copley Galleries' efforts to promote surrealism left an indelible mark on the local arts scene in terms of the visibility and recognition of the artists presented. It was through this venue that the farsighted curator Walter Hopps was introduced to Joseph Cornell and Man Ray's work and eventually established contact with Marcel Duchamp.

While efforts to promote avant-garde and surrealist art were not fully grasped by the local public, California was not the cultural backwater it was thought to be, and avant-garde movements influenced a future generation of artists, writers, and filmmakers:

"By the 1950s ... the art scene in Los Angeles was remarkably diverse: an increasing number of commercial galleries were paralleled by informal spaces that experimented with alternative means of production, display, and dissemination. The use of found materials to make works of collage and assemblage reflected an interest in surrealism, jazz, and folk traditions."<sup>70</sup>

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70 Peabody et al., "Shifting the Standard" (note 8), p. 2.

Well into the 1960s, the influence of surrealism was still present in Hollywood, as seen in Ed Ruscha's design for the cover of the September 1966 issue of *Artforum*, in which the word "surrealism" bursts forth from a background of golden bubbles.<sup>71</sup>

★ ★ ★

It's different now. When I do return to California from time to time, the past is treated reverentially. I am rather respected and accused of having had foresight. It would be unfair or disillusioning to spill the beans that we really didn't know what we were doing at all. Unhappily, the brother-in-law died with an automobile and cannot share the belated credit. It seems better that I try to accept such admiration with modesty. The past is always a beautiful time.<sup>72</sup>

—William N. Copley

<sup>71</sup> Edward Ruscha, "Surrealism soaped and scrubbed," (Cover design by) *Artforum*, no. 1 (September 1966).

<sup>72</sup> Doran and Copley, *William N. Copley* (note 1), p. 82.





150 Antonio Ruiz, *Dream of Malinche*, 1939, oil on canvas, 30 × 40 cm.  
Mexico City, Galería de Arte Mexicano.

## The Galería de Arte Mexicano and Pathways for Mexican Surrealism in the United States

Rachel Kaplan

In March 1935, the Galería de Arte Mexicano (GAM) opened in Mexico City to advance the production and sale of modern Mexican art. From its inception, GAM aimed to place this art within a larger international panorama. Though dedicated to artists living and working in Mexico, the gallery envisioned a broader outreach for its audience. The gallery's founding mission statement announced its intention to "attract people interested in Mexican art, especially tourists among whom there already exists an affection towards Mexico's visual arts."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the gallery reached out to travel agencies and foreign consulates and soon began organizing exhibitions to send abroad. This essay explores the history of GAM's promotion of Mexican works with surrealist tendencies within its larger program of fostering transnational connections with museums and galleries in the United States in its first decade.<sup>2</sup>

GAM's activities at the time must be understood both within the historical context of displaying modern Mexican art and through the concerted efforts of gallery director Inés Amor as she cultivated relationships with artists, collectors, and institutions to sustain the gallery at the local and international level. Though its specific legacy has been debated, the "International Exhibition of Surrealism" (1940) constitutes a landmark event in GAM's early years, both within histories of Mexican modernism and international surrealism alike. This essay first considers the significance of this exhibition to GAM and the gallery's artists, and

1 "Estatutos para abrir la galería," in Delmari Romero Keith, ed., *Historia y testimonios: Galería de Arte Mexicano* (Mexico City: Ediciones GAM, 1985), p. 17: "[A]traer a ella a las personas interesados en el arte mexicano, especialmente a los turistas entre los cuales existe ya una corriente de simpatía por las artes plásticas de México." Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

2 This essay developed from a paper given at the workshop "Networks, Museums and Collections: Surrealism in the United States" at the Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, Paris, November 27–29, 2017. I would like to thank the editors for their insightful comments and suggestions in revising this essay for publication.

then proceeds to discuss its role in presenting a pathway for introducing Mexican art abroad. In the years following the show, Amor strengthened GAM's networks in the United States to support her emerging artists and present alternatives to the established muralists who were better known there. Drawing on GAM's rich archives, the final section of the text traces the reception of Mexican works with surrealist tendencies through an examination of museum and gallery exhibitions in the United States. The highlighting of surrealist connections provided one strategy for showing the variety of styles present in Mexican easel painting, which Amor championed as the height of Mexican artistic production.

### Birth of a gallery and Mexican art networks

The Galería de Arte Mexicano quickly emerged as a cultural gathering place in Mexico City and set its sights on a larger geographic network. Carolina Amor founded GAM after she left her post in the Ministry of Public Education's Department of Fine Arts following changes in government policies affecting the arts. In 1934 José Muñoz Cota assumed leadership of the department from the composer Carlos Chávez. In line with the cultural populism of Lázaro Cárdenas's newly established presidency, Muñoz Cota denounced easel painting among other activities seen as bourgeois and elitist.<sup>3</sup> With many of her programs now cut, Carolina Amor resigned, taking her pension and the connections she had formed with artists to create GAM. The gallery first opened in the mezzanine of the Amor family home, located near the Paseo de la Reforma, one of the city's main thoroughfares.<sup>4</sup> Within a year GAM was under the directorship of Carolina's younger sister, Inés, who received her training on the job and looked to the artists for guidance, advice, and an education in the arts (fig. 147).<sup>5</sup> While the gallery supported a range of art forms, including drawing, printmaking, photography, and sculpture, Inés Amor gave priority to exhibiting easel painting in accordance with her sister's founding motives and in response to the shortage of existing opportunities to display these works.

3 "Carolina Amor," in Romero Keith, *Historia y testimonios* (note 1), pp. 1–21, here pp. 1–2. For more on Muñoz Cota and the early years of the Cardenista Department of Fine Arts, see Dafne Cruz Porchini, "El Departamento de Bellas Artes y las exposiciones de carteles de 1934 y 1935," *Revista Digital CENIDIAP*, no. 3 (2005), <http://discursovisual.net/dvweb03/agora/agodaacruz.htm>, accessed February 12, 2019.

4 Romero Keith, "Carolina Amor" (note 1), pp. 2–3. From its opening in March 1935 until 1938, the Galería de Arte Mexicano was located at Calle Abraham González 66, the Amor family home. After the family moved in late 1937, Inés Amor searched for alternative locations and moved the gallery nearby to Calle General Prim 104.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 15.



147 Lola Álvarez Bravo, *Inés Amor*. Tucson, AZ, The University of Arizona, Center for Creative Photography.

Though GAM is often recognized as the first commercial gallery for modern art in Mexico, other venues anticipated its opening. Frances Toor, a publisher of magazines and travel guides and an early promoter of Mexican art in the United States, displayed paintings in her Mexico City office. Similarly, Greek-born Alberto Misrachi sold art out of his bookstore, the *Librería Misrachi*.<sup>6</sup> Though Misrachi's arrival preceded GAM by only a few years, he provided Inés Amor with early financial support and professional guidance, becoming a friend and collaborator.<sup>7</sup> While Misrachi and Toor sold art, this was not their primary endeavor. Without an established customer base, commercial art ventures struggled. In the beginning Amor took on extra work to support her gallery, editing the social pages of the *Excelsior* newspaper and teaching children's English classes.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, GAM probably benefited from the social connections of the Amors, an aristocratic land-owning family whose members endeavored to maintain their distinguished social status following the loss of their properties during the Mexican Revolution.

6 Later the Central Art Gallery and Central de Publicaciones. For more on Misrachi, see Luis Geller, *Alberto Misrachi Galerista. Una vida dedicada a promover el arte de México* (Mexico City: Sylvia Misrachi, 1998).

7 Letter from Inés Amor to Betty Pirie, January 19, 1935, Correspondencia privada de Inés Amor 1937, Galería de Arte Mexicano Archives, Mexico City (hereafter cited as GAM Archives).

8 Jorge Alberto Manrique and Teresa del Conde, eds., *Una mujer en el arte mexicano. Memorias de Inés Amor* [1987] (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005, 2nd ed.), pp. 41–42.

After assuming leadership of GAM, Amor worked to solidify her base of artists, signing many of them to exclusive contracts. By offering a monthly allowance in exchange for a set number of works and right of refusal, Amor granted artists economic stability for the development of their art. Amor's efforts to formalize the sale and exchange of art through contracts point to GAM's intentions to achieve a sustained presence in Mexico. She earned official recognition from the Mexican government when she was selected to assemble contemporary paintings to send to the San Francisco Golden Gate International Exposition and the New York World's Fair, both in 1939 and 1940.<sup>9</sup> While GAM was founded as an alternative to government-sponsored spaces, this recognition signaled a changing relationship with official arts agencies and bolstered Amor's relations with exhibition organizers in the United States.<sup>10</sup> Around the same time, the gallery's foreign ambitions received an additional boost from mounting the "International Exhibition of Surrealism."

### "Apparition of the Great Sphinx of the Night": European surrealism comes to GAM

On January 17, 1940, visitors dressed in their finest attire poured into GAM to attend the opening of the "International Exhibition of Surrealism." The gallery had recently relocated to a larger space and the event served as a dual inauguration of the exhibition and the new venue.<sup>11</sup> As promised on the evening's invitations, which were carefully burnt around the edges, the lights went out and an illuminated great sphinx appeared, wearing a butterfly mask designed by Wolfgang Paalen that recalled his painting *Toison d'Or* (1937).<sup>12</sup> The performance linked the "International Exhibition of Surrealism" to previous iterations in Copenhagen, London, and Paris.<sup>13</sup> The title page of the exhibition

9 See *Golden Gate International Exposition. Contemporary Art. Official Catalog*, exh. cat. (San Francisco: San Francisco Bay Exposition Company, 1939), p. 30; and correspondence in the GAM Archives in folders on the Golden Gate International Exposition 1939, the Golden Gate International Exposition San Francisco 1940, and the Exposición para la pabellón de México en la Feria Mundial de Nueva York.

10 Amor worked for the Golden Gate International Exposition under the auspices of Mexico's Department of Fine Arts in the Ministry of Public Education, and was commissioned by the Ministry of the Economy for the exhibition at the 1939 New York World's Fair.

11 The gallery had moved to Calle Milán 18, where it remained for the next five decades until moving again in 1991 to its present location at Gobernador Rafael Rebollar 43.

12 Manrique and del Conde, *Una mujer en el arte mexicano* (note 8), p. 112. See also Olivier Debrouse, *Figuras en el trópico, plástica mexicana 1920–1940* (Barcelona: Ediciones Océano, 1984), p. 184.

13 For connections between the performance at the Mexican inauguration and the earlier shows, see Luis M. Castañeda, "Surrealism and National Identity in Mexico. Changing Perceptions, 1940–1968," *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, no. 3/1–2 (2009), pp. 9–29, here pp. 11–13; and Ida Rodríguez Prampolini, *El surrealismo y el arte fantástico de México* (Mexico City: UNAM,



catalogue announced both the “apparition of the great sphinx” and the “burnt invitations,” along with “clairvoyant watchets [*sic*],” “perfume of the fifth dimension,” and “radioactive frames.”<sup>14</sup> This act recalled the show’s Parisian precedent and suggested the inclusion of additional realms, senses, and dimensions in the installation.<sup>15</sup>

Organized in Mexico by Paalen and the Peruvian César Moro in coordination with André Breton in Paris, the exhibition featured European works supplemented by local additions (fig. 148). According to Dr. Salomon Grimberg, who frequented GAM as a student, when Paalen approached Amor about hosting the exhibition, she immediately realized that it would convert her gallery into a participant in the international scene and that she would gain a platform to show the best of



148 Photographer unknown, installation view of the “Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo,” Mexico City, Galería de Arte Mexicano, 1940. Mexico City, Galería de Arte Mexicano.

1969), p. 55. Other recent publications that study this important exhibition are Dafne Cruz Porchini and Adriana Ortega Orozco, “The 1940 International Exhibition of Surrealism. A Cosmopolitan Art Dialogue in Mexico City,” *Dada/Surrealism*, no. 21/1 (2017); and Daniel Garza Usabiaga, “La Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo en México como fracaso (1940). Una reconsideración,” in Dafne Cruz Porchini, Claudia Garay Molina, and Mireida Velázquez Torres, eds., *Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica de Exposiciones de Arte Mexicano (1930-1950)* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2016), pp. 33–44.

14 *Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo*, exh. cat. (Mexico City: Ediciones GAM, 1940). I have not yet found additional accounts of these final three elements.

15 The title page to the French exhibition catalogue listed “*Plafond chargé de 1.200 sacs à charbon, Portes ‘Revolver,’ Lampes Mazda, Échos, Odeurs du Brésil et le reste à l’avenant.*” Emphasis in original: *Exposition internationale du surréalisme*, exh. cat. (Paris: Galerie des Beaux-Arts, 1938).

Mexican easel painting.<sup>16</sup> Later in her memoirs, Amor would credit the surrealist exhibition as the event that brought interest to Mexican art and established Mexico City as an artistic and cultural center within the international avant-garde.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the foundational importance of the exhibition ascribed by these memories, surrealist ideas had a presence in Mexico before the exhibition. Breton traveled to Mexico in 1938, when he famously dubbed Mexico as the surrealist country par excellence and cemented Mexico's place in the imagination of the European movement.<sup>18</sup> Upon his return to Paris, Breton wrote of his experience in the surrealist journal *Minotaure*, and mounted "Mexique" at the Galerie Renou et Colle, an exhibition that included works by Frida Kahlo and Manuel Álvarez Bravo, as well as Mesoamerican objects, paintings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and popular art that he had collected during his travels.<sup>19</sup> While Antonin Artaud had visited Mexico two years before Breton, European surrealism had found its way to the country before the arrival of these two visitors. Artists such as Agustín Lazo had spent time in Paris, encountering surrealist artists and ideas. Associated back home with a group known as the Contemporáneos, Lazo sent images of his work as well as reproductions of pieces by Giorgio de Chirico and Salvador Dalí for publication in the group's journal of the same name.<sup>20</sup> Coinciding with Breton's visit, Lazo translated key texts for a special issue of *Letras de México* and wrote an overview of surrealist painting for *Cuadernos de Arte*, disseminating ideas of European surrealism in Mexico.<sup>21</sup>

Lazo was among the Mexican artists Paalen selected for the "International Exhibition of Surrealism." Amor acknowledged that Paalen had invited the Mexican artists to participate as a "courtesy toward Mexico," however the precedent existed for including local artists in international exhibitions.<sup>22</sup> The catalogue's checklist presented the international artists first and without a heading in a grouping of ninety-two works by

16 Salomon Grimberg, "Los días de la calle de Gabino Barrera," in Evelyn Useda Miranda, Víctor Mantilla González, Arturo López Rodríguez, Jessica Martín del Campo, and Mariana Casanova Zamudio, eds., *Surrealismo. Vasos Comunicantes* (Mexico City: Ediciones El Viso/Museo Nacional de Arte, 2012), pp. 283–298, here p. 292. Grimberg began working at GAM while he was in medical school and quickly became a permanent fixture there. Dr. Salomon Grimberg, telephone interview with the author, June 5, 2011.

17 Manrique and del Conde, *Una mujer en el arte mexicano* (note 8), p. 112.

18 Rafael Heliodoro Valle, "Diálogo con André Breton," *Universidad de México*, June 1930, pp. 5–8, published in Rodríguez Prampolini, *El surrealismo y el arte fantástico* (note 13), pp. 53–54: "México tiende a ser el lugar surrealista por excelencia."

19 André Breton, "Souvenir du Mexique," *Minotaure*, no. 12/13 (May 1939), pp. 31–52.

20 James Oles, *Agustín Lazo* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2009), p. 49.

21 Agustín Lazo, "Reseña sobre las actividades sobrerrealistas," *Cuadernos de Arte* 3, in *Universidad. Mensual de cultura popular*, March 1938; cited in Oles, *Agustín Lazo* (note 20), pp. 61–62.

22 Manrique and del Conde, *Una mujer en el arte mexicano* (note 8), p. 111.

forty-one artists from fifteen countries.<sup>23</sup> Among these artists one finds Álvarez Bravo, Kahlo, and Diego Rivera, three Mexican artists who had previously exhibited in Paris and developed relationships with Breton and Paalen, and who had advocated for their inclusion in this selection.<sup>24</sup> The catalogue then identified automatist drawings, a surrealist object, drawings by the mentally ill, Mesoamerican ceramics and masks from Rivera's collection, objects from New Guinea from Paalen's collection, and, finally, a list of eight artists clearly designated as "Pintores de México."<sup>25</sup>

For the most part, the Mexican artists created new works specifically for the exhibition. The artists were all GAM veterans with the exception of Xavier Villaurutia, known primarily as a writer and leader of the Contemporáneos, and the young Guillermo Meza, for whom the surrealist exhibition marked the first public display of his work. The inclusion of Guatemalan-born Carlos Mérida and Spanish-born José Moreno Villa as Mexican painters reflects the gallery's inclusion of all artists living and working in the country in its regular programming. Lazo rounded out the Mexican contingent, along with Manuel Rodríguez Lozano, Roberto Montenegro, and Antonio Ruiz.

Local reviews of the "International Exhibition of Surrealism" quickly noted that the Mexican artists included were not surrealists, a distinction the reviewers made proudly to assert local specificity. In his review for *El Nacional*, Luis Cardoza y Aragón, who is often associated with surrealism, wrote, "The Mexicans that figure in this exhibition are not proper surrealists. And it doesn't matter!"<sup>26</sup> He praised the personal forms of expression he found in the works by Mérida and Lazo. Reviewer Luis G. Basurto Jr. identified Lazo's painting as the most surrealist Mexican contribution to the show, while noting that the only thing distinguishing many of the regional painters as "surrealist" was

23 Ninety-two works are listed in the first section of the catalogue and identified by artist, date, and medium. A group of *cadavres exquis*, collages, frottages, rayograms, decalcomania, fumages, and encrages are referenced but not identified, so the full number of works is not known.

24 Alice Rahon—at the time married to Paalen—later recalled that just days before the exhibition Rivera threatened to remove his works from the show if they were not included in the catalogue among the international artists: Debroyse, *Figuras en el trópico* (note 12), p. 185. Interestingly, original handwritten and typewritten checklists group all of the artists together alphabetically, with no distinction made for the "Pintores de México": Checklists in *Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo* file, GAM Archives.

25 The surrealist object was a found nineteenth-century painting owned by Paalen. Objects by Moro, Paalen, and Meret Oppenheim appeared in the main portion of the checklist, while a preliminary note by Paalen explained that transportation difficulties had prevented the inclusion of more objects and sculptures: *Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo*, exh. cat. (note 14).

26 Luis Cardoza y Aragón, "Galería de Arte Mexicano. Exposición Surrealista," *El Nacional*, January 27, 1940, p. 5: "Los mexicanos que figuran en esta exposición no son surrealistas propiamente. ¡Ni falta que hace!"

the imposed name.<sup>27</sup> In denying this label, Basurto, Cardoza y Aragón, and other reviewers rejected a foreign-born movement in favor of celebrating Mexican artists for their distinctive contributions and creative personalities.

Three decades later, in her study *El surrealismo y el arte fantástico de México*, art historian Ida Rodríguez Prampolini follows this trend, distancing the local artists from the surrealist movement by defining a “fantastic art” movement specific to her country.<sup>28</sup> In his article “Surrealism and National Identity in Mexico: Changing Perceptions, 1940–1968,” scholar Luis M. Castañeda closely scrutinizes Rodríguez’s argument and highlights her stake in promoting a nationalist reading at a time when both artistic and political concerns led to a questioning of Mexican identity.<sup>29</sup> In so doing, Castañeda tracks the historiography of the exhibition’s “critical afterlife.”<sup>30</sup> In another moment in this “after-life,” art historian Olivier Debroise, in his study of Mexican painting, positions the surrealist exhibition as the “natural end” of a “history of the painters of a first Mexican school.”<sup>31</sup> For Debroise, not only did the exhibition launch the gallery in the international art world, it defined the state of Mexican painting moving forward: “[I]t would be easel painting, or it wouldn’t be.”<sup>32</sup> To this end, the exhibition helped to advance the gallery’s agenda of promoting easel painting. Furthermore, as the gallery began looking toward representation in the United States, the surrealist identification stuck with many of its artists—a fact due in part to Amor’s savvy reading of the market.

## Inroads and interventions in the United States

By the time of GAM’s founding, Mexican art had a persistent presence in the United States as part of a larger cultural exchange between the two countries. Political and commercial interests on the part of both countries led to what has been recognized as a “vogue” in the United States for Mexican arts and culture.<sup>33</sup> In November 1922, a large exhibition of Mexican popular arts opened in Los Angeles that included a

27 Luis G. Basurto Jr., “Crítica de arte. Gran exposición surrealista internacional. I – Los pintores mexicanos,” *Excélsior*, January 20, 1940, section 2, pp. 2–3.

28 Rodríguez Prampolini, *El surrealismo y el arte fantástico* (note 13).

29 Castañeda, “Surrealism and National Identity” (note 13).

30 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

31 Debroise, *Figuras en el trópico* (note 12), p. 12.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 188: “Será de caballete o no será.”

33 See Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican. Cultural Relations Between the United States and Mexico, 1920–1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992).

small selection of modern paintings.<sup>34</sup> A 1928 exhibition organized by Anita Brenner for the Art Center in New York and the “Mexican Arts” show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1930 followed this precedent, displaying modern painting alongside folk art, and, in the case of the Met, adding art from the viceregal period as well. Amor rejected these models in order to highlight modern painting. In May 1936 she organized her first loan exhibition to the United States for the Brooks Memorial Gallery in Memphis, Tennessee.<sup>35</sup> In 1937, she arranged an exhibition for the Arts Club of Chicago featuring the work of fourteen artists including established names such as Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, as well as emerging artists such as Lazo and Jesús Guerrero Galván. The Arts Club exhibition traveled to Minnesota and New York and was featured in popular publications such as *Life* magazine, garnering national attention.<sup>36</sup> Following the outbreak of World War II, both Mexico and the United States found increased impetus for strengthening their neighborly bonds, reinvigorating the use of art as a tool to promote cultural understanding in the coming years.<sup>37</sup>

The 1930s also brought to the United States representatives from the mural movement that emerged in Mexico during the previous decade. In 1930 José Clemente Orozco, one of “los tres grandes” of Mexican muralism, completed a mural at Pomona College in Claremont, California. The first mural by a Mexican artist in the United States, it was soon followed by murals by Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros—the other two acclaimed “grandes.” These murals facilitated recognition in the United States of the socially engaged figurative work that characterized the movement. New York galleries such as the Weyhe Gallery created and encouraged a market for prints by these artists and others, further circulating modern Mexican art.<sup>38</sup> While Amor capitalized on

34 Olivier Debroise, “Mexican Art on Display,” in Carl Good and John V. Waldron, eds., *The Effects of the Nation: Mexican Art in an Age of Globalization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), pp. 20–36, here p. 26.

35 Now the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art.

36 “Revolutionary Mexican Art Show Tours the U.S.,” *Life*, March 14, 1930, pp. 28–30. The exhibition traveled to the University of Minnesota, the Valentine Gallery in New York, and the Saint Paul School of Art.

37 For more on the presentation of Mexican art in the service of cultural diplomacy, see Catha Paquette, “Soft Power. The Art of Diplomacy in US-Mexican Relations, 1940–1946,” in Gisela Cramer and Ursula Prutsch, eds., *¡Américas unidas! Nelson A. Rockefeller’s Office of Inter-American Affairs (1940–46)* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2012), pp. 143–180; and Charity Mewburn, “Oil, Art, and Politics. The Feminization of Mexico,” *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, no. xx/72 (Spring 1998), pp. 73–136.

38 See Anna Indych-López, *Muralism without Walls: Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros in the United States, 1927–1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), pp. 64–74. For more on the Weyhe Gallery and its role in promoting Mexican prints in the United States, see Innis Shoemaker, “Crossing Borders. The Weyhe Gallery and the Vogue for Mexican Art in the United States,” in John Ittmann, ed., *Mexico and Modern Printmaking. A Revolution in the Graphic Arts, 1920–1950*,



the recognition of these established artists, she also found opportunities to promote lesser-known painters.

Amor's involvement with another historic exhibition in 1940 continued the international momentum established by the surrealist exhibition. That February, John McAndrew, John E. Abbott, and Monroe Wheeler from New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) arrived in Mexico City. Conducting research in anticipation of "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art" scheduled to open that spring, they set up their base of operations at GAM.<sup>39</sup> Writing a progress report to Alfred H. Barr Jr., Abbott described the "First International Exhibition of Surrealism in Mexico" as being "enormously successful."<sup>40</sup> Framed in the context of improving international relations and with the cooperation of the Mexican government,<sup>41</sup> "Twenty Centuries" would occupy the entire New York museum, with objects spanning from before the conquest to the present day. Within the modern section, visitors to the exhibition could find a gallery devoted to Mexican works with surrealist affinities (fig. 149). Two of the paintings on view came directly from the "International Exhibition of Surrealism"—Kahlo's *The Two Fridas* (1939) and Antonio Ruiz's *Dream of Malinche* (1939). Both painted expressly for the GAM exhibition, these pieces have consequently become iconic works epitomizing Mexican engagement with surrealism. The continued pervasiveness of these two images attests to the

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exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006), pp. 23–53; and Reba White Williams, *The Weyhe Gallery Between the Wars 1919–1940*, unpub. PhD diss., City University of New York, 1996.

39 McAndrew, MoMA's Curator of Architecture and Design, learned about a large retrospective of Mexican art that had been planned for the Jeu de Paume in Paris while visiting Mexico in the summer of 1939. Canceled due to wartime concerns, McAndrew relayed the plans to Alfred H. Barr Jr. and Nelson A. Rockefeller, laying the groundwork for an exhibition modeled on the Parisian plan. President of MoMA, Rockefeller had additional interests in bringing the exhibition to the museum in the hopes of easing relations with President Lázaro Cárdenas following the 1938 expropriation of oil. During a meeting in October 1938, Rockefeller introduced the idea of the exhibition to Cárdenas to improve relations between the two countries and foster feelings of goodwill. A full discussion of the history of this important MoMA exhibition and connected cultural relations is beyond the scope of this essay, but various sources are available for further reading: Holly Barnet-Sánchez, *The Necessity of Pre-Columbian Art. U.S. Museums and the Role of Foreign Policy in the Appropriation and Transformation of Mexican Heritage, 1933–1944*, unpub. PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1993; Indych-López, *Muralism without Walls* (note 38); Cathleen M. Paquette, *Public Duties, Private Interests. Mexican Art at New York's Museum of Modern Art, 1929–1954*, unpub. PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2002; Alejandro Ugalde, *The Presence of Mexican Art in New York between the World Wars. Cultural Exchange and Art Diplomacy*, unpub. PhD diss., Columbia University, 2003.

40 Letter from John E. Abbott to Alfred H. Barr Jr., February 15, 1940, (Alfred H. Barr Jr. Papers [AAA:3155:593], The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York (hereafter cited as MoMA Archives).

41 See "Foreword of the Mexican Department of Foreign Affairs," in *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1940), p. 10; also MoMA, "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art Being Assembled for the Museum of Modern Art," press release, no. 40220-14, February 21, 1940, MoMA Archives, [https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_press-release\\_325182.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325182.pdf), accessed February 12, 2019.



149 Photographer unknown, installation view of the exhibition "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art," New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1940. New York, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

legacy and impact of both exhibitions, while the paintings themselves can be discussed concomitantly in terms of surrealist attributes or distinctly Mexican subjects.

Intimate in scale and with a miniaturist quality of detail, *Dream of Malinche* draws the viewer in for contemplation and echoes the popular art form of *retablos*, on view in a nearby room at MoMA (fig. 150). In this work, Malinche, Hernán Cortés's Indigenous lover and translator, sleeps on a bed as a colonial town arises from her recumbent body, a visual metaphor for racial and cultural mixing that she herself represents.<sup>42</sup> The blue sky of the landscape peels away, showing bricks in place of clouds. Ruiz's painting, simultaneously depicting the actual act of dreaming and a dreamlike scene, uses a surrealist visual language to comment on a national theme. Ruiz originally titled the work *Malinche*, and it appears in the surrealist exhibition catalogue under this name. However, according to the artist's niece, he later added "el sueño de" or "dream of" at Amor's suggestion,<sup>43</sup> pointing to Amor's role in framing the presentation and reception of her artists' works. Ruiz recognized

42 Rita Eder has argued that the town depicted by Ruiz is Cholula. For Eder, the female Indigenous body crowned by the archetypal colonial church is an allegory for the nation's foundation and conquest. See Rita Eder, "El sueño de la Malinche de Antonio Ruiz y María Magdalena: algunas afinidades," in Cuauhtémoc Medina, ed., *La imagen política: XXV Coloquio Internacional de Historia de Arte* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2006), pp. 93–112.

43 Ibid., p. 111.



151 Photographer unknown, installation view of the exhibition “Mexican Art Today,” Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1943. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

this assistance and guidance from Amor, eventually giving her the work with the added inscription “A la reina de mis ilusiones (To the queen of my dreams),” a dual allusion to the painting as well as to the dealer and her interventions on her artist’s behalf.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast to Ruiz’s small canvas, Kahlo’s *The Two Fridas* dwarfed the other works in the room, creating an aura of prominence. A press release for the exhibition described Kahlo as “the surrealist with a complex and morbid imagination.”<sup>45</sup> By emphasizing Kahlo as both distinctly Mexican and a recognized surrealist painter, the press statement echoed the identity struggle at play in *The Two Fridas*.<sup>46</sup> Kahlo also painted *The Wounded Table* (1939) for the GAM exhibition, and this work was likewise sent to MoMA for display. However, its large size became an issue, making it the only modern work shipped to New York that the organizers decided not to hang.<sup>47</sup> Instead, the painting was sent to the Julien Levy Gallery—where Kahlo had her first solo show in the United States in 1938—and was replaced at MoMA by the smaller *What the Water Gave Me* (1938).<sup>48</sup>

44 Ibid.

45 Press release, Department of Circulating Exhibitions Records, II.1.80.5, MoMA Archives.

46 Ibid.

47 Letter from Miguel Covarrubias to Alfred H. Barr Jr., April 27, 1940, Alfred H. Barr Jr. Papers [AAA:3155;645], MoMA Archives.

48 Ibid.

This later addition would travel again in 1943, to “Mexican Art Today,” a survey organized by Amor for the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA). Amor worked with Henry Clifford, Philadelphia’s curator of paintings, to bring together the best examples of Mexican painting from the previous thirty years, as well as drawings, prints, and photographs. While including a painting by Orozco related to his Pomona College mural and portable frescoes by Rivera, Amor and Clifford strove to shift the focus toward easel painting, positioning the latter as the height of contemporary Mexican artistic expression. Within this context, one of the rooms highlighted a new generation of artists that depicted alternate and fantastic realities (fig. 151). Here, Kahlo’s bathtub hung alongside paintings by Ruiz and Carlos Mérida, both participants in the surrealist exhibition at GAM, as well as works by young artists who emerged immediately after the 1940 show.

By forming close personal relationships with curators such as Clifford, Amor was able to influence the display and acquisition of works by her artists. The exhibition provided a catalyst for the PMA’s collection of modern Mexican art. Nearly a quarter of the works in “Mexican Art Today” entered the museum’s permanent collection and several others entered private collections in Philadelphia and New York. Carl Zigrosser, curator of the PMA’s newly founded print department, arranged the purchase of sixty-five prints directly from the exhibition.<sup>49</sup> Clifford, who during the course of the exhibition bought works from Amor destined to enter the museum’s collection, similarly inspired members of the museum’s patronage circles to purchase works as gifts.<sup>50</sup> Encouraged by this spur of giving, in June 1945 Clifford wrote to Amor, “Bit by bit I am building up a Mexican group and having two special galleries built and painted to receive them.”<sup>51</sup>

Following the positive press and sales generated by these museum exhibitions, by the fall of 1943 Amor was contemplating opening a branch of GAM in New York.<sup>52</sup> The imagined outpost would give her stable of artists a persistent New York presence. While this permanent location never came to fruition, in November 1945 Amor found an alternative with an exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries on East Fifty-

49 Anne d’Harnoncourt and William D. Chiego, “Preface,” in Ittmann, *Mexico and Modern Printmaking* (note 38), pp. iii–ix, here p. iii. Zigrosser also purchased prints for his personal collection which would eventually enter the museum as well, in 1972 and 1976.

50 I have written in greater depth on the impact of *Mexican Art Today* on the PMA’s collection elsewhere. See Rachel Kaplan, “Mexican Art Today. Inés Amor, Henry Clifford and the Shifting Practices of Exhibiting Modern Mexican Art,” *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, no. 3/2+3 (2014), pp. 264–288; and Rachel Kaplan, *Mexican Art at Home and Abroad. The Legacy of Inés Amor and the Galería de Arte Mexicano*, unpub. PhD diss., New York University, 2015, pp. 131–135.

51 Letter from Henry Clifford to Inés Amor, June 6, 1945, Henry Clifford file, GAM Archives.

52 Letter from Henry Clifford to Inés Amor, October 23, 1943, Henry Clifford file, GAM Archives.





152 Juan Soriano, *Girl with Mask* (alternately titled *Infinite Space*), 1945, oil on canvas, 80.3 × 100.3 cm. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Seventh Street. As an extension of the Galería de Arte Mexicano, issues that permeated and characterized the Mexican art scene were transposed directly to the New York show. The Knoedler exhibition featured figurative works that teetered between the real, surreal, and abstract. It included the established painters Siqueiros and Rufino Tamayo, both well known in New York, and an additional eleven artists identified as being part of Mexican art's younger generation. The Knoedler catalogue, with biographies submitted by Amor, emphasized the youth of these artists and positioned them as the future of Mexican painting.

Identified in the catalogue as “one of the most promising young artists in Mexico,” Juan Soriano exemplifies the rising generation that Amor promoted.<sup>53</sup> While the young Soriano did not participate in the “International Exhibition of Surrealism,” he is recorded as being at the inaugural evening.<sup>54</sup> In reviewing the Knoedler exhibition for *ARTnews*, critic Rosamond Frost notes that Soriano “seems to combine the power of the older social crusaders with a disturbing, often surreal imagery.”<sup>55</sup> Yet Soriano himself would later emphatically deny surrea-

53 *Mexican Painting*, exh. cat. (New York: Knoedler Galleries, 1945).

54 “Exposición surrealista,” *Excelsior*, January 20, 1940, section 2, p. 2.

55 Rosamond Frost, “Mexicana of the Moment,” *ARTnews*, no. 44 (November 15, 1945), p. 23. Frost later became better known as Rosamond Bernier, an established lecturer on art.



list connections, recalling the same refusal by Mexican critics in 1940.<sup>56</sup> His dreamlike paintings from the period inhabit ambiguous spaces on the threshold of reality and fantasy, evident in his contributions to the Knoedler show. In *Infinite Space* (1945), a young girl tries on a mask accompanied by a playful monkey and chaperone (fig. 152). The apparent sky behind her peels away to reveal a brick wall, confusing what is indoors and what is outdoors, what is real and what is artifice. A recurring device in Soriano's work, this interplay is reminiscent of Ruiz's *Dream of Malinche*.

Sales records provide helpful evidence as to how the two galleries worked together, and serve to further illustrate the Knoedler Galleries' role as an extension of GAM. In 1946 Amor wrote to Lelia Wittler at Knoedler after hearing that someone was interested in purchasing a painting by Soriano: "I hope it will be *Infinite Space* since the *Massacre* piece has an offer here of \$1,000.00. In any case, do not sell *Massacre* for less than a thousand."<sup>57</sup> Following Amor's wishes, Wittler sold *Infinite Space* to Mrs. Herbert Cameron Morris and left *Massacre* for Amor to sell in Mexico.<sup>58</sup> Morris was a member of the PMA's painting committee, and following "Mexican Art Today" bought the two portable frescoes by Diego Rivera that were on view to donate to the museum. Maintaining an interest in Mexican art, she traveled to New York at Clifford's behest to see the Knoedler show, where she purchased the Soriano. Clifford wrote Amor to tell her the news: "I got a friend of mine, Mrs. Herbert Morris, to go to N.Y. and see your show. I told her of Juan's *Two Figures + Monkey*—or whatever the official title is—and she fell in love with it and bought it."<sup>59</sup> Morris donated this painting to the PMA as well in 1947, the same year she purchased another Soriano from Amor by way of the Knoedler Galleries, which would enter the PMA's collection ten years later.<sup>60</sup>

As intimated in the correspondence outlined above, Amor built her network of museums and collectors through chains of personal connections, and her relationships with other galleries proved no exception. Betty Pirie, a collector and friend of Amor's based at the time in New

<sup>56</sup> Stated in an interview with Edward J. Sullivan, published in Edward J. Sullivan, *Fragile Demon. Juan Soriano in Mexico, 1935 to 1950* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2008), p. 35. Sullivan goes on to explore Soriano's surrealist affinities and the tendency to discuss Soriano under the label of Mexican surrealism, pp. 35–42.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from Inés Amor to Lelia Wittler, November 19, 1946, Knoedler 1945 file, GAM Archives.  
<sup>58</sup> Born Willarene Sober, she gave several works to the PMA. She is listed in the credit lines of these gifts as Mrs. Herbert Cameron Morris.

<sup>59</sup> Letter from Henry Clifford to Inés Amor, December 15, 1945, Henry Clifford file, GAM Archives.

<sup>60</sup> The PMA now calls the painting *Girl with Mask*. The second Soriano that Morris bought and gifted, titled in 1947 *The White Tablecloth*, is now identified as *Girl with Bouquet*.

York, facilitated the early stages of the Knoedler collaboration.<sup>61</sup> Amor's network of collaborating galleries expanded in New York thanks to a keen interest in Mexican art and Amor's established reputation. Frost's previously mentioned *ARTnews* article identified the enthusiasm for Mexican art as the "Mexicana of the Moment," noting two exhibitions occurring concurrently just blocks away from the 1945 Knoedler show.<sup>62</sup> On November 1, 1945, the Kleemann Galleries opened an exhibition of eighteen works on paper by Mexican artists. An additional show featured recent works by Carlos Mérida at the Nierendorf Galleries. While Kleemann did not collaborate with Amor, a version of the Nierendorf show had hung on the walls of the Galería de Arte Mexicano nine months earlier, in February 1945.<sup>63</sup> Amor sent Nierendorf thirteen paintings from her Mérida show that applied elements of the abstract and surreal to Mesoamerican themes, leading Frost to praise Mérida's fusion of modern visual languages with ancient traditions.<sup>64</sup>

The connection between the two Mérida exhibitions presents another model for reconstructing GAM's extended network. In the 1940s GAM favored one-artist shows, with unsold works often traveling together as a new iteration of the exhibition to galleries in the United States. In another example, an exhibition of works by the French-born surrealist Alice Rahon originated at GAM in March 1944 and continued on to the Stendahl Galleries in Los Angeles in March 1945 and Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century in New York the following May. Amor organized a second exhibition of works by Rahon in September 1946, which she then sent to be shown at Nierendorf. Rahon had arrived in Mexico in 1939 with Paalen and contributed four watercolors to the "International Exhibition of Surrealism," the first public display of her visual work and the start of her ongoing relationship with Amor. Mexican reviews of her two GAM shows discuss Rahon's work in terms of both surrealism and abstraction. One 1946 review praises Rahon as a champion of surrealism before describing how she used the new language of abstraction to create her fantasy worlds.<sup>65</sup> Mérida

61 Letter from Carman Messmore to Betty Pirie, May 19, 1945, Knoedler 1945 file, GAM Archives.

62 Frost, "Mexicana of the Moment" (note 55), p. 23.

63 Amor wrote to Carman Messmore of Knoedler Galleries that Henry Kleemann had visited Mexico and bought a number of works from her without ever mentioning an exhibition. Letter from Inés Amor to Carman Messmore, October 12, 1945, Knoedler 1945 file, GAM Archives.

64 Frost, "Mexicana of the Moment" (note 55), p. 23. For more on Mérida's relationship to both surrealism and Mexican modernism, see Courtney Gilbert, "Negotiating Surrealism. Carlos Mérida, Mexican Art and the Avant-Garde," *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, no. 3/1–2 (2009), pp. 30–50. Gilbert also argues for Mérida's involvement in the short-lived Galería de Arte Moderno in Mexico City's Palace of Fine Arts (1929–31) as an early venue for showing avant-garde and surrealist works: pp. 39–43.

65 Chouchette Tourres, "Exposición en la Galería de Arte Mexicano," *Revista Mañana*, September 28, 1946, accessed in the GAM archival scrapbooks.

himself wrote the exhibition notes to accompany Rahon's 1944 show at GAM.<sup>66</sup> While elsewhere Rahon is discussed as a French painter,<sup>67</sup> Mérida firmly plants her in Mexico, highlighting her importance for expanding notions of abstraction and the avant-garde in her new home. While Rahon's work widens the notions of surrealism in Mexico, it also attests to the émigré presence there and Amor's lasting support of these artists as well, initiated with the 1940 surrealist exhibition.

That exhibition offered a platform for both Amor's young gallery and the surrealist organizers to promote their own agendas and reach new audiences, creating a mutually beneficial event. Amor capitalized on this recognition beyond Mexico, as she promoted her artists through her broadening network in the United States. There she found venues and audiences that had been primed for an interest in modern Mexican art. Building upon this base, she presented new and unfamiliar names and showed a diversity of artistic activity that included artists working with surrealist tendencies. Tracing the paths of specific works and artists through the "International Exhibition of Surrealism" to group and individual shows at museums and galleries in the United States elucidates one aspect of GAM's greater programming of Mexican modernism at large and introduces overlooked episodes of international surrealism in the United States.

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66 "Alice Paalen," exh. brochure, Mexico, 1944, accessed in the GAM archival scrapbooks.

67 Tourres, "Exposición en la Galería de Arte Mexicano" (note 65).



157 Ed Ruscha, *Surrealism Soaped and Scrubbed*, 1966, chromogenic print, 27.9 × 35.6 cm. New York.

## Surrealist Intrusion and Disenchantment on Madison Avenue, 1960

Susan L. Power

Commercial gallery interests, bolstered by institutional promotional efforts, set the tone for the North American reception of surrealism from the moment the movement's visual production arrived on American shores in the early 1930s.<sup>1</sup> The tension between North American market or museum-driven forces and the underlying socio-political aims of the movement's collective activities crystallized in their international exhibitions in Mexico City and New York City during European wartime exile.<sup>2</sup> In a sequel to that now well-documented episode of the movement's activities in the Americas, the surrealists staged an encore in New York City some twenty years later.<sup>3</sup> Titled "Surrealist Intrusion

<sup>1</sup> Updating the abundant scholarship on this defining period of surrealism's trajectory in the United States, Sandra Zalman has most recently revisited and expanded upon these issues in *Consuming Surrealism in American Culture: Dissident Modernism* (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2015). On the Mexican context, see Courtney Gilbert, "'The (New World) in the time of the surrealists.' European Surrealists and their Mexican Contemporaries," PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2001; and Rachel Kaplan's analysis of the commercial stakes for surrealism in 1940 in this volume: "The Galería de Arte Mexicano and Pathways for Mexican Surrealism in the United States."

<sup>2</sup> Refuting formalist readings of surrealist practice, the international exhibitions organized by artists and poets affiliated with the surrealist movement sought to displace the visual production they championed from the realm of pure aesthetics and monetary exchange to inscribe it within another field, one that would unite surrealist principles and artistic output with the movement's social and political ideals. The surrealist exhibitions thus enlisted strategies of display and catalogue documentation to disrupt and undermine the discourses established in the interest of commerce and art history. This conjuncture forms the central premise of my PhD dissertation, "Les expositions surréalistes en Amérique du Nord: Terrain d'expérimentation, de réception et de diffusion (1940–1960)," PhD diss., Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2012. For scholarly examination of these stakes in other notable international surrealist exhibitions, see Elena Filipovic, "Surrealism in 1938: The Exhibition at War," in Raymond Spiteri and Donald Lacoss, eds., *Surrealism, Politics and Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), pp. 179–203; and Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938–1968* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Of the copious literature, two foundational books deserve particular mention: Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde, 1920–1950* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995); and Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995). An update on Jeffrey Wechsler's *Surrealism and American*



in the Enchanters' Domain," this international exhibition of surrealism was held at D'Arcy Galleries on Madison Avenue from December 1960 through January 1961. Leading the organizing team, André Breton and his "twine" Marcel Duchamp—as the latter had punned in the exhibition catalogue for the 1942 "First Papers of Surrealism"—joined forces once again to orchestrate a revival that was considered, at the onset of the 1960s, somewhat of a lackluster anomaly. Having been declared one of the casualties of the Second World War, surrealism had virtually vanished from the postwar capital of the international art world, along with the departed European exiles and their American champions—Julien Levy and Peggy Guggenheim having shuttered their galleries in the late 1940s. It had long been eclipsed by the next "ism," abstract expressionism, which by the late 1950s was itself waning with the advent of neo-Dada, pop, assemblage, happenings, and so forth. Nonetheless, the cultural clout of the organizers and the solid reputations of the many stalwart artists featured in "Surrealist Intrusion" insured ample press coverage of the event.<sup>4</sup>

In view of the growing institutional popularity and academic scrutiny of surrealism since the dawn of our current century, the dearth of scholarly attention devoted to "Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain" might seem surprising, especially within the relatively recent expanded scope of art-historical inquiry addressing the history of exhibitions. In large part the biased reception of surrealism, circumscribing the history of the movement essentially to the 1930s and 1940s—an imbalance that persists to this day—has undoubtedly contributed to the marginal status of "Surrealist Intrusion" as a latecomer.<sup>5</sup> "Surrealist Intrusion" has garnered the most attention for the scandal that erupted when Salvador Dalí—aided and abetted by the Parisian organizers' long-standing accomplice Duchamp—upstaged the quirkily sober surrealist

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*Art, 1931–1947*, Jeffrey Wechsler, ed., exh. cat., New Brunswick, Rutgers University Art Gallery (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Art Gallery, 1977), Isabelle Dervaux expanded the chronological scope considerably to include the legacy of surrealism in contemporary art in the exhibition *Surrealism USA*, Isabelle Dervaux, ed., exh. cat., New York, National Academy Museum/Phoenix, Phoenix Art Museum (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2005).

- 4 "Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain" was previewed and reviewed in both the mainstream and specialized press. See Mark Roskill, "Surrealists," *ARTnews*, 59/7 (November 1960), p. 18; John Canaday, "Art. Surrealism With the Trimmings," *New York Times*, November 16, 1960, p. 36; and "Nostalgia and the Forward Look. Duchamp Surveys Surrealism and Dalí Forges Ahead in All Directions," *New York Times*, December 4, 1960, p. X21; Emily Genauer, "Art. Dalí and Some Surrealist Enchanters," *New York Herald Tribune*, December 4, 1960, p. 19; Robert Coates, "The Art Galleries. The Surrealists," *New Yorker*, December 10, 1960, pp. 198–201; John Canaday, "Surrealistic Sanity," *Time*, 76/24 (December 12, 1960), p. 55; Irving Hershel Sandler, "New York Letter," *Art International*, no. 4 (December 31, 1960), p. 33; and Jerrold Lanes, "Surrealist Events," *Arts*, 35/5 (February 1961), pp. 22–31.

- 5 Lewis Kachur's groundbreaking study *Displaying the Marvelous* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), with its focus on the international surrealist exhibitions of the 1930s and 1940s, attests to the convergence of these phenomena.

enterprise in his usual flamboyant fashion.<sup>6</sup> The more subdued format of “Surrealist Intrusion” in the history of surrealist exhibitions may also account for the critical neglect.<sup>7</sup> As they had done under different circumstances in the 1947 and 1959–60 international exhibitions held in Paris, the group renewed their efforts to reestablish their activities and relevance with the 1960–61 New York exhibition.<sup>8</sup> This essay will thus examine the actual circumstances that engendered the tardy surrealist endeavor stateside and in so doing will illuminate the friction that also resulted as the surrealists sought to reiterate the vitality of the Parisian movement in the postwar American landscape at a moment when the contemporary art market was gaining momentum.

### Behind the scenes at D’Arcy Galleries

Unlike most of the surrealist exhibitions spearheaded by affiliates of the movement, “Surrealist Intrusion” was instigated by the dealer Maurice Bonnefoy, owner of D’Arcy Galleries. A neophyte to surrealism, he reached out to Breton for advice about showcasing surrealist artists at his Upper East Side gallery in early 1960, amid plans to expand his space in a move from 19 East Seventy-Sixth Street to 1091 Madison Avenue.<sup>9</sup>

6 The misunderstandings and tensions arising from Salvador Dalí’s participation in “Surrealist Intrusion” swiftly ended Breton and Duchamp’s longstanding collaboration on the international surrealist exhibitions (1938, 1942, 1947, and 1959–60), and strained their friendship. Upon learning from Claude Tarnaud’s incendiary account of the opening about Dalí’s unexpected and provocative presence in the exhibition, the surrealists in Paris condemned his self-promoting inclusion by issuing the collective tract, “We Don’t EAT It That Way.” For the most detailed account of the events by a key participant revisiting the episode over forty years later, see Édouard Jaguer, “À propos d’un écart absolu de Marcel Duchamp (et de l’exposition internationale du surréalisme à New York, 1960–61),” *Étant donné Marcel Duchamp*, no. 5 (2003), pp. 22–47.

7 Unlike “white cube” masterpiece installations typical of modernist museum display (monographic groupings, chronological, stylistic, and/or medium-specific linear hanging)—with the Museum of Modern Art as a case in point for the New York context (see the installation shots for William Rubin’s *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage*, Museum of Modern Art, ed., <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1884?locale=en>, accessed July 17, 2018)—the international surrealist exhibitions adopted outmoded and unconventional methods of hanging artwork (non-linear, salon-style arrangements juxtaposing heterogeneous works, integrated into Marcel Duchamp’s theatrical exhibit designs, for instance) in order to stage singular surrealist environments. Commentators usually perceived these spectacular tactics as funfair antics or cheap provocation, unworthy of serious aesthetic appraisal. What critics failed to grasp was the subversive intent of the surrealist exhibition strategies. Disrupting fine art categories and criteria, the disembodied gaze, individual authorship, and stylistic homogeneity was exactly the point, however. By 1960, nonetheless, some art critics possessed a more nuanced understanding of surrealist aims as critical examination of “Surrealist Intrusion” demonstrates.

8 For an extensive reconstruction and in-depth analysis of “Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters’ Domain,” see chapters 8 and 9 of my doctoral dissertation, Power, “Les expositions surréalistes en Amérique du Nord” (note 2).

9 Mere blocks away from his previous Upper East Side space and a block from the Metropolitan Museum of Art between Eighty-Second and Eighty-Third Streets, the uptown locale was situated in a stronghold of dealers specializing in modern European masters. Leo Castelli opened

Formerly an international businessman based in Cuba, Bonnefoy, whose gallery specialized in non-Western art, particularly pre-Columbian, had connections with French collectors, notably Madeleine Rousseau.<sup>10</sup> The gallery venture also brought him into contact with surrealist artist and theorist Wolfgang Paalen (and subsequently his widow Isabel Marin) in Mexico, from whom he acquired pre-Columbian pieces.<sup>11</sup> Through these extended networks, in which dealers and collectors of non-Western art intersected with surrealist circles, Bonnefoy germinated the plan to expand his activity to surrealism during a stay in Paris where he visited the “Exposition internationale du Surréalisme” (E.R.O.S.), held at the Galerie Daniel Cordier in 1959–60.

In an introductory letter to Breton, the dealer outlined his intention to present “significant European surrealists” in his new larger premises. Subsequently, he also proposed a show juxtaposing non-Western objects with surrealist works.<sup>12</sup> Prefiguring William Rubin’s 1984 MoMA tour de force “Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern,” Bonnefoy’s idea was to demonstrate the influence of the non-Western pieces on the surrealist ones.<sup>13</sup> From the start, his formalist approach revealed a superficial grasp of surrealism’s basic tenets. Ironically, of the four non-Western pieces that were included in “Sur-

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his first New York gallery in his fourth-floor apartment at 8 East Seventy-Seventh Street in 1957 in the same area. Bonnefoy stated his intentions in an initial letter to Breton, January 30, 1960, <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100241310>, accessed July 17, 2018.

- 10 Bonnefoy had worked for the familial maritime transport business based in Cuba and had traveled widely in South America, Africa, Indonesia, and New Guinea, which explains his interest in non-Western art. Conversation with the dealer’s son Olivier Bonnefoy, December 13, 2005. Selected exhibitions held at D’Arcy Galleries prior to “Surrealist Intrusion” include “A Survey of Pre-Columbian Cultures,” “African Art,” “3,000 Years of Mexican Art,” and “The Arts of Primitive Man; Mother and Child in Primitive Art,” all in 1957; then “6,000 Years of Primitive Art,” “Primitive Art from the Miguel Covarrubias Collection,” and “Treasures of Pre-Columbian America” in 1958. Madeleine Rousseau (1895–1980) worked for the Association populaire des amis du musée (APAM, est. 1936) and edited its journal, *Le Musée vivant*. As an art historian, collector, and educator, she was involved in the postwar Parisian art scene, promoting both non-Western and contemporary art, especially abstraction.
- 11 Paalen also supplied objects to New York dealer André Emmerich. Conversation with André Emmerich, November 22, 2005. The surrealist affinity for non-Western objects was longstanding and profound. Savvy dealers such as Emmerich played up those connections to appeal to a broader clientele. For instance, an advertisement for his gallery, which appeared above the publicity for “Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters’ Domain,” proposed “aspects of surrealism & fantasy in pre-Columbian art.” See *New York Times*, January 1, 1961, p. X14.
- 12 Letter from Maurice Bonnefoy to André Breton, February 12, 1960, <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100241310>, accessed July 17, 2018.
- 13 The idea was hardly novel as New York galleries had been showcasing the modernist primitivism paradigm since the 1910s. See Marius de Zaya, “Statuary in Wood by African Savages. The Root of Modern Art, 1914,” in Jack Flam with Miriam Deutch, eds., *Primitivism and Twentieth Century Art. A Documentary History* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 70–72. Also Stieglitz’s installation of works by Picasso and Braque with African art at Gallery 291, 1915; and de Zayas’s Modern Art Gallery, 1916. “Early African Heads and Statues from the Gabon Pahoin Tribes,” organized by Paul Guillaume at Durand-Ruel’s New York Gallery in 1933, juxtaposed African sculptures with paintings by Derain. That show was recently restaged at the Almine Rech Gallery in New York (May–June, 2017).

realist Intrusion,” none of them were from Bonnefoy’s gallery. Vincent Bounoure, a non-Western art specialist and recent member of Breton’s coterie who authored the “Surrealist Intrusion” catalogue essay titled “Surrealism and the Savage Heart,” rejected the pieces Bonnefoy had initially suggested.<sup>14</sup> It was thus left to Duchamp to negotiate the loans for the objects, which were borrowed from the Museum of Primitive Art, founded by Nelson A. Rockefeller in 1954.<sup>15</sup>

Once Breton had agreed to collaborate with Bonnefoy—who had offered the poet consultant fees and a cut on sales from any works he secured—they corresponded regularly.<sup>16</sup> Their epistolary exchange provides an invaluable source of information about the organizational aspects, affording an exclusive glimpse behind the scenes of “Surrealist Intrusion.” Despite the absence of D’Arcy Galleries records, primary documents from a number of archives, primarily the André Breton archive and Julien Levy Papers, offer insight into the logistics, curatorial process, and intent.<sup>17</sup> For example, prior to reaching out to Breton, Bonnefoy had already been in discussion with the French artist Jean-Jacques Lebel, who was handling the selection of works by a younger generation of artists affiliated with the Parisian surrealist group—Jean Benoît, Agustín Cárdenas, Yves Elléouët, Manina, Mimi Parent, and Unika Zürn—to be showcased at the gallery in April.<sup>18</sup> As soon as

14 Bonnefoy sent photographs of the objects, whose “art for art’s sake” qualities Bounoure found irrelevant to the surrealist vision. The surrealists’ affinity for non-Western art was related to its transformative function rather than formal characteristics. Letter from Vincent Bounoure to André Breton, August 24, 1960, <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100527080>, accessed July 17, 2018.

15 The loans comprised a Tlingit or Haida eagle headdress from British Columbia, a slit-gong head from the New Hebrides, a standing figure from the Marquesa Islands, and a male ancestor figure from Easter Island. See the checklist insert for “Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters’ Domain,” D’Arcy Galleries, ed., exh. cat. (New York: D’Arcy Galleries, 1960).

16 “Qu’il s’agisse de peintres anciens ou nouveaux, notre collaboration devrait se concevoir, à mon sens, sur une base monétaire qui tiendrait directement compte de la vente ici des œuvres sélectionnées par vous, en France, ou ailleurs. Dans le cas de peintres ‘nouveaux’, notre Galerie tiendra compte dans son prix de vente d’honoraires de ‘consultant’ comme cela se pratique couramment ici lorsque la sélection de certains peintres se fait en Europe. Dans le cas de peintres ‘anciens’ où les prix sont d’autant plus flexibles que l’œuvre est plus rare, il vous suffirait de m’indiquer à la fois le prix demandé par le vendeur et celui suggéré pour la vente. Ce dernier me servira de base.” Bonnefoy to Breton, February 12, 1960 (note 12).

17 The surrealists were usually present during the development phase of their exhibitions, which comprised a form of collective activity carried out in parallel to other endeavors. Their regular meetings facilitated direct communication and eliminated the need for written correspondence, which accounts for the scarcity of archival documents relating to surrealist exhibitions such as “First Papers of Surrealism.”

18 The son of Robert Lebel, a close associate of Breton and Duchamp, Jean-Jacques Lebel had frequented the surrealist group briefly in the 1950s and exhibited in “E.R.O.S.” Bonnefoy mailed Breton a copy of the letter, dated March 5, 1960, he had sent to Lebel, who suggested replacing the works by Manina, Mimi Parent, and Unika Zürn with others by Jacques Lacomblez, Étienne Martin, and Roberto Crippa. Of the latter, Lacomblez, who was associated with Édouard Jaguer

Breton was onboard, Bonnefoy canceled the arrangement with Lebel, counting on the poet to act as his expert surrealist supplier.<sup>19</sup>

Although the final configuration of “Surrealist Intrusion” borrowed heavily from the artists and works on view in “E.R.O.S.,” Bonnefoy was adamant about excluding any work with explicit erotic content, no doubt fearing that any sexual innuendo would be off-putting for his more conservative American clientele.<sup>20</sup> To purely commercial ends, Bonnefoy insisted on exhibiting representative works by well-known surrealist artists from European collections that had never been shown in the United States, depending on Breton’s connections to obtain them.<sup>21</sup> Seeking formal similarities between the works by established surrealist artists and the younger generation, the dealer once again betrayed his ignorance of the surrealist perspective on the visual arts. Bonnefoy’s formalist approach to surrealist visual production was widespread in the United States, as New York critics parroted similar expectations, adopting a connoisseurial attitude in praise of the “surrealist old masters,” such as Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, Francis Picabia, Man Ray, and Yves Tanguy, whose work set an aesthetic standard against which the younger generation could hardly compete.<sup>22</sup>

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and Phases, was the only artist included in “Surrealist Intrusion.” Once he had secured Breton’s participation, Bonnefoy no longer needed Lebel’s services and canceled their arrangement. See <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100241310>, accessed July 17, 2018.

- 19 “Je veux absolument donner à ma Galerie une orientation précise et qui se reflétera d’une façon pertinente dans le choix des œuvres exposées tout au long de l’année. ... Je ne peux faire mieux que de m’en remettre complètement à vous pour le choix des peintres et la sélection de leurs toiles. Ce principe établi, il sera nécessaire pour moi de prévoir à l’avance le programme des expositions à venir et d’avoir ici, en permanence, un stock substantiel des œuvres qui, n’étant pas nécessairement exposées, seront néanmoins disponibles lorsque des collectionneurs se présenteront.” Letter from Bonnefoy to Breton, February 25, 1960, <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100241310>, accessed July 17, 2018.
- 20 “Vous connaissez comme moi l’Amérique et vous savez sans doute que la notion d’érotisme en peinture doit être abordée ici avec une prudence calculée. En d’autres termes, s’il est vrai qu’il soit ‘le seul art à la mesure de l’homme’, l’érotisme ne devrait pas se poser à New York et surtout dans une grande exposition rétrospective en manifeste absolu du surréalisme.” Letter from Bonnefoy to Breton, February 26, 1960, <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100241310>, accessed July 17, 2018.
- 21 On February 12, 1960 (note 12), Bonnefoy wrote to Breton: “Votre liste des ‘anciennes forces’ concorde presque point par point avec celle que j’avais provisoirement établie: Arp, Bellmer, Brauner, Duchamp, Ernst, Giacometti, Gorky, Lam, Man Ray, Matta, Miró, Paalen, Tanguy.” The dealer also requested that the exhibited works be available for sale although there were exceptions, such as André Masson’s *The Cardinal Points* (1923) and Francis Picabia’s *Portrait of Arthur Craven* (1918) lent by Simone Collinet, Breton’s first wife, and a number of pieces from Julien Levy’s collection. See checklist insert, “Surrealist Intrusion,” exh. cat. (note 15). For a list of the twenty-one works (including sale price and insurance value) that Julien Levy consigned to D’Arcy Galleries, see letter from Bonnefoy to Levy, November 12, 1960, Series I., Box 11, Folder 4, Julien Levy Gallery Records, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.
- 22 See Canaday, “Surrealistic Sanity” (note 4), p. 55; Genauer, “Art. Dalí and Some Surrealist Enchanters” (note 4), p. 19; and Sandler, “New York Letter” (note 4), p. 33. As Anne Umland has convincingly demonstrated, MoMA’s iconic collection of surrealist painting and sculpture, displayed in a linear presentation of surrealist “masterpieces” from the 1940s through the 1950s, informed American narratives about surrealism. See Umland’s essay in this volume.



Beginning in July 1960, two of Breton's associates, Édouard Jaguer and José Pierre, joined the surrealist curatorial team, stepping in while the poet was vacationing in the south of France to locate works owned by dealers, collectors, and artists in Europe.<sup>23</sup> At that point, both co-organizers gradually got a better sense of Bonnefoy's general ignorance and veritable outsider status. They discovered, for instance, that the dealer was entirely unaware of Dalí's *persona non grata* rapport with the surrealists<sup>24</sup> when Bonnefoy unknowingly asked Breton to consult with Duchamp about obtaining older works by Dalí and inviting him to the opening.<sup>25</sup> If at first Bonnefoy's philistinism and crass commercialism was a source of ridicule for the surrealist organizers, their mockery soon turned into annoyance and ire.<sup>26</sup>

As they had done for "First Papers of Surrealism" in 1942, the surrealists were attuned to presenting surrealism with an American slant, although this was not reflected in the selection. Of the fifty-eight participating artists, a mere seven could pass for American: William Copley, Joseph Cornell, Marcel Duchamp, Arshile Gorky, Jasper Johns, Man Ray, and Robert Rauschenberg, only three of whom featured in the catalogue.<sup>27</sup> Copley, Duchamp, Johns, and Rauschenberg were later added to a separate checklist insert. In unpublished handwritten notes, José Pierre sketched some of their preliminary ideas for both the exhibition and the accompanying catalogue. Proposed catalogue essays related surrealism to American themes, such as abstract expressionism, ancient myths and legends, film, poetry, and black humor, whereas the overarching idea for the exhibition was to embody the surrealist universe, as was generally the case for the movement's exhibitions, whether explicitly tied to a surrealist theme like "E.R.O.S." or not.<sup>28</sup>

23 Édouard Jaguer was a French poet and critic affiliated with surrealist circles who contributed to journals from *La Main à Plume*, published during the German occupation of France, to *La Révolution la nuit* and *CoBrA* in the postwar period. In 1953 he founded Phases, a publication and exhibition platform to promote international artists associated with "lyrical abstraction," the international counterpart to abstract expressionism. A French writer, critic, and art historian, José Pierre actively participated in Parisian surrealist group activities from 1952 to 1969, including their international exhibitions from 1959–60 to 1965: "E.R.O.S.," "Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain," and "Absolute Deviation (L'Écart absolu)."

24 The Catalan artist had been excommunicated from the movement in 1938 for his blatant self-promotion and courting commercial interests, hence Breton's derogatory anagram "Avida Dollars."

25 In a letter dated July 9, 1960, Bonnefoy wrote to Breton about contacting Duchamp, who was friends with Dalí and was vacationing in Cadaqués, the town adjacent to Port Lligat, where the Catalan artist resided, <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100241310>, accessed July 17, 2018.

26 For a lengthy account of the organizers' standpoint, see Édouard Jaguer's letters of July 15, 1960, and July 24, 1960, to André Breton, <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100684680>, accessed July 17, 2018; and <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100484070>, accessed July 17, 2018.

27 Having married Alexina "Teeny" Matisse in 1954, Duchamp was granted American citizenship on December 30, 1955.

28 Of the proposed essays and prospective authors only José Pierre's text appeared in the catalogue, which featured: "Homage to Indian Art (Souvenirs of a Journey to Arizona)" (André Breton),

Titled “The Invention (or Reinvention) of the World,” the early draft reveals the conceptual underpinnings of the 1960 show.<sup>29</sup> Drawing connections between surrealism and non-Western cultures from an experiential rather than a formal perspective, the tripartite structure referenced the title of Paul Gauguin’s painting *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (*D’où venons-nous, que sommes-nous, ou allons-nous?*).<sup>30</sup> It thus celebrated the painter as a precursor to surrealist painting and situated surrealism in relation to the past (origin, history), present (state, psychoanalysis), and future (becoming, utopia). Adopting the surrealist analogical approach, each of the exhibiting artists was identified with a specific object, animal, or idea, and grouped under one of the three main parts. This elaborate system of associations was discarded, although analogical charts were developed for the various “enchanters” in the “Surrealist Intrusion” catalogue.<sup>31</sup> Of primary relevance here is the surrealist insistence on establishing a radically distinct genealogy as an alternative to official art-historical narratives (and in particular the formalist, teleological progression of modern art).<sup>32</sup>

While conforming to Bonnefoy’s demands that the catalogue follow the same physical format he habitually used at the gallery, its contents surpassed the parameters of a conventional exhibition publication.<sup>33</sup>

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“American poetry since Whitman” (?), “Funeral March in Jackson Pollock’s honor (Abstract U.S. art and Surrealism)” (José Pierre), a passage from Benjamin Péret’s preface to *Anthology of American Myths, Tales and Legends*, “American Cinema” (Gérard Legrand), and “Nonsense and Black Humor” (Robert Benayoun); <http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/56600100009890>, accessed July 17, 2018.

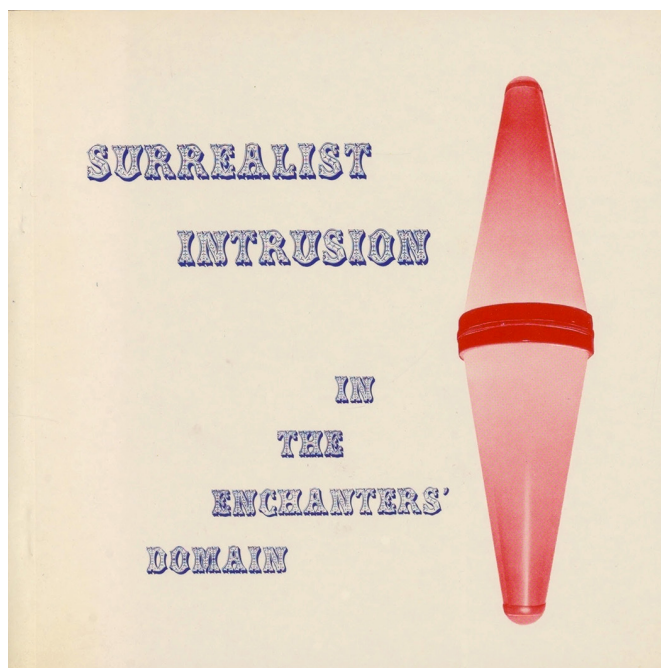
29 The proposed title referenced the eponymous 1952 film by Michel Zimbarba and Jean-Louis Bedouin with commentary by Benjamin Péret. The poetic 25-minute cinematic experiment in praise of “primitive thought,” which premiered at the Cinémathèque française in Paris, is a postwar surrealist classic. In José Pierre’s notes, other potential themes were listed: Homage to Indian Art, Striptease, Homage to Charles Fourier, and the Key: to freedom, dreams, etc. José Pierre, “Notes,” <http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/56600100009890>, accessed July 17, 2018.

30 In July 1950, Breton was interviewed by Jean-Louis Bedouin and Pierre Demarne for a radio broadcast with the same title. See André Breton, *Œuvres Complètes*, Marguerite Bonnet, Philippe Bernier, Étienne-Alain Hubert, and José Pierre, eds., vol. 4 (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), pp. 618–624.

31 During the New York exile, Breton renewed his interest in the philosophy of French nineteenth-century utopian socialist Charles Fourier, whose theory of universal analogy was central to the orientation of postwar surrealism. See Fabrice Flahutez, *Nouveau monde et nouveau myth. Mutations du surréalisme, de l’exil américain à l’Écart absolu’ (1941–1965)* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2007).

32 In a chapter of *L’Art Magique* titled “Two Great Syntheses. Gustave Moreau and Paul Gauguin,” Breton featured a reproduction of the painting, which he considered to be the artist’s “veritable spiritual testament.” See Breton, *Œuvres Complètes* (note 30), p. 269. In his text, Gauguin’s painting offers a counter example to the purely formal concerns of decorative painting (symbolism versus impressionism), a contrast Breton transposes to the 1950s context with surrealist “psychic automatism” versus the “plastic automatism” of abstract expressionism, a viewpoint expressed by Édouard Jaguer and José Pierre in their catalogue essays for “Surrealist Intrusion.”

33 The 7 × 7 in. (18 × 18 cm) square, sixty-page publication conformed to Bonnefoy’s stipulations. According to Édouard Jaguer, the catalogue “remains a faithful reflection” of their concerns. See Jaguer, “À propos d’un écart absolu de Marcel Duchamp” (note 6), p. 24. The catalogue was a primary point of contention between the organizers and Bonnefoy, who threatened not



153 Marcel Duchamp, cover design for the catalogue for the exhibition "Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain," D'Arcy Galleries, New York, 1960.

Designed by Duchamp, the cover features a large embossed image of an enigmatic tobacconist carrot, a red minimalist figure juxtaposed with the elaborate, outmoded typography of the title in blue (fig. 153)—a reference to the actual object that purportedly graced the facade of the gallery. Preceding the title page and exhibition credits, Breton's and Duchamp's handprints, signed and dedicated to the latter's wife Teeny, visualized the authorial imprint of the two principal organizers and were a nod to the occult-themed show (figs. 154 and 155).<sup>34</sup> The rest of the catalogue is divided into three parts: a surrealist pre-history devoted to their pantheon of enchanters, both historical and legendary; three essays by surrealist affiliates Édouard Jaguer, José Pierre, and Vincent Bounoure; and an alphabetically-arranged section with entries and

to publish it because the deadlines were not respected. Breton was expected to write an essay, which never materialized, and Édouard Jaguer had to submit a revised version of "La Face incon nue de la Terre," a catalogue preface for the eponymous exhibition at the Galerie Saint Laurent in Brussels in 1960; <http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/56600100986530>, accessed July 7, 2018.

34 Jaguer explained that the handprints replaced the missing texts. An allusion to chiromancy, the practice of palm reading had precedents in the surrealist-oriented publication *Minotaure*. See Georges Hugnet, "Petite rêverie du grand veneur," *Minotaure* 2, no. 5 (1934), p. 30; and Lotte Wolf, "Révélation psychiques de la main," *Minotaure* 2, no. 6 (Winter 1935), pp. 38–44.



154 Handprint by André Breton, "Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain," D'Arcy Galleries, New York, 1960.



155 Handprint by Marcel Duchamp, "Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain," D'Arcy Galleries, New York, 1960.

images for the participating artists.<sup>35</sup> Whereas the texts and the catalogue of artists were characteristic of a more standard exhibition catalogue, the enchanters section was an innovation and deviated from the museum or gallery norm while mimicking their features, such as Alfred Barr's modern art chart for the cover of "Cubism and Abstract Art."<sup>36</sup> Situating surrealism within an alternative history, Breton's lineage of occult precursors—from Circe, Merlin, and Simon Magus to Mélusine, Kling-sor, Armide, Prospero, and Maldoror—posited the surrealist artist as a visionary and underscored the transformative function of art in opposition to the mainstream American formalist history of the movement, forged largely by the Museum of Modern Art (fig. 156).

35 Translating the texts from French was a central concern, especially given their poetic tenor. The question of translation was not limited to linguistic challenges but also entailed the "translation" of basic surrealist concepts to a visual arts (and American) context. Maurice Bonnefoy recommended Julien Levy to both Édouard Jaguer and André Breton, who agreed with his choice. Claude Tarnaud, a writer, artist, and member of the surrealist movement who was working at the time as a translator for the United Nations in New York also contributed to the catalogue texts in English at Breton's request. André Breton, "Letter to Claude Tarnaud, October 10, 1960," TARN 5, Fonds Claude Tarnaud, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

36 See, for instance, MoMA's 1943 "American Realists and Magical Realists" or Julien Levy's "The Disquieting Muse. Surrealism," Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, 1958.







and those affiliated with Édouard Jaguer's Phases group (Karl Otto Götz, Jacques Lacomblez, Carl Frederik Reuterswärd, Pierre Alechinsky, Gianni Dova).<sup>38</sup> This organizational logic allowed for an inclusive roster of artists, some of whom were no longer within the movement's orbit but whose work had been central to the surrealist project, while emphasizing its current and ongoing dynamism, relevance, and reach.<sup>39</sup> Although the grouping was not reflected in the alphabetical order of artists in the catalogue or the hanging (which was supposedly arranged in relation to the enchanters celebrated in the catalogue), the correspondence and press release conveyed this information.<sup>40</sup> Even given the much simpler organizing principle, American critics, faced with a stylistically heterogeneous selection of works and some lesser-known artists, were perplexed.<sup>41</sup>

### Staging enchantment

As he had done for the other major international surrealist exhibitions, Marcel Duchamp, the only member of the organizing team on site in New York, handled the installation design.<sup>42</sup> Yet the visual impact of

38 The tripartite structure echoes the placement of works that Breton arranged in his studio, on permanent display at the Musée National d'Art Moderne/Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, since 2003. For a sumptuous photographic essay of Breton's studio by Gilles Ehrmann, commissioned by Elisa Breton at the time of her husband's death, see Julien Gracq and Gilles Ehrmann, *42 rue Fontaine, L'atelier d'André Breton* (Paris: Adam Biro, 1999); and for an extensive analysis, Flahutez, *Nouveau monde* (note 31), pp. 423–425.

39 Dalí is a case in point. He was to be represented by two works: the painting *The Specter of the Angelus*, ca. 1934, characteristic of his paranoiac-critical method, and a photograph of his costume design for the 1939 "Dream of Venus" pavilion at the New York World's Fair, which was reproduced in the catalogue alongside a quote by Breton and an entry by Jean Schuster that briefly details the artist's career, including his expulsion from the surrealist movement in 1938—another example of how the catalogue served to clarify the surrealist stance.

40 The myriad of artwork and objects were installed throughout the seven gallery spaces. See the copy of the gallery floor plan Bonnefoy sent to Breton, <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100982520>, accessed July 17, 2018. Although the hanging is partially documented in a set of nine black-and-white photographs—roughly one third of the 150 works on the checklist are identifiable in the installation views—no known spatial rendering of the entire exhibition layout exists. Seven of the installation shots are reproduced courtesy of Collection David Fleiss, Paris. See Jaguer, "À propos d'un écart absolu de Marcel Duchamp" (note 6). In his account of the exhibition, Jaguer explained that the painters would be loosely associated with the enchanters: "[S]ans pour autant viser à une impossible 'illustration'; en quelque sorte se tenir à la fois au cœur et à distance dudit thème, dans le but ou l'espoir d'approfondir certaines analogies ou correspondances et de provoquer des éclairs de chaleurs entre les 'enchanteurs' et des peintres dont les recherches procèdent par définition de l'art magique." Jaguer, "À propos d'un écart absolu de Marcel Duchamp" (note 6), p. 23. In his letter of July 30, 1960, Victor Brauner wrote to Breton that he felt an affinity with all the enchanters rather than any one in particular. See <http://www.andrebretton.fr/view?rql=victor+brauner+juillet+30+1960>, accessed July 17, 2018.

41 Critic Robert Coates devotes a lengthy discussion to the roster, which he esteemed "too inclusive." Coates, "The Art Galleries" 1960 (note 4), pp. 198–201.

42 Primarily a writer, Claude Tarnaud, who co-edited with Yves Bonnefoy the short-lived surrealist-oriented journal *La Révolution La Nuit* (Revolution by Night) in 1945, joined the postwar

“Surrealist Intrusion” was less spectacular and rather understated as compared with his other interventions, a marked difference that did not go unnoticed in the press.<sup>43</sup> While vacationing in Cadaqués, Duchamp wrote to Breton explaining how the layout of the gallery, divided into seven smaller spaces, was ill-suited to the more grandiose, theatrical environments they had staged previously, and suggested that “a surrealist excursion to a tournament of diviners/soothsayers” would be more apt, especially given Bonnefoy’s reluctance to finance an elaborate installation.<sup>44</sup> Duchamp also assured the poet that D’Arcy Galleries was a reputable establishment, a remark that hints at the reservations the other Paris-based members of the team were having by that time. The reassuring, enthusiastic tone of his letter shifted to urgency in a subsequent note requesting they meet to discuss concerns regarding the show. The details of the conversation that ensued can be surmised in a lengthy collective missive addressed to the dealer on October 5, 1960, mere months before the scheduled opening. As the tensions became increasingly acute during their exchanges over the summer, the surrealist organizers—together in Paris for the first time since the inception of the project—decided to put the dealer in his place. In the letter, they reproached him for having an entirely different conception of the exhibition and being oblivious to the surrealist point of view: “There has been a fairly serious misunderstanding between you and us from the start. Everything is proceeding as if in your mind a surrealist exhibition should be prepared and presented absolutely according to the same routine formulas as a traditional, or even abstract, painting exhibition, devoid of any conceptual content.”<sup>45</sup> Bonnefoy’s main point of contention with the surrealists was their failure to respect deadlines and delays in publishing the catalogue, which the dealer threatened to cancel. In response to his ultimatum, they voiced their indignation at his complete lack of awareness of their more urgent commitments, such as their political stance against France’s war in Algeria, and the catalogue’s crucial

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surrealist ranks, participating in the exhibition “Surrealism in 1947” at the Galerie Maeght in Paris.

43 Writing in the *New Yorker*, Coates mentions both the 1938 Paris show that garnered international press coverage due to its elaborate decor and “First Papers of Surrealism” in 1942, which he had reviewed two decades earlier. Coates, “The Art Galleries” (note 4), p. 199.

44 This expression relates to Julien Levy’s first suggestion for the title of the exhibition, “Tournament of the Enchanters.” After a lengthy debate about the exact phrasing, with suggestions ranging from “Surrealist Intrusion in the Domain of the Enchanters” to “[...] in the Enchanters’ States,” a reference to the USA, and “[...] in the Realm of the Enchanters,” they finally agreed on “Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters’ Domain.”

45 Bonnefoy insisted that the works conform to habitual formats and dimensions so as to accommodate the low ceilings of the gallery space, whereas the surrealists sought to disrupt a linear, symmetrical hanging by including irregular forms and sizes (Paalen’s hexagonal canvas and Langlois’s long horizontal one). See Marcel Duchamp, André Breton, Édouard Jaguer, and José Pierre, “Letter to Maurice Bonnefoy,” October 5, 1960, <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100793540>, accessed July 17, 2018.

role of situating the exhibition within its ideological context.<sup>46</sup> Another lesser concern related to Duchamp's proposal for the decor, which entailed covering the floor with a thick rubber mat that was meant to incite a bodily viewing experience by encouraging visitors to jump up and down in front of the paintings.<sup>47</sup> To quell Bonnefoy's fears about the safety risks of the installation, they agreed to simplify the *mise-en-scène* by adopting what they termed a more improvisational approach.<sup>48</sup> Always striving for singularity in their exhibition designs, they opted for a subtle environment of small "inventions" comprising everyday household objects, to be distributed around the gallery in relation to the paintings, sculptures, and other works.

Duchamp's final inventory of these "readymades" included a seemingly random, effectively "improvised" array of accessories—some visible in the installation photographs and others mentioned in the press: a garden hose serpentine through the gallery, three living white chickens in a cupboard converted into a chicken coop, a ray of sunset (or sunrise), a child's bicycle hanging upside-down from the ceiling, a repurposed paint can and conch shell ashtrays, a glass show globe filled with red and green colored liquid on a pedestal, an old typewriter, a bowl of goldfish, a pink telephone placed on the seat of a baby stroller, andirons stacked with charred firewood, a special recording of a little girl awkwardly practicing scales on a piano alternating with Duchamp's own rendition of the Marseillaise, an *Arcane 17* star tarot card projected onto the ceiling, an electric model train in the storefront window, four clocks (one in each room) set at different hours, a tobacconist's "carrot" on the exterior, packs of cigarettes glued to an inside window, an antique time clock for guests to punch their invitations at the opening, and a traffic light blinking red and green.<sup>49</sup> *New York Times* critic John

46 The surrealists were referring to Bonnefoy's complete ignorance of the current political situation to which they were committed, notably the drafting and publication of the "Declaration of Insubordination in the Algerian War," commonly called the "Manifeste of 121," a tract denouncing French colonialist policies in Algeria signed by 121 intellectuals, including many surrealists, on September 6, 1960.

47 This kinesthetic feature was mentioned in the *ARTnews* preview: "[T]he foam rubber floor that Duchamp has arranged for one of the rooms." Roskill, "Surrealists" (note 4), p. 67.

48 By virtue of their collective nature and due to limited resources, the surrealist exhibitions commonly incorporated improvisational tactics to a greater or lesser degree.

49 Though seemingly random, the ordinary objects accrued significance on display and connected to the surrealist world in numerous ways. The toys were borrowed from Claude Tarnaud's children. See Claude Tarnaud, "Lettre à Édouard Jaguer," cited in Jaguer, "À propos d'un écart absolu de Marcel Duchamp" (note 6), pp. 26–27. An allusion to the alchemical origins of the pharmacy, the show globe filled with red and green water was an outmoded object placed in apothecary window displays in much the same way as the tobacconist's carrot on a shop's facade signaled the proprietor's activity. Duchamp recorded David Hare's daughter awkwardly practicing the piano. One critic mentions the grating piano exercises alternating with a rudimentary rendition of the Marseillaise played by Duchamp. See Canaday, "Nostalgia and the Forward Look" (note 4), p. X21. An explicit reference to the eponymous poetic work André Breton

Canaday described the result as “gently freakish,” concluding perhaps presciently that the “nightmare world has become home sweet home.”<sup>50</sup>

Three other display “innovations” are worthy of mention. Hung vertically between the paintings, small unframed rectangular mirrors captured the fleeting reflections of the public as they circulated through the galleries, an interactive device capturing the viewer’s participation in the artistic process and evoking Duchamp’s notion of “to see seeing.”<sup>51</sup> The mirror effect would have also inserted excess visual stimuli to an already packed presentation, thereby adding further distraction and disrupting the isolated aesthetic gaze the surrealists eschewed.<sup>52</sup> Hand-written paper price tags hanging from strings identified the works, while small paper flags signaling the artists’ nationalities were affixed to the artworks. These tacky alternatives to more tasteful wall labels or a price list could hardly have escaped the critics’ notice, although only Irving Sandler mentioned them in his write-up, concluding that “the atmosphere generated is more like an international trade fair than ‘The

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wrote while on a road trip through Canada during his US exile in 1944, the image of the tarot card, representing hope and regeneration, also signals the occultation of surrealism and surrealism’s postwar orientation to reaffirm its revolutionary stance and vitality after the ravages of war. The text was published in France in 1947, coinciding with “Le Surréalisme en 1947,” the first international surrealist exhibition following the exile. The equivocal allusion points to the predominant themes in the exhibition: esotericism as a metaphor for the surrealist quest for knowledge in the service of transformation. “Esotericism ... at least offers the immense interest of maintaining in a dynamic state the limitless field of its system of comparison, for man to discover the relationships between seemingly unrelated objects in order to partially discover the mechanics of universal symbolism.” Translated from the French by the author. See André Breton, “Arcane 17,” in Breton, *Œuvres Complètes* (note 30), p. 826. According to Canaday, there were five clocks in the same room, which Duchamp told him represented the omnipresence of time, but that the visitors might not notice them right away and that later recalling this detail might trigger an enigma. He also mentioned how the train cars advertised the names of participating artists. See Canaday, “Art. Surrealism With the Trimmings” (note 4), p. 36. Rather than an improvised addition to the panoply of objects, the “carotte de tabac” had been shipped from Paris along with the second shipment of artwork. The surrealist organizers explained, not without irony, to Bonnefoy that the object was proof that they were trying not to ruin him with the installation and that the exterior signage fulfilled both the surrealist criterion of singularity and the dealer’s requirement of economy. They boasted that it would bring in more visitors than anything designed by Arp or Miró but paradoxically no mention of it was made in the press. See Duchamp et al., “Letter” (note 45). In a footnote, Étienne-Alain Hubert credits Radovan Ivšić with the purchase of the object at the Bazar de l’Hôtel de Ville. See Breton, *Œuvres Complètes* (note 30), p. 1462. The mirrors were not listed in Duchamp’s inventory but are visible in the installation photographs and were mentioned in a press review. See Genauer, “Art. Dalí and Some Surrealist Enchanters” (note 4), p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> Canaday, “Nostalgia and the Forward Look” (note 4), p. X21. The full title of the article, “Nostalgia and the Forward Look. Duchamp Surveys Surrealism and Dalí Forges Ahead in All Directions,” which reviews both “Surrealist Intrusion” at D’Arcy Galleries and Dalí’s concurrent solo show at the Carstairs Gallery, sums up his appraisal of them respectively: current surrealism looks old and the “old masters” still look fresh, whereas Dalí’s latest work looks new.

<sup>51</sup> See Marcel Duchamp, “The Creative Act,” in Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson, eds., *Marcel Duchamp Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 138–140; and Michel Sanouillet, ed., *Duchamp du signe* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), p. 37.

<sup>52</sup> One review in particular suggests that the surrealist installation successfully achieved the disruptive effect. See Coates, “The Art Galleries” (note 4), pp. 198–201.

Enchanters' Domain.”<sup>53</sup> No doubt an ironic stab at both the surrealists' insistence on the international dimension of the lineup and Bonnefoy's exclusively commercial concerns, the shoddy add-ons also betrayed a Duchampian disdain for the art system.<sup>54</sup>

On the one hand, an analysis of the vast network of connections between these objects—both within the context of the exhibition as well as the expansive field of surrealist practice across time and space—offers a hermeneutical field day.<sup>55</sup> As an ensemble their presence was intended to underscore how a surrealist exhibition as a collective artistic manifestation was an environment meant to enact the movement's principles and materialize its conceptual realm in opposition to museum and gallery displays of painting and sculpture presenting surrealism as another art-historical category or style. Although critics were often privy to this distinction—between the exhibition as artistic practice rather than institutional discourse—the average American gallery visitor would have been unlikely to grasp the difference.<sup>56</sup>

### A surrealist vanishing act?

By featuring emerging artists representing the most recent art world developments alongside the mainstays, “Surrealist Intrusion” participated in the movement's quest for renewal, thereby seeking to ensure not only its enduring vitality but also its legacy at a turning point when a plurality of approaches—neo-Dada, new realism, pop art, happenings, and so

53 Sandler, “New York Letter” (note 4), p. 33.

54 In a letter to Jaguer, Tarnaud recounted his reticence about the flags and the discussion with Duchamp that ensued. Jaguer, “À propos d'un écart absolu de Marcel Duchamp” (note 6), pp. 36–37.

55 A number of the scenographic details connected with the theme of enchantment and the related concepts of transformation or metamorphosis, albeit rather obliquely. For instance, the ceiling projection of *Arcane 17*, the star tarot card, was a key motif for Breton (and the title of his major work from the exile period). Along similar lines, the impressive show globe, placed on a pedestal alongside Duchamp's rectified readymade titled *Pharmacy*, a chromolithograph of a winter landscape, to which the artist added two spots of red and green paint along the horizon, signaled the alchemical dimension of the early pharmaceutical profession. The conical red tobacconist's shop sign was an obscure reference to the French revolutionary-period radical Père Duchesne and a metaphor for the politically engaged surrealist magician-artist. The surrealists channeled occult practices such as tarot for their poetic and transformative significance, so it was only fitting that they hired a fortune-teller to perform at the opening for “Surrealist Intrusion.” For in-depth analysis of the theoretical foundations and iconography of these themes, see Flahutez, *Nouveau monde* (note 31), pp. 219–278.

56 “A thoroughgoing surrealist exhibition involves more than a display of surrealist art. It must be a work of surrealist art in itself, and it was to this end that Mr. Duchamp was enlisting the services of the chickens, for which he had arranged a small, green-lighted recess of a gallery.” Canaday, “Art. Surrealism With the Trimmings” (note 4), p. 36. “Because this isn't really an art exhibition at all. ... It's the illustration of a theory.” Genauer, “Art. Dalí and Some Surrealist Enchanters” (note 4), p. 19.



forth—began to upend reigning modernist paradigms, notably abstract expressionism. Staging a postwar international exhibition of surrealism after having been sidelined from the New York scene for nearly a generation, the movement unexpectedly (though perhaps unsurprisingly) came face-to-face with one of its specters—none other than Dalí, the most American surrealist of them all. Harking back to the foundational moment of surrealism's American reception in the 1930s, when Dalí proclaimed "Ai bring ou surrealism,"<sup>57</sup> the Catalan showman precipitated a sudden ending to the surrealist revival. Prominently displaying his recent large-format painting *L'Oreille anti-matière*, as it was titled in the catalogue checklist, also known as *Madonna*, the "affair Dalí" provoked outrage from Breton's cohort, who canceled plans for an intercontinental tour of the show, which had been slated to travel first to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and then the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, West Coast venues, and even the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless, the surrealists had succeeded in orchestrating a comeback as critics could hardly fail to point out: "Surrealism is with us again this week in force strong enough to remind us how persistently it has been with us since its inception close to half a century ago, and also how strongly it has contributed to forms of contemporary art that we may not even think of as having surreal overtones," asserted John Canaday in his *New York Times* assessment of "Surrealist Intrusion." Yet his viewpoint unabashedly assigned surrealism to a "now lengthy past," praising the show's "nostalgic—traditional rather than innovational" dimension.<sup>59</sup> Always the "action painting" apologist, Irving Sandler

57 A phonetic transcription excerpted from the press conference Salvador Dalí gave during his first visit to New York in 1934, reprinted in Julien Levy, *Surrealism* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995; first published 1936 by Black Sun Press, New York), p. 160.

58 Now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's holdings, the painting had previously featured in Dalí's one-man show at the Carstairs Gallery, December 6, 1958, to January 20, 1959. Responding to the Dalí fiasco, Breton penned two personal letters to Duchamp in an attempt to get his side of the story. Written after the surrealists had received Claude Tarnaud's scathing report of the incident (see Jaguer, "À propos d'un écart absolu de Marcel Duchamp," note 6, pp. 33–34), Breton's first missive expresses his incomprehension, seeks an explanation, and clarifies the surrealist position, reiterating their current political engagement (against the conflicts in Algeria) and its incompatibility with the Catalan artist's participation, especially in view of Dalí's fascist tendencies and sympathies with the repressive Spanish regime under Franco. Unpublished letter from André Breton to Marcel Duchamp, December 6, 1960, Fonds d'archives de l'Association Marcel Duchamp, Villier-sous-Grez, France. In reply to Duchamp's cursory dismissal of the surrealist uproar (see Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk, eds., *Affectionately Marcel. The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp*, Ghent, Amsterdam: Ludion Press, 2000, p. 371), Breton's second letter expresses his regrets about the entire undertaking and his desire to forget about the unfortunate outcome as well as preserve his deep friendship with Duchamp. Unpublished letter from Breton to Duchamp, December 15, 1960, Fonds d'archives de l'Association Marcel Duchamp, Villier-sous-Grez, France.

59 Canaday, "Art. Surrealism With the Trimmings" (note 4), p. 36; Canaday, "Nostalgia and the Forward Look" (note 4), p. X21.

weighed in less kindly: “There can be no question that the Surrealist spirit persists and will probably continue to do so, but the particular kind of enchantment exhumed in this display stopped enchanting long ago.”<sup>60</sup> Robert Coates concurred that “Surrealist Intrusion” was “extremely valuable as a historical survey” although “the tomfoolery now [was] a little tired.”<sup>61</sup>

Maurice Bonnefoy, perhaps unwittingly, or maybe with uncanny commercial flair, had his finger on the pulse of the emerging art market when he embarked on the short-lived surrealist adventure. His prescient vision of the lasting appeal of “old novelties” or “new classics” had the desired effect of enchanting the press, who almost unanimously praised works by surrealism’s prominent artists. “It was the old masters who stole the show,” one critic observed.<sup>62</sup> Yet banking on surrealism was not without its risks and Bonnefoy’s promotion of Dalí backfired, fatally quashing his financial future in surrealist art. We find him two years later soliciting Joseph Cornell about organizing a solo show of his work, a venture which never came to fruition.<sup>63</sup> The new decade was indeed ushering in a sea change, and the American “soaped and scrubbed” version of surrealism would be riding the wave again with an *Artforum* special issue featuring Ed Ruscha’s cover design hitting the stands in September 1966 (fig. 157), just weeks before Breton’s passing, and a second act at the Museum of Modern Art—William Rubin’s 1968 blockbuster “Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage.”<sup>64</sup>

“Surrealist Intrusion” served as locus, a convergence point or “contact zone” where disparate agents—both individuals and objects—intersected, interacted, commingled, coalesced, and collided. At once a surrealist environment, a fleeting imaginary territory staking a claim for a different vision, a distinct way of relating to and existing in the world, and a Madison Avenue showroom counting on another future, primarily a platform for investment and monetary exchange—the exhibition encapsulates these conflicting agendas, demonstrating how the movement’s idealist aims were at odds with Bonnefoy’s commercial strategy yet dependent on him for the material conditions crucial

60 Sandler, “New York Letter” (note 4), p. 33.

61 Coates, “The Art Galleries” (note 4), pp. 198–201.

62 Canaday, “Surrealistic Sanity” (note 4), p. 55.

63 Letter from Maurice Bonnefoy to Joseph Cornell, December 12, 1962. Series 2.1, Box 2, Folder 11, Joseph Cornell papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

64 The title of Ed Ruscha’s cover image for the special Surrealism issue of *Artforum* 5/1 (September 1966), *Surrealism Soaped and Scrubbed*, might aptly describe the American reception of the movement. Not insignificantly, and coinciding with the social and political unrest of the 1960s that culminated in the May 1968 demonstrations and riots in France, some 300 protesters—including a wide spectrum of politically engaged artists—voiced their opposition to MoMA’s evisceration of Dada and surrealist visual production at the opening of “Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage” on March 25, 1968.

to their collective activity. Furthermore, the exhibition focuses a lens on the deep-rooted misconceptions of the movement's basic tenets that persist to this day, especially in the United States. A counterpoint to museum and gallery exhibitions of surrealist visual art, "Surrealist Intrusion" attempted, albeit to little avail, an incursion into the formalist aesthetic territory of the American art world. And while it turned out to be more short-lived than either the dealer or the surrealists had anticipated, their joint venture, though conflictual, bears witness to the movement's under-the-radar tenacity and lasting creative potential, if not the efficacy of their social and political ends—a view articulated most vehemently by one American art world insider: "Surrealism is by all odds the most important, interesting, and fertile artistic and/or literary movement of the twentieth century, both in its theory and, still more, its practice; in its realizations, the most beautiful and profound."<sup>65</sup> "Surrealist Intrusion" stands as a reminder of the movement's resistance to the distortions of its American reception, a relic of its enduring, if compromised, subversive force.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Lanes, "Surrealist Events" (note 4), p. 22.

<sup>66</sup> For a succinct analysis of the American reception of surrealism in the mid-1960s, see Scott Rothkopf, "Returns of the Repressed. The Legacy of Surrealism in American Art," in Dervaux, *Surrealism USA* (note 3), pp. 66–75.



165 Jasper Johns, *Target with Plaster Casts*, 1955, encaustic and collage on canvas with objects, 129.5 × 111.8 cm. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Leo Castelli.

## D'Arcy Galleries and New York Late Surrealism: Duchamp, Johns, Rauschenberg

Lewis Kachur

The D'Arcy Galleries were a blip on the screen of New York gallery history, exhibiting mostly contemporary artists on and around upper Madison Avenue for a number of years from around February 1957 to June 1968.<sup>1</sup> Run by Maurice Bonnefoy (1920–1999), their more notable shows ranged from Kurt Seligmann to pre-Columbian art. Bonnefoy had been stationed in Egypt during the Second World War and amassed a large African art collection. His gallery at 1091 Madison Avenue between Eighty-Second and Eighty-Third Streets, one block east of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was at the northernmost edge of the Madison gallery district that spread up the east side in the postwar years. The area was known more for modern art masters than for younger, new talent artists. D'Arcy Galleries were part of a postwar boom that saw the number of Manhattan galleries multiply from around ninety in 1945 to 406 in 1960.

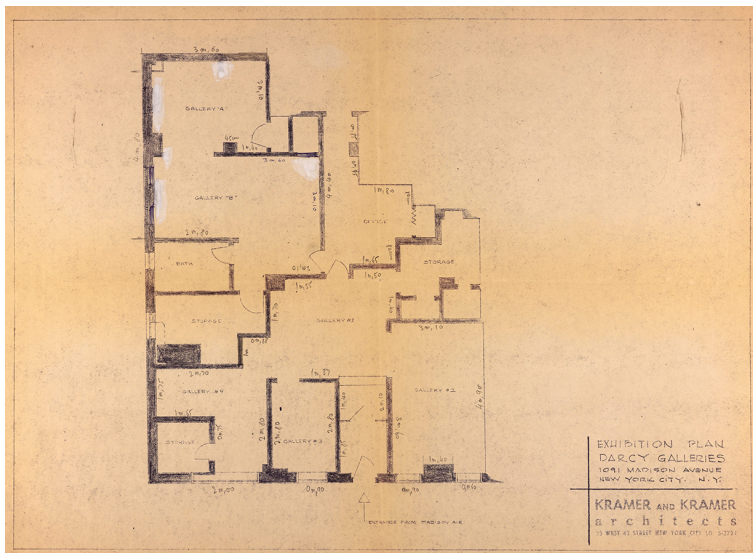
Though without a portfolio of surrealist artists, Bonnefoy was able to persuade André Breton to sanction the first international surrealist manifestation in New York in almost two decades since the “First Papers of Surrealism” exhibition of 1942 (although there had been a major effort, “Bloodflames 1947,” at the Hugo Gallery, which included several surrealists such as Roberto Matta and Arshile Gorky). Former surrealist dealers Julien Levy and Peggy Guggenheim had, by this time, shut down their galleries, which gave Bonnefoy an opening. He wrote to Breton on January 30, 1960, announcing his move from 19 East Seventy-Sixth Street to much larger premises at 1091 Madison Avenue, as well as his intention to turn from non-Western and pre-Columbian to

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<sup>1</sup> Claire Howard, “D'Arcy Galleries,” in Johannes Nathan and Sarah Goodrum, eds., *Art Market Dictionary* (Berlin: De Gruyter, forthcoming 2020).



recent European art.<sup>2</sup> After a lengthy correspondence, as well as extensive planning and a visit to Paris, “Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters’ Domain” opened at D’Arcy Galleries on November 28, 1960, with some 150 works by fifty-eight surrealists, or “enchanters”—painters and sculptors—on show until January 14, 1961. Bonnefoy was able to accommodate this large number of works in generous, meandering spaces, filling seven gallery rooms, three storage areas, and a bathroom (fig. 158).<sup>3</sup> No wonder one of the associations of the exhibition was to a labyrinth. This ambitious show is usually remembered for the contro-



158 Kramer and Kramer, architects, Ground plan of D’Arcy Gallery, entrance from 1091 Madison Avenue.

versial inclusion of a large, recent Madonna-themed canvas by Salvador Dalí, which drew a scathing protest statement from André Breton and twenty-four of his Paris followers.<sup>4</sup> Their manifesto “We Don’t EAR It That Way” attacked the “portentous Madonna” formally titled *L’Oreille anti-matière* (1958). Aside from this terrible pun, Dalí was tarred as “the fascist painter, the religious bigot, and the avowed racist, friend of Franco,” and a goateed photomontage of Gala was labeled *L.H.O.O.Q.*

2 Letter from Maurice Bonnefoy to André Breton, January 30, 1960, <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100241310>, accessed October 8, 2018. The two men corresponded extensively through 1960.

3 Interestingly, André Breton had a ground plan of the gallery, presumably to aid in visualizing the show; [http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100982520?back\\_rql=Any%20X%20ORDERBY%20FTIRANK%28X%20%20DESC%20WHERE%20X%20has\\_text%20%22Exhibition%20Plan%22&back\\_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.andrebretton.fr%2Fview%3F\\_fsb%3D1%26rql%3DEXhibition%2520Plan%26subvid%3Dtsearch](http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100982520?back_rql=Any%20X%20ORDERBY%20FTIRANK%28X%20%20DESC%20WHERE%20X%20has_text%20%22Exhibition%20Plan%22&back_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.andrebretton.fr%2Fview%3F_fsb%3D1%26rql%3DEXhibition%2520Plan%26subvid%3Dtsearch), accessed October 8, 2018.

4 Laid out in detail in Édouard Jaguer, “A propos d’un écart absolu de Marcel Duchamp (et de l’exposition internationale du surréalisme de New York, 1960–61),” in *Étant donné Marcel Duchamp* 5, 2003, pp. 22–48.

(*comme d'habitude*). Apart from the latter appropriation, Duchamp was treated relatively respectfully in the statement. Dalí's *Madonna* remained on view, and the New York press did not register the Paris protest. Yet the show should also be recalled as the first occasion since the 1942 "First Papers of Surrealism" show in New York that Marcel Duchamp had the scope to create an overall surrealist environment. Earlier exhibitions beginning in the 1930s fostered a large degree of surrealism's internationalism that, before these manifestations, was rather uninterested in artists of the Americas. In the case of "The Enchanters' Domain," André Breton's protest and its aftermath resulted in this exhibition having little follow-up, and the planned circulating tour was canceled. Bonnefoy did not go on to exhibit any of the younger surrealist artists as he had originally intended. Scholarly analysis of the exhibition did not take place until the Breton atelier auction of 2003, when a group of nine unpublished installation photographs emerged.<sup>5</sup> Recent examination of the original prints has brought out a number of interesting details, including Breton's annotations on the back of the photographs. Further specifics of both Duchamp's and Man Ray's submissions are discussed below.

### Duchamp and friends

Though retired from art dealing, Julien Levy still lived nearby in 1960, in southern Connecticut, with a large modern art collection. Duchamp involved his old friend, and borrowed what was most likely the largest single US loan from him, and called on Levy as an adviser and translator for the catalogue. Levy lent twenty-two works, the majority of which were for sale (fig. 159).<sup>6</sup> Works by Max Ernst and the late Arshile Gorky, both of whom Levy had represented, were especially numerous. Two of the Levy loans sold, Ernst's *Savage Moon* (1926) for \$4,500 and Victor Brauner's *Personnages* (1946) for \$1,800.

Duchamp had earlier collaborated on a Manhattan gallery exhibition, Sidney Janis Gallery's "Dada 1916–1923" show of 1953.<sup>7</sup> Yet he called on

5 Seven are published in *ibid.*, pp. 35–39. See also Susan Power, "Les expositions surréalistes en Amérique du Nord. Terrain d'expérimentation, de réception et de diffusion (1940–1960)," unpub. PhD diss., Université de Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2012; and Lewis Kachur "Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain: Duchamp's Exhibition Identity," in Anne Collins Goodyear and James W. McManus, eds., *aka Marcel Duchamp. Meditations on the Identities of an Artist* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2014), pp. 149–159.

6 Receipt from D'Arcy Galleries to Julien Levy, November 12, 1960, Series Ia. Box 11, Folder 4, Julien Levy Gallery Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

7 Catherine Craft, *An Audience of Artist. Dada, Neo-Dada, and the Emergence of Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 202–209.

# D'ARCY GALLERIES

1091 Madison Avenue • New York • BUTterfield 8-5750

November 12, 1960

## Received from:

Mr. Julien Levy  
Bridgewater, Conn.

on consignment for exhibition, and possible sale.

Artist	Title of work	Insurance by us	Net price to us
Max Ernst	Savage Moon	\$ 3,000	\$ 4,500
	Moon Mad	\$ 10,000	<del>\$ 16,000</del> not for sale
	Anxious Friend	\$ 5,000	\$ 7,000
	Collage	\$ 150	\$ 150
	Collage	\$ 150	\$ 150
Brauner	Cette espèce de chose	\$ 900	\$ 900
	Ego, id, and...	\$ 1,500	\$ 2,000
	Personnage, 1946	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,800
Bellmer	Double Composition	\$ 300	\$ 300
Tanguy	gouache (2x10 3/4)	\$ 1,500	not for sale
	gouache (4 1/2 x 11)	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,800
Man Ray	Anpor	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000
	Domesticated Egg	\$ 1,000	not for sale
Gorky	Drawing "A"	\$ 1,000	\$ 2,500
	Drawing "B"	\$ 1,000	not for sale <del>\$ 2,000</del> (to be replaced)
	Pastoral	\$ 10,000	not for sale
	Carnival	\$ 8,000	\$ 10,000
Copley	The Thinker	\$ 500	not for sale
Cornell	Shadow box	\$ 200	not for sale
	Glass bell	\$ 50	not for sale
Dali	Costume (photo)	\$ 200	\$ 200

Received 21 items,

48,950  
Hank Burt

159 Letters referring to works from Julien Levy's collection sent to the D'Arcy Galleries for exhibition and possible sale, and a 1962 announcement for the Stanley Brandon Kears sculpture exhibition, 1960-61. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives, Julien Levy Gallery records.

Janis Gallery for only one work here, an important Arp bronze, *Head with Three Disagreeable Objects* (*Trois objets désagréables sur une figure*, 1930).

Duchamp worked hard to install the 150 works with Bonnefoy and poet Claude Tarnaud, and incorporated a number of whimsical features, including an old typewriter, a fish bowl, and a *Tabac* sign, also embossed on the catalogue cover as the logo for the show. Rectangular mirrors were hung between many of the works, reflecting the spectators' gaze back at them. Authorship was downplayed, as there were no names





160 Photographer unknown, *Marcel Duchamp's Environment for the Enchanters' Domain* (detail), 1960. Closet corner between a work by Miró, 1950, and Salvador Dalí's *Madonna*, 1958. Paris, Collection David Fleiss, Galerie 1900–2000.

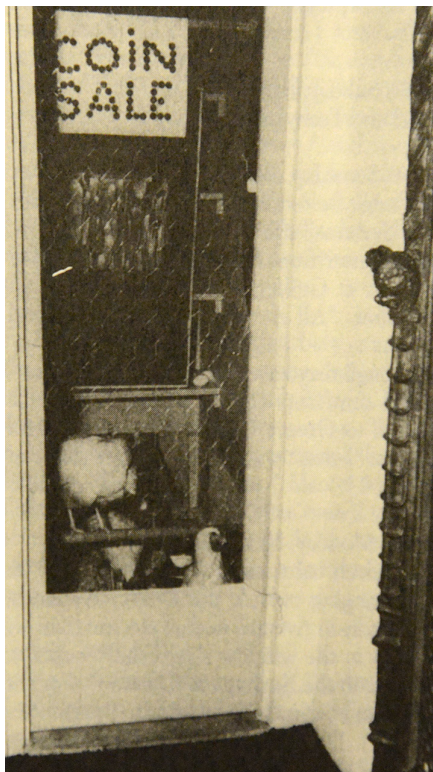
with the works, only the tiny flags of the artists' nationality attached to most frames, emphasizing internationalism in their diversity. As one experienced critic complained, the alphabetical checklist was of limited utility, and the catalogue only illustrated one work per artist—sometimes not even a work on view.<sup>8</sup>

And it was a rare moment for Duchamp to create three new temporary installations for the show, even as he labored in private on his final installation, *Étant donnés* (1946–1966). One of the three was performative, involving live animals, and further problematized whether temporary installations count as works of art, surrealist or otherwise.

Widely regarded as “retired” from art making in this era of his career, Duchamp undertook these elaborate installations, surprising even close family relations. Their main characteristic is that they were also highly varied. The most ambitious installation was physically marginal, set up in an illuminated closet off the gallery space and just to the left of the large, ornately framed Dalí *Madonna* (fig. 160). It was not photographed separately among the nine installation views Duchamp had made, but its location is just visible in the one featuring the Dalí *Madonna* on the

8 Robert M. Coates, “The Surrealists,” *New Yorker*, December 10, 1960, p. 199.

right, relating to the even more ornately framed Miró *Portrait of a Man in a Late Nineteenth-Century Frame* (1950) to the left. Breton uniquely annotated this photograph in his characteristic green ink on the front, with the words “3 poules blanches” and an arrow pointing to the closet. A grainy newspaper photograph is the only trace of a direct view into the closet, with the three white chickens in their improvised, wire-netted coop, lit by a green light (fig. 161). Above is a sizeable supertitle, “COIN SALE,” composed of seventy-seven US penny coins glued to a cardboard mount. The words have very different linguistic senses: a logical if unconvincing vending of penny coins in English, and, in French, “dirty corner,” leading to speculation about the production of fecal matter by the three birds.<sup>9</sup> The coins implicitly critique the venal commercialism of the art market, what Duchamp elsewhere called “the race for pennies. ... the beginning of monetizing art in the social form.”<sup>10</sup> Other, even bodily, metaphors are also possible when connecting the phrase to period titles like *Coin de chasteté* (*Wedge of Chastity*,



161 Photographer unknown, Marcel Duchamp's *Environment for the Enchanters' Domain* (detail), 1960, featuring closet with installation. Location unknown.

<sup>9</sup> Coates read it as French, and commented, “[I]t looked very clean to me.” Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> In the context of the sale of works by Picabia in 1926, as told to Calvin Tomkins in 1964. See Calvin Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp. The Afternoon Interviews* (Brooklyn: Badlands Unlimited, 2013), p. 35.



1954), the most recent of the two more conventional works Duchamp included at D'Arcy.<sup>11</sup>

That Duchamp placed the Dalí *Madonna* next to his closet hints at their growing friendship since the Duchamps began spending the summers, from 1958 on, visiting the Dalís at Cadaqués in Spain. Dalí had even agreed to Duchamp's suggestion that he arrive at the D'Arcy vernissage dressed as a girl, an astonishing plan not in the end carried out.<sup>12</sup> But Dalí did attend with his entourage of friends and collectors, and was warmly greeted on arrival by Duchamp. At some point in the evening one chicken escaped from the closet, and a newspaper report credits Dalí with recapturing the errant fowl.<sup>13</sup> One might think of Dalí as the *animalier* of surrealism, beginning with his live snails on the passenger mannequin in the renowned *Rainy Taxi* (*Taxi pluvieux*, 1938) of the 1938 Surrealist Exhibition in Paris. Just half a year before "Enchanters," in March of 1960, Dalí had performed in the video *Chaos and Creation*, which incorporated live pigs along with chicken feathers. Duchamp is even mentioned in the script, and one imagines it a topic of their summer chats in Cadaqués. While the use of live animals builds on Dalí's precedent, the specific choice of chickens resonates most pointedly with the numerous fowl in some of Robert Rauschenberg's most radical combines, such as *Odalisk* (1955–58). Duchamp knew *Odalisk* from their joint American Federation of Arts exhibition "Art and the Found Object" held at the Time-Life Reception Center in New York from January 12 to February 6, 1959.<sup>14</sup> Five Rauschenberg combines of the late 1950s include various stuffed fowl; thus, they were a kind of signature material. In turn, Rauschenberg took Duchamp's cue of live fowl and doubled their number in a later performance: *Linoleum* (1966) included a "costume" of an ungainly ten-foot rolling mesh chicken coop with six live chickens enclosed with the dancer Steve Paxton.

Duchamp's second installation was the green garden hose, as ubiquitous as the *Corner* was tucked away and hardly visible. He snaked this hose across the floor of the many rooms of the gallery, including in front of Dalí's *Madonna*. The hose hugs the left side floorboard along the length of another room, referencing two of Duchamp's early readymades

11 I speculate on the bodily metaphor in the exhibition space in my essay "Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain: Duchamp's Exhibition Identity," in Collins Goodyear and McManus, *aka Marcel Duchamp* (note 5), p. 153. The second submission is *Pharmacie* (1914), discussed further in the present text.

12 Reynolds Morse journal, roll 568, frame 929, Archives of American Art (AAA), New York.

13 Emily Genauer, "Art. Dalí and Some Surrealist 'Enchanters,'" *New York Herald Tribune*, December 4, 1960, clipping in the archives of the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres, Spain.

14 See also Kachur, *Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain* (note 5), pp. 149–50.



162 Photographer unknown, installation view of the exhibition “Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters’ Domain,” D’Arcy Galleries, New York, November 1960–January 1961. Paris, Collection David Fleiss, Galerie 1900–2000.

(fig. 162). The child’s bicycle on the ceiling unexpectedly activates that overhead zone, as the coal sacks had in the 1938 Surrealist Exhibition. And its wheels bring to mind the upright *Bicycle Wheel and Stool* (*Roue de bicyclette*) of 1913, recently refabricated for the “Art and the Found Object” show. In both cases the wheels are de-functionalized in these readymades.

The second, “assisted” readymade included is *Pharmacie* (1914), a banal print of a forest landscape by an unknown commercial artist to which Duchamp added small touches of red and green, as well as his signature and date. This work was one of Duchamp’s most frequently exhibited once he began participating in surrealist exhibitions from the 1930s. Its seemingly incomprehensible title is an allusion to show globes—glass vessels of colored liquid used in display windows of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American pharmacies.<sup>15</sup> Duchamp clarifies this in the D’Arcy exhibition by placing a by then antique and rather elaborate show globe adjacent to the work. From a letter he wrote to Breton,

15 “Mysterious show globes of the Apothecary. What are the True Origins?”; <http://waring.library.musc.edu/exhibits/ShowGlobes/Origins.php>, accessed July 1, 2018.



163 Photographer unknown, display case with works by Man Ray shown at "Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain," D'Arcy Galleries, New York, November 1960–January 1961. Paris, Collection David Fleiss, Galerie 1900–2000.

we know that its liquid colors were red, green, and yellow.<sup>16</sup> Thus it provided a gloss on the touches of red and green Duchamp added to the landscape print. Adjacency in the installation is key to the underlying message. Since this show globe presents a sizable sculptural form, elevated on a *socle*, plus varied colors, its visual interest would appear to verge on sculptural art in its own right. Visually overwhelming the small *Pharmacie*, Duchamp thus simultaneously problematizes his own concept of readymades.

In an adjoining room, with Miró's *Portrait* visible through the doorway, Duchamp's hose unspools in front of facing women in works by Giacometti and Masson (fig. 163). In between these two is a showcase niche dedicated to Duchamp's old friend Man Ray. This glass-fronted vitrine has two clear shelves supporting five of a generous representation of eight Man Ray works included in the show, the greatest number for any artist, whereas most had only two. These include the classic Dada-sur-

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Marcel Duchamp to André Breton, December 1, 1960; in Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk, eds., Jill Taylor, trans., *Affectionately, Marcel. The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp* (Ghent: Ludion Press, 2000), p. 370. Since there are three segments to the globe, Duchamp probably meant three separate colors.



164 Photographer unknown, installation view of “Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters’ Domain,” D’Arcy Galleries, New York, November 1960. Showing *Bed* by Robert Rauschenberg, *Fireplace and Hose* by Marcel Duchamp, and *Target* by Jasper Johns. Paris, Collection David Fleiss, Galerie 1900–2000.

realist objects *Gift* (*Cadeau*, 1921) and *Object to be Destroyed* (*Objet de destruction*, 1923) on the central shelf, flanking *Repainted Mask* (1941), a face mask that was also used in contemporaneous photo shoots. All three were borrowed from the Morton Neumann collection of Chicago. Below is the wooden sculpture *Domesticated Egg* (1930), with two drawings above, one presumably the watercolor *Anpor* (1919), lent by Julien Levy. Man Ray is thus included in a range of media and time periods, with the exception of photography, which seems not to have been represented at all in the exhibition. In this way, Duchamp utilized his relative independence in New York out of sight of the Paris group to feature two good friends who had *not* appeared in the “First Papers” surrealist exhibition of 1942: Man Ray and Salvador Dalí.

Duchamp’s green garden hose wends its way to an endpoint in a closed terminal room, in front of his third D’Arcy installation: what he called a “somewhat timid little invention”—an abbreviated fireplace (andirons and burnt logs) placed directly against the wall (fig. 164). This suggests a fire that had been doused by this very hose, thus uniting the two elements conceptually, just as the pseudo fire in the brazier had



been linked vertically to the suspended coal sacks in the 1938 Surrealist Exhibition. On the left are a painting by Gorky and Ernst's sculpture *Moon Mad* (1944), both borrowed from Levy. In the center niche, works by Rauschenberg, a shaped canvas *Meditation* (1948) by Wolfgang Paalen, and Johns are interspersed with the small rectangular mirrors that were spread throughout. The Rauschenberg and Johns are the same works that Duchamp had solicited for the Galerie Cordier "Exposition internationale du Surréalisme" ("E.R.O.S.") the year before, in 1959.

In Paris, however, Johns and Rauschenberg were shown in separate spaces. Here they would be united by Duchamp in the same room, flanking his own work, thus by adjacency aligning the pair, as well as himself with his two young American protégées. Their works both resonate in conception with Duchamp's burnt logs and garden hose, as mixed media composed of readymade elements. Duchamp's everyday readymade materials here are closer to those of Rauschenberg, whose quilt even includes a traditional "log cabin" pattern, probably a coincidental linguistic link to Duchamp's logs. On the other hand, Johns allowed his *Target* to be placed quite low, obliquely propped in the corner, melding into blinds behind. The light between the blinds is probably another Duchamp intervention: the suggestion of sunrise or sunset, intermingling their contributions all the more.<sup>17</sup>

Johns's mid-1950s works with bodily plaster casting, as in *Target with Plaster Casts* (1955) shown here, as well as his related *Target with Four Faces* (1955), feature a rare process for the period, which must have struck Duchamp as uncannily similar to his own, still secret, body casting for *Étant donnés*. Even more so, Duchamp had made two plaster casts in the summer of 1959, *With My Tongue in My Cheek* and *Torture-Morte*, addressing the now fragmentary, single body part more modestly, yet quite analogously to those atop Johns's two *Targets* (figs. 165 and 166). The framing of the foot in *Torture-Morte* (1959) further recalls the shallow box structures lined up atop these *Targets*. Duchamp could have seen them in Johns's first show (at Castelli Gallery, January–February 1958) or on the January 1958 cover of *ARTnews*, which reproduced *Target with Four Faces*. So, too, Johns, just at the moment of planning for "Enchanters" (late 1960), was also engaging conceptually by reading and reviewing the English translation of Duchamp's *Notes from the Green Box*.<sup>18</sup>

17 Thus the "rayon de soleil couchant (ou levant)" of exhibition displays mentioned in the letter from Duchamp to Breton, December 1, 1960, p. 370 (see note 16). Identified by Susan Power in "Les expositions surréalistes" (note 5), p. 116.

18 Published in *Scrap*, no. 2, New York (December 23, 1960); reprinted in Kirk Varnedoe, ed. and Christel Hollevoet, comp., *Jasper Johns. Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1996), pp. 20–21.





166 Marcel Duchamp, *Still-Torture*, 1959, painted plaster, flies, paper, wood, 29.5 × 13.3 cm. Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne.

### Problematizing categorization

These surrealist-exhibited early works of Johns and Rauschenberg thus should be contextualized as late surrealism as much as neo-Dada, a widely applied term of the time. Duchamp's imprimatur no doubt added to their growing reputations and, perhaps inadvertently, brought them under the late surrealist umbrella. So, too, Johns and Rauschenberg gave new life to the Duchampian readymade, and contributed to the Duchamp revival spurred by the 1959 Robert Lebel monograph.<sup>19</sup>

The end of Duchamp's hose implicitly points to the interchange of this adjacent trio. Their connection was recognized by the young art historian Mark Roskill, who characterized them in his review of the exhibition as distinct from "programmatically surrealism." He wrote of an

19 Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Grove Press, 1959).

"altogether different kind of value that Duchamp himself has had for such men as Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg." Roskill praises both *Target* and *Bed* as already as "durable" as comparable works "in the Duchamp suitcase," meaning the *Boîte-en-valise* series.<sup>20</sup> Such a connection is prompted by Duchamp's installation.

Duchamp was determined that this "event" not replicate previous efforts, and with his installations he succeeded in this.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, the prominent *New York Times* and *New Yorker* writers both compared it to the earlier international surrealist exhibition in New York, the 1942 "First Papers" show in midtown.<sup>22</sup> As John Canaday wrote in the *New York Times*, "A thoroughgoing surrealist exhibition involves more than a display of surrealist art, it must be a work of surrealist art in itself, and it was to this end that Mr. Duchamp was enlisting the services of the chickens, for which he had arranged a small, green-lighted recess of a gallery. Several goldfish, conventionally housed, were already on hand."<sup>23</sup> By 1960, even this mainstream critic grasped that the installation was "a work of surrealist art in itself." It had become no longer a provocation or surprise, but rather an expected part of the spectacle.

The writer and longtime *New Yorker* critic Robert Coates, however, saw the installation as "a little tired," and specified the garden hose as having less "shock value" than the flashlights of 1938, or the miles of string of 1942. He would seem to pronounce the final word on surrealism in the United States: "I participated, in a minor degree, in welcoming the 1942 exhibition, which was designed to launch the movement in this country. But the movement, as a movement, was already falling apart, and it might be said that instead of Surrealism's taking over America, America took over the Surrealists."<sup>24</sup>

Yet a surrealist exhibition as a work of surrealist art in itself, which Duchamp did more than anyone else to introduce, was developed further in the 1960s by the likes of Allan Kaprow and Brian O'Doherty,<sup>25</sup> and continues to unspool ubiquitously through exhibition rooms today.

20 Mark Roskill, "Surrealists," *ARTnews*, no. 59 (November 1960), p. 67.

21 In a letter from Marcel Duchamp to André Breton, November 27, 1960: "[T]he general formula doesn't duplicate that of previous surrealist events." In Naumann and Obalk, *Affectionately, Marcel* (note 16) p. 369.

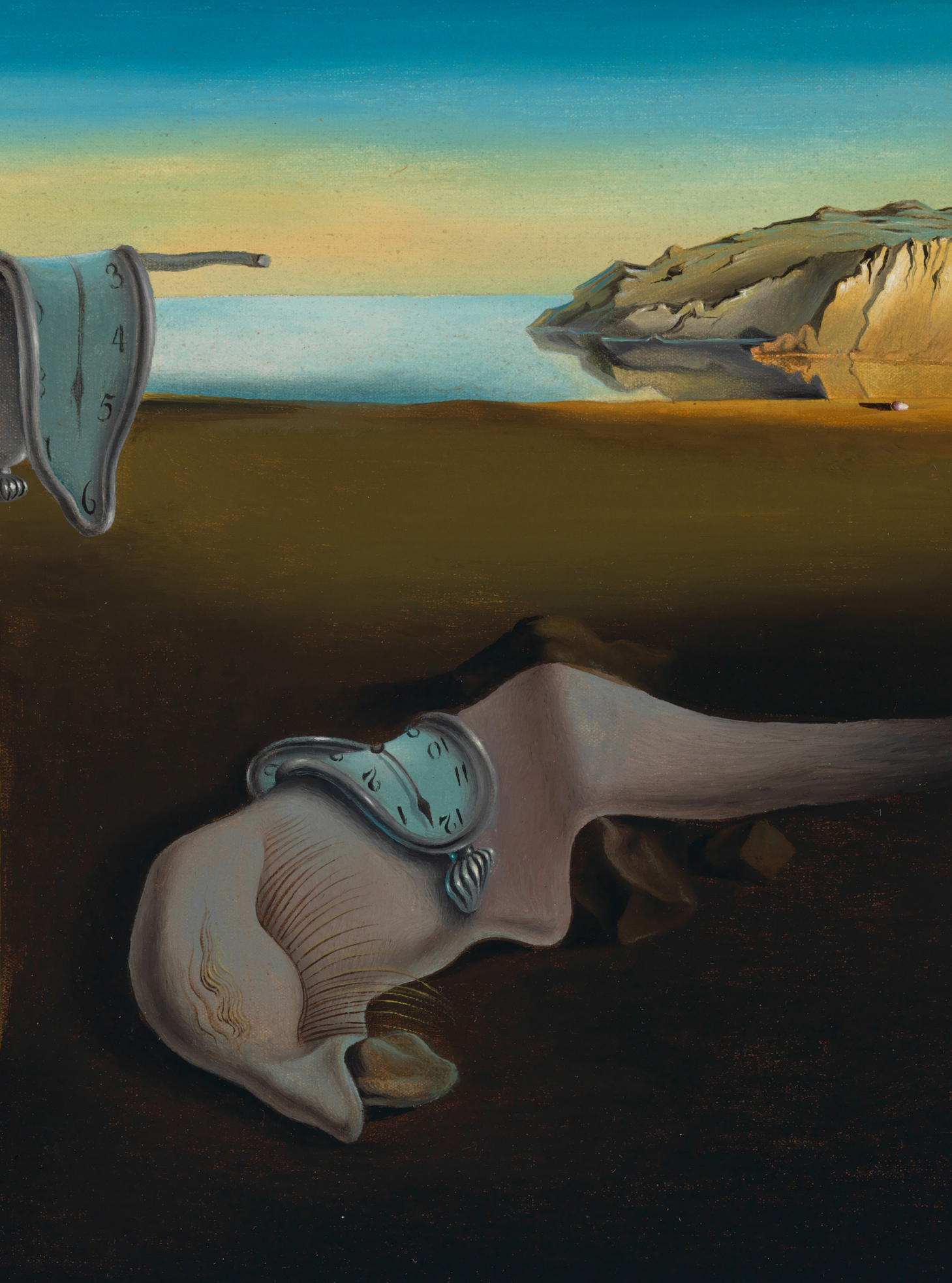
22 The 1942 "First Papers of Surrealism" exhibition is surveyed in Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), chap. 4.

23 John Canaday, "Art. Surrealism With the Trimmings," *New York Times*, November 28, 1960, p. 36.

24 Coates, "The Surrealists" (note 8), p. 201.

25 See works by Kaprow and others in Allan Kaprow *Assemblages, Environments and Happenings* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966). See also Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (1976) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and O'Doherty's own string installations.





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*Deplorably passé in Montmartre and Montparnasse even before the war, surrealism has a new lease on life along Park Avenue and in the 57th Street galleries.*

Klaus Mann, 1943

This volume brings the complex networks that fostered and sustained surrealism in North America into academic focus. Who—among collectors, critics, dealers, galleries, and other kinds of mediating agents—supported the artists in the surrealist orbit, in what ways, and why? What more can be learned about high-profile collectors such as the de Menils in Houston or Peggy Guggenheim in New York? Compared to their peers in Europe, did artists in the United States use similarly spectacular strategies of publicity and mediation? In what networks did the commercial galleries operate, locally and internationally, and how did they dialogue with museums? This book offers an innovative and last-ing contribution to research and scholarship on the history of art in America, while focusing specifically on the expansion and reception of surrealism in the United States.