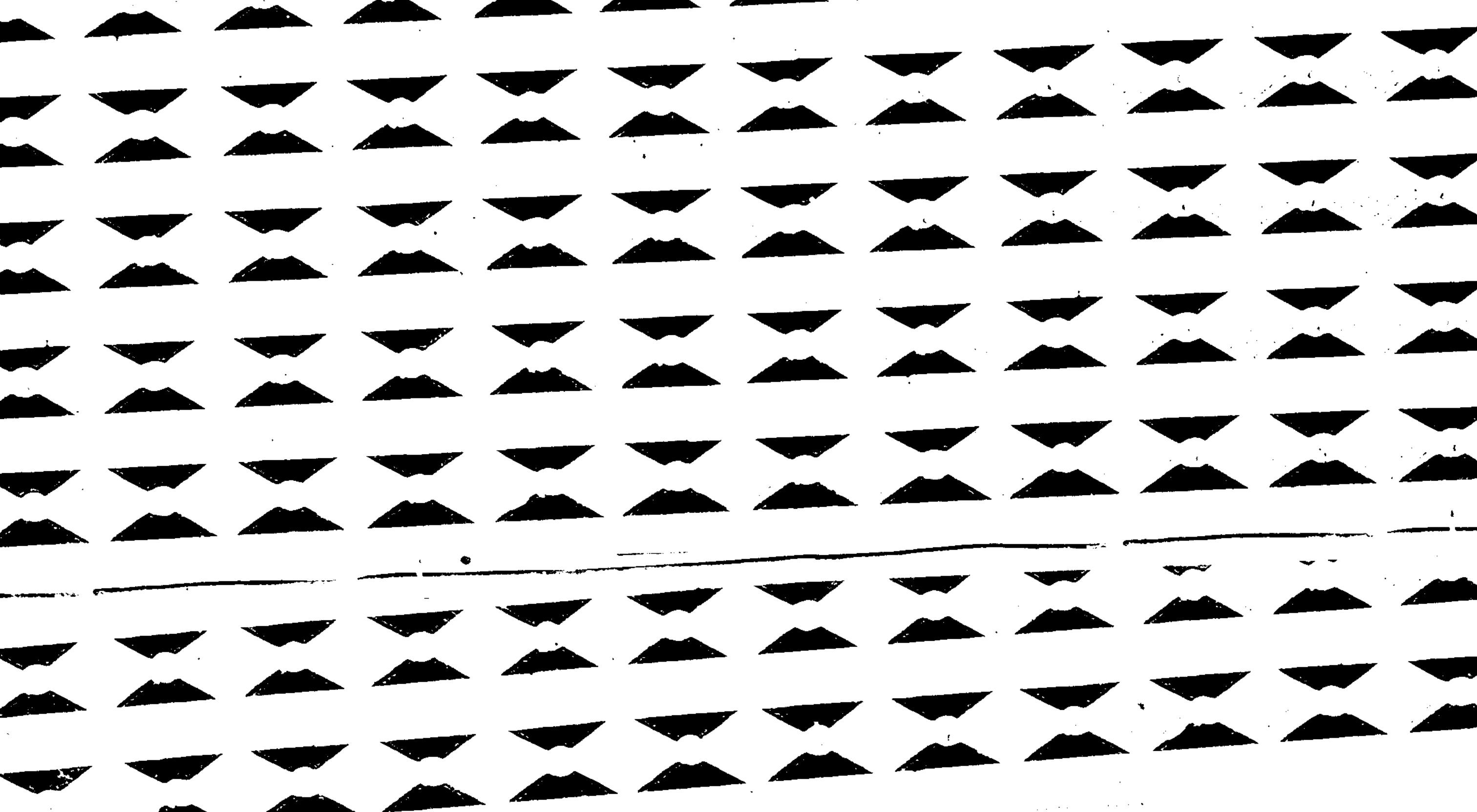


MAX ERNST

AN INVITATION TO LOOK

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M&L FINE ART



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The artist's career surveyed in a private collection

OCTOBER 2 – NOVEMBER 29 2019

M&L FINE ART

15 Old Bond Street
London, W1S 4AX



Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning in Arizona, 1947.
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Max Ernst, Invitation to 1935 exhibition *Exposition Max Ernst, dernières oeuvres*, Paris. Based on an image by Man Ray.
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FOREWARD

I am proud to present this small but significant exhibition of works by Max Ernst in London. The pieces on show span the entirety of the artist's career, from the celebrated collages of the nineteen twenties to the later, multimedia works of the nineteen sixties, tracing the evolution of Ernst's thought-process over five decades. Besides forming a small retrospective, this exhibition features a second particularity: all of the works originate from one single-owner collection and were acquired between the nineteen sixties and nineteen seventies by the one of Max Ernst's most renowned collectors, who over the years became a close friend of the artist. Accordingly, they also represent the singular vision and specific tastes of a highly refined connoisseur. To preserve the identity of this private collection, we have not included works with a different provenance.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Dr Jürgen Pech, Editor of the Max Ernst Catalogue Raisonné and Chief Curator of the Max Ernst Museum, Brühl, who compiled the factsheets for all the works and contributed introductory texts for the six sections of the present catalogue. Together, these provide readers with the opportunity to delve into Ernst's creative process and appreciate his radical and innovative approach to artmaking, in which chance and automatism took over

rational control to influence all poetic inspiration. From this point of view, Max Ernst's contribution to twentieth century art, and in particular to American "action painting," was greatly influential. If it's true that an artist's importance is also measured by his or her impact on successive generations, Max Ernst's role should therefore be no lesser than that of Pablo Picasso.

I hope this small exhibition, far from an isolated event, will be our first in a series. dedicated to celebrating the great masters, both Italian and foreign, of the twentieth century. M&L Fine Art was born to promote Italian art abroad, and this remains our focus, since so much remains to be discovered and understood. However, at the same time I also would like to increase our engagement with international artists. In the current global climate, marked by widespread particularism, art may resist divisive forces and fulfil a uniting function across contexts. Max Ernst's life and work are a testament to this ambition.

Matteo Lampertico

AN INFORMAL LIFE OF M.E.

(as told by himself to a young friend)

*Originally printed in the
catalogue published
to accompany the artist's 1961
retrospective at the Museum
Modern Art, New York.*

1891

First contact with the sensible world: On the second of April at 9:45 a.m. Max Ernst hatched from the egg which his mother had laid in an eagle's nest and over which the bird had brooded for seven years.

It happened in Brühl, six miles south of Cologne. There Max grew up and became a beautiful child. Although marked by some dramatic incidents, his childhood was not particularly unhappy.

In Cologne, at the time of Diocletian, eleven thousand virgins had surrendered their lives rather than their chastity. Their gracious skulls and bones embellish the walls of the convent church in Brühl, the very same place where little Max was forced to spend the most boring hours of his childhood. It may be that their companionship was helpful.

The geographic, political and climatic conditions of Cologne as a city are perhaps propitious to the creation of fertile conflicts in a sensitive child's mind. Many of the important crossroads of European culture meet: influences of the early Mediterranean, Western rationalism, Eastern inclination towards the occult, myths of the North, the Prussian categorical imperative, the ideals of the French Revolution, and so forth. (The continuous and powerful drama of these contradictory tendencies can be recognized in M.E.'s work. One day, perhaps, elements of a new mythology will spring from this drama.)

[Parents: Louise Kopp and Philipp Ernst, the latter a painter as well as a teacher at the School for the Deaf and Dumb for the Rhine province, in Brühl.]

1894

First contact with painting: The child watched the father at work on a small watercolour entitled *Solitude* which represented a hermit, seated in a beech forest, reading a book. Something both peaceful and menacing emanated from this *Solitude* — perhaps because of the subject (unusual in spite of its simplicity)

or because of the way in which it was treated. Each of the countless leaves, stirred by branches of the tree, had been delineated with obsessive solicitude; each seemed endowed with a separate and solitary life. In the painting the hermit appeared seated somewhere beyond this world and his supernatural air both thrilled and frightened little Max. Even the very sound of the word "hermit" as pronounced by the father disturbed the child, who repeated the syllables in awkward intonations until all sense disappeared.

Max never forgot the enchantment and terror he felt when, for the first time a few days later, the father led him into the forest. (Echoes of this feeling can be found in many of M.E.'s own *Forests, Visions, Suns* and *Nights*.)

1896

First contact with drawing: Little Max made a series of drawings. They represented the father, mother, sister Maria (one year older than himself), two younger sisters, a friend and the station master of the railroad. In the sky — a train, abundantly smoking.

When asked, "What will you be when you grow up?" he always answered, "a railroad station master." Maybe the child was seduced by the nostalgia evoked by passing trains, or by the great mystery of telegraph wires which move when watched from a moving train yet stay still when you stand still.

One night, to explore the mystery of telegraph wires (and also to flee from the father's tyranny), five-year-old Max escaped from his parents' house. Blond, blue-eyed and curly-haired, he joined (by chance) a procession of pilgrims. Enchanted by the apparition of this charming child, the pilgrims proclaimed him "little Jesus Christ." To appease his father's wrath (the next day when a policeman brought him home) little Max declared he was the Christ Child. This candid remark inspired the father to paint a portrait of little son as little Jesus.

1897

First contact with nothingness: His sister Maria kissed him and her sisters goodbye and, a few hours later, died. After this the feeling of nothingness and the powers of destruction were utmost in his mind, in his behaviour and, later, in his work.

First contact with hallucination: Measles and powers of destruction. A fever vision: *I see before me a panel crudely painted with large black strokes on a red background imitating the grain of mahogany and provoking associations of organic forms — a threatening eye, a long nose, the enormous head of a bird with thick black hair, and so forth. In front of the panel a shiny black man makes slow, comic and, according to the memories of a time long past, joyously obscene gestures. This odd fellow wears my father's moustache. After several leaps in slow motion which revolt me, legs spread, knees folded, torso bent, he smiles and takes from his pocket a big crayon made from some soft material which I cannot more precisely describe. He sets to work. Breathing loudly he hastily traces black lines on the imitation mahogany. Quickly he gives it new, surprising and despicable forms. He exaggerates the resemblance to ferocious and viscous animals to such an extent that they become alive, inspiring me with horror and anguish. Satisfied with his art, the man seizes and gathers his creations into a kind of vase which, for this purpose, he paints in the air. He whirls the contents of the vase by moving his crayon faster and faster. The vase ends up by spinning and becomes a top. The crayon becomes a whip. Now I realize that this strange painter is my father. With all his might he wields the whip and accompanies his movements with terrible gasps of breath, blasts from an enormous and enraged locomotive. With a passion that is frantic, he makes the top jump and spin around my bed.*

Certainly little Max took pleasure in being frightened by these somnolescent visions and later voluntarily provoked hallucinations of the same kind by looking at wood panelings, clouds, wallpapers, unplastered walls, and so forth, to release his imagination. When asked, "What is your favourite occupation?" he always answered "seeing."

1898

Second contact with painting: He watched the father begin a picture in the garden *après nature* and finish it in his studio. The father omitted a tree which disturbed the composition. When he had finished the painting he went out and chopped down the tree so that no longer would there exist any difference between nature and art. Against such strict realism revolt grew in the child's heart. He decided to direct himself towards a more equitable conception of the relationship between the subjective and the objective world.

Duties at school were already odious. Indeed the very sound of the word *Pflicht* always inspired M.E. with horror and disgust. However, what the professors (of theology and ethics) named the three sources of evil — the pleasures of the eye, the pleasures of the flesh, the vanities of life — proved irresistibly attractive. (Since the cradle M.E. has neglected duties to surrender himself to the three sources of evil. Among them the pleasures of the eye have dominated.)

1906

First contact with the occult, magic and witchcraft: On the night of the fifth of January one of his closest friends, a most intelligent and affectionate pink cockatoo, died. It was a terrible shock to Max when, in the morning, he discovered the dead body and when, at the same moment, the father announced the birth of a sister.

In his imagination Max coupled these two events and charged the baby with the extinction of

the bird's life. There followed a series of mystical crises, fits of hysteria, exaltations and depressions. A dangerous confusion between birds and humans became fixed in his mind and asserted itself in his drawings and paintings. (Later M.E. identified himself voluntarily with *Loplop, Bird Superior*. This phantom remained inseparable from another — *Perturbation, my Sister: the Hundred Headless Woman*.)

Excursions into the world of marvels, chimeras, phantoms, poets, monsters, philosophers, birds, women, lunatics, magi, trees, eroticism, poisons, mathematics, and so forth. A book that he wrote at this time the father found and burned. The title was *Divers' Manual*.

At the age of adolescence, the well-known game of purely imaginary occurrences seen in somnolence: *A procession of men and women, attired in everyday dress, come from a distant horizon towards my bed. Before arriving, they separate: the women pass to the right, the men to the left. Curious, I lean toward the right so that not a single face will escape me. At first I am struck by the extreme youth of all these women, but, upon close examination face by face, I realize my mistake — many are middle-aged and only two or three are very young, about eighteen years old, the age convenient to my adolescence. I am too occupied with these women to pay much attention to what passes on the left. But without seeing I know that there I would make the opposite error. All these men begin to shock me because of their precocious senility and remarkable ugliness, but among them, upon close examination, only my father continues to have the features of an old man.*

1909

[Receives his baccalaureate. Plans a degree in philosophy at the University of Bonn with the intention of specialising in psychiatry.] As his family obliged Max to continue his studies, he was enrolled at the

University of Bonn. He followed, however, the path on which he had embarked at the *gymnasium*: neglected duties to surrender passionately to the most gratuitous activity there is — painting.

His eyes were avid not only for the amazing world which assailed them from the exterior but also for that other world, mysterious and disquieting, which burst forth and vanished in adolescent dreams with persistence and regularity: *To see it clearly becomes a necessity for my nervous equilibrium. To see it clearly there is only one way — to record all offered to my sight.*

1910-11

The young man, eager for knowledge, avoided any studies which might degenerate into breadwinning. Instead his pursuits were those considered futile by his professors — predominantly painting. Other futile pursuits: reading seditious philosophers and unorthodox poetry, transient pleasures, and so forth. Attracted by the most audacious spirits, he was willing to receive the most contradictory influences — in painting, for example — Manet, Gauguin, van Gogh, Goya, Macke, Kandinsky, Delaunay, and so forth.

What to do about consequent confusion? Struggle like a blind swimmer? Appeal to reason? Submit to discipline? Or, accentuate contradictions to the point of paroxysm? Should he abandon himself in his night, indulge in the luxury of losing reason? The young man's temperament predisposed him to accept the last solution.

[In the course of his studies visits asylums and, for the first time, sees the art of the insane about which he decides to write a book.] Near Bonn there was a group of sinister looking buildings resembling, in many ways, the Hospital of St. Anne in Paris. At this "clinic for the mentally ill," students could take courses and practical jobs. One of the buildings housed an astonishing collection of sculpture and

paintings executed in spite of themselves by the inmates of this horrible place. These works strongly touched and troubled the young man. *I try to recognize streaks of genius in them and decide to explore fully those vague and dangerous lands confined by madness.* (But it was only much later that M.E. discovered certain processes which helped him venture into these no-man's lands.)

Meets August Macke, a subtle poet, the very image of just and intelligent enthusiasm, generosity, judgment and exuberance. [Macke, himself influenced by Robert Delaunay, lived in Bonn. With Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, Alexei Jawlensky and Paul Klee, he was a member of *Der Blaue Reiter* in Munich. Macke was also associated with the group around Herwarth Walden, dealer and publisher of *Der Sturm* in Berlin, as well as with avant-garde painters and poets in France and Germany. He was killed in 1914.]

1912

[M.E. joins *Das Junge Rheinland*, a group of friends, poets and painters stimulated to a great extent by Macke.] We were filled with heroism. Spontaneity was *de rigueur*. No doctrine, no discipline, no duties to fulfill. United by a thirst for life, poetry, liberty, the absolute and knowledge. *C'était trop beau* . . . [Decides he is a painter. Sees the Cologne Sonderbund exhibition which includes van Gogh, Cézanne, Munch and Picasso. Meets Munch.]

[First exhibitions: 1912, at the informal galleries of *Das Junge Rheinland* in the bookshop of Friedrich Cohen, Bonn; at the Feldmann Gallery, Cologne; 1913, at the Gereon Club, Cologne; at the *Erster Deutsche Herbstsalon*, Berlin—the last, a group exhibition presented by *Der Sturm* and organized by Macke and Kandinsky, includes work by Chagall, Delaunay and Klee.]

1913

[Meets Guillaume Apollinaire, accompanied by Delaunay.] It was only once at Macke's house. Needless to say M.E. was deeply moved. What he had read had dazzled and excited him. "Zône" had appeared in *Der Sturm*; and the first edition of *Alcools*, published by Mercure de France with a Picasso drawing, had arrived in Cologne. We were speechless, utterly captivated by Apollinaire's winged words which flew from the lightest to the most serious, from deep emotion to laughter, from paradox to incisively accurate formulation.

First contact with Paris, the third week of August: Armed with a light suitcase arrived at the Gare du Nord, scorned the cabs, took the Boulevard de Strasbourg, then Sébastopol, slowing down at intersections, cafes, storefronts, eyes bulging, lying in wait. Arrived at Les Halles. Refreshed after a bowl of soup and a horn of *frites*, wandered around and felt right. Rented a room, Hôtel des Ducs de Bourgogne, the rue de Pont Neuf, leaned out the window, saw the Seine. (Macke had given letters; looked up no one.) Happy to wander all day in different *quartiers*. At night theaters, dance halls and cabarets. Went often to Montparnasse where, at the Café Dome, met Jules Pascin. At the end of four weeks, money gone, had to leave. (In Paris, M.E. had experienced that feeling of *belonging* which, as Patrick Waldberg reminds us, is like love at first sight and binds forever.)

1914

First contact with Arp: One day in Cologne M.E. noticed someone about his own age in a gallery which showed works by Cézanne, Derain, Braque and Picasso. His face was handsome and spiritual, his manners courtly. However they contrasted strangely with what he was doing. With gentleness (Franciscan) and competence (Voltaireian), he seriously was attempting to explain to an old fool the virtues of

modern art. The imbecile pretended to be convinced but exploded with rage when Arp showed him some of his own drawings. With shouts and gestures he announced that he was seventy-two, that his whole life and strength had been devoted to art and that, if this were the result of all his sacrifices, it would be better . . . Quietly Arp suggested that it would be better — to ascend to heaven. Pronouncing maledictions the fool left; M.E. and Arp joined hands to conclude a pact of friendship still vigorous today.

On the first of August 1914 M.E. died. He was resurrected on the eleventh of November 1918 as a young man who aspired to find the myths of his time. Occasionally he consulted the eagle who had brooded the egg of his prenatal life. (You may find the bird's advice in his works.)

[War: Four years at the front as an artillery engineer. At the front twice wounded, by the recoil of a gun, by the kick of a mule. His fellow soldiers named him "the man with the head of iron." Invalided 1917. In February, M.E. and Paul Éluard, not yet acquainted, had fought on the same front, opposite sides.]

How to overcome the disgust and fatal boredom that military life and the horrors of war create? How? Blaspheme? Vomit? Or, have faith in the therapeutic virtues of a contemplative life? Circumstances were not favorable. However, he decided to make an attempt. A few watercolors, even paintings, (executed in moments of calm) attest this. Many of these, lost or destroyed, already contained the germ of later works (*Histoire Naturelle*, 1925). A few titles, still remembered, indicate a state of mind: *Desire of a plant to cling*, *Of love in the inanimate world*, *Descent of animals into the valley at night*, *A leaf unfolds*, and so forth.

1916

[DADA is born in Zurich. *Der Sturm* organizes a small exhibition of M.E.'s work in January and pub-

lishes a drawing as cover of the periodical, vol. 6, no. 19/20.]

1917

[*Der Sturm* publishes "On the Development of Color," an article by M.E.]

1918

[DADA arrives in Germany. M.E. marries Louise Strauss, a student of art history.]

1919

[On a trip to Munich M.E. sees DADA publications from Zurich and discovers that Arp is alive. In Munich M.E. also sees an exhibition of Klee whom he visits for the first and last time. In the magazine *Valori Plastici*, he sees the work of de Chirico and, as a result, creates the album of eight lithographs *Fiat Modus Pereat Ars*. M.E. composes his first altered engravings and collages.]

Enter, enter, have no fear of being blinded — One rainy day in 1919 in a town on the Rhine, my excited gaze is provoked by the Pages of a printed catalogue. The advertisements illustrate objects relating to anthropological, microscopical, psychological, mineralogical and paleontological research. Here I discover the elements of a figuration so remote that its very absurdity provokes in me a sudden intensification of my faculties of sight — a hallucinatory succession of contradictory images, double, triple, multiple, superimposed upon each other with the persistence and rapidity characteristic of amorous memories and visions of somnolence. These images, in turn, provoke new planes of understanding. They encounter an unknown — new and non-conformist. By simply painting or drawing, it suffices to add to the illustrations a color, a line, a landscape foreign to the objects represented — a desert, a sky, a geological section, a floor, a single

straight horizontal expressing the horizon, and so forth. These changes, no more than docile reproductions of what is visible within me, record a faithful and fixed image of my hallucination. They transform the banal pages of advertisement into dramas which reveal my most secret desires.

[Dadamax Ernst and J. T. Baargeld form the DADA conspiracy in the Rhineland and, with others, a DADA center, W/3 West Stupidia. They publish *Der Ventilator*, banned by the British army of occupation, also *Bulletin D*, and arrange the first DADA exhibition in Cologne.]

1920

Der Arp ist da. [Cologne: February, first issue of *Die Schammade* edited by Dadamax and Baargeld. Arp had returned and joined them. He and M.E. produce *Fatagaga* (fabrication de tableaux garantis gazométriques). April: Second, culminating DADA exhibition — *DADA Ausstellung DADA Vorfrühling*. Meets Kurt Schwitters. Birth of a son, Jimmy.]

[Paris: First contact with André Breton: Dadamax is invited to exhibit his collages. In May, the exhibition opens *Au sans pareil*.]

1921

[Cologne: Éluard, accompanied by his wife Gala, visits Cologne and selects collages as illustrations to his poems. Dadamax signs *DADA soulève tout*, a DADA manifesto.]

[Tyrol: Summers at Tarrenz-bei-Imst with Arp, Sophie Taeuber, Tristan Tzara and, for the last time, Louise Ernst. Contributions, "*Dada au grand air*" to DADA Tyrol issue of DADA magazine.]

1922

[Summer: Again, in the Tyrol.] August: Born and bred in the Rhineland, escaped, with neither papers nor money, to Paris to live. [Settles in Saint Brice, a

suburb near Montmorency, in the same building with Éluard. Works in an atelier which manufactures souvenirs of Paris. Publication of *Les Malheurs des Immortels*, and *Répétitions*, two collaborative volumes, collages by M.E., poems by Éluard.]

1923

[Paints: *Equivocal Woman*, *Saint Cecelia*, *The Couple*, and the first version of *Woman, Old Man and Flower*. The last, completely repainted the following year] The woman, of course, lies in the old man's arm. The other figure is the flower.

1924

Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale, the last in the series which started with *Elephant of the Celebes*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Revolution by Night*, *La Belle Jardinière* [destroyed] and, probably, the last consequence of his early collages — a kind of farewell to a technique and to occidental culture. (This painting, it may be interesting to note, was very rare in M.E.'s work: He never imposes a title on a painting. He waits until a title imposes itself. Here, however, the title existed before the picture was painted. A few days before he had written a prose poem which began: *à la tombée de la nuit, à la lisière de la ville, deux enfants sont menacés par un rossignol* . . . He did not attempt to illustrate this poem, but that is the way it happened.)

[M.E. sells all of his work in Germany, sails in July for the Far East. M.E., Gala and Éluard are re-joined in Saigon. M.E. spends about three months traveling, returns via Marseilles. Breton's first Surrealist Manifesto, issued in Paris October.] M.E. found his friends in Paris *en plein effervescence*.

1925

On the tenth of August (in Pornic, the home of Gilles de Laval), M.E. found a process which rests solely

upon the intensification of the mind's powers of irritability. In view of the characteristics of its technique, he called it *frottage* [rubbing] and, in his own personal development, it has had an even larger share than collage from which, indeed, he believes it does not fundamentally differ. By means of appropriate techniques, by excluding all conscious mental influences (of reason, taste or morals) and by reducing to a minimum the active part of what, until now has been called the "author," this process revealed itself as the exact equivalent of what was known as automatic writing. By enlarging the active part of the mind's hallucinatory faculties, he succeeded in attending, simply as a spectator, the birth of his works.

Enter, enter, have no fear of being blinded — One rainy day at an inn by the seaside, I discover myself recalling how in childhood the panel of imitation mahogany opposite my bed had served as the optical stimulant to visions in somnolence. Now I am impressed by the obsession imposed upon my excited gaze by the wooden floor, the grain of which had been deepened and exposed by countless scrubbing. I decide to investigate the symbolism of this obsession and, to aid my meditative and hallucinatory powers, I take from the boards a series of drawings. At random I drop pieces of paper on the floor and then rub them with black lead. By examining closely the drawings thus obtained, I am surprised at the sudden intensification of my visionary capacities.

My curiosity awakened, I marvel and am led to examine in the same way, all sorts of materials that fall into my field of vision — leaves and their veins, the ragged edges of sack cloth, the palette knife's markings on a "modern" painting, thread unrolled from its spool and so forth — that end with a kiss (the Bride of the Wind).

Drawings obtained in this way — thanks to a progression of suggestions and transmutations which occur spontaneously (like hypnagogical

visions) — lost the character of the material employed, here for example wood, and assumed the aspect of unbelievably precise images which were probably able to reveal the initial cause of the obsession or to produce some semblance of its cause.

These drawings, these first fruits of *frottage*, were assembled as *Histoire Naturelle* from *The Sea and the Rain* to *Eve, the Only One Left*. [Their titles]: *The Sea and the Rain — A Glance — Little tables around the earth — Shawl of Snow Flakes — Earthquake — Pampas—He will fall far from here—False Positions—Confidences—She guards her secret—Whip lashes or lava threads—Fields of Honor, Inundations, Seismic Plants—Scarecrows—Sprint of the Chestnut Tree—Scars—The linden tree is docile—The Fascinating Cypress—Habits of Leaves—Idol—The Palette of Caesar—Huddling against the walls—Enter into the continents—Vaccinated Bread—Flashes of lightning under fourteen years old—Conjugal Diamonds—Origin of the Clock—In the stable of the sphinx—Dead Man's Meal—Wheel of Light—He who Escaped—System of Solar Money—To Forget Everything—Stallion and the Wind's Betrothed—Eve, the Only One Left.]*

At first it seemed *frottage* could be used only for drawings. Then M.E. adapted it to painting. It revealed a field of vision limited only by the capacity of irritability of the mind's powers.

[Many of the "natural history" *frottages* published as a portfolio the following year, preface by Arp. Contributes to the first Surrealist group exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Paris. Autumn: Roland Penrose sees *La Belle Jardinière* by M.E. reproduced in the magazine *La Révolution Surréaliste*. They meet.]

1926

January: I see myself lying in bed and, at my feet, standing, a tall thin woman, dressed in a very red gown. The gown is transparent, so is the woman. I

am enchanted by the surprising elegance of her bone structure. I am tempted to pay her a compliment.

[M.E. and Joan Miró collaborate on the ballet *Roméo et Juliette* for Diaghilev. As a result, a broadside signed by Breton and Louis Aragon condemns them for surrealist activities. *Roméo et Juliette*, a ballet in two tableaux, first presented by the Ballets Russes at the Théâtre de Monte Carlo, May 4. Music by Constant Lambert; decors and costumes by M.E. and Miró; choreographed by Bronia Nijinska.]

1927

[January in Megève. February returns to Paris. Meets and marries Marie-Berthe Aurenche without her parents' blessing. Paints *Young People Trampling Their Mother*; *Vision Provoked by a String Found on My Table*; *The Horde*; *Vision Provoked by the Nocturnal Aspects of the Porte St. Denis*; *One Night of Love*].

1928

Entrance of the flowers: Aux rendez-vous des amis... C'était la belle saison... It is the time of serpents, earthworms, feather flowers, shell flowers, bird flowers, animal flowers, tube flowers. It is the time when the forest takes wing and flowers struggle under water. (Was he not a pretty flower?) It is the time of the circumflex medusa.

[Publication of Breton's *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture*, reproducing among other works by M.E.: *The Little Tear Gland That Says Tic-Tac*, *Revolution by Night*, *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale*, *Young People Trampling Their Mother*.]

1929

One day a painter asked M.E., "What are you doing now, are you working?" "Yes," he replied, "I am making collages. I am preparing a book which will be called *The Hundred Headless Woman*."

The acquaintance whispered in his ear, "And what sort of glue are you using?" With that modest air which his contemporaries so admire, he admitted that in most of his collages, there is little use for glue; that he is not responsible for the term "collage," that of fifty-six of the catalogue numbers of his exhibition of "collages" in 1920, only twelve justified the term *collage-découpage*. As for the other forty-four, Aragon was right when he said "the place to catch the thoughts of M.E. is the place where, with a little color, a line of pencil, he ventures to acclimate the phantom which he has just precipitated into a foreign landscape." Maxim: If it is not plumes that make plumage, it is not glue [colle] that makes collage. [Meets Alberto Giacometti. Publication of M.E.'s collage novel *La Femme 100 têtes*.]

1930

After having composed with method and violence my novel The Hundred Headless Woman, I am visited almost daily by the Bird Superior, Loplop — my private phantom. He presents me with a heart in a cage, the sea in a cage, two petals, three leaves, a flower and a young girl. Also, the man of the black eggs and the man with the red cape.

One beautiful autumn afternoon he relates that he had once invited a Lacedemonian to come and listen to a man who imitated perfectly the nightingale. The Lacedemonian replied, "I have often heard the nightingale itself."

One evening he tells some maxims, which don't make me laugh. Maxim: it is better not to reward a beautiful deed than to reward it badly. Illustration: A soldier lost both arms in battle. His colonel offered him a silver dollar. Said the soldier, "No doubt you think, sir, that I have lost a pair of gloves."

[The collage novel by M.E., *Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel*, published. July: The film *L'Age d'Or* by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí,

in part inspired by M.E.'s pictures, is privately shown at the home of the Vicomte de Noailles. M.E., himself, appears in the film.]

1931

[Nine paintings by the German romantic Caspar David Friedrich, destroyed by fire while on exhibition at the Glass Palace, Munich. Patrick Waldberg describes effect of this destruction upon M.E.: "He felt the loss to the point of sickness. Beyond painting, profound spiritual ties united him — beyond time — to this poet-artist in whom his own preoccupations discovered a kindred echo. Caspar David Friedrich had said: 'Close your physical eyes in order to see first your painting with the spiritual eye. Next, bring into the daylight what you have seen in your night so that your action is exercised in turn on

other beings from the exterior to the interior.' M.E. has never ceased to follow this advice."]

[First exhibition in the United States: Julien Levy Gallery, New York.]

1932

[Finishes series of collages, *Loplop introduces . . .*, begun in 1929.]

1933

[In the early summer visits northern Italy: Le Roncoli, Vigoleno and Ravenna. Paints the largest of his forest pictures, and the next year for the magazine *Minotaure* writes:]

What is a forest? A supernatural insect. A drawing board. What do forests do? They never retire early. They await the woodcutter. What is summer for



Man Ray, Surrealist Group, 1933. Terrace of the house of Tristan Tzara, 15 Avenue Junot, designed by Adolf Loos. Left to right: Tristan Tzara, Paul Éluard, André Breton, Hans Arp, Salvador Dalí, Yves Tanguy, Max Ernst, René Crevel, Man Ray. Image: Telimage, Paris © Man Ray Trust / ADAGP - DACS / 2019

the forests? The future: that will be the season when masses of shadows will be able to change themselves into words and when beings gifted with eloquence will have the nerve to seek midnight at zero o'clock.

But that is time past, it seems to me. Perhaps.

In that time past did nightingales believe in God? In that time Past nightingales did not believe in God. They were bound in friendship to mystery.

And man, what position was he in man and the nightingale found themselves in the most favorable position for imagining: they had in the forest a perfect guide to dreams.

What is dreaming? You ask of me too much; it is a woman who fells a tree.

What are forests for? To make gifts of matches to children as toys.

Is, then, fire in the forest? Fire is in the forest.

What do the plants live on? Mystery.

What day is it? Merde.

What will be the death of the forests? The day will come when a forest, until then a friend of dissipation, will decide to frequent only sober places, tarred roads and Sunday strollers. She will live on pickled newspapers. Affected by virtue, she will correct these bad habits contracted in her youth. She will become geometric, conscientious, dutiful, grammatical, judicial, pastoral, ecclesiastical, constructivist and republican... It will be a bore. Will the weather be fair? Of course! We'll go on a presidential hunt.

Will the name of this forest be Blastula or Gastrula? Her name will be Mme de Rambouillet.

Will the forest be praised for her new conduct? Not by me. She will find this most unfair, and one day, unable to stand it any longer, she will dump her trash in the heart of the nightingale. What will the nightingale say to that? The nightingale will be galled. "My friend," he will reply, "You are worth even less than your reputation. Go take a trip to Oceania, you'll see."

And will she go? Too proud.

Do forests still exist there? They are, it seems, savage and impenetrable, black and russet, extravagant, secular, swarming, diametrical, negligent, ferocious, fervent and lovable, with neither yesterday nor tomorrow. From one island to another, over volcanos, they play cards with incomplete decks. Nude, they wager only their majesty and their mystery.

On the 24th of December, I am visited by a young chimera in evening dress.

1934

Eight days later I meet a blind swimmer . . . A little patience (fifteen days of waiting) and I will be present at the attirement of the bride. The bride of the wind embraces me while passing at full gallop (simple effect of touch).

[Summer: Maloja, Switzerland, with Giacometti. Sculpts in stone. Publication of *Une Semaine de Bonté, ou les sept éléments capiteaux*, M.E.'s most ambitious collage novel.]

[M.E. told Roland Penrose later:] All of these works suggest an overwhelming sense of motion through time and space. They vibrate with the incongruous and irrational qualities generally attributed to dreams although artists know they are the original breath of reality. The elements of the collages, banal engravings from old books, are metamorphosed, transformed. Birds become men and men become birds. Catastrophes become hilarious. Everything is astonishing, heartbreaking and possible.

1935

I see barbarians looking toward the west, barbarians emerging from the forest, barbarians walking to the west. On my return to the garden of the Hesperides I follow, with joy scarcely concealed, the rounds of a fight between two bishops... Voracious

gardens in turn devoured by a vegetation which springs from the debris of trapped airplanes . . .

With my eyes I see the nymph Echo.

1936

October: If you are to believe the description on his identity card, M.E. would be no more than forty-five when he writes these lines. He would have an oval face, blue eyes and greying hair. His height would be only slightly more than average. As for distinguishing marks of identification, this card allows him none. Consequently he could, if pursued by the police, plunge into the crowd and easily disappear forever.

Women, on the other hand, find that his young face framed by silky white hair "makes him look very distinguished." They see in him charm, a great sense of "reality" and seduction, a perfect physique and agreeable manners (the danger of pollution, he himself admits, has become such an old habit that he is rather proud of it as a "sign of worldliness"). They find, also, a character difficult, inextricable, obstinate; also an impenetrable mind. "He is," they say, "a nest of contradictions," at once transparent and enigmatic, something like the pampas.

It is difficult for them to reconcile the gentleness and moderation of his expression with the calm violence which is the essence of his thought. They readily compare him to a gentle earthquake which does no more than rock the furniture yet does not hurry to displace everything. What is particularly disagreeable and unbearable to them is that they can almost never discover his *identity* in the flagrant (apparent) contradictions which exist between his spontaneous behaviour and the dictates of his conscious thoughts. For instance, they can observe two apparently irreconcilable attitudes: first, that of the god Pan and the man Papou, who possess all the mysteries and in their interplay realize a union ("He marries nature, he pursues the nymph Echo"); and, second, that of a Prometheus, thief of fire,

conscious and organized, who, guided by thought, pursues with implacable hate and gross injuries. "This monster is pleased only by the antipodes of the landscape," they say. And a teasing little girl adds, "He is, at the same time, a brain and a vegetable."

[Meets the painter Leonore Fini. Ignoring Breton's veto, M.E. participates in exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, autumn, 1936, with 48 works, almost twice as many as any other exhibitor.]

1937

[Publication by Cahiers d'Art of *Au delà de la Peinture*, devoted to M.E.'s work from 1918 to 1936.] I dedicate this book to Roland Penrose, to the nymph Echo and to the antipodes of the landscape.

[Decors for *Ubu Enchainé*, a play by Alfred Jarry directed by Sylvain Itkine. First presented by the Compagnie du Diable Éclarte at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées, Paris, September 22.]

[Meets the painter Leonora Carrington.]

1938

Enraged by a monstrous demand, "to sabotage in every possible way the poetry of Paul Éluard," M.E. quit the surrealist group.

[With Leonora Carrington settles at Saint Martin d'Ardèche, near Pont St. Esprit about thirty miles north of Avignon. Decorates their home with murals and bas-reliefs. Illustrates and, with the following text, in part introduces her novella *La Maison de la Peur*, Loplop speaks:]

Good wind, ill wind, I present you the Bride of the Wind . . . Who is the Bride of the Wind? Can she read? Can she write in French without making mistakes? What fuel keeps her warm? . . . She is kindled by her intensity, her mystery, her poetry. She has read nothing, yet she has drunk everything. She knows not how to read. Nevertheless,



Max Ernst and Peggy Guggenheim in the 'Surrealist Gallery,' Art of This Century, New York, c. 1942.
Works visible: *The Kiss* (1927) and *Zoomorphic Couple* (1933).
© Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2019

the nightingale saw her, seated on the stone of spring, reading. And, although she read in silence, animals and horses listened rapt with admiration.

1939

[War is declared. Paints *A Moment of Calm*. Interrupted.] "He is under the jurisdiction of the German Reich." As an enemy alien, M.E. was interned: first for six weeks in a camp at Largentière, then transferred to Les Milles near Aix-en-Provence. Liberated at Christmas time, thanks to a petition by Éluard to Albert Sarraut, M.E. returned to Saint Martin. Survived on subsidies sent him by his friend Joë Bousquet.

1940

May: Interned again, first in a camp at Lorio, then transferred to the St. Nicholas (!) camp near Nîmes. Escaped to Saint Martin, recaptured, interned again, escaped again just as his papers for release arrived. Allowed to return, once more, to Saint Martin. [Now, sought by the Gestapo, M.E. begins to paint *Europe after the Rain*. Decides to leave Europe.] An offer of shelter secured in the United States by several friends including Marga Barr, son Jimmy, expedited through the Emergency Rescue Committee by Varian Fry.

1941

[On his way, at Marseille, M.E. meets Breton also seeking a way to leave. Attempt at reconciliation. Meets Peggy Guggenheim. Because of complications with his transit visa, M.E. has trouble leaving France but finally crosses the border to Madrid and leaves, with Peggy Guggenheim, from Lisbon.]

July: M.E. arrived in New York at the La Guardia airport where his son Jimmy welcomed him to the United States. From the plane he had glimpsed the lovely lady, the Statue of Liberty. Hardly off the plane he was seized by immigration authorities. "He is under the jurisdiction of the German Reich." Interned in the fortress of Ellis Island — had a splendid view of the Statue of Liberty. Liberated after three days, M.E. travelled for several weeks across the United States — Chicago, New Orleans, Arizona, New Mexico, California. [Decides to settle in New York.]

First painting in America: *Napoleon in the Wilderness*. The decalcomania base was begun in France, but the painting was finished in Santa Monica, shortly after M.E.'s arrival. (He had just quit Europe: Napoleon — the dictator; wilderness — Saint Helena; exile — defeat, and so forth. The painting, he discovered, bore a strange likeness to an allegory by Piero di Cosimo in the Kress Collection.) About a month later when M.E. visited the National Gallery in Washington, he was amazed to see the resemblance in *idea* between this picture, which he had never seen before, and his own painting — the strange horse dancing, the guardian winged female figure, the string and, in the foreground, the sea monster.

Loplop, Bird Superior, had followed the airplane which brought me to this country on the fourteenth of July, and the bird builds his nest in a cloud on the East River.

[Marries Peggy Guggenheim. They separate at the close of the following year.]

In New York, on Wall Street, M.E. enjoyed the way they pronounced his name and added it to his collection. Here it is: Mac, Maxt, Mex, Mask, Oinest, Oinst, and so forth.

1942

Exhibitions in New York, Chicago and New Orleans, complete "flops." The press hostile (or silent), the public recalcitrant (sales nil), and so forth. Compensation: Young painters and poets were enthusiastic.

In the same year, the non-Euclidian fly appears.

[At the Wakefield Bookshop, New York, Betty Parsons shows in a group exhibition a painting by M.E.] It provoked the curiosity of some of the young painters. The technique especially intrigued them. M.E. explained: It is a children's game. Attach an empty tin can to a thread a metre or two long, punch a small hole in the bottom, fill the can with paint, liquid enough to flow freely. Let the can swing from the end of the thread over a piece of canvas resting on a flat surface, then change the direction of the can by movements of the hands, arms, shoulder and entire body. Surprising lines thus drip upon the canvas. The play of association then begins.

[This particular painting, slightly altered by M.E., becomes *Young Man intrigued by the flight of a non-Euclidian fly*, now in a private collection in Zurich. The magazine *View* devotes an issue to M.E. M.E. collaborates on the founding of the magazine *VW*.]

1943

Within the realm of the possible, at last, a gathering. [M.E. meets the painter Dorothea Tanning. They spend the summer in Arizona.]

[Sidney Janis in his *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America*, published the following year, writes: "In his American pictures, as in the past, Max Ernst continues to invent new techniques with

which he creates the properties of enigma that inevitably fill his work. He has recently invented a new method of chance — oscillation — and in this technique has painted several large gyrating compositions. They are produced by means of color flowing freely from a swinging container operated with a long cord by the artist. Ernst in several recent works has combined techniques as well as images from many periods. These are compartmentalized by horizontal and vertical lines which divide them into rectangular segments somewhat resembling the spatial order of Mondrian. *Day and Night* [1942] painted previously, anticipated this trend. One of these pictures, *Vox Angelica* [1943] is an autobiographical account in episodes of dream and reality, of his peregrinations from one country to another.”]

1944

Summer: M.E. found himself working steadily at sculpture. He had rented a place at Great River, Long Island, with the intention of spending the summer swimming. But there were so many mosquitoes that we could not poke our noses out of doors. Decided to take over the garage, screen it and make a studio. There he worked the summer on sculpture.

1945

[Invited by Albert Lewin, M.E. enters and wins a competition sponsored by Loew-Lewin for a painting on the theme of *The Temptation of St. Anthony* used in the film *The Private Affairs of Bel Ami*, based on Maupassant’s story.]

[Éluard organizes a retrospective exhibition in honor of M.E. at the Galerie Denise René, Paris.]

1946

Double Wedding in Beverly Hills: M.E. and Dorothea, Man Ray and Juliette Browner. [M.E. and Dorothea

Tanning find temporary retreat in the mountains of Arizona; in Sedona they acquire a piece of land and begin to construct a house. During a stay in the Nevada desert, composes *Sept microbes vus à travers un temperament*]

1947

Sedona, Arizona: building, sculpting, painting, writing, and — last (not least) Loving (Dorothea).

[*A l’intérieur de la vue — 8 poèmes visibles*, poems by Éluard as illustrations to collages by M.E.]

1948

[*Beyond Painting*, by and about M.E., edited and with an introduction by Robert Motherwell. M.E. becomes a United States citizen.]

1949

[Retrospective exhibition organized at Copley Galleries, Beverly Hills. On the occasion of the exhibition, the gallery publishes as one volume *At Eye Level / Paramyths*, about and by M.E. Marcel Duchamp visits Sedona. August: Sails from New Orleans to Antwerp, then by train to Paris.]

With Dorothea saw Paris once more — mixed feelings — Paris and its inhabitants slowly, painfully recovering from Nazi occupation, frustration and disorder.

M.E. was glad to greet his old friends: Arp, Joë Bousquet, Patrick Waldberg, Robert Lebel, André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Georges Bataille, Giacometti, Balthus, Penrose. Also Paul Éluard, in spite of some difficulties (the poet of freedom caught by a merciless discipline.)

[*La Brebis Galante* by Benjamin Péret with illustrations by M.E. published. The bookstore La Hune, Paris, celebrates the event with a retrospective exhibition of the graphic work of M.E.]



Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning, Sedona, Arizona, 1948.
Photograph by Bob Towers, courtesy of Max Ernst Museum Brühl des LVR. Foundation Max Ernst.
© The Dorothea Tanning Foundation 2019



Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1961. Opening of a Retrospective of Max Ernst; here with Salvador Dalí and his wife Gala.
© Dennis Stock/Magnum Photos.

1950

M.E.'s devoted friend, François Victor Hugo, provided him with a studio on the Quai St. Michel across the river from Notre Dame de Paris.

[Retrospective exhibition organized at the Galerie René Drouin, Paris. Catalogue: preface by Joë Bousquet and text by Michel Tapié. The exhibition shows, for the first time in Paris, M.E.'s work done in America. October: Returns to Sedona.]

1951

[Loni and Lothar Pretzell, sister and brother-in-law of M.E., organize a large retrospective exhibition at the ruined castle of the archbishops of Cologne at Brühl.] A bolt of lightning destroyed a banner bearing M.E.'s

name. This incident considered an omen from the heavens by the inhabitants of the town; the town council met during the night; the exhibition ended with a huge deficit for the city administration and with the disgrace of the very understanding and very well-intentioned *Stadtdirektor*, personally accused of responsibility for the financial disaster. [This exhibition at Brühl had considerable influence in the Rhineland, still recovering from Nazi suppression of all modern art.]

1952

[March: Yves Tanguy visits Sedona. During the summer M.E. conducts a course of about thirty lectures at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu. Subject: The last fifty years of modern art. About ninety-six students

— corrects their examination papers. Also gives one general lecture on surrealism. In Houston, at the Contemporary Art Association, Dominique de Menil, aided by Alexander Iolas, organizes an exhibition of M.E.'s work.]

1953

[M.E. returns to Paris. Works in the Impasse Ronsin, next to Brancusi, in a studio lent to him by the painter William Copley. Retrospective exhibition organized by E.L.T. Mesens and P.G. van Hecke (with collaboration of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London) at the Municipal Casino, Knokke-le-Zoute, Belgium. *Das Schnabelpaar*, a poem and eight etchings in color by M.E. published.]

[Fall: Visits Cologne, the Rhineland and Heidelberg.] M.E. had not seen Cologne for twenty-five years. Naturally it was a terrible shock to him. Nothing remained of the city, every stone of which he had known. When reconstruction of the Town Hall was begun, they found an old Roman villa, perfectly preserved. It was fantastically luxurious, and with a (modern!) system of central heating through the floor.

1954

At the Twenty-seventh Biennale of the City of Venice, M.E. to his astonishment grabbed first prize.

1955

[Settles in Huismes in Touraine near Chinon. *Galapagos* by Antonin Artaud with illustrations by M.E. published.]

1956

[At a shop in Chinon finds border strips of old-fashioned wallpapers similar to those he had used more than thirty-five years before and, for his amusement, makes a series of collages: *Dada Forest*, *Dada*

Sun. Retrospective exhibition organized at the Kunsthalle, Berne, catalogue preface by Franz Meyer.]

1957

[Winter, 1956-57: Sedona. At the Museum of Tour, an exhibition with Man Ray, Dorothea Tanning and Mies van der Rohe sponsored by Les Services des Relations Culturelles de l'Ambassade des Etats-Unis.]

1958

[Becomes a French citizen. Patrick Waldberg's biography, *Max Ernst*, published. The bookstore La Hune celebrates the event with an exhibition.]

Spring: M.E. was astonished when he was informed that the Museum of Modern Art in New York wished to organize an exhibition of his work.

1959

[November: A large retrospective exhibition of his work opens at the Musée d'Art Moderne. Catalogue edited by Gabrielle Vienne, preface by Jean Cassou.]

1960

[Autumn: Trip to Germany with Patrick Waldberg. *Max Ernst* with texts by M.E., preface by Georges Bataille published.]

1961

January: M.E. arrived in New York with the intention of visiting Sedona, an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art and, perhaps, his grandchildren. He reread (with interest) this dated data, a chronology unchronologically composed. In it he found things old, things new (and some things censored). It is, he decided, to be read in English by other friends, some new, some old, all young.

MAX ERNST
23 January 1961, New York

PLATES

Texts by Jürgen Pech



WORKS FROM THE 1920s:
FROTTAGE, GRATTAGE AND
A PAINTED PLASTER RELIEF

In late March of 1924 Paul Éluard left the threesome with Max Ernst that he and his wife Gala had begun two years before and boarded a ship bound for Tahiti. Ernst and Gala followed him a few months later. To finance the journey, Gala had paintings from her husband's collection sold at auction. Ernst sold his paintings to the Düsseldorf art dealer Johanna Ey. After reuniting in Saigon and putting an end to the liaison, the husband and wife returned alone, and the thirty-three-year-old Max Ernst remained in Indochina until the end of the year.

At this time the Surrealist group made a self-confident appearance in public. On 15 October the *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (Surrealist manifesto) by André Breton was published; just four days prior, they had opened the Office of Surrealist Research, which was supposed to serve as a place for information and collections. An announcement advertised for the office: "A revolution is upon us. You can take part in it." Finally, on 1 December the first issue of the magazine *La Révolution surréaliste* (The Surrealist revolution) appeared, accompanied by the motto: "There must be a new declaration of human rights". With the research office and the straightforward layout of the magazine, which was completely the opposite of the Dadaists' chaotic typography, the group asserted a scientific approach. Surrealism was not supposed to be understood as a new direction in literature, but as the foundation of a new attitude toward intellectual activity and life itself.

Accordingly, André Breton's manifesto adapted the brief lexicon style, in order to establish the word "surrealism". He categorically introduced his definition of the term with the following:

Therefore, I am defining it once and for all:

SURREALISM, *n.* Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express — verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner — the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.

ENCYCLOPEDIA. *Philosophy.* Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life. The following have performed acts of ABSOLUTE SURREALISM: Messrs. Aragon, Baron, Boiffard, Breton, Carrive, Crevel, Delteil, Desnos, Eluard, Gérard, Limbour, Malkine, Morise, Naville, Noll, Péret, Picon, Soupault, Vitrac.

Max Ernst is missing from this list. Painters were either described as visitors to the Surrealist palace, or they appear in a footnote, where Ernst is named along with Giorgio de Chirico, Man Ray and André Masson. In the manifesto Surrealist activity is entirely limited to language and its written form.

At the same time the question of reality Breton had articulated in his manifesto was also a question of realisation for Surrealist art. The search for a kind of *écriture automatique*, an automatic writing method

suited to poets introduced a new, experimental phase in Ernst's oeuvre, which led him to a natural laboratory. The appearances of things were questioned and now served as sources of inspiration. Beginning in 1925 he produced more than 130 drawings dominated by frottage technique. Through the rubbing process, the underlying materials — wooden boards, woven straw, wire fencing, rough wall surfaces, canvases, leaves, and grain leather — became mostly unidentifiable. They were deprived of their textures and reassembled to create a fantastical pictorial language that inspired the imagination. They prompted visions, which Ernst interpreted and fixed in the piece *L'arbre* (The tree).

A monumental collection of structures arises in a vast and deserted landscape with a low horizon. Even though the towering block referred to as a tree in the title casts a shadow across the right side, the trunk lacks branches and leaves. In only four places along the upper edge can one recognise some tender shoots. The writing at the lower edge identifies the frottage as plate 55 in the *Histoire Naturelle* (Natural history), but it was not included in the 1926, since the gallerist Jeanne Bucher only published halftone prints of 34 drawings in an edition of 306.

The plaster relief *Ci-fût une hirondelle* (Here was a swallow) was produced in 1927 as part of an edition of twelve. In the eleventh issue of the magazine *La Révolution surréaliste* (The Surrealist revolution), published on 15 March 1928, it was advertised for sale as a "Surrealist edition". In the still-damp material Ernst printed a predetermined arrangement of curved shapes, creating concave depressions and convex elevations emerged. He then painted each plaster relief individually. He outlines the silhouettes of bodies, beaks, and wings, adding colourful heads to illustrate a family of birds.



Max Ernst in Singapur, August, 1924
Private collection, Bonn.

L'ARBRE, 1925

Frottage, pencil on paper, 43 x 26 cm (16 ¹⁵/₁₆ x 10 ¹/₄ in.)

signed 'max ernst' lower right; inscribed 'Hist. Nat. pl. 55 L'ARBRE' lower left

PROVENANCE

- The artist;
- James Duce'llier, Carcassonne;
- Galerie Arditti, Paris.

EXHIBITED

- Max Ernst. *Paintings & Collages from the 1920s - 70s from a Private European Collection*, Lawrence Rubin, Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art, New York, February 1st - 26th 2000, no. 8.

ILLUSTRATED

- Werner Spies (ed.), *Max Ernst. Œuvre-Katalog*, vol. 3, Werke 1925-1929, Bearbeitet von Werner Spies, Sigrid und Günter Metken, DuMont Buchverlag, Cologne 1976, no. 856, p. 34.



CI-FÛT UNE HIRONDELLE, 1927

Oil on plaster, 21 x 23 cm (8 1/4 x 9 1/16 in.)
signed 'max ernst' lower left

PROVENANCE

– The artist.

EXHIBITED

– Max Ernst. *Paintings & Collages from the 1920s – 70s from a Private European Collection*, Lawrence Rubin, Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art, New York, February 1st – 26th 2000, no. 2.



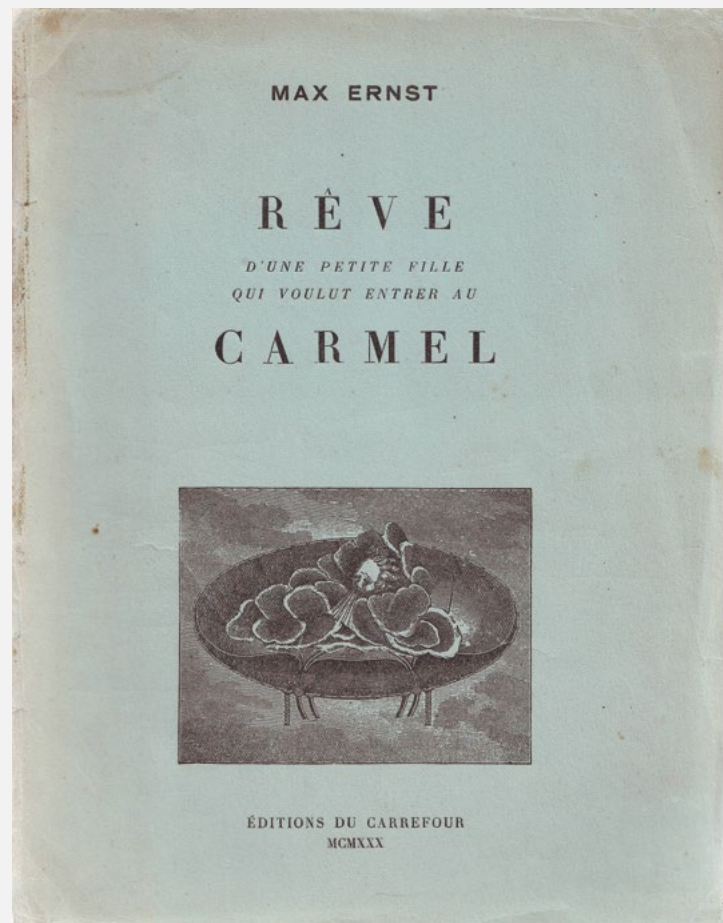


MAX ERNST,
RÊVE D'UNE PETITE FILLE
QUI VOULUT ENTRER
AU CARMEL, 1930

On 20 December 1930 the second collage-novel *Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel* (published in English as *A Little Girl Dreams of Taking the Veil*) was released. It appeared precisely one year after the first collage-novel *La femme 100 têtes* (published in English as *The Hundred Headless Woman*) also under the imprint of Pierre G. Lévy's Éditions du Carrefour, but in a slightly larger edition of 1060 copies, rather than 1003. Besides the cover picture it contains 79 collages and is therefore much smaller and more concentrated than its predecessor, with its 147 collages. Its content corresponds to the position that André Breton demanded in late 1929 in his *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*: "Everything remains to be done, every means must be worth trying, in order to lay waste to the ideas of *family, country, religion*".

Owing to its structure, the collage novel can be characterised as a drama. There is an introductory text, a prologue, and the work is divided into four acts labelled in Roman numerals: "I. Into the darkness", "II. The hair", "III. The knife" and "IV. The divine bridegroom". By alluding to the themes of light and dark, the first and last acts are antithetical to each other. The two middle acts use knife and hair to deal with the

antagonists of the tonsure, the sign that one has surrendered to God. Both antitheses divide the collage novel symmetrically. The little girl has her dream during the night of Good Friday, between the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. Thus, death and life form yet another pair of opposites. Like *La femme 100 têtes*, this collage novel also contains captions, but these take the form of dialogue and contain stage directions. Forming the backdrop is the passion play, which, since the Middle Ages, has dramatically depicted the story of Christ's suffering and is performed in celebration of East, the midpoint of the Catholic liturgy. Max Ernst refers not only to knowledge of the Bible, but also to a



Max Ernst, *Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel*, Paris, Dezember 1930
Private collection, Bonn.

number of literary texts, and he weaves this knowledge in as a response. An edition of Lewis Carroll's 1865 dream tale, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, appeared the same year as Max Ernst' dream drama. The first chapter of the book is titled 'Down the rabbit hole', and Ernst paraphrases this in the title of his act I, 'Into the darkness'. Yet, these types of sources were not adopted in their entirety but transformed and insinuated. Max Ernst reflects reading by assembling them in a collage-like way and putting them into new contexts.

A violent atmosphere dominates the third act; robbery, murder and arson are committed in the name of the church. Marceline-Marie, the drama's young protagonist, takes up the knife in order to continue the almost two thousand years of Christianisation with fishing or capturing human beings, the worship of relics, and inquisition. The missionary work is done in all four elements, in and on the water, before fire, on the earth and in the air.

The two collages in this presentation are from this act and summarize the gloomy, violent scenes in an exemplary manner. In the centre of the first image Marceline-Marie robs a woman with the blessing of a priest on the left side, while the group in the background on the right worship the firestorm.

In the original signed in the lower right, all three elements are difficult to distinguish against the ground: Father Dulac Dessalé on the left, a female head and décolletage behind the upraised arm of the woman being robbed, and on the right, a group of two ministrants and a deacon, which Ernst had snipped out of a picture of the celebration of the Eucharist.

While this church-approved seizure occurs in an exterior space, the action in the second collage has moved to a dark and gloomy interior. Knife raised, the protagonist threatens a bearded man who is bound to a table. She is surrounded by four extras, who either observe the event or hold a candle. A wooden chair-back, which Ernst added to the back of the man standing on the left, screens the crime. On the right side, in the folds of a wide robe that has also been pasted into the collage, the third element can be seen: a grasshopper brightly illuminated in the candle light. Along with blood, frogs, mosquitoes, flies, pestilence, boils, hail, darkness and the death of all first-born children, it is one of the ten biblical plagues.

In the same month in which the collage novel appeared, Pope Pius XI published the treatise on Christian marriage, the *Casti connubii*, on 31 December 1930. His encyclical defended traditional Catholic doctrine, which demands the indissolubility of marriage, faithfulness and progeny. A year later, in his text *Danger de pollution* (Danger of pollution), which was published in the third issue of the magazine *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution* (Surrealism in the service of the revolution), Ernst railed against these limitations of freedom:

"The melancholy marital duty was invented to start up the multiplication machine, in order to deliver zombie-like souls to the church, and creatures to the fatherlands, who are up to the demands of production and military service".

LE R.P. DULAC DESSALÉ : 'EH
 PETIOTS, QUE FAITES-VOUS LÀ ?' –
 MARCELINE ET MARIE (D'UNE SEULE
 VOIX) : 'DE NOS MAINS FLEXIBLES
 NOUR PROPAGEONS LES FLÉAUX.,
 (The R.F. Dulac Dessalé: ›Hey, little
 ones, what are you doing there?‹
 Marceline and Marie (in one voice):
 ›We are propagating catastrophes with
 our flexible hands.‹), 1929/1930

Collage on paper, 16,5 x 19 cm (6 1/2 x 7 1/2 in.)

signed 'max ernst' lower right

Illustration for the book *Max Ernst, Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel*,
 Éditions du Carrefour, Paris, December 20th 1930, p. [125].

PROVENANCE

- The artist;
- Galleria La Medusa, Rome.

EXHIBITED

- *Max Ernst. Retrospektive 1979*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, February 17th – April 29th 1979; Nationalgalerie, Berlin, May 10th – July 15th 1979, Prestel Verlag, Munich 1979, no. 192, p. 287.
- *Max Ernst. Paintings & Collages from the 1920s – 70s from a Private European Collection*, Lawrence Rubin, Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art, New York, February 1st – 26th 2000, no. 10.

ILLUSTRATED

- *Maestri Europei*, Galleria La Medusa, Rom 1971, no. 14, p. [30] (illustrated in color, p. [31]).
- *Max Ernst. Retrospektive 1979*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, February 17th – April 29th 1979; Nationalgalerie, Berlin, May 10th – July 15th 1979, Prestel Verlag, Munich 1979, no. 192, p. 287.
- Werner Spies (ed.), *Max Ernst. Œuvre-Katalog*, vol. 4, Werke 1929-1938, Bearbeitet von Werner Spies, Sigrid und Günter Metken, DuMont Buchverlag, Cologne 1979, no. 1643, p. 41.
- Jürgen Pech, *Studien zur religiösen Ikonographie im Werk von Max Ernst bis 1934. Der Collagenroman ›Max Ernst. Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel‹ (1930)*, Bonn 1996, p. [339].
- Max Ernst, *A Little Girl Dreams of Taking the Veil*, Dover, Mineola, New York 2017, p. 127.



'... DE MA MAIN, MON PÈRE, J'AI DRESSÉ UN PETIT
AUTEL DE TRAVAIL ...' (>... WITH MY HAND, FATHER,
I'VE BUILT A LITTLE WORK-ALTAR ...<), 1929/1930

Collage on paper, 15,8 x 18,8 cm (6 1/4 x 7 3/8 in.)

signed 'max ernst' lower right

Illustration for the book Max Ernst, *Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel*,
Éditions du Carrefour, Paris, December 20th 1930, p. [139].

PROVENANCE

- The artist;
- Galerie Arditti, Paris;
- Galleria Arturo Schwarz, Milan.

EXHIBITED

- Max Ernst. *Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel*, Galleria Schwarz, Milan, January 9th – 31st 1964, no. [13], p. [2].
- *Dada*, Galerie Krugier & Cie, Genève, February 1966, no. 35, p. [22].
- Cinquant'anni a Dada. Dada in Italia 1916-1966*, Civico Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, April 24th – September 30th 1966, no. 32.
- Max Ernst. *Works on Paper*, State University College, Oswego, N.Y., January 2nd – 22nd 1968; Richmond Artists Association, Richmond, Virginia, February 18th – March 10th 1968; Harvard University, Busch Reisinger University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 15th – May 11th 1968; State University College, Genesco, N.Y., August 1st – 22nd 1968; Cornell

- University, White Museum of Art, Ithaca, N.Y., September 9th – 29th 1968; Edinboro State College, Edinboro, Pennsylvania, October 21st – November 11th 1968; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, December 1968, no. 24.
- Max Ernst, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, January 24th – March 15th 1970, no. 145, p. 151.

ILLUSTRATED

- Werner Spies (ed.), *Max Ernst. Œuvre-Katalog*, vol. 4, Werke 1929-1938, Bearbeitet von Werner Spies, Sigrid und Günter Metken, DuMont Buchverlag, Cologne 1979, no. 1650, p. 44.
- Jürgen Pech, *Studien zur religiösen Ikonographie im Werk von Max Ernst bis 1934. Der Collagenroman 'Max Ernst. Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel' (1930)*, Bonn 1996, p. [347].
- Max Ernst, *A Little Girl Dreams of Taking the Veil*, Dover, Mineola, New York 2017, p. 141.





THE 1930s:
DETERMINING
A POSITION
ON ART THEORY

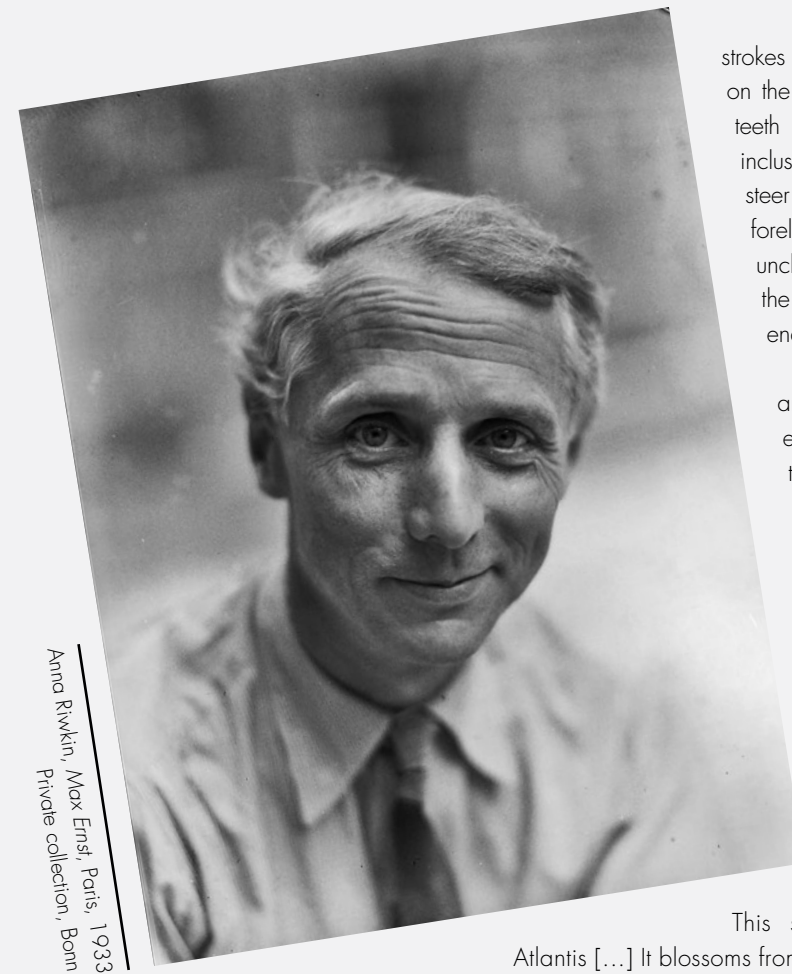
In the summer of 1933 the Swedish photographer Anna Riwkin visited the French metropolis of art. On the terrace of Tristan Tzara's live/work house, which was based on plans by Richard Loos and built in 1926 in the Montmartre quarter of Paris, at Avenue Junot 15, she was able to take a group portrait of the Surrealists, featuring Hans Arp, André Breton, René Crevel, Salvador Dalí, Paul Éluard, Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy, Tristan Tzara and Man Ray. She also took close-up portraits of individual members, such as the 42-year-old Max Ernst, who looks into the camera in a charming and amused manner, with the soft focus on the background emphasising his face even more.

Just recently he had written about the inspirational process behind his indirect techniques, which he had developed over the past decade in the form of overpaintings, collages, frottages and grattages. In the text *Comment force l'inspiration* (How to stimulate the imagination) which appeared on 15 March 1933 in the sixth and last issue of the magazine *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution* (Surrealism in the service of revolution), he explained the importance of the frottage technique that examines surface textures: "In my personal development, this process (based on intensifying the excitation of the mind), which I would like to call 'frottage', owing to its technical components, may play a larger role than the 'collage', although frottage, as I believe, is not fundamentally distinct from it".

A caption described the article as an excerpt from a treatise on surrealist painting. Three-and-a-half-years later, in October 1936, Ernst compiled an extensive theoretical treatise *Au-delà de la peinture* (Beyond painting) for the magazine *Cahiers d'Art*. Here, he cites the treatise on painting by the Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci, referring to the "stains on the wall, in the ashes on the hearth, in the clouds or in the gutter" mentioned by da Vinci and the art biographer Giorgio Vasari, as stimulating textures; he also expressly invoked the *écriture automatique*, which André Breton had conjured up in his 1924 manifesto *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (Surrealist manifesto):

Consequently, the frottage technique is based on nothing but the intensification of the irritability of mental faculties with the appropriate technical means. It excludes any sort of conscious mental guidance (reason, taste, morals) and limits to the utmost the active participation of what has been, until now, called the 'author' of the work. Thus, it has in the meanwhile proved to be a true equivalent of what was already the concept of *écriture automatique*. The author is only an on-looker, indifferent or engaged, in the creation of the work and its phases of development. Just as the poet's role since the famous *Lettre du voyant* consists of writing whatever it is in him that thinks (articulates itself), the role of painter is to set free, to make visible 'whatever it is in him that sees' from its shell.

Embroidered decorative blankets with floral patterns served as a visual stimulus for Ernst's painting *La horde des barbares* (The horde of barbarians) from 1934. An oval shape, surrounded by leaves, which recalls a sunflower, can be recognized in several places in the picture. He laid a piece of paper coated in black paint on top of the lace blanket and used a palette knife to partially scrape off the layer across the weave, shifted the fabric and repeated the process. Ernst then augmented the associative ideas evoked by the pattern, to clarify them. He added blue sky to individual silhouettes, so that on the right side, a figure wearing an object on its head and arm, becomes visible, along with a creature with a large eye and curved trunk. With a few



Anna Riwkin, Max Ernst, Paris, 1933
Private collection, Bonn.

strokes of blue he transformed the structures on the left into a face with slit eyes and teeth bared. Whether it is—with the inclusion of other shapes—a leaping steer with horns and an outstretched foreleg, however, remains deliberately unclear, because Ernst indicates to us the optical provocateur as an open-ended work of art.

Max Ernst's entire oeuvre is an invitation to look. His desire for expanded, interpretive perception transforms reality, because he is not interested in copying the realities of the external world. He had pointed this out vehemently in a survey, *Où va la peinture?* (Where is painting going?), conducted in 1935 by the French magazine *Commune*. In his response he compared his artistic search with the undersea work of a diver, and took a swipe at Salvador Dalí and his veristic dream painting:

This submerged world is no dead Atlantis [...] It blossoms from volcanoes, which although they do not reach the level of the conscious, nevertheless still influence the conscious, meaning, all individual and collective life. Surrealism was born in the midst of the Dada flood, when the ark ran aground on a mountain top. Since the sailors were not in the least interested in repairing their ship or settling on the island, they preferred to dive. Thanks to automatic writing, collages, frottages and all of the processes that support automatism and irrational knowledge, they touched the bottom of this invisible and wonderful universe, 'the subconscious', in order to depict it in all of its reality. No diver knows before he springs what he will bring back. In the same way the painting does not look for his subject. To impose such a thing, however subversive or unusual it is, and to deal with it in an academic manner, will only produce a work of lesser revolutionary significance. In the same way, the person who pretends to fix the dreams of his nights on a canvas is doing nothing more than the work of the artist who is obsessed with copying three apples, without caring for anything other than the similarity.

LA HORDE DE BARBARES, 1934

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard, 23 x 31,5 cm (9 1/16 x 12 3/8 in.)
signed 'max ernst' lower right

PROVENANCE

- The artist;
- Dimitri Petrov, New York;
- Richard Feigen Gallery, New York;
- Hanover Gallery, London;
- Galleria Alexandre Iolas, Milan.

EXHIBITED

- *Max Ernst. Early and recent paintings and sculpture*, Hanover Gallery, London, July 6th – August 15th 1965, no. 13, p. {42}.
- *Phantastische Kunst – Surrealismus*, Kunsthalle, Bern, October 21st – December 4th 1966, no. 51.
- *Max Ernst. Retrospektive 1979*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, February 17th – April 29th 1979; Nationalgalerie, Berlin, May 10th – July 15th 1979, Prestel Verlag, Munich 1979, no. 233, p. 303.

ILLUSTRATED

- *Max Ernst. Early and recent paintings and sculpture*, Hanover Gallery, London, July 6th – August 15th 1965, no. 13, p. [42] (illustrated in color, p. [17]).
- *Max Ernst. Retrospektive 1979*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, February 17th – April 29th 1979; Nationalgalerie, Berlin, May 10th – July 15th 1979, Prestel Verlag, Munich 1979, no. 233, p. 303.
- Werner Spies (ed.), *Max Ernst. Œuvre-Katalog*, vol. 4, Werke 1929-1938, Bearbeitet von Werner Spies, Sigrid und Günter Metken, DuMont Buchverlag, Cologne 1979, no. 2228, p. 345.





THE 1950s: RETURN
AND REMINISCENCES

Ernst had spent the previous decade in the United States of America. In 1941 the now fifty-year-old artist arrived in New York after spending the last year-and-a-half in various French internment camps. Shortly after World War II broke out, he began a torturous odyssey. In early September 1939 he was imprisoned initially as an 'enemy foreigner', first in the prison at Largentière, then in Les Milles near Aix-en-Provence and finally in the Saint-Nicolas camp near Nîmes. While France viewed him as an 'enemy foreigner', Nazi cultural politics had also branded him as a 'degenerate artist' in 1937. As it was for many other European intellectuals, the only possibility of survival meant escape and exile.

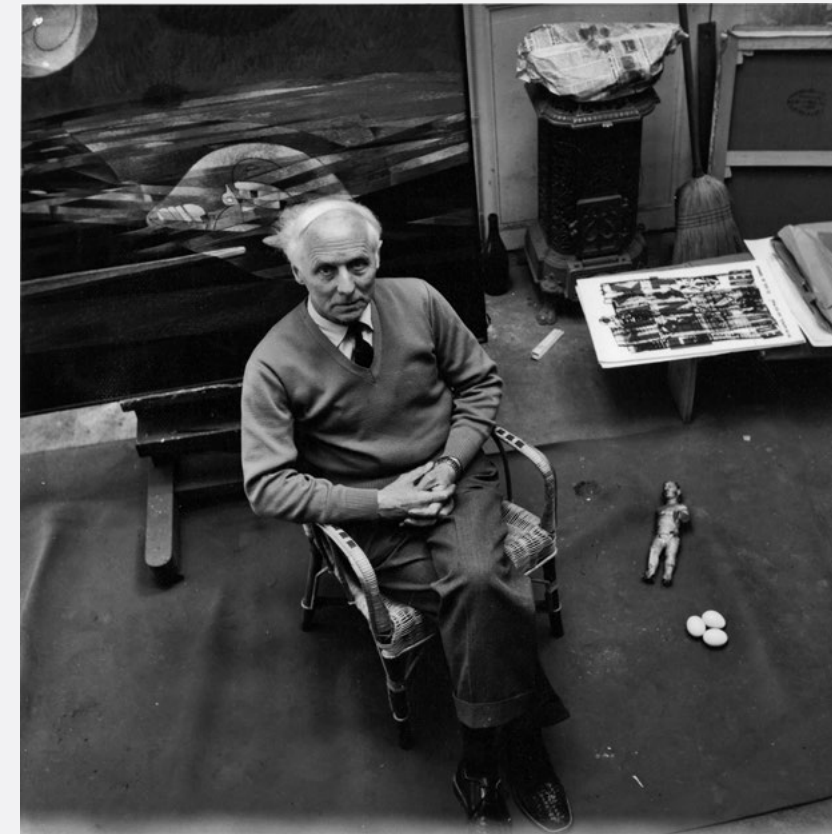
Max Ernst went back to Europe for the first time in late 1949, and in 1953 he returned to France for good. In June 1954 he was awarded the Grand Prize for painting at the Venice Biennale. At the same time Hans Arp received the Grand Prize for sculpture and Joan Miró, the Grand Prize for printmaking. A few months after the award ceremony, which brought him an international breakthrough at the age of 63, Reinhart Wolf did a portrait of him in his Paris studio at Rue La Fayette 80. The photographer, who had come from Hamburg, used the high-ceilinged gallery of the type that had been in use in many studios since the nineteenth century, to take his photograph. Despite the perceptible details of the room, with easel, cast iron stove, stretcher frames leaning against the wall next to a broom, and partially unpacked posters, the artist looks unrealistically small from this perspective. Ernst was aware of the strongly surreal effect of the angle and added to it with an arrangement of three eggs. In his spontaneous staging he cites himself, referring to a picture from his third collage novel *Une semaine de bonté* (A week of goodness) from 1934, for one. For another, he alluded to his treatise *What is Surrealism?*, which had also been published two decades prior, in October 1934, as part of a group show at the Kunsthaus Zürich. In the text he emphasised that surrealism, with its psychic automatism, had rejected the myth of creation and thus the concept of the genius, adding allusively: "Naturally it's over for the old understanding of 'talent', it's over for hero worship and the legend, so welcome to wanton admirers, of the 'fertility' of the artist who lays three eggs today, one tomorrow, and none on Sunday".

In New York Ernst had developed his oscillations, another indirect technique involving coincidence and the laws of nature. He drilled a hole into a paint jar and let it swing over a canvas lying on the ground. The process created sinuous curves, which he interpreted in a second step, but were also the starting point for Jackson Pollock's expressive 'drippings' and action paintings.

The two paintings *Oiseaux dans la forêt* (Birds in the forest) and *Dancers under the starry sky* could be described as modifications of this kind of interpretation of lineatures, being painted this time randomly by hand, in a trance-like state. By adding bright colours to the labyrinth of lines in *Oiseaux dans la forêt* Ernst created a variety of luminous, three-dimensional looking zones. They emphasise individual sections and can be interpreted as heads, torsos, or legs in the birds hidden in the brown surfaces.

In *Dancers under the starry sky* the pictorial space is also left open and concentrates the gaze on two figures made of serpentine lines—one lively, with legs spread, and the other narrow, divided into small parts, with raised arms. Ernst also integrated ecstatic dance, which echoes in the title, into his poem *Dix mille peaux-rouges* (Ten thousand red skins), published in 1953 in the book *Sept microbes vus à travers un tempérament* (Seven microbes seen through a temperament). It is a poetic summary of his time in Arizona and a tribute to the Native Americans who adhere to their identity and live in harmony with nature:

Reinhart Wolf, *Max Ernst*, Paris, 1954
 Courtesy of Max Ernst Museum Brühl
 des LVR, Foundation Max Ernst.



For them / time is / rescinded / ten thousand redskins burst out / across the plains, conscious of their happiness / proclaim the sublimity of their dances / They swallow the days turn the nights upside down / Ten thousand redskins clear-sighted / they get ready to make the rain laugh / their lands furrowed with longing and thirst / make their drums thud full of sound / Full of / sounds / Ten thousand redskins drunk on love / want to mix their restless blood / with the dark milk of their silent women / the laughing honey of their pretty children / children of the century / where are your tridents / Ten thousand redskins pale, but strong / leave their families to die in solitude / Ten thousand redskins, with burning blood, / their life is still there, searching for demons.

The title *Pèse Esprit* (Spirit scales) is borrowed from a measuring device that determines the alcohol content of liquids. The narrow, vertical painting features dark blue facets that become brighter and brighter the closer they get to the high horizon. Out of the submarine depths rises a rod, a kind of periscope that connects them to a misty, diffuse sky. Through the veiled world above ground, the gaze is also focused on the multi-layered blue area that dominates the picture. Ernst is not visualising alcohol content, but is interested in the other meaning of the word *esprit*, in the spiritual dimension of thought, in its brilliant, refreshing and free facets.

OISEAUX DANS LA FORÊT, ca. 1951

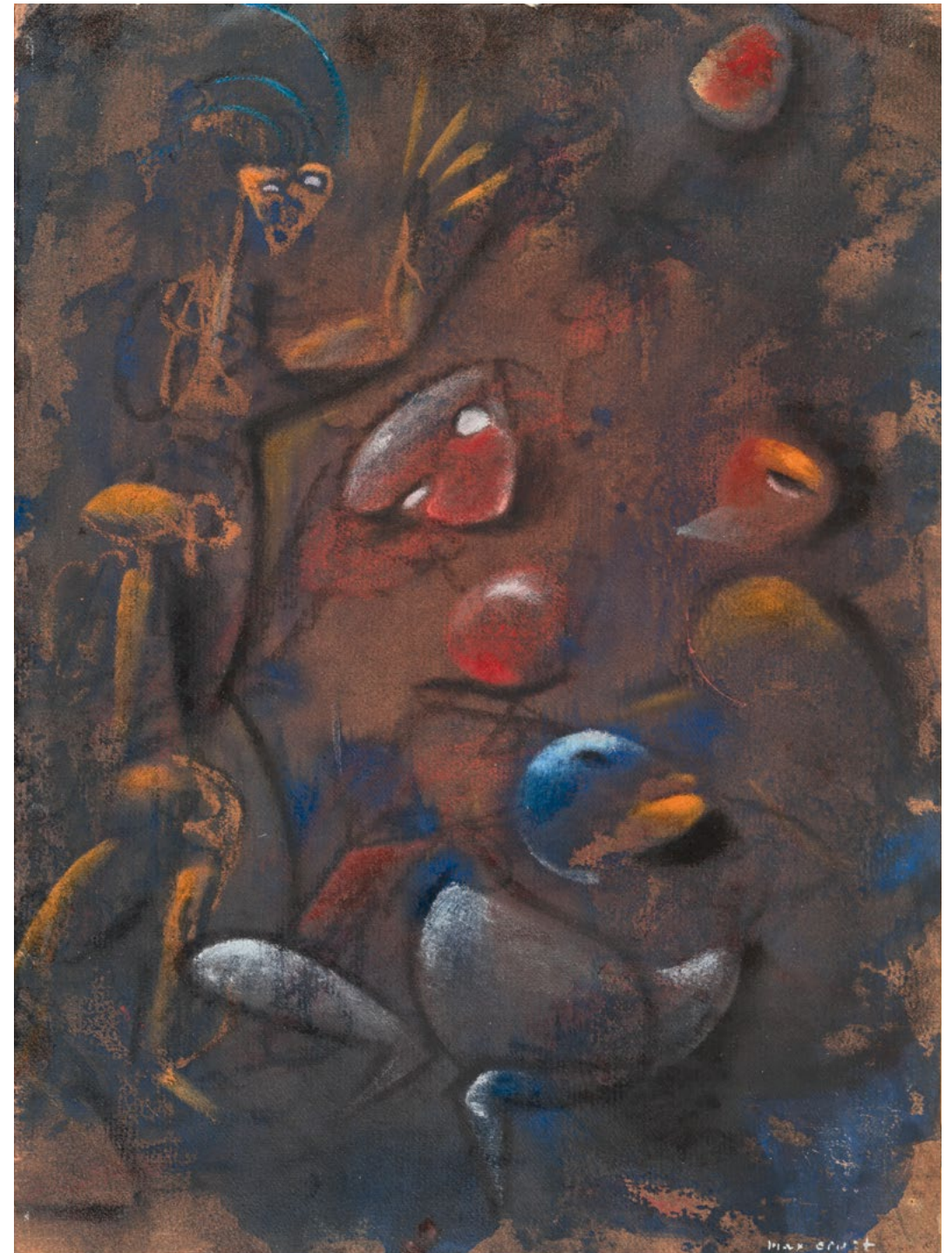
Oil and pastel on paper, mounted on canvas, 32 x 24 cm (12 ³/₅ x 9 ³/₄ in.)
signed 'max ernst' lower right

PROVENANCE

- The artist;
- Galleria Lorenzelli, Bergamo;
- Galleria Levi, Milan.

EXHIBITED

- *Max Ernst. Paintings & Collages from the 1920s - 70s from a Private European Collection*, Lawrence Rubin, Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art, New York, February 1st - 26th 2000, no. 14.



DANCERS UNDER THE STARRY SKY, 1951

Oil on wood, 61 x 35,5 cm (24 x 14 in.)
signed 'max ernst' lower right

PROVENANCE

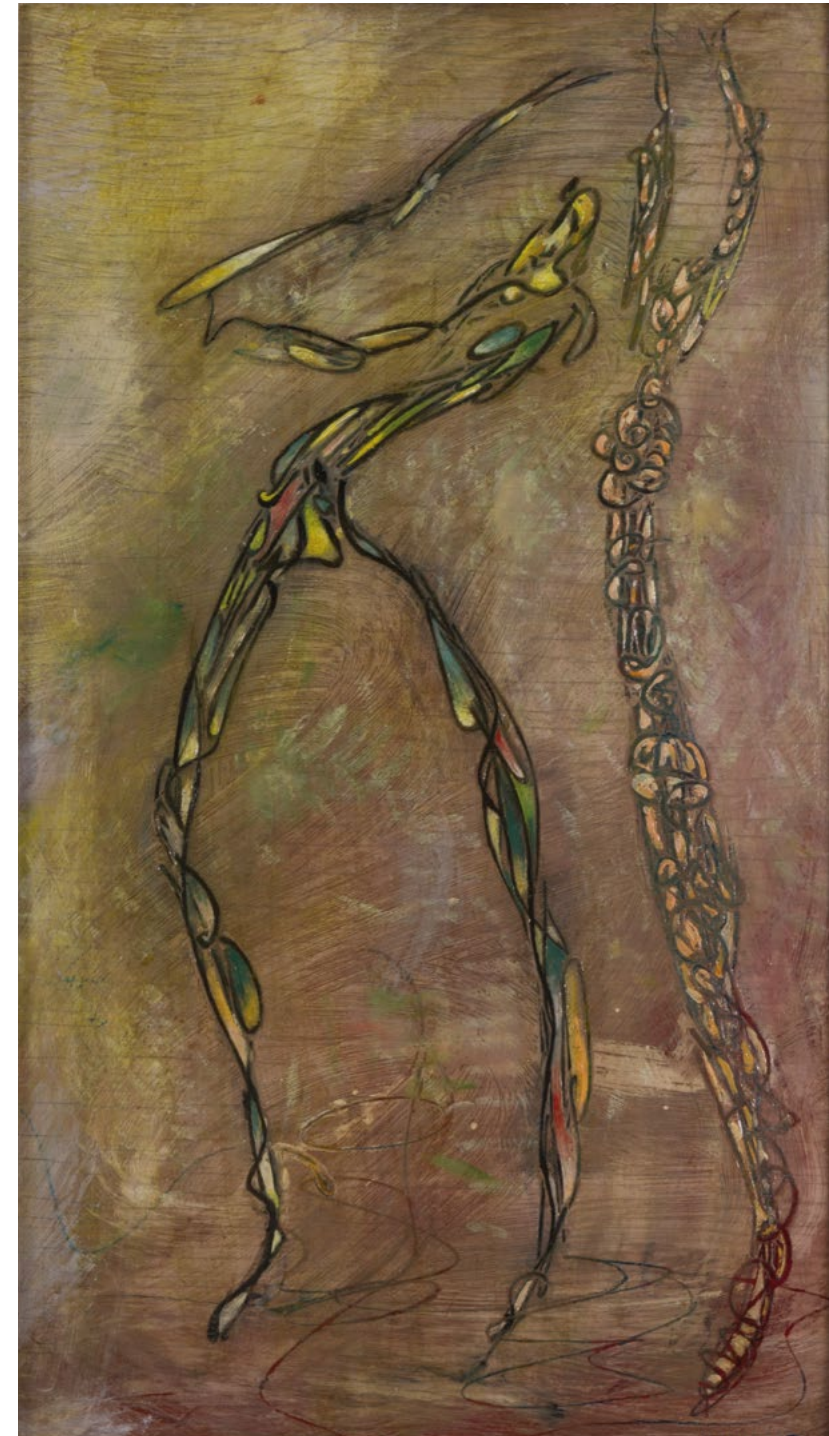
- The artist;
- Galleria Alexandre Iolas, Milan;
- Galleria Arturo Schwarz, Milan;
- Notizie Arte Contemporanea, Turin.

EXHIBITED

- *Max Ernst*, Contemporary Arts Association, Houston, Texas, January 13th – February 3rd 1952, no. 21, p. [3].
- *Max Ernst. Paintings & Collages from the 1920s – 70s from a Private European Collection*, Lawrence Rubin, Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art, New York, February 1st – 26th 2000, no. 18.

ILLUSTRATED

- Giuseppe Gatt, *Max Ernst. I Maestri del Novecento*, Florence 1969, no. 36, p. 89 (illustrated in color, p. 82).
- Werner Spies (ed.), *Max Ernst. Œuvre-Katalog*, vol. 5, Werke 1939-1953, Bearbeitet von Werner Spies, Sigrid und Günter Metken, DuMont Buchverlag, Cologne 1987, no. 2911, p. 311.



PÈSE ESPRIT, 1963

Oil on masonite board, 39,5 x 14,5 cm (15 ⁹/₁₆ x 5 ³/₄ in.)
signed 'max ernst' lower right

PROVENANCE

- The artist;
- Galerie Alexandre Iolas, Paris;
- Galerie Krugier, Genève;
- Claude Segalot, Paris;
- Galerie Levi, Milan.

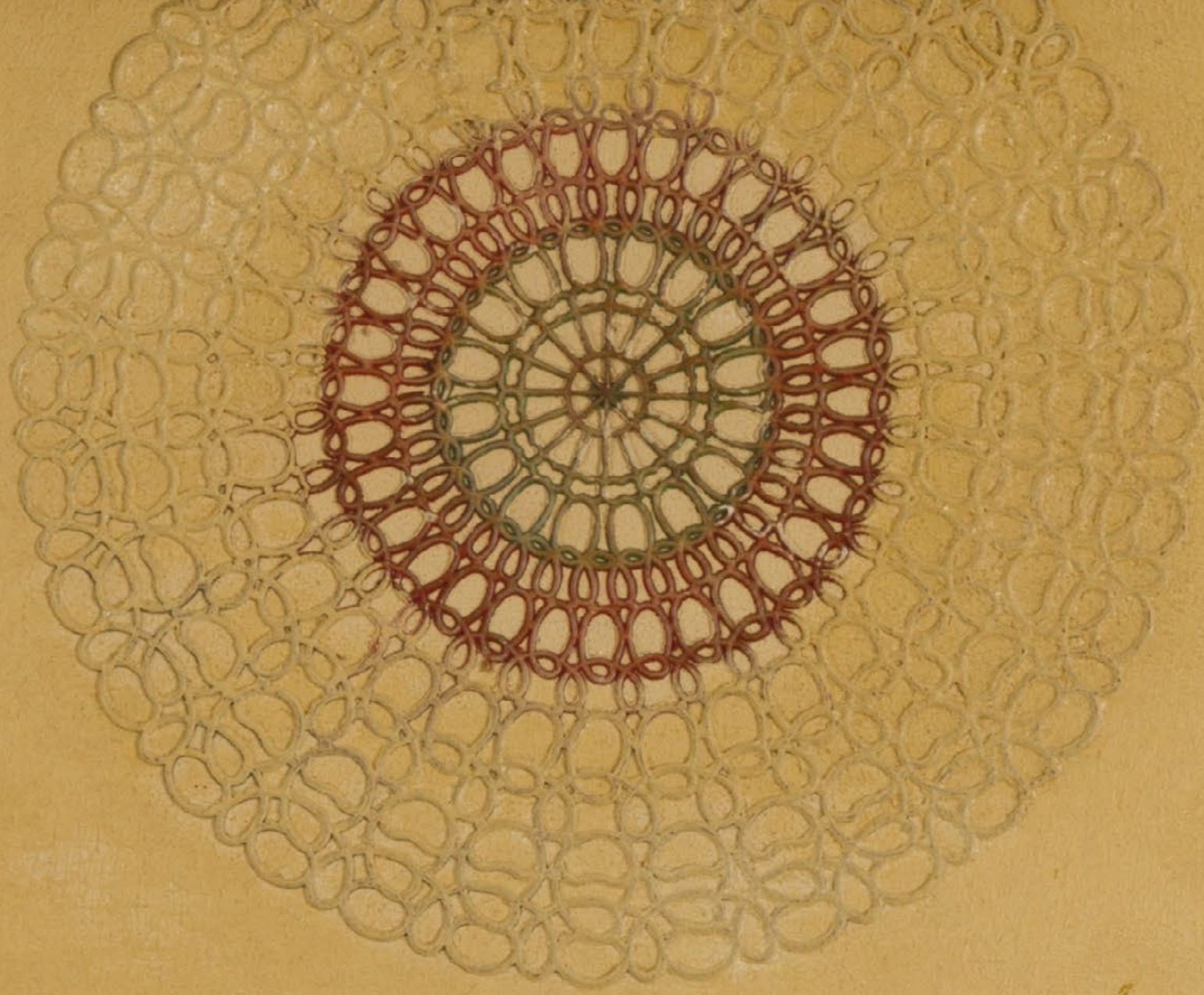
EXHIBITED

- Max Ernst. *Early and recent paintings and sculpture*, Hanover Gallery, London, July 6th – August 15th 1965, no. 8, p. [42].
- Max Ernst. *Sculpture and recent painting*, The Jewish Museum, New York, March 3rd – April 17th 1966, no. 47, p. 60.
- Max Ernst. *Oltre la pittura*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, June 17th – October 2nd 1966, no. 46, p. [18].
- Max Ernst / René Magritte, Bodley Gallery, New York, February 17th – March 14th 1970, no. 8, p. p. [4].
- Max Ernst. *Retrospektive 1979*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, February 17th – April 29th 1979; Nationalgalerie, Berlin, May 10th – July 15th 1979, Prestel Verlag, Munich 1979, no. 314, p. 339.
- Max Ernst. *Paintings & Collages from the 1920s – 70s from a Private European Collection*, Lawrence Rubin, Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art, New York, February 1st – 26th 2000, no. 5.

ILLUSTRATED

- Max Ernst. *Early and recent paintings and sculpture*, Hanover Gallery, London, July 6th – August 15th 1965, no. 8, p. [11].
- John Russell, *Max Ernst. Leben und Werk*, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, Cologne 1966, no. 125, p. 342 (illustrated, no. 125, p. [284]).
- John Russell, *Max Ernst. Life and Work*, Thames and Hudson, London 1967, no. 125, p. 348 (illustrated, no. 125, p. [300]).
- Max Ernst / René Magritte, Bodley Gallery, New York, February 17th – March 14th 1970, no. 8, p. [5].
- Max Ernst. *Retrospektive 1979*, Haus der Kunst, Munich, February 17th – April 29th 1979; Nationalgalerie, Berlin, May 10th – July 15th 1979, Prestel Verlag, Munich 1979, no. 314, p. 339.
- Werner Spies (ed.), *Max Ernst. Œuvre-Katalog*, vol. 6, Werke 1954-1963, Bearbeitet von Werner Spies, Sigrid und Günter Metken, DuMont Buchverlag, Cologne 1998, no. 3697, p. 335.





THE 1960s:
CONSTELLATIONS
AND COMBINATIONS



Despite their differences in both size and in the statements they make, the four works from the 1960s are connected via their compositional structure. In all of the vertical pictures, a circular shape is added to the upper section, while the areas beneath are designed all designed differently.

In the painting *Eine Heringsschule* (A school of herrings) from 1965 and the watercolour *Floral* from 1968 there seem to be allusions to planets or heavenly bodies of some kind. In the medium-sized work on paper, the ground — with its bluish and pink splashes and its dominant spots of colour, surrounds a purple, linear structure inside of it on the one hand — as well as the multi-coloured circular section (alternating from yellow to green to blue and brown) show certain traces of the process that Ernst chose on purpose. In the title of a show that took place from 19 March to 15 May 1968 at the Galerie Alphonse Chave in Vence, he ironically described it as *Déchets d'atelier, lueurs de génie* (Studio rubbish, flashes of genius). The philosopher Emil M. Cioran received a copy of the catalogue and sent his thanks in a letter dated 26 April:

Dear Max, You've already given me great pleasure by sending me this precious 'rubbish' (I like this form of self-irony, which only a proud, upstanding mind is capable of). In everything you do, as you well know, there is something beyond, an expansion, which, although we cannot translate it into comprehensible words, we can perceive it and it benefits us. This is why we love you, and that's why we think about your works, which fascinate us.

For the large painting, on the other hand, Ernst used eight borders from old-fashioned tapestries, which he had found years ago, as he noted in his autobiography, in a shop in the French city of Chinon, and a decorative cover made of plastic with curving loops of different sizes. He coloured the centre in red and green so that this sun seems to pulsate. The upper edge is cut off; its size goes beyond the section of the visible image. In the image the muted, yellow light of the sun falls upon an artificially staged picture of the sea. The borders, which are glued onto the canvas at a slight angle and are framed at the top and bottom by yellow, tapered planes; they could be interpreted as waves and crests of water, but also as a vast, dense school of herrings.

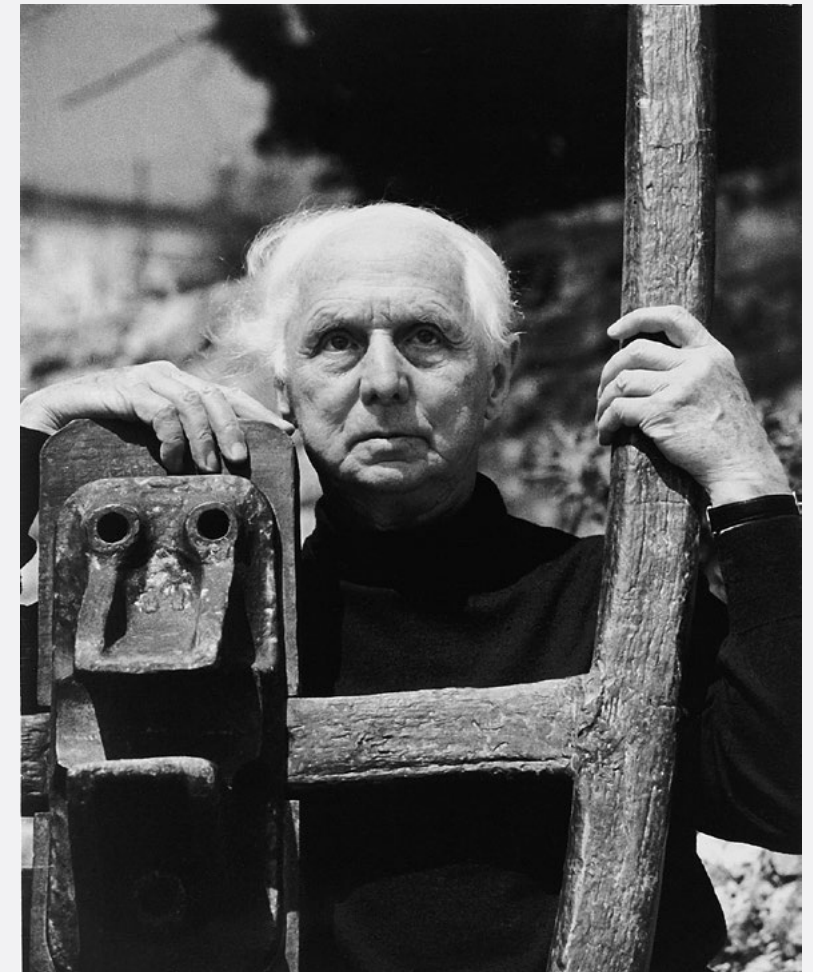
Ernst integrated found functional objects and items from his studio into his *Le sexe d'un ange* (The sex of an angel) and *Julia Baisers*, both completed in 1968. The cut-out circles with a narrow, blue-eyed mask decorated with three flowers and chaotic looking red planes and droplets function as heavenly bodies, but at the same time, recall round heads on top of rectangular bodies, indicating a second layer of meaning.

In the large assemblage *Le sexe d'un ange*, a nocturnal scene with a decorative full moon, the coloured reproduction of a parrot is trapped behind the real bars of a cage. And in the picture itself a creature behind bars sits on a branch, excluded from nature. The bird — and thus the divine entity mentioned in the title — has been robbed of both its freedom and its independence.

The photo postcard from the turn of the last century on a light yellow, sunny background in the medium-sized collage *Julia Baisers* features an actress equipped with butterfly wings. It integrates a picture into a picture, confronting the present with the past. In the early 1930s Ernst had already articulated this presentational principle in his *Loplop présente* series. With the scaffold-like figure of Loplop, thought to

be a self-portrait of the artist, he offers found objects, fragments of reality or his own works. In his later oeuvre he developed these kinds of presentational tableaux, first to concentrate the eye on the image and second, to draw attention to the distance between art and reality, in a romantic, ironic sense. Loplop was a pseudonym that first appeared in 1929 in his collage novel *La femme 100 têtes* (The hundred headless woman). In the 1938 book *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme* (A brief dictionary of surrealism), which accompanied the international surrealist exhibition in the Galerie Beaux-Arts in Paris, under the direction of Georges Wildenstein, his character served as the lord and master of his own fauna and as an inspiring, driving force behind a mental attitude: "Loplop, the chief of birds.' Painter, poet and theoretician of surrealism from the early days of the movement to the present time".

By taking ordinary objects and using them in other ways, Ernst updated romantic universal poetry. For his works are exemplary of the process of 'romanticisation', as defined by Novalis, the early German romantic poet and philosopher, in 1798, whose aim is to lend "a higher meaning to what is common, a mysterious guise to the ordinary, the dignity of the unknown to the known, an infinite appearance to the finite".



Karlheinz Bauer, Max Ernst, Seillans, March 1968
Private collection, Bonn.

EINE HERINGSSCHULE, 1965

Oil and collage on canvas, 73 x 60 cm (28 ³/₄ x 23 ⁵/₈ in.)

signed 'max ernst' lower right; inscribed 'Eine Heringsschule' on the reverse

PROVENANCE

- The artist;
- Galerie Alexandre Iolas, Paris.

EXHIBITED

- *Max Ernst. Oltre la pittura*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, June 17th - October 2nd 1966, no. 84, p. [20].

ILLUSTRATED

- Werner Spies (ed.), *Max Ernst. Œuvre-Katalog*, vol. 7, Werke 1964-1969, Bearbeitet von Werner Spies, Sigrid und Günter Metken und Jürgen Pech, DuMont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, Cologne 2007, no. 4054, p. 107.



FLORAL, 1968

Oil, watercolor and collage on paper, 33,5 x 25,7 cm (13 ³/₁₆ x 10 ¹/₈ in.)
signed 'max ernst' lower right

PROVENANCE

- The artist;
- Galerie Alexandre Iolas, Paris, New York.

EXHIBITED

- Max Ernst. *Paintings & Collages from the 1920s – 70s from a Private European Collection*, Lawrence Rubin, Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art, New York, February 1st – 26th 2000, no. 22.

ILLUSTRATED

- Werner Spies (ed.), *Max Ernst. Œuvre-Katalog*, vol. 7, Werke 1964-1969, Bearbeitet von Werner Spies, Sigrid und Günter Metken und Jürgen Pech, DuMont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, Cologne 2007, no. 4418, p. 289.



JULIA BAISERS, 1968

Oil, gouache and collage on wood, 27 x 21,7 cm (10 ⁵/₈ x 8 ¹/₂ in.)
signed 'max ernst' lower right

PROVENANCE

- The artist;
- Peter Schamoni, Munich (a gift of the artist);
- Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago;
- Galerie Arditti, Paris.

EXHIBITED

- *The Surrealist Experience*, Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, May 23rd – July 1st 1972, no. 21.
- *Max Ernst. Paintings & Collages from the 1920s – 70s from a Private European Collection*, Lawrence Rubin, Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art, New York, February 1st – 26th 2000, no. 23.

ILLUSTRATED

- Auc. cat. 142, Kornfeld & Klipstein, Berne, June 10th/12th 1971, no. 11 (illustrated in color).
- *The Surrealist Experience*, Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, May 23rd – July 1st 1972, no. 21.
- Sigrid Metken, »Facteur Chevals Posttasche. Die Bildpostkarte in der Kunst«, in: *Das Kunstwerk*, vol. 27, no. 1. Kohlhammer Verlag, Stuttgart, January 1974, p. 26.
- Werner Spies, *Max Ernst – Collagen. Inventar und Widerspruch*, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, Cologne 1974, no. 532, p. 492 (illustrated, p. [438]).
- Werner Spies (ed.), *Max Ernst. Œuvre-Katalog*, vol. 7, Werke 1964-1969, Bearbeitet von Werner Spies, Sigrid und Günter Metken und Jürgen Pech, DuMont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, Cologne 2007, no. 4430, p. 295.



LE SEXE D'UN ANGE, 1968

Oil and collage on wood, 51 x 43 cm (20 1/8 x 17 in.)
signed 'max ernst' lower right

PROVENANCE

- The artist;
- Galerie Alphonse Chave, Vence;
- Galleria Galatea, Turin;

EXHIBITED

- *Max Ernst. Déchets d'atelier, lieux de génie*, Galerie Alphonse Chave, Vence, March 19th – May 15th 1968, no. [10], p. [6].
- *Max Ernst*, Galleria Galatea, Turin, October 21st – November 22nd 1969, p. [40].

ILLUSTRATED

- *Max Ernst*, Galleria Galatea, Turin, October 21st – November 22nd 1969, p. [40] (illustrated in color, p. [41]).
- Werner Spies (ed.), *Max Ernst. Œuvre-Katalog*, vol. 7, Werke 1964-1969, Bearbeitet von Werner Spies, Sigrid und Günter Metken und Jürgen Pech, DuMont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, Cologne 2007, no. 4475, p. 317.





MAX ERNST, *LIEUX COMMUNS*, 1971

In 1971 Ernst celebrated his eightieth birthday. Despite his great age, he continued to be productive. In this year, besides paintings and drawings, he executed around twenty individual prints and four illustrated books. For *Aux petits agneaux* (To the little sheep) by his first biographer Patrick Waldberg, he contributed twenty lithographs; for *Décervelages* (Brainwashing saveloy), a homage to Alfred Jarry and his play *Ubu roi*, he created eight lithographs; for the *Die Bedeutung des Schönen in der exakten Naturwissenschaft* (The meaning of beauty in the precise natural sciences) by the physicist and Nobel prize winner Werner Heisenberg, he made three lithographs; finally on 21 June, a portfolio called *Lieux communs* (Truisms) was published.

The title is ambiguous and can be translated as “commonplaces”, yet can also mean “truisms, banalities, trivialities”. In addition to chambers and kitchens, the works mainly feature public places, such as a fair, a harbour, a railway station, shops and streets, and interiors with bourgeois décor. The large-format suite compiles eleven poems written by Ernst and twelve reproductions of his colour collages, underscoring his twin talents as an artist of both images and words. In contrast to the woodcut collages he had been making over the last fifty years, he began his work this time with colour. It was based on colour pictures from the nineteenth century, which could be cut from sheets of paper and served as theatrical brochures and figures for peep shows. On selected backgrounds Ernst mounted strange and disturbing visual elements that are not easy to identify, despite the large size of these colour collages.

For *La vie quotidienne* (The daily life) he referred to two views of interior walls, assembling them so that a wide empty space is between them. On the right side a fireplace dominates the picture of the wall. On the mantel is a red coverlet upon which two vases symmetrically frame a glass bell containing yet another plant. Directly behind it is a large mirror in a gold frame. On the left side a coat, a chair and a wooden chest are discernible; to the right of the fireplace hangs a long-handled shovel. On the edge in the foreground sits a cat, looking at the other side, where Ernst has pasted in another element (slightly higher and at eye level with the cat), featuring a clothes rack and a stool. The magnificently decorated costume is headless and is reminiscent of the title *La femme 100 têtes* (The hundred headless woman) from his first collage-novel in 1929. Ernst turned the image of the wall behind it 180 degrees, so that the open door, the shelf with a box and chest above, and the cupboard on the side make the spatial situation seem uncertain, as it carries on ad absurdum. On this side the world is headless and upside down. The confrontation between our rational world and an imaginary world of possibilities is continued on a linguistic level in the accompanying prose poem:

Die begossene katze fürchtet die nässe / die schöne mit dem durchgeschnittenen hals / fürchtet das hackmesser.

The drenched cat fears the wet / the beauty with her throat cut / fears the cleaver.

In this comparison Ernst explains the wet cat's understandable fear of water as a matter of course, parallel to a headless woman's paradoxical fear of a cleaver. However, what appears to be a trivial truism at first sight reveals an irrational, incomprehensible alternative: the world of poetry, imagination and dreams. It is

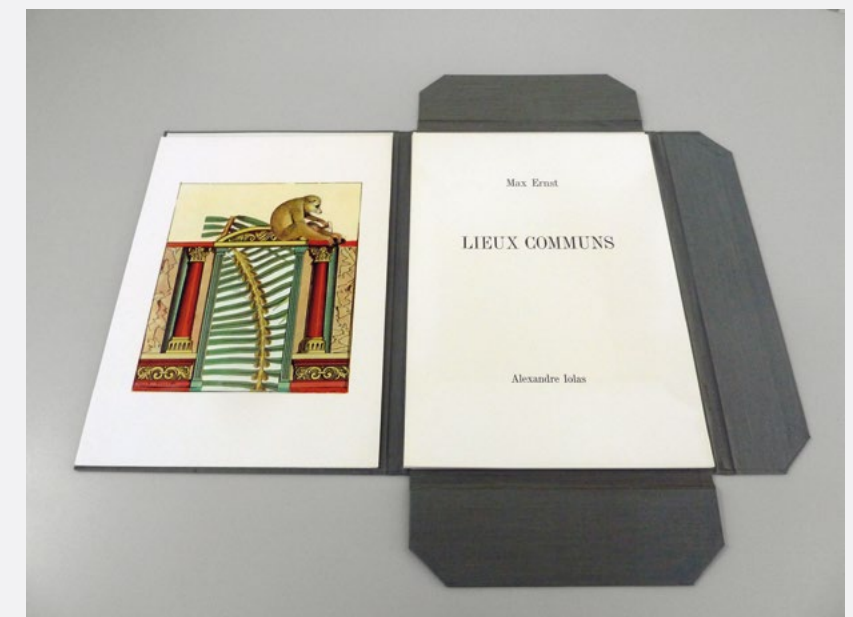
also striking that Ernst has set his signature on the side of the unreal, absurd-looking image, as if he is both authenticating it and also belongs to it.

In the second colour collage, titled *Où donner de la bobine* (Where to go with the coil?), the showplace is not an interior, but an exterior. Ernst places the facades of houses with doors and multiple windows so close to each other that only a narrow gap remains, identifying it as the sky with the colour blue. At the bottom of this interim space is pasted a tower with a peaked roof. It is precisely here that Ernst places his signature. Above, to the left and right, signs indicate a butcher's, a tobacco shop and a wine shop. The windows, however, look alien with bright green buds and colourful calyxes. Ernst not only added plants to the picture, but small animals as well, crawling on the walls. And on the left-hand side he integrated into the window the silhouette of a headless, half-clothed woman who is falling down inside the room, although the even light brown colours make this very difficult to see. Her free fall contradicts the silence expressed in the prose poem, which is disturbingly broken with the last word:

Seitwärts ruhiger hof / seitwärts ruhiger garten / und auf dem grund / ein roter glockenturm / taub und stumm / unheil

To the side a quiet courtyard / to the side a quiet garden / and on the ground / a red clock tower, deaf and dumb / evil

Thus, the portfolio can be considered reminiscent of the first woodcut collages that Ernst had created fifty years before. There, too, is the motif of the headless woman, along with the combination of flora and fauna. Over time, the art of collage gradually became well-known and commonplace, a trivial, spiritless banality that does not achieve the illusionistic quality and contextual depth that distinguishes the work of Max Ernst.



Max Ernst, *Lieux communs*,
Milan, June 1971
Private collection, Bonn.

LA VIE QUOTIDIENNE, 1970/1971

Collage on paper, 29,4 x 23,1 cm (11 ³/₅ x 9 ¹/₁₀ in.)

signed 'max ernst' lower left

Illustration for the portfolio *Max Ernst, Lieux communs. Onze poèmes et douze collages* (Commonplaces. Eleven poems and twelve collages), Alexandre Iolas, Milan, June 21st 1971, p. [14] (illustrated in color, p. [15]).

PROVENANCE

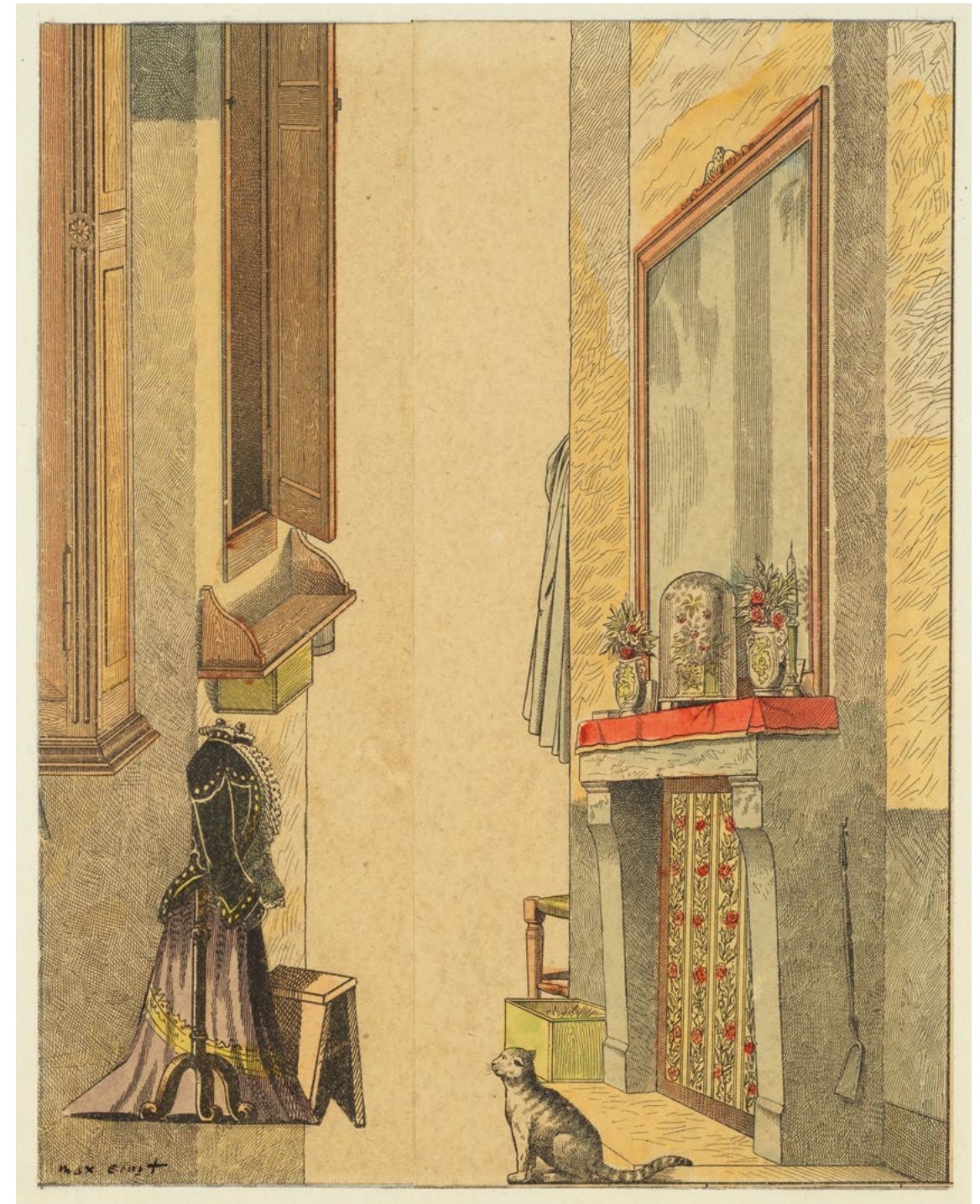
- The artist;
- Galerie Alexandre Iolas, Paris.

EXHIBITED

- *Max Ernst*, Galerie Alexandre Iolas, Paris, June 21st – end of summer 1971.
- *Max Ernst. Paintings & Collages from the 1920s – 70s from a Private European Collection*, Lawrence Rubin, Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art, New York, February 1st – 26th 2000, no. 6.

ILLUSTRATED

- Edward Quinn, *Max Ernst*, Atlantis Verlag, Zürich, Freiburg i.Br. 1976, no. 512, p. 437 (illustrated in color, p. 400).
- Pierre Gimferrer, *Max Ernst*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 1983, no. 157, p. 128 (illustrated in color, p. 112).
- *Max Ernst: Retrospektive*, Albertina, Vienna, January 23rd – May 5th 2013; Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, May 26th – September 8th 2013, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern 2013, (illustrated in p. 320).



OÙ DONNER DE LA BOBINE, 1970/1971

Collage on paper, 32,3 x 23,5 cm (12 7/10 x 9 1/4 in.)

signed 'max ernst' lower middle right

Illustration for the portfolio *Max Ernst, Lieux communs. Onze poèmes et douze collages* (Commonplaces. Eleven poems and twelve collages), Alexandre Iolas, Milan, June 21st 1971, p. [24], (illustrated in color, p. [25]).

PROVENANCE

- The artist;
- Galerie Alexandre Iolas, Paris.

EXHIBITED

- *Max Ernst*, Galerie Alexandre Iolas, Paris, June 21st – end of summer 1971.
- *Max Ernst. Paintings & Collages from the 1920s – 70s from a Private European Collection*, Lawrence Rubin, Greenberg Van Doren Fine Art, New York, February 1st – 26th 2000, no. 7.

ILLUSTRATED

- Sigrid Metken, „Die verkehrte Welt – Wenn Bilderbogen Kunst anregen,“ in: *Das Kunstwerk*, vol. 24, no. 5. Kohlhammer Verlag, Stuttgart, September 1971, p. 14.
- Edward Quinn, *Max Ernst*, Atlantis Verlag, Zürich, Freiburg i.Br. 1976, no. 511, p. 437 (illustrated in color, p. 400).
- Pierre Gimferrer, *Max Ernst*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 1983, no. 159, p. 128 (illustrated in color, p. 112).



