

# 13

## From Fantasy to Dada and the New Objectivity

**L**ate nineteenth-century explorations of the irrational and fantastic and a growing interest in naive and primitivizing modes of expression in art found a striking embodiment during World War I in the eclectic productions of a diverse group of artists who labeled their endeavor "Dada." The Dadaists felt that reason, logic, and Western ideals of progress had led to the disaster of world war, and that the only way forward was through political anarchy, the natural emotions, the intuitive, and the irrational. Dada was first and foremost a response to the brutal, mechanized madness of war. More distantly, it can be seen as a descendant of Romanticism and Symbolism, which themselves were preceded by a thousand years or more of individuals and movements concerned with some sort of personal, eccentric, unorthodox, mystical, or supernatural expression. These currents also found expression of a more inwardly focused kind in the art of Marc Chagall and of Italian painters of the Metaphysical School.

### Truth Pursued through the Dreamworld: Chagall and the Metaphysical School

As Romanticism grew and spread in the nineteenth century, visions of imagined worlds appeared in many forms in painting, sculpture, and architecture. The dreamworlds of Moreau, Redon, Ensor (see fig. 5.22), Böcklin (see fig. 5.24), Klinger, and Rousseau (see fig. 3.15) provided the principal transition from nineteenth-century Romanticism to twentieth-century fantasy.

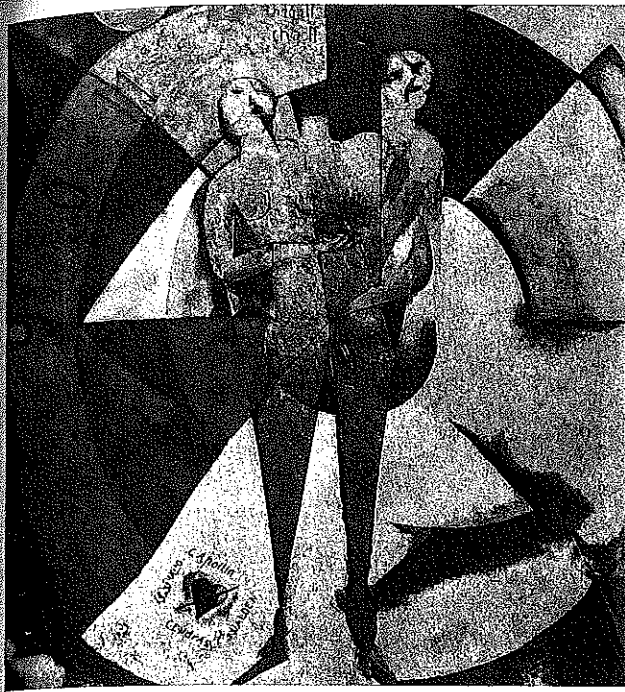
#### Chagall

While Russian artist **Marc Chagall** (1887–1985) was the contemporary of such prominent figures as Tatlin and Goncharova (see chapter 11), his art followed a course quite divergent from that of the Constructivists in post-revolutionary Russia. Chagall's paintings do not fit neatly into a category or movement, but their sense of fantasy anticipates aspects of Surrealism, which developed some-

what later. Chagall was born to a large and poor Jewish family in Vitebsk, Russia. He acquired a large repertoire of Russian–Jewish folktales and a deep attachment to the Jewish religion and traditions, from which his personal and poetic visual language emerged. He attended various art schools in St. Petersburg, but derived little benefit until 1908, when he enrolled in an experimental school directed by the theater designer Léon Bakst, who was influenced by the new ideas emanating from France. In 1910, after two years of study, Chagall departed for Paris.

In Paris, he entered the orbit of Guillaume Apollinaire and the leaders of the new Cubism (see chapter 10), as well as that of Modigliani, Soutine, and Jules Pascin. Chagall's Russian paintings had largely been intimate genre scenes, often enriched by elements of Russian or Jewish folklore. His intoxication with Paris fueled his experimentation with Fauve color and Cubist space, and his subjects became filled with a lyricism that, within two years of his arrival, emerged in mature and uniquely poetic paintings.

*Homage to Apollinaire* (fig. 13.1) was shown for the first time at Herwarth Walden's Der Sturm Gallery in Berlin in 1914. That show had an impact on the German Expressionists that extended well beyond World War I. Chagall's painting is a homage to four people he admired, including Herwarth Walden and Apollinaire, whose names are inscribed around a heart at the lower left. The artist included his own name in Roman and Hebrew letters at the top of the canvas. A circular pattern of color shapes, inspired by the paintings of his friend Robert Delaunay (see fig. 10.44), surrounds the bifurcated figure of Adam and Eve. The esoteric symbolism of *Homage to Apollinaire* has been variously interpreted. Beyond the traditional biblical meanings are references to alchemy and other mystical schools of thought. The bodies of Adam and Eve emerge from one pair of legs to symbolize the union and opposition of male and female, derived from medieval representations of the Fall from Grace. The numbers on the left arc of the outer circle introduce the notion of time. In fact, the figures themselves read like the hands of a clock.



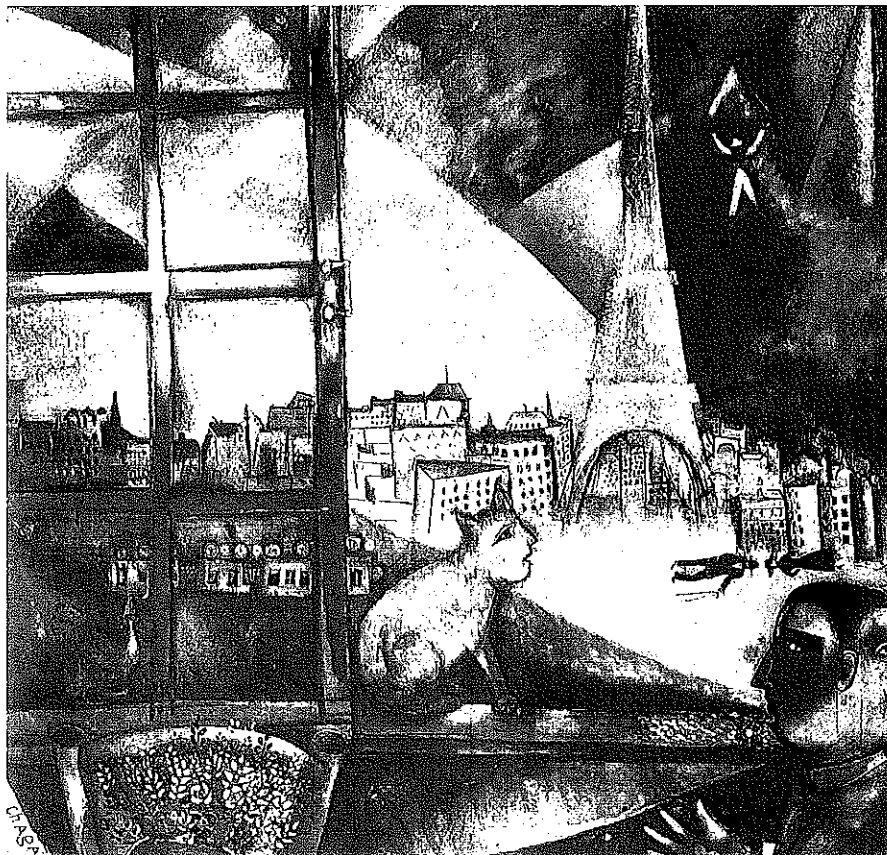
**13.1** Marc Chagall, *Homage to Apollinaire*, 1911–12. Oil, gold and silver powder on canvas, 6' 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  $\times$  6' 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (2  $\times$  1.9 m). Stedelijk van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

Such themes of lovers irrevocably joined extend throughout Chagall's work, as do references to both Jewish and Christian spirituality.

During the next years in Paris, Chagall continued to create new forms to express his highly personal vision. In *Paris*

*Through the Window* (fig. 13.2), the double-faced Janus figure (the Roman god of doorways) in the lower right corner, with its two profiles in contrasting light and shadow, suggests a double nature for the painting—the romantic yet real Paris, and the Paris transformed in the poet's dreams—with trains floating upside down, pedestrians promenading parallel to the sidewalks, and an aviator supported by a triangular kite. The window, with its frame of red, yellow, blue, and green, and its human-headed cat acting as a domesticated Cerberus (the mythical three-headed dog who guards the underworld), becomes a partition between the two realms. The composition of the sky in large geometric areas and the animated buildings, particularly the somewhat tilted Eiffel Tower (which could not be seen from Chagall's studio), suggest Robert Delaunay's dynamic method (see fig. 10.43) imposed upon a dream of gentle nostalgia. Many of Chagall's contemporaries, including Delaunay, did not favor this strong imaginative element. It was the poet André Breton, the principal theorist of Surrealism, who would recognize the significance of Chagall's "liberation of the object from the laws of weight and gravity."

Chagall returned to Vitebsk in 1914 and, caught by the outbreak of war in Russia, he stayed there until 1922. After his reunion in Russia with his beloved Bella, whom he married in 1915, he commemorated his feeling for her in a group of paintings of lovers. *Birthday* (fig. 13.3) is a 1923 copy of a composition originally painted in 1915 (Chagall occasionally made copies of his paintings to keep for his



**13.2** Marc Chagall, *Paris Through the Window*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 52 $\frac{3}{8}$ "  $\times$  54 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (133  $\times$  139.1 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.



**13.3** Marc Chagall, *Birthday*, 1923. Oil on canvas, 31 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (81 × 100 cm). Private collection.

own use). This canvas commemorates Bella's surprise visit to the artist's studio with a bouquet of flowers for his birthday. Chagall floats ecstatically through the air and, with delicious absurdity, twists his head for a kiss.

After the Russian Revolution, Chagall, like Malevich and other avant-garde artists, served for a time as a commissar of fine arts and formed a free art academy. Perhaps his most fruitful work was for the State Yiddish Chamber Theater in Moscow, where he painted murals and designed sets and costumes. This opportunity to work on a large scale in the theater continued to fascinate him and to inspire some of his most striking paintings. *The Green Violinist* (fig. 13.4), painted after his return to Paris in 1923, is also a replica of an earlier work. It is based on one of the paintings Chagall made for the Yiddish Theater, studies for which he brought to Paris. The violinist, a subject frequently depicted by Chagall, refers to the traditional Jewish form of music that was performed in local villages. Here the purple-frosted fiddler is seen floating above the brown and gray roofs of his village.

In Paris, Chagall became increasingly active in the graphic arts, especially for the dealer Ambroise Vollard. Over the years he continued to move from project to project with undiminished energy and enthusiasm. In 1945 he designed sets and costumes for Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird*. He made color lithographs; produced sculptures and ceramics; designed a ceiling for the Paris Opéra in 1963 and murals for the Metropolitan Opera at the Lincoln Center in New York in 1966. He also designed many characteristically vibrant stained-glass windows in which he was able to indulge his love of rich, translucent color.



**13.4** Marc Chagall, *The Green Violinist*, 1923–24. Oil on canvas, 6'5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " × 3'6 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (1.9 × 1.1 m). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

### De Chirico, Carra, and the Metaphysical School

Working in Italy from around 1913 to 1920, the Metaphysical painters retained the forms of Renaissance reality, perspective space, recognizable environment, and sculptural figures and objects, but used various juxtapositions to produce surprise and shock, and to create an atmosphere of strangeness, sometimes even of fear and horror. Though the Metaphysical School was never a movement or style in the same sense that Cubism was, in their search for new content Metaphysical painters had a strong influence on Surrealism's exploration of the intuitive and the irrational (see chapter 15).

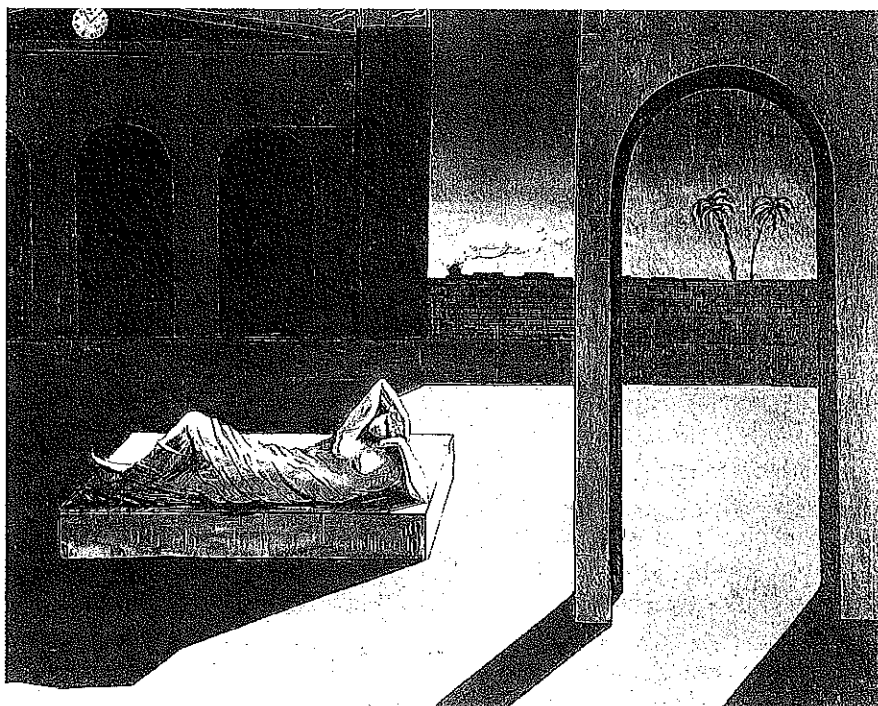
The work of **Giorgio de Chirico** (1888–1978), in particular, links nineteenth-century Romantic fantasy with twentieth-century Surrealism. Born in Greece of Italian parents, de Chirico learned drawing in Athens. After the death of his father, the family moved to Munich in order to advance the artistic leanings of Giorgio, and the musical leanings of his younger brother. In Munich, de Chirico was exposed to the art of Böcklin (see fig. 5.24) and Klinger. What impressed de Chirico about Böcklin was his ability to impart “surprise”: to make real and comprehensible the improbable or illusory by juxtaposing it with normal everyday experience. De Chirico's concept of a painting as a symbolic vision was also affected by his readings of the philosophical writings of Nietzsche. For example, Nietzsche's insistence that art expresses deep-seated motivations within the human psyche led de Chirico to his metaphysical examination of still life.

While de Chirico was in Germany, from 1905 to 1909, Art Nouveau (see chapter 5) was still a force, and the German Expressionists (see chapter 8) were beginning to make themselves known. Ideal or mystical philosophies

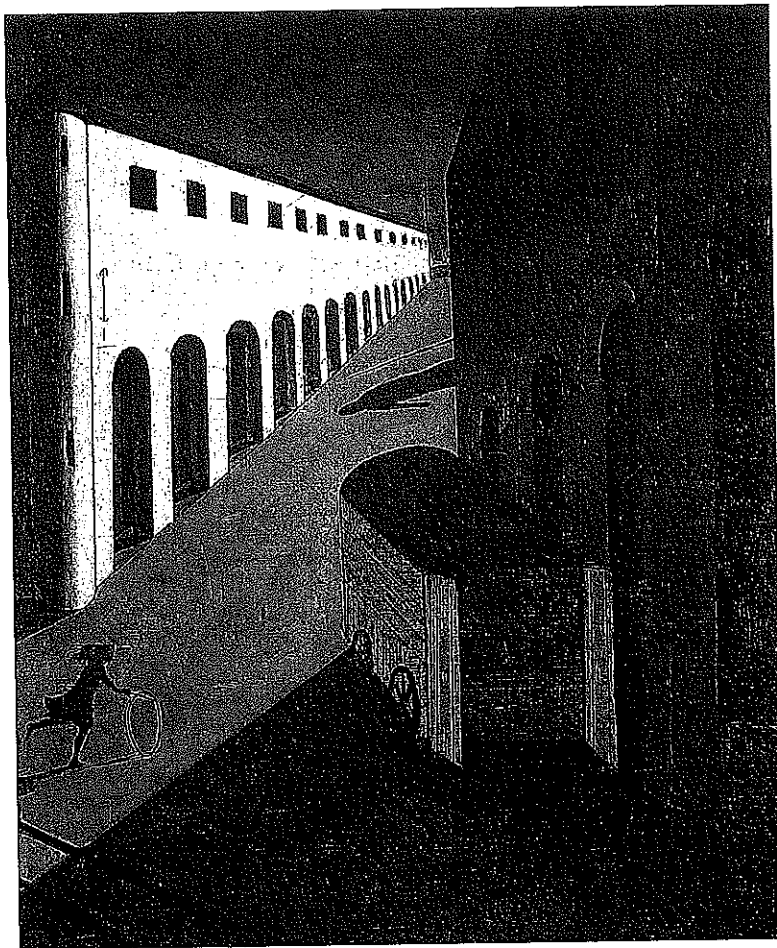
and pseudophilosophies were gaining currency among artists and writers everywhere, and modern Theosophy was an international cult. We have already seen the Theosophical bases of Kandinsky's approach to abstraction, and his mystical concepts of an inner reality beyond surface appearance that later affected artists as divergent as Mondrian and Klee.

Psychoanalysis, with its study of the subconscious, the symbolism of dreams, and the importance of instinct and emotion on human behavior, also had great importance for artists seeking new modes of expression. These artists were occasionally profound students of philosophy or psychology. Most often, however, they assimilated the current, popularized ideas, which became the basis for works of art expressed through their peculiar and intense perception. De Chirico constantly referred to the “metaphysical content” of his paintings, using the word metaphysical (which in philosophy refers to broad questions of the nature of causality, being, and time) loosely or inaccurately to cover various effects of strangeness, surprise, and shock.

De Chirico's approach to art during his early and most important phase—up to 1920—was to examine a theme as though wringing from it its central mystery. In 1912 and 1913, while living in Paris, he painted a group of works incorporating a Hellenistic sculpture of a reclining Ariadne. One of these works, *The Soothsayer's Recompense* (fig. 13.5), presents the darkened arches of a classical façade beneath a large clock. On the distant horizon a moving train introduces another modern element into a seemingly ancient context. Such anomalies are commonplace in Italian cities—a palazzo may become a nineteenth-century railway station. De Chirico used these anachronisms to suggest the melancholy of departure, a melancholy that



**13.5** Giorgio de Chirico, *The Soothsayer's Recompense*, 1913. Oil on canvas, 53½ × 71" (135.9 × 180.3 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.



**13.6** Giorgio de Chirico, *The Melancholy and Mystery of a Street*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 34¼ × 28½" (87 × 71.4 cm). Private collection.

saturates the shadowed square where deserted Ariadne mourns her departed lover Theseus. At times, the strange, sad loneliness of de Chirico's squares takes on dimensions of fear and isolation in a vast, empty space.

*The Melancholy and Mystery of a Street* of 1914 (fig. 13.6) is one of de Chirico's finest examples of deep perspective used for emotional effect. On the right, an arcaded building in deep browns and grays casts a shadow filling the foreground; a lower white arcade on the left sweeps back toward infinity; the sky is threatening. Into the brightly lit space between the buildings emerges a little girl rolling her hoop inexorably toward a looming black specter of a figure standing behind the dark building. In the foreground of the palazzo on the right is an empty old-fashioned freight car or carnival van whose open doors add another suggestive and disturbing element. The scene may be described matter-of-factly: an Italian city square with shadows lengthening in a late autumn afternoon; an arcade of shops closed for the day; railway tracks in the lower left corner; the shadow of a heroic nineteenth-century statue; a little girl hurrying home. But from these familiar components the artist created an ominous mood.

For several years after 1914, de Chirico incorporated mannequins into his compositions as surrogates for the human figure. These mannequins suggest the articulated wooden figures used in drawing classes, dressmakers' dummies, or Renaissance lay figures and anatomical charts,

and act as the protagonists in de Chirico's pictorial dramas. The paintings that use these blank-faced figures also recall Renaissance architectural perspectives of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; they create a dramatic aura through the use of extreme foreshortenings and close-ups.

Upon Italy's entry into the war, de Chirico left Paris, where he had attracted considerable attention among the avant-garde, and returned home to Italy. In Ferrara, from 1915 to 1919, de Chirico summed up his explorations of the previous years in a fully developed mature style. The haunting, dreamlike fusion of reality and unreality in his paintings was aptly termed *Metaphysical*, and when de Chirico met the artists Carlo Carrà and Filippo de Pisis in the army hospital in Ferrara, they formed the association known as the *Scuola Metafisica*, or *Metaphysical School*. *The Great Metaphysician* (fig. 13.7) is a key work of this time, the climax of the artist's visions of lone-

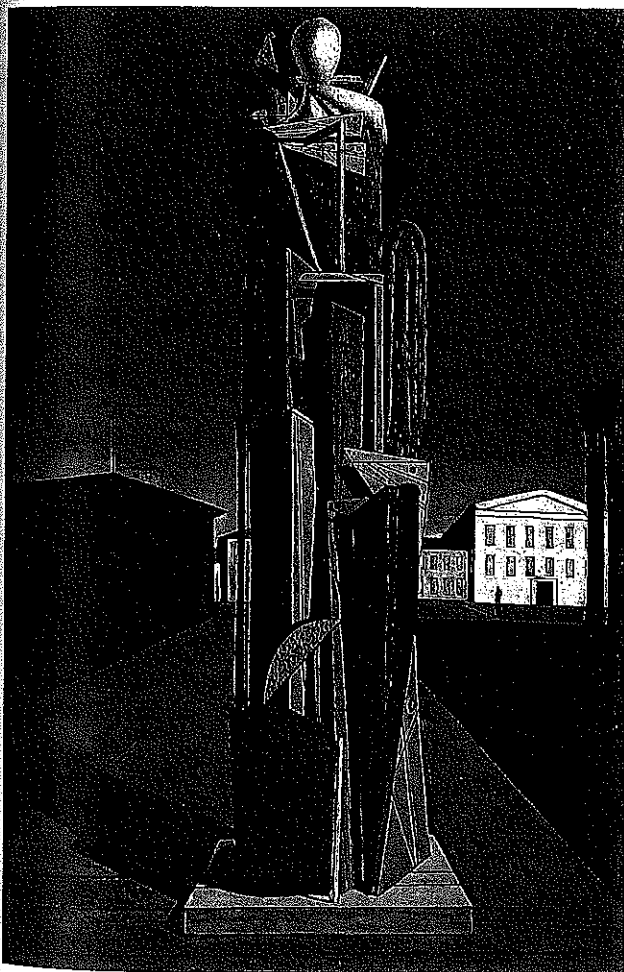
liness and nostalgia, his fear of the unknown, his premonitions of the future, and his depiction of a reality beyond the physical realm. *The Great Metaphysician* combines the architectural space of the empty city square and the developed mannequin figure. The deep square is sealed in with low classical buildings. The buildings to the right and left are abstract silhouettes extending dark, geometric shadows over the brown area of the square. Only the rear buildings and the foreground monument are brightly lit. This monument on a low base is a looming construction of elements from the studio and drafting table, crowned by a blank mannequin head. It is clear from these paintings that the *Metaphysical School* shared little of the Italian Futurists' faith in machine technology (see chapter 11) and its desire to capture the dynamism of modern life. Rather, de Chirico and his followers sought an elegiac and enigmatic expression, one that, unlike the Futurists, did not reject the art of the Italian past.

After 1920, just as de Chirico began to be recognized as a forerunner of new movements in many parts of Europe and the United States, he suddenly turned against the direction of his own painting and settled on an academic classicism that he continued to pursue. As a result, he quarreled violently with the Surrealists, who had hailed his early work as the most crucial forerunner of their own, but who dismissed his later classically oriented style. In his later career, de Chirico did not actually repudiate his own early

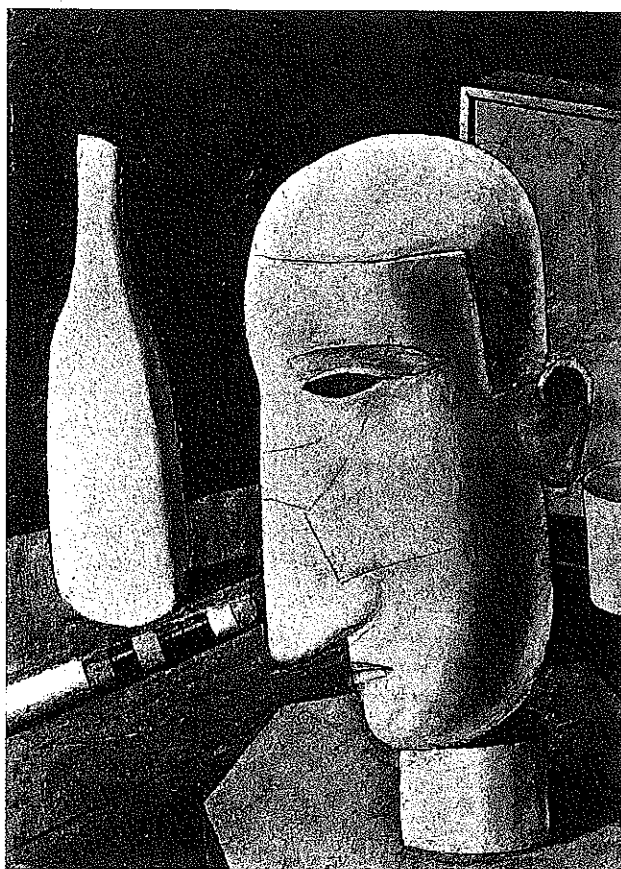
works. However, like many other artists, he abandoned experimentation after World War I and attempted to rejoin the mainstream of European post-Renaissance painting.

The Futurist and Metaphysical painter Carlo Carrà (see chapter 11) met de Chirico in 1917 while on military service in Ferrara. Carrà had been replacing the coloristic fluidity of his Futurist paintings with a more disciplined style akin to Analytic Cubism. In the early war years he applied Marinetti's concept of free words to collages with propagandistic intent (see fig. 11.7). The form proposed by Marinetti, and practiced for a time by Carrà, specifically influenced poets and artists among the Dadaists and Surrealists.

The directions of Carrà's paintings and collages after 1912 indicate his search for a new content and for forms less fragmented than those of Futurism. He painted pictures in 1917 that are almost pastiches of de Chirico's, but in *The Drunken Gentleman* (fig. 13.8), dated 1916 but probably painted in 1917, he developed an individual approach. The objects—sculptured head, bottle, glass—are modeled with clear simplicity in muted color gradations of gray and white that are given strength and solidity by the heavy impasto of the paint. Out of elementary still-life



13.7 Giorgio de Chirico. *The Great Metaphysician*. 1917. Oil on canvas, 41½ × 27½" (104.5 × 69.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



13.8 Carlo Carrà, *The Drunken Gentleman*, 1917 (dated 1916 on canvas). Oil on canvas, 23¾ × 17½" (60 × 44.5 cm). Collection Carlo Frua de Angeli, Milan.

props, the artist created his own metaphysical reality. In 1918 Carrà published *Pittura Metafisica*, a book about the Metaphysical School. De Chirico, justifiably feeling that he was not given adequate credit, became embittered, and ended both their friendship and the Metaphysical School as a formal movement.

## The World Turned Upside Down: The Birth of Dada

During World War I, Zurich, in neutral Switzerland, was the first important center in which an art, a literature, and even a music and a theater of the fantastic and the absurd arose. In 1915 a number of artists and writers, almost all in their twenties and in one way or another displaced by the war that was sweeping over Europe, converged on this city. This international group included the German writers Hugo Ball and Richard Huelsenbeck, the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara, the Romanian painter and sculptor Marcel Janco, the Alsatian painter, sculptor, and poet Jean (Hans) Arp, the Swiss painter and designer Sophie Taeuber, and the German painter and experimental filmmaker Hans Richter. Many other poets and artists were associated with Zurich Dada, but these were the leaders whose demonstrations, readings of poetry, "noise concerts," art exhibitions, and writings assaulted the traditions

and preconceptions of Western art and literature. Thrown together in Zurich, these young men and women expressed their reactions to the spreading hysteria of a world at war in forms that were intended as negative, anarchic, and destructive of all conventions. Dada was a search for new vision and content that went beyond any frivolous desire to outrage the bourgeoisie. In Dada there was a central force of wildly imaginative humor, one of its lasting delights—whether manifested in free-word-association poetry readings drowned in the din of noise machines, in absurd theatrical or cabaret performances (see fig. 13.10), in nonsense lectures, or in paintings produced by chance or intuition uncontrolled by reason. Nevertheless, it had a serious intent: the Zurich Dadaists were making a critical reexamination of the traditions, premises, rules, logical bases, even the concepts of order, coherence, and beauty that had guided the creation of the arts throughout history and remained central to the enterprise of high-minded, utopian modernism.

### The Cabaret Voltaire and Its Legacy

Hugo Ball, a philosopher and mystic as well as a poet, was the first actor in the Dada drama. In February 1916, with the nightclub entertainer Emmy Hennings, he founded the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich as a meeting place for these free spirits and a stage from which existing values could be attacked. Interestingly enough, across the street from the Cabaret Voltaire lived Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, who would stand at the forefront of the Russian Revolution the following year. Ball and Hennings were soon joined by Tzara, Janco, Arp, and Huelsenbeck.

The term “Dada” was coined in 1916 to describe the movement then emerging from the seeming chaos of the Cabaret Voltaire, but its origin is still doubtful. The popular version advanced by Huelsenbeck is that a French–German dictionary opened at random produced the word “dada,” meaning a child’s rocking horse or hobbyhorse. Richter remembers the *da, da, da, da* (“yes, yes”) in the Romanian conversation of Tzara and Janco. *Dada* in French also means a hobby, event, or obsession. Other possible sources are in dialects of Italian and Kru African. Whatever its origin, the name Dada is the central, mocking symbol of this attack on established movements, whether traditional or experimental, that characterized early twentieth-century art. The Dadaists used many of the formulas of Futurism in the propagation of their ideas—the free words of Marinetti, whether spoken or written; the noise-music effects of Luigi Russolo to drown out the poets; the numerous manifestos. But their intent was antithetical to that of the Futurists, who extolled the machine world and saw in mechanization, revolution, and war the rational and logical means, however brutal, to the solution of human problems.

Zurich Dada was primarily a literary manifestation, whose ideological roots were in the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud, in the theater of Alfred Jarry, and in the critical

ideas of Max Jacob and Guillaume Apollinaire. In painting and sculpture, until Picabia arrived, the only real innovations were the free-form reliefs and collages “arranged according to the laws of chance” by Jean Arp (see fig. 13.11). With few exceptions, the paintings and sculptures of other artists associated with Zurich Dada broke little new ground. In abstract and Expressionist film—principally through the experiments of Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling—and in photography and typographic design, however, the Zurich Dadaists made important innovations.

The Dadaists’ theatrical activity was an important precursor to the sixties “happening” and other forms of performance art that developed after World War II, particularly that of the Fluxus group (see figs. 21.20, 21.21). In fact, the effects of Dada are so pervasive in today’s culture that one can find instructions for composing Dada poetry on the Internet. Arp described a typical evening at the Cabaret Voltaire thus:

Tzara is wiggling his behind like the belly of an Oriental dancer. Janco is playing an invisible violin and bowing and scraping. Madame Hennings, with a Madonna face, is doing the splits. Huelsenbeck is banging away nonstop on the great drum, with Ball accompanying him on the piano, pale as a chalky ghost. We were given the honorary title of Nihilists.

The performers may have been wearing one of the masks created by Marcel Janco (1895–1984) made of painted paper and cardboard (fig. 13.9). Ball said these masks not only called for a suitable costume but compelled the wearer to act unpredictably, to dance with “precise, melodramatic gestures, bordering on madness.” Dada theater of this kind had precedents in Russian Futurist performances, such as the 1913 *Victory over the Sun*, for which Malevich designed costumes.

Hugo Ball introduced abstract poetry at the Cabaret Voltaire with his poem *O Gadjji Beri Bimba* in June 1916. Wrapped in a cardboard costume (fig. 13.10), he recited his “sound poem,” *Karawane*, from the two flanking music stands. Ball’s thesis—that conventional language had no more place in poetry than the outworn human image in painting—produced a chant of more or less melodic syllables without meaning such as: “zimzim urallala zimzim zanzibar zimlalla zam ...” Despite the frenzied reactions of the audience to this experiment, its influence—like much else presented at the Cabaret Voltaire—affected the subsequent course of twentieth-century poetry.

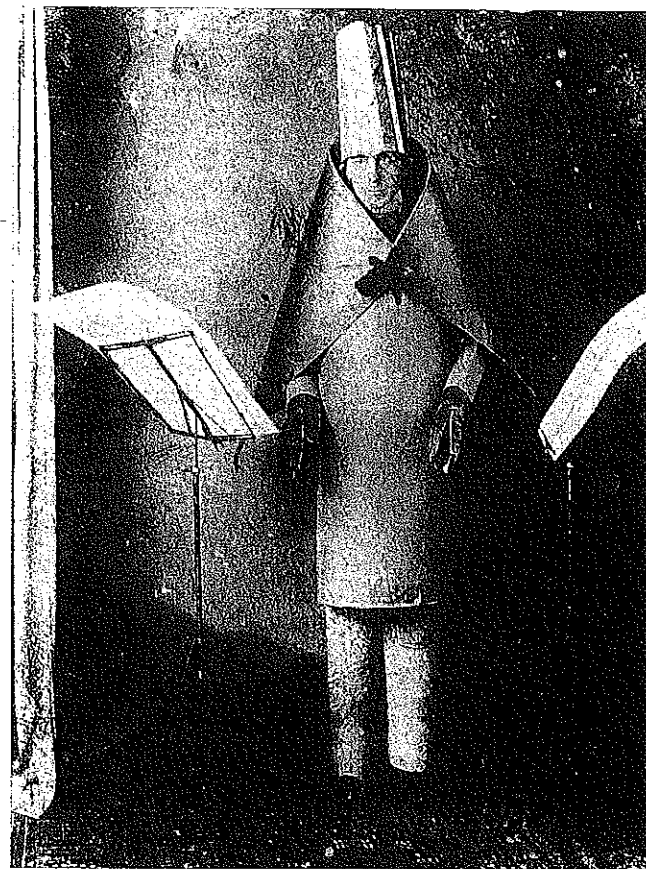
The Zurich Dadaists were violently opposed to any organized program in the arts, or any movement that might express the common stylistic denominator of a coherent group. Nevertheless, three factors shaped their creative efforts. These were bruitisme (noise-music, from *le bruit*—“noise”—as in *le concert bruitiste*), simultaneity, and chance. Bruitisme came from the Futurists, and simultaneity from the Cubists via the Futurists. Chance, of course, exists to some degree in any act of artistic creation.



**13.9** Marcel Janco, *Mask*, 1919. Paper, cardboard, string, gouache, and pastel, 17¼ × 8¾ × 2" (45 × 22 × 5 cm). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris.

In the past the artist had normally attempted to control or to direct it, but it now became an overriding principle. All three, despite the artists' avowed negativism, soon became the basis for their revolutionary approach to the creative act, an approach still found in poetry, music, drama, and painting.

The year 1916 witnessed the first organized Dada evening at a public hall in Zurich and the first issue of the magazine *Collection Dada*, which Tzara would eventually take over and move to Paris. The following year, the first public Dada exhibitions were held at the short-lived Galerie Dada. Such activities ushered in a new, more constructive phase for Zurich Dada, broadened from the spontaneous performances of the Cabaret Voltaire. But with the end of World War I, Zurich Dada too was drawing to an end. The initial enthusiasms were fading; its participants were scattering. Ball abandoned Dada, and Huelsenbeck, who had opposed attempts to turn Dada into a conventional, codified movement, left for Berlin. Tzara remained for a time in Zurich and oversaw the last Dada soirée in 1919, after which he moved to Paris. The painter Francis



**13.10** Hugo Ball reciting the poem *Karawane* at the Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich, 1916. Photograph, 28¼ × 15¾" (71.5 × 40 cm). Kunsthaus, Zurich.

Picabia arrived in 1918, bringing contact with similar developments in New York and Barcelona. Picabia, together with Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, had contributed to a Dada atmosphere in New York around Alfred Stieglitz's 291 Gallery and his periodical *291* (see chapter 10). With the help of the collector Walter Arensberg, Picabia began to publish his own journal of protest against everything, which he called *391*. After a journey to Barcelona, where he found many like-minded expatriates, Picabia visited Zurich, drawn by the spreading reputation of the originators of Dada. Returning to Paris at the end of the war, he became a link, as did Tzara, between the post-war Dadaists of Germany and France. Dada, which was perhaps more a state of mind than an organized movement, left an enormous legacy to contemporary art, particularly the Neo-Dada art of the fifties and early sixties (see figs. 21.10, 21.16).

### Arp

**Jean (Hans) Arp** (1887–1966) was the major visual artist to emerge from Zurich Dada. Arp was born in Strasbourg, then a German city in the disputed region of Alsace but subsequently recovered by France. He studied painting and poetry, and in Paris in 1904 he discovered modern painting, which he then pursued in studies at the Weimar School of Art and the Académie Julian in Paris. He also wrote



poetry of great originality and distinction throughout his life. The disparity between his formal training and the paintings he was drawn to brought uncertainty, and he spent the years 1908–10 in reflection in various small villages in Switzerland. The Swiss landscape seems to have made a lasting impression on him, and the abstraction to which he eventually turned was based on nature and organic shapes.

In Switzerland, Arp met Paul Klee, and after his return to Germany he was drawn into the orbit of Kandinsky and the Blaue Reiter painters (see figs. 8.17, 8.18). In 1912 he exhibited in Herwarth Walden's first Autumn Salon, and by 1914, back in Paris, he belonged to the circle of Picasso, Modigliani, Apollinaire, Max Jacob, and Delaunay.

Arp took an unusually long time finding his own direction. Since he destroyed most of his pre-1915 paintings, the path of his struggle is difficult to trace. He experimented with geometric abstraction based on Cubism, and by 1915, in Zurich, he was producing drawings and collages whose shapes suggest leaves and insect or animal life but which were actually abstractions. With **Sophie Taeuber** (1889–1943), whom he met in 1915 and married in 1922, he jointly made collages, tapestries, embroideries, and sculptures. Through his collaboration with her, Arp further clarified his ideas:

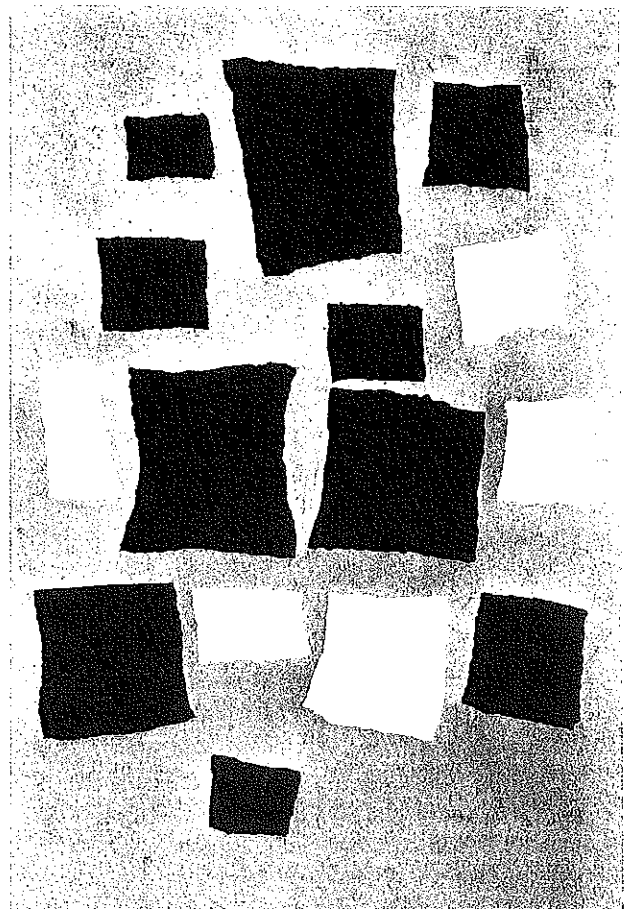
These pictures are Realities in themselves, without meaning or cerebral intention. We ... allowed the elementary and spontaneous to react in full freedom. Since the disposition of planes, and the proportions and colors of these planes seemed to depend purely on chance, I declared that these works, like nature, were ordered according to the laws of chance, chance being for me merely a limited part of an unfathomable *raison d'être*, of an order inaccessible in its totality.

Also emerging at this time was the artist's conviction of the metaphysical reality of objects and of life itself—some common denominator belonging to both the lowest and the highest forms of animals and plants. It may have been his passion to express his reality in the most concrete terms possible, as an organic abstraction (or, as he preferred to say, an organic concretion), that led him from painting to collage and then to relief and sculpture in the round.

In 1916–17 Arp produced collages of torn, rectangular pieces of colored papers scattered in a vaguely rectangular arrangement on a paper ground (fig. 13.11). The story told of their origin is that Arp tore up a drawing that displeased him and dropped the pieces on the floor, then suddenly saw in the arrangement of the fallen scraps the solution to the problems with which he had been struggling. Arp continued to experiment with collages created in this manner, just as Tzara created poems from words cut out of newspapers, shaken and scattered on a table. Liberated from rational thought processes, the laws of chance, Arp felt, were more in tune with the workings of nature. By relinquishing a certain amount of control, he

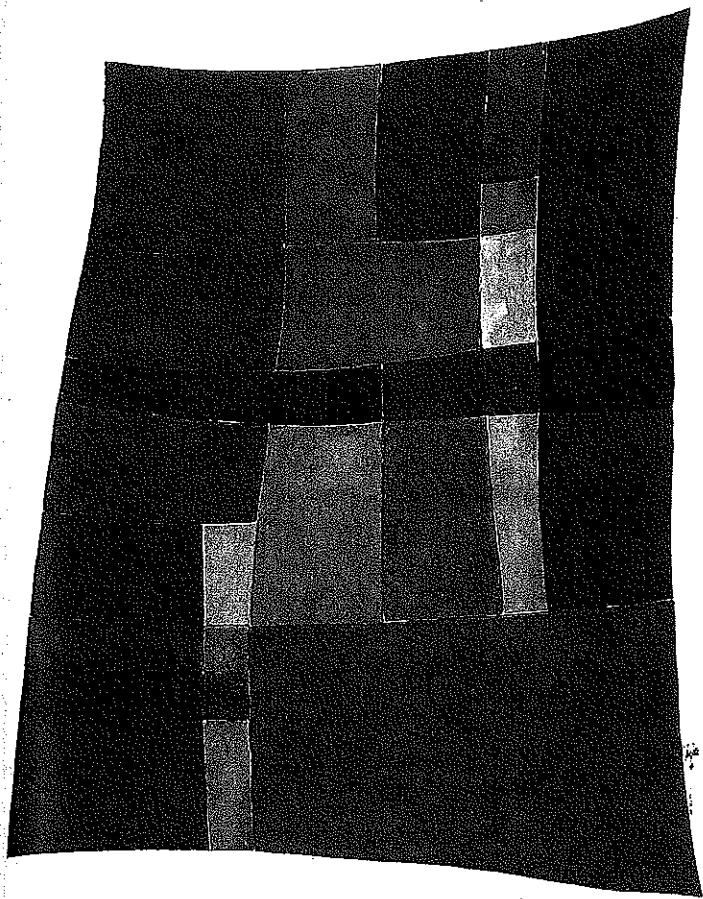
was distancing himself from the creative process. This kind of depersonalization, already being explored by Marcel Duchamp in Paris, had profound consequences for later art.

The shift in emphasis away from the individual artist and the unique artistic creation allowed for fruitful collaboration between Taeuber and Arp, who dubbed their joint productions "Duò-Collages." Partly as a result of Taeuber's training in textiles, the couple did not restrict themselves to the fine art media traditionally reserved for painting and sculpture. In their desire to integrate art and life they shared an outlook with contemporaries in Russia and artists such as Sonia Delaunay (see fig. 10.45). Taeuber developed a geometric vocabulary in her early compositions made in Zurich (fig. 13.12). These rigorous abstractions, organized around a rhythmical balance of horizontals and verticals, had a decisive influence on Arp's work. He said that when he met Taeuber in 1915, "she already knew how to give direct and palpable shape to her inner reality. ... She constructed her painting like a work of masonry. The colors are luminous, going from rawest yellow to deep red." Between 1918 and 1920 Taeuber made four remarkable heads in polychromed wood, two of which are portraits of Arp (fig. 13.13). These heads, humorously reminiscent of hat stands, are among the few

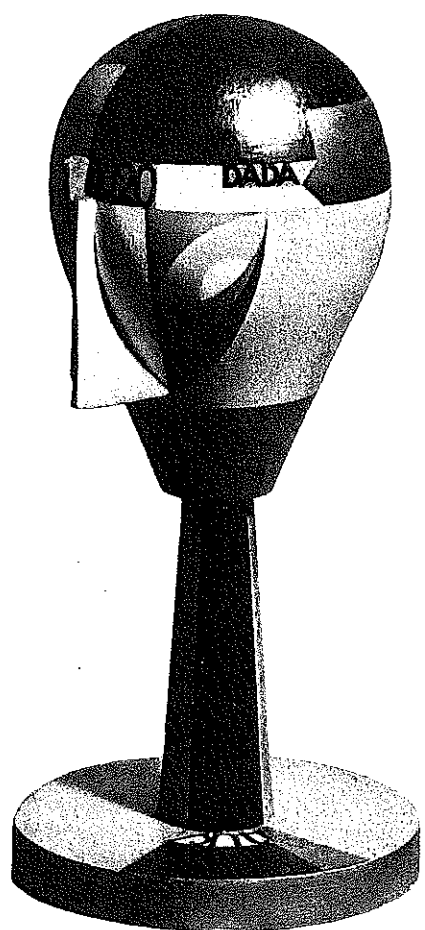


**13.11** Jean Arp, *Collage Arranged According to the Laws of Chance*, 1916–17. Torn and pasted paper, 19% × 13% (48.6 × 34.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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**13.12** Sophie Taeuber, *Rythmes Libres*, 1919. Gouache and watercolor on vellum, 14¾ × 10¾" (37.6 × 27.5 cm). Kunsthaus, Zurich.



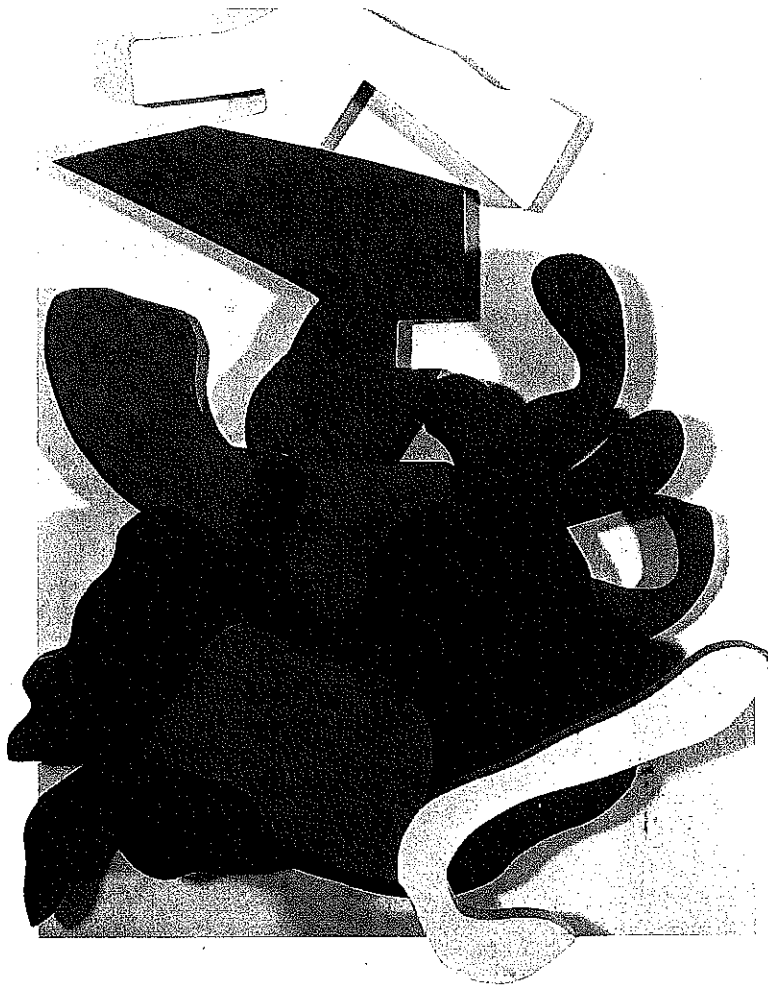
**13.13** Sophie Taeuber, *Dada Head*, 1920. Painted wood, height 13¾" (34 cm). Fondation Arp, Clamart, France.

works of Dada sculpture made in Zürich. At the same time, Raoul Hausmann was creating similar mannequinlike constructions in Berlin (see fig. 13.26).

By 1915, Arp was devising a type of relief consisting of thin layers of wood shapes. These works, which he called "constructed paintings," represent a medium somewhere between painting and sculpture. They give evidence of Arp's awareness of Cubist collage and constructions, which he would have seen in Paris in 1914–15 (see figs. 10.23, 10.26, 10.27, 10.28). To make his reliefs, Arp prepared drawings and gave them to a carpenter who cut them out in wood. While not executed with the same aleatory methods employed for the collages, the relief drawings sprang from Arp's willingness to let his pencil be guided unconsciously, without a set goal in mind. The curving, vaguely organic forms that resulted, which evoked the body and its processes or some other highly abstracted form in nature, have been called "biomorphic," a term used to describe the abstract imagery of Arp's later work as well as that of many Surrealists who followed his lead. Arp developed a vocabulary of biomorphic shapes that had universal significance.

An oval or egg shape, for example, was for him a "symbol of metamorphosis and development of bodies." A viola shape suggested a female torso, and then an accent was provided by a cutout circle that became a navel. Arp's later painted reliefs suggested plants, exotic vegetables, crustaceans, or swarming amoebae, with strong implications of life, growth, and metamorphosis. He used the term "*Formes terrestres*" or "earthly forms" to describe these reliefs. A particular shape might suggest a specific object and thus give the relief its name, as in *Fleur Marteau* (*Hammer Flower*) (fig. 13.14). Although the origin of the shapes was initially intuitive (a line doodled on a piece of paper), the contour lines were as organic as the living organism that inspired them.

Although he was one of the founders of Zurich Dada who exerted tremendous influence on subsequent art, Arp did not perform in the theatrical presentations at the Cabaret Voltaire (unlike Taeuber, who danced in the Dada performances). "He never needed any hullabaloo," said Huelsenbeck, "Arp's greatness lay in his ability to limit himself to art." He also contributed drawings and poems



**13.14** Jean Arp, *Fleur Marteau*, 1916.  
Oil on wood, 24¾ × 19¾" (61.9 × 49.8 cm).  
Fondation Arp, Clamart, France.

assisted by Duchamp and Picabia, Stieglitz founded the periodical *291* to present the revolutionary convictions about modern art held by these artists. Thus, ideas comparable to those that would define Zurich Dada one year later were fermenting independently in a small, cohesive group in New York. Aside from the two Europeans, the most important figure in the group was the young American artist Man Ray. In addition, the remarkable collectors Walter and Louise Arensberg, whose salons regularly attracted many of the leading artists and writers of the day, were important patrons of Marcel Duchamp, the artist of greatest stature and influence in the group.

### Duchamp's Early Career

The enormous impact made on twentieth-century art by **Marcel Duchamp** (1887–1968) is best summarized by the artist Richard Hamilton: "All the branches put out by Duchamp have borne fruit. So widespread have been the effects of his life that no individual may lay claim to be his heir, no one has his scope or his restraint." Duchamp, a handsome, charismatic man of great intellect, devoted a lifetime to the creation of an art that was more cerebral than visual. By the beginning of World War I he had rejected the works of many of his contemporaries as "retinal" art, or art only intended to please the eye. Although a gifted painter, Duchamp ultimately abandoned conventional methods of making art in order, as he said, "to put art back at the service of the mind." He lived a simple but peripatetic existence, traveling between Europe and America for most of his adult life.

Duchamp's inquiry into the very nature of art was first expressed in such paintings as *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (see fig. 10.48), which used Cubist faceting to give, he said, "a static representation of movement." The Paris exhibition of the Futurists in February 1912 had helped the artist to clarify his attitudes, although his intention was at the opposite extreme of theirs. Futurist dynamism, with its "machine aesthetic," was an optimistic, humorless exaltation of the new world of the machine, with progress measured in terms of speed, altitude, and efficiency. Duchamp, though he used some of Futurism's devices, expressed disillusionment through satirical humor.

Duchamp spent the summer of 1912 painting machines of his own creation. While still in France, he made *The*

to Dada publications between 1916 and 1919. In Arp's later, freestanding sculptures in marble or bronze (see chapter 15), the suggestion of head or torso became more frequent and explicit. When asked in 1956 about a 1953 piece entitled *Aquatic*—which, reclining, suggests some form of sea life, and standing on end, a sensuous female torso—he commented, "In one aspect or another, my sculptures are always torsos." In the same way that de Chirico anticipated the use by some Surrealists of illusionistic techniques and recognizable images, Arp's work foreshadowed the different artistic tendency within Surrealism to employ abstract biomorphic shapes and arbitrary, non-descriptive color to create a world of fantasy. His work later influenced such artists as Joan Miró, André Masson, and Alexander Calder (see figs. 15.17, 15.18, 22.30).

### A Further Shore: New York Dada

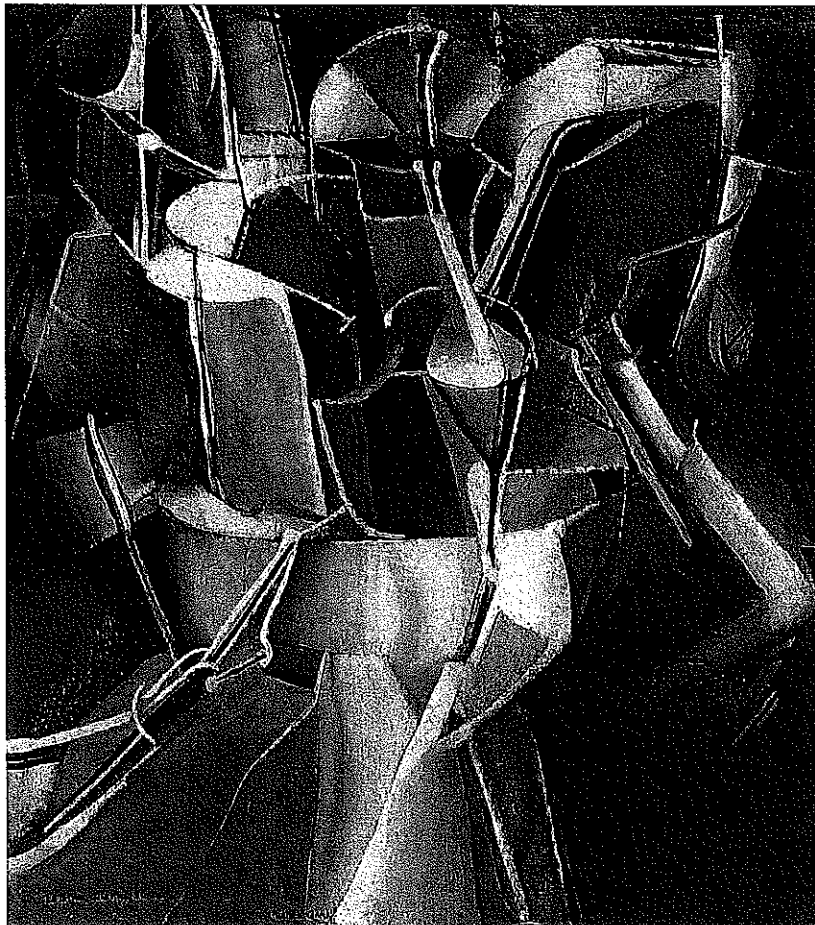
During World War I, Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia had both come to New York and found a congenial environment at 291, the avant-garde gallery founded by Alfred Stieglitz, who had introduced the American public to such European masters as Rodin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri Rousseau, Matisse, and Picasso. (The "Stieglitz circle" of American artists is discussed in chapter 18.) In 1915,

*King and Queen Traversed by Swift Nudes* in which the figures are not only mechanized but are conceived as machines in operation, pumping some form of sexual energy from one to another. Subsequently in Munich the artist pursued his fantasies of sexualized machines in a series of paintings and drawings, including *The Passage from Virgin to Bride* (fig. 13.15) and the initial drawing for the great painting on glass, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* or *The Large Glass* (see fig. 13.20). Though these works suggest anatomical diagrams of the respiratory, circulatory, digestive, or reproductive systems of higher mammals, in each Duchamp abandoned the physicality of the human body. The organic becomes mechanized, and human flesh is supplanted by tubes, pistons, and cylinders. The term "mechanomorphic" was eventually coined to describe Duchamp's distinctive grafting of machine forms onto human activity. Thus, while he restored traditional symbols of inviolable purity and sanctified consummation (i.e., the virgin and the bride), he destroyed any sense of convention by presenting them as elaborate systems of anatomical plumbing. Doubting the validity of traditional painting and sculpture as appropriate modes of contemporary expression, and dissatisfied with Cubism, Duchamp still created beautifully rendered, visually seductive works of art. His recognition of this fact no doubt contributed to his decision to abandon painting at the age of twenty-five. "From Munich on," Duchamp said, "I had the idea of

*The Large Glass*. I was finished with Cubism and with movement—at least movement mixed up with oil paint. The whole trend of painting was something I didn't care to continue."

During 1912 the so-called Armory Show was being organized in New York, and the American painters Walt Kuhn and Arthur B. Davies and the painter-critic Walter Pach were then in Paris selecting works by French artists. Four paintings by Duchamp were chosen, including *Nude Descending a Staircase* and *The King and Queen Traversed by Swift Nudes*. When the Armory Show opened in February 1913, Duchamp's paintings, and most particularly the *Nude*, became the *succès de scandale* of the exhibition. Despite attacks in the press, all four of Duchamp's paintings were sold, and he suddenly found himself notorious.

Duchamp was meanwhile continuing with his experiments toward a form of art based on everyday subject matter—with a new significance determined by the artist and with internal relationships proceeding from a relativistic mathematics and physics of his own devising. Although he had almost ceased to paint, Duchamp worked intermittently toward a climactic object: *The Large Glass* (see fig. 13.20), intended to sum up the ideas and forms he had explored in *The Passage from Virgin to Bride* and related paintings. For this project, he made, between 1913 and 1915, the drawings, designs, and mathematical calculations



**13.15** Marcel Duchamp, *The Passage from Virgin to Bride*, Munich, July–August 1912. Oil on canvas, 23 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (59.4 × 54 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

for *Bachelor Machine* and *Chocolate Grinder, No. 1*, later to become part of the male apparatus accompanying the bride in *The Large Glass*.

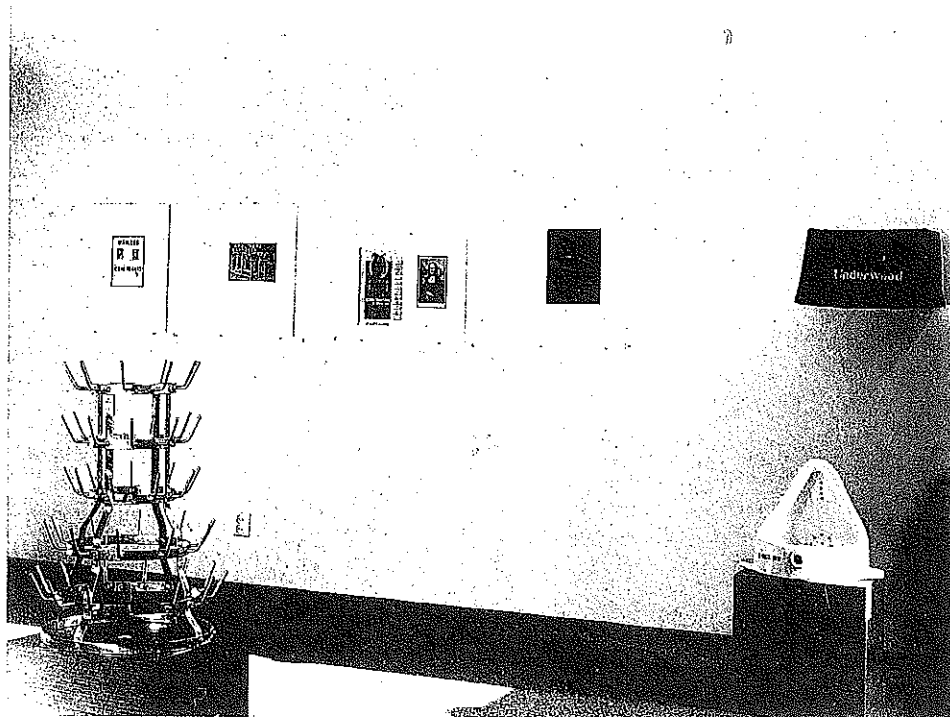
Duchamp's most outrageous and far-reaching assault on artistic tradition by far was his invention in 1913 of the "readymade," defined by Surrealist André Breton as "manufactured objects promoted to the dignity of art through the choice of the artist." Duchamp said his selection of common "found" objects, such as a bottle rack (fig. 13.16), was guided by complete visual indifference, or "anaesthesia," and the absence of good or bad taste. They demonstrated, in the most irritating fashion to the art world of Duchamp's day, that art could be made out of virtually anything, and that it required little or no manipulation by the artist. Within Duchamp's vocabulary, his famously irreverent addition of a mustache and goatee to a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* was a "rectified" readymade. An "assisted" readymade also required some intervention by the artist, as when Duchamp mounted an old bicycle wheel on an ordinary kitchen stool (fig. 13.17).

Because the readymade could be repeated indiscriminately, Duchamp decided to make only a small number yearly, saying "for the spectator even more than for the artist, *art is a habit-forming drug* and I wanted to protect my readymade against such *contamination*." He stressed that it was in the very nature of the readymade to lack uniqueness, and since readymades are not originals in the conventional sense, a "replica will do just as well." To extend the perversity of this logic, Duchamp remarked: "Since the tubes of paint used by an artist are manufactured and readymade products we must conclude that all paintings in the world are assisted *readymades*."

Duchamp limited the number of readymades so that their original concept would not lose its impact. This attitude struck a chord among a broad spectrum of artists in the late fifties and sixties. So-called Neo-Dada, Pop, Minimalist, and Conceptual artists, for example, in their own way undermined the cult of originality that surrounded objects crafted by the artist's hand. They incorporated found objects (see fig. 21.54), left the fabrication of their work to others (see fig. 22.54), or sometimes avoided the object altogether.

For Duchamp, the conception, the "discovery," was what made a work of art, not the uniqueness of the object. One glimpses in the works discussed so far the complex process of Duchamp's thought—the delight in paradox, the play of visual against verbal, and the penchant for alliteration and double and triple meanings. In a deliberate act of provocation, Duchamp submitted a porcelain urinal, which he turned ninety degrees and entitled *Fountain* (see fig. 13.16), to the 1917 exhibition of the New York Society of Independent Artists. The work was signed "R. Mutt," a pun on the plumbing fixture manufacturer J. L. Mott Iron Works. Needless to say, the association with the then popular Mutt and Jeff cartoons did not escape Duchamp. Although the exhibition was in principle open to any artist's submission without the intervention of a jury, the work was rejected. Duchamp resigned from the association, and *Fountain* became his most notorious readymade.

In 1913–14 Duchamp had carried out an experiment in chance that resulted in *3 Stoppages Étalon* (*3 Standard Stoppages*) (fig. 13.18) and was later applied to *The Large Glass*. In a spirit that mocked the notion of standard, scientifically perfect measurement, Duchamp dropped



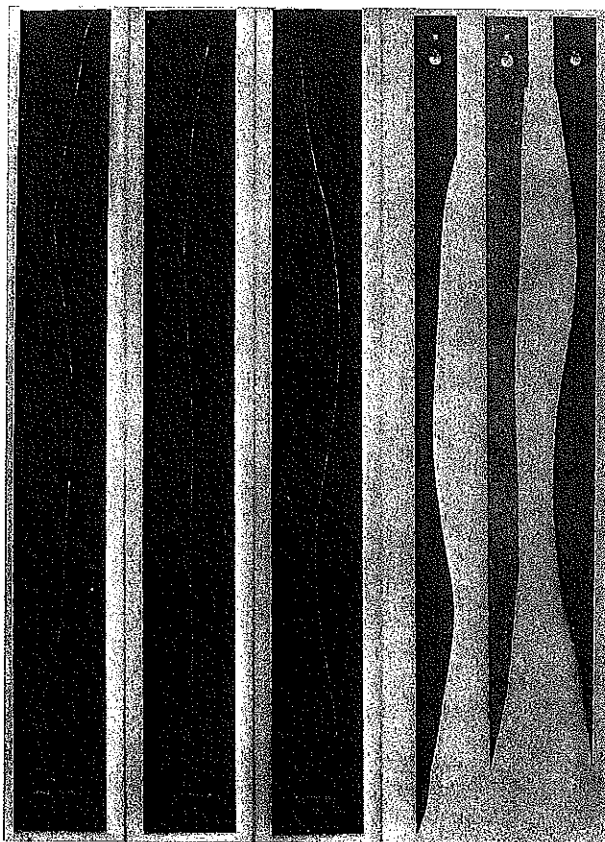
**13.16** Marcel Duchamp, *Bottle Rack and Fountain*, 1917. Installation photograph, Stockholm, 1963.

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**13.17** Marcel Duchamp, *Bicycle Wheel*, New York, 1951 (third version, after lost original of 1913). Assemblage: metal wheel, 25½" (63.8 cm) diameter, mounted on painted wood stool, 23¾" (60.2 cm) high; overall 50½ × 25½ × 16¾" (128.3 × 64.8 × 42.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

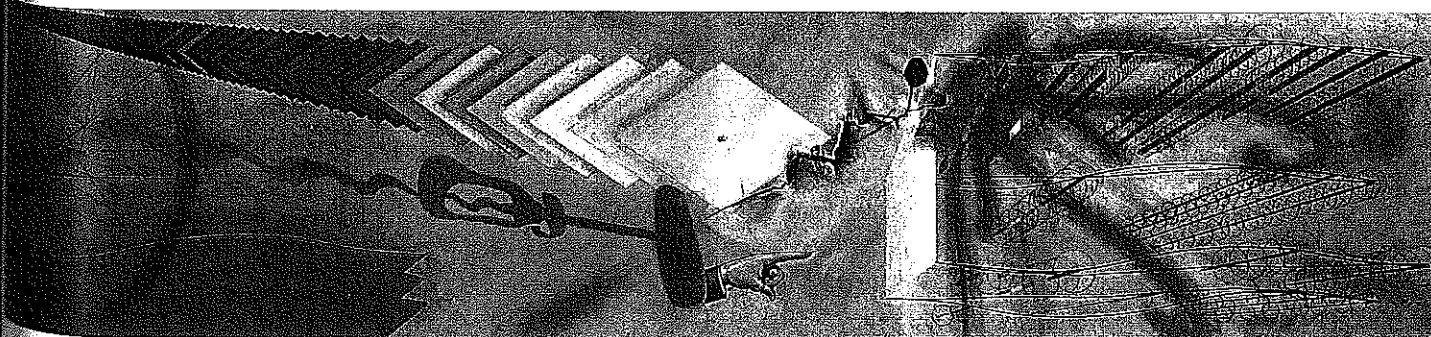
three strings, each one meter in length, from a height of one meter onto a painted canvas. The strings were affixed to the canvas with varnish in the shape they assumed to "imprison and preserve forms obtained through chance." These sections of canvas and screen were then cut from the stretcher and laid down on glass panels, and three templates were cut from wooden rulers in the profile of



**13.18** Marcel Duchamp, *3 Stoppages Étalon (3 Standard Stoppages)*, 1913–14. Assemblage: 3 threads glued to 3 painted canvas strips, each mounted on a glass panel; 3 wood slats, shaped along one edge to match the curves of the threads; the whole fitted into a wooden box, 3 painted canvas strips, each 5¼ × 47¼" (13.3 × 120 cm); each mounted on a glass panel, 7¼ × 49¾ × ¼" (18.4 × 125.4 × 0.6 cm); three wood slats, 2½ × 43 × ¼" (6.2 × 109.2 × 0.2 cm), 2½ × 47 × ¼" (6.1 × 119.4 × 0.2 cm), 2½ × 43¾ × ¼" (6.3 × 109.7 × 0.2 cm); overall, fitted into wood box, 11½ × 50¾ × 9" (28.2 × 129.2 × 22.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

the shapes assumed by the strings. The idea of the experiment—not the action itself—was what intrigued Duchamp. *3 Stoppages Étalon* is thus a remarkable document in the history of chance as a controlling factor in the creation of a work of art.

In 1918, Duchamp made *Tu m'* (fig. 13.19), his last painting on canvas, for the collector Katherine Dreier a



**13.19** Marcel Duchamp, *Tu m'*, 1918. Oil and graphite on canvas; with brush, safety pins, nut and bolt, 2'3½ × 10'2¾" (0.7 × 3.2 m). Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.

leading spirit in American avant-garde art. The painting has an unusually long and horizontal format, for it was destined for a spot above a bookcase in Dreier's library. It includes a compendium of Duchampian images: cast shadows, drawn in pencil, of a corkscrew and two readymades, *Bicycle Wheel* and *Hat Rack*; a pyramid of color samples (through which an actual bolt is fastened); a *trompe l'oeil* tear in the canvas "fastened" by three real safety pins; an actual bottle brush; a sign painter's hand (rendered by a professional sign painter), as well as the outlines at the left and right of *3 Stoppages Étalon*. Together with Dreier and Man Ray, Duchamp eventually founded the *Société Anonyme*, an important organization that produced publications, gave lectures, and put on exhibitions while building an important collection of modern art.

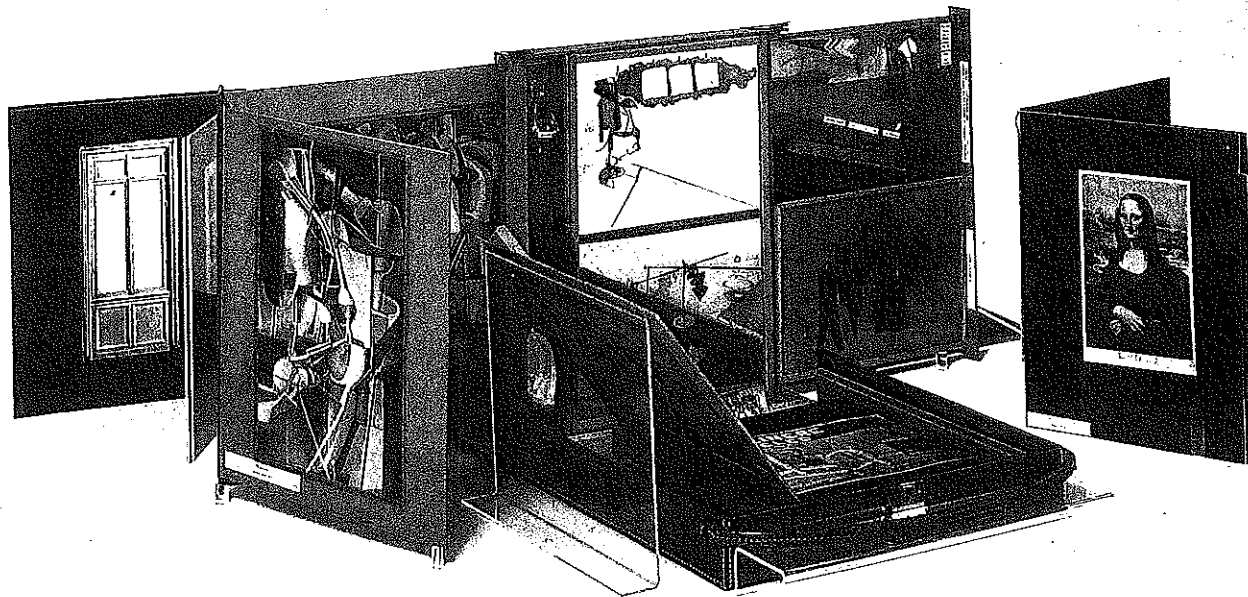
### Duchamp's Later Career

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, Duchamp relocated for several months to Argentina and then to Europe. In 1920 he returned to New York, bringing a vial he called *50 cc of Paris Air* as a gift for the art collector Walter Arensberg. During this period he invented a female alter ego, Rose Sélavy, which when pronounced in French sounds like "Eros, c'est la vie" or "Eros, that's life." Duchamp inscribed works with this pseudonym and was photographed several times by Man Ray in the guise of his feminine persona. Such gestures were typical of his tendency to break down gender boundaries, and they demonstrate the degree to which Duchamp's activities and his personality were as significant, if not more so, than any objects he made.

**13.20** Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even or The Large Glass*. 1915–23. Oil, lead wire, foil, dust, and varnish on glass, 8'11" × 5'7" (2.7 × 1.7 m). Philadelphia Museum of Art.



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**13.21** Marcel Duchamp, *Boîte en valise* (*Box in a Valise*), 1941. Leather valise containing miniature replicas, photographs, and color reproductions of works by Duchamp. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

In 1922, after yet another round of travel, Duchamp settled in New York and continued working on *The Large Glass* (fig. 13.20). He finally ceased work on it in 1923. This painting on glass, which was in gestation for several years, is the central work of Duchamp's career. The glass support dispensed with the need for a background since, by virtue of its transparency, it captured the "chance environment" of its surroundings. *The Large Glass* depicts an elaborate and unconsummated mating ritual between the bride in the upper half of the glass, whose machinelike form we recognize from *The Passage from Virgin to Bride* (see fig. 13.15), and the uniformed bachelors in the lower half. These forms are rendered with a diagrammatic precision that underscores the pseudoscientific nature of their activities. Despite their efforts, the bachelors fail to project their "love gasoline" (the sperm gas or fluid constantly ground forth by the rollers of the chocolate machine) into the realm of the bride, so the whole construction becomes a paradigm of pointless erotic activity. Breton described it as "a mechanistic and cynical interpretation of the phenomenon of love." To annotate and supplement this cryptic work, Duchamp assembled his torn scraps of notes, drawings, and computations in another work titled *The Green Box*. This catalogue of Duchampian ideas was later published by the artist in a facsimile edition. Duchamp allowed New York dust to fall on *The Large Glass* for over a year and then had it photographed by Man Ray calling the result *Dust Breedings*; then he cleaned everything but a section of the cones, to which he cemented the dust with a fixative. The final touch came when the *Glass* was broken while in transit and was thereby webbed with a network of cracks. Duchamp is reported to have commented with satisfaction, "Now it is complete."

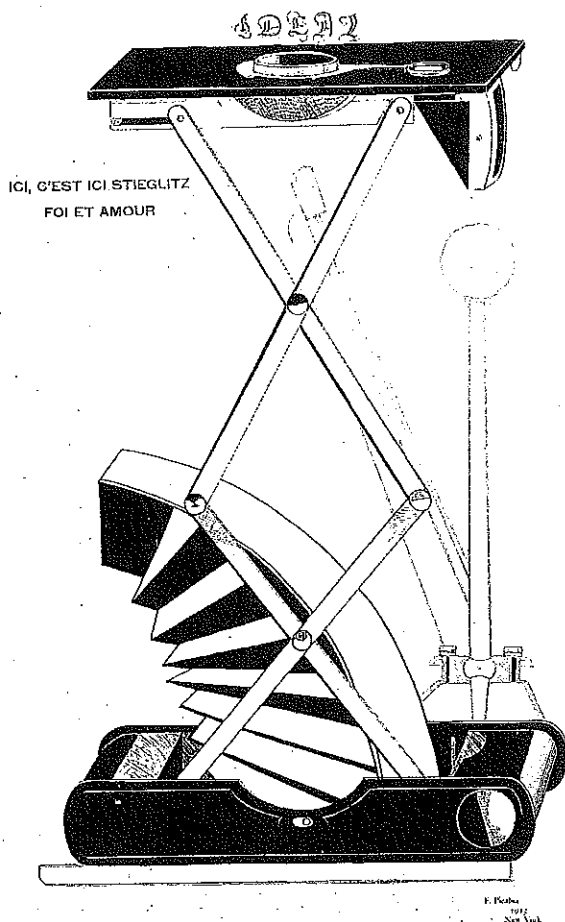
Back in Paris in the mid-thirties, Duchamp devised a work of art that made all of his inventions easily portable. The *Boîte en valise* (*Box in a Valise*) (fig. 13.21) was a kind of leather briefcase filled with miniature replicas of his previous works, including all the aforementioned objects. It provided a survey of Duchamp's work, like a traveling retrospective. When, like so many other European artists, Duchamp sought final refuge in America from World War II in Europe, he came equipped with his "portable museum." Friends such as the American artist Joseph Cornell, who also made art in box form (see fig. 19.54), helped him assemble the many parts of *Boîte*. Like *The Green Box*, it was made into a multiple edition. Duchamp intended that the viewer participate in setting up and handling the objects in the valise. In this way, the viewer completes the creative act set in motion by the artist.

Although Duchamp let it be rumored that he had ceased all formal artistic activity in order to devote himself to chess (at which he excelled), he worked in secret for twenty years on a major sculptural project, completed in 1966. *Étant Donnés* 1. *La Chute d'Eau*, 2. *Le Gaz d'Éclairage* (*Given: 1. The Waterfall*, 2. *The Illuminating Gas*) is one of the most disturbing and enigmatic works of the century, but it came to light only after the artist's death, when it was installed in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which owns most of Duchamp's major works. A mixed-media assemblage built around the realistic figure of a nude woman sprawled on the ground, *Étant Donnés* can only be viewed by one person at a time through a peephole in a large wooden door. Duchamp's secret considerations of realism and voyeurism, coupled with the mysterious title, provide a challenging complement to the mechanical sexuality and person symbolism of *The Large Glass*.



## Picabia

Francis Picabia (1875–1953) was born in Paris of wealthy Cuban and French parents. Between 1908 and 1911 he moved from Impressionism to Cubism. He joined the Section d'Or briefly and then experimented with Orphism and Futurism (see fig. 10.49). In New York in 1915, he collaborated with Marcel Duchamp in establishing the American version of proto-Dada and, in the spirit of Duchamp, took up machine imagery as an emblematic and ironic mode of representation. "Almost immediately upon coming to America," Picabia said, "it flashed on me that the genius of the modern world is in machinery, and that through machinery art ought to find a most vivid expression." In this "mechanomorphic" style, Picabia achieved some of his most distinctive work, particularly a series of *Machine Portraits* of himself and his key associates in New York. Thus, he saw Stieglitz (fig. 13.22) as a broken bellows camera, equipped with an automobile brake in working position and a gear shift in neutral, signifying the frustrations experienced by someone trying to present experimental art in philistine America. Both the Gothic letters and the title, *Ideal*, confirm the conceptual or heraldic form of the portrait, while also establishing a witty contrast between the commonplace, mechanical imagery and the



13.22 Francis Picabia, *Ideal*, 1915. Pen and red and black ink on paper, 29 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 20" (75.9 × 50.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

ancient, noble devices of traditional heraldry. Made for publication in Stieglitz's journal *291*, Picabia's 1915 portraits are modest in size, materials, and ambition, but in other works the artist developed his machine aesthetic—his "functionless" machines—into splendidly iconic paintings. They are tongue-in-cheek, however, in their commentary on the seriocomic character of human sexual drives, and have many parallels, both thematic and formal, with Duchamp's *The Large Glass*, then under way in New York.

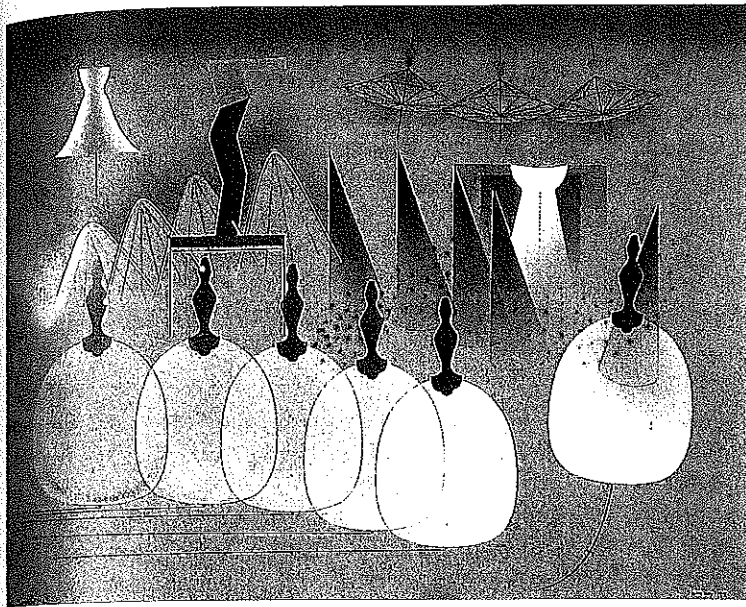
Returning to Europe in 1916, Picabia founded his journal *391* in Barcelona and published it intermittently in New York, Zurich, and Paris until 1924. After meeting the Zurich Dadaists in 1918, he was active in the Dada group in Paris. He reverted to representational art and, after the emergence of Surrealism, painted a series of *Transparencies* in which he superimposed thin layers of transparent imagery delineating classically beautiful male and female images, sometimes accompanied by exotic flora and fauna. Though the *Transparencies*, and the greater part of Picabia's later work, were long dismissed as decadently devoid of either content or formal interest, they have assumed new importance among the acknowledged prototypes of eighties Neo-Expressionism (see chapter 26).

## Man Ray and the American Avant-Garde

Relatively unburdened by tradition, some American artists who met Duchamp and Picabia in New York had little difficulty entering into the Dada spirit. Indeed, one of the most daring of all Dada objects was made by Philadelphia-born Morton Schamberg, who mounted a plumbing connection on a miter box and sardonically titled it *God*. Though known primarily for this work, Schamberg was actually a painter and photographer who made a number of abstract, machine-inspired compositions in oil before his life was cut short by the massive influenza epidemic in 1918.

No less ingenious in his ability to devise Dada objects than to photograph them was Man Ray (1890–1976) (born Emmanuel Radnitsky), also from Philadelphia, who went on to pursue a lengthy, active career in the ambience of Surrealism. He gathered with Duchamp and Picabia at the Arensbergs' home and by 1916 had begun to make paintings inspired by a Dada machine aesthetic and three-dimensional constructions made with found objects. By 1919, Man Ray, who was always looking for ways to divest himself of the "paraphernalia of the traditional painter," was creating the first paintings made with an airbrush, which he called "Aerographs." Normally reserved for commercial graphic work, the airbrush made possible the soft tonalities in the dancing fans and cones of *Seguidilla* (fig. 13.23). The artist was delighted with his new discovery. "It was wonderful," he said, "to paint a picture without touching the canvas."

In 1921, disappointed that Dada had failed to ignite a full-scale artistic revolution in New York, Man Ray moved to Paris. His exhibition in December of that year was a Dada event. The gallery was completely filled with balloons

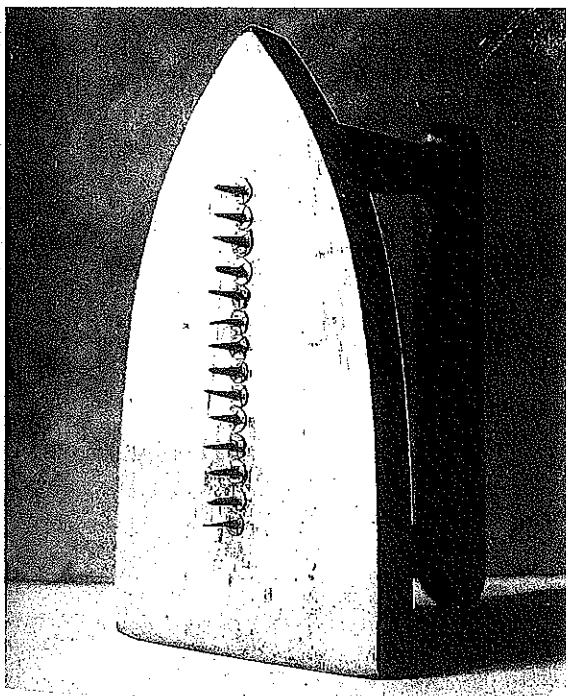


**13.23** Man Ray, *Seguidilla*, 1919. Airbrushed gouache, pen and ink, pencil, and colored pencil on paper board, 22 × 27 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (55.9 × 70.8 cm). Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

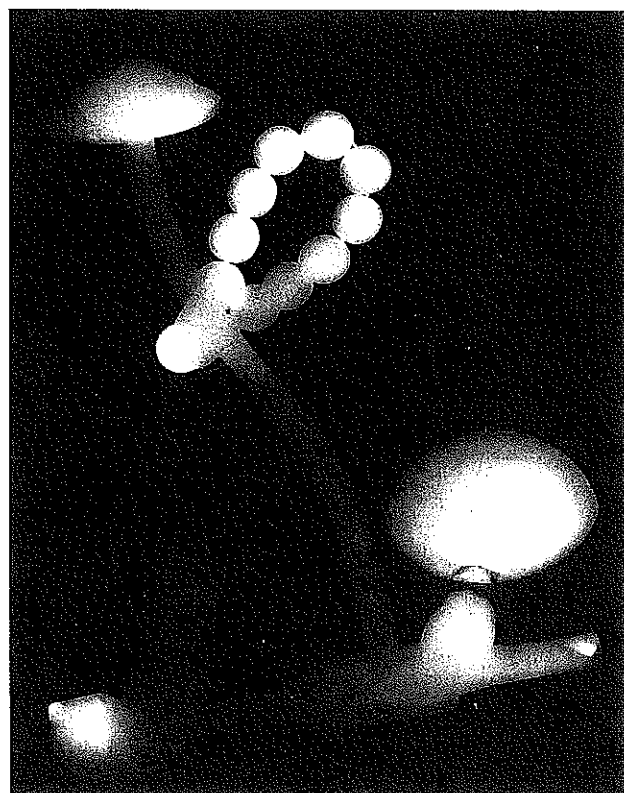
that viewers had to pop in order to discover the art. *Gift* (fig. 13.24), which exists today as a replica of the 1921 original, was made in the spirit of Duchamp's slightly altered or "assisted" readymades. With characteristic black humor, Man Ray subverted an iron's normal utilitarian function by attaching fourteen tacks to its surface, transforming this familiar object into something alien and threatening. The work was made for avant-garde French composer Erik Satie, hence its title.

Man Ray, who had taken up photography in 1915 through his association with Stieglitz, invented cameraless photographic images that he called "Rayographs." These were made by placing objects on or near sensitized paper that was then exposed directly to light. In the proper Dada manner, the technique was discovered accidentally in the darkroom. By controlling exposure and by moving or removing objects, the artist used this "automatic" process to create images of a strangely abstract or symbolic character (fig. 13.25).

Man Ray became an established figure in the Parisian avant-garde, gaining fame with his Dada films, with his experimental photographs, his photographs of artists and art, and his fashion photography (see fig. 15.61). By the mid-twenties, he was a central figure of the Surrealist circle (see chapter 15). Several of his assistants became important photographers in their own right: Berenice Abbott (see fig. 18.48), Bill Brandt (see fig. 15.69), and Lee Miller (see fig. 19.58).



**13.24** Man Ray, *Gift*, Replica of lost original of 1921. Flatiron with nails, height 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 3 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (16.5 × 9.2 × 9.5 cm). Collection Morton G. Neumann Family, Chicago.



**13.25** Man Ray, *Untitled*, 1922. Gelatin-silver print (Rayograph), 9 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 7" (23.8 × 17.78 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

## "Art is Dead": Dada in Germany

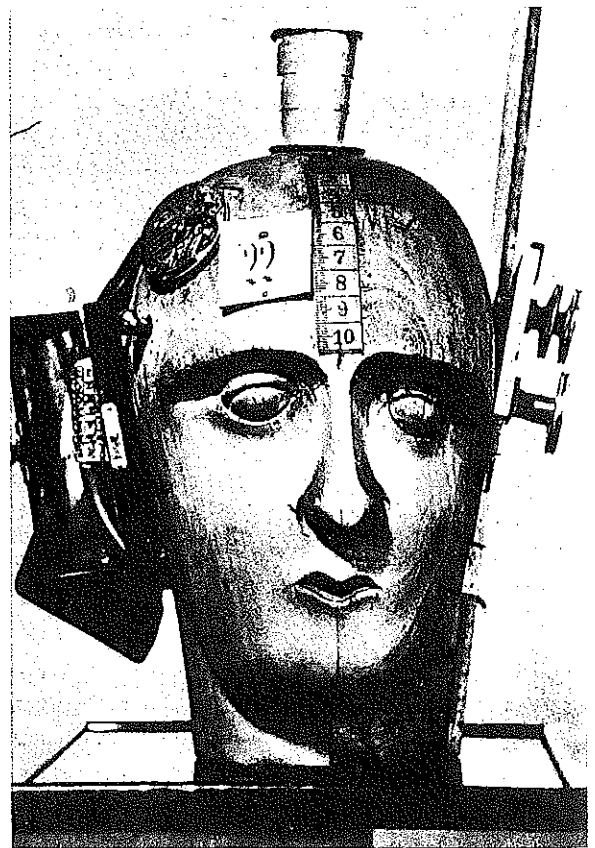
In 1917, with a devastating war, severe restrictions on daily life, and rampant inflation, the future in Germany seemed completely uncertain. This atmosphere, in which highly polarized and radical politics flourished, was conducive to the spread of Dada. Huelsenbeck, returning from Berlin to Zurich, joined a small group including the brothers Wieland and Helmut Herzfelde (who changed his name to John Heartfield as a pro-American gesture), Hannah Höch, the painters Raoul Hausmann, George Grosz, and, later, Johannes Baader. Huelsenbeck opened a Dada campaign early in 1918 with speeches and manifestos attacking all phases of the artistic status quo, including Expressionism, Cubism, and Futurism. A Club Dada was formed, to which Kurt Schwitters, later a major exponent of German Dada, was refused membership because of his association with Der Sturm Gallery, regarded by Huelsenbeck as a bastion of Expressionist art and one of Dada's chief targets. After the war and the fall of the monarchy came a period of political chaos, which did not end with the establishment of the Weimar Republic (1918–33) and democratic government under the moderate socialist president Friedrich Ebert. Experimental artists and writers were generally leftwing, hopeful that from chaos would emerge a more equable society, but disillusionment among members of the Dada group set in as they realized that the so-called socialist government was actually in league with business interests and the old imperial military. From their disgust with what they regarded as a bankrupt Western culture, they turned to art as a medium for social and political activity. Their weapons were mostly collage and photomontage. Berlin Dada, especially for Heartfield and Grosz, quickly took on a leftwing, pacifist, and communist direction. The Herzfelde brothers' journal, *Neue Jugend*, and their publishing house, Malik-Verlag, utilized Dada techniques for political propaganda (see figs. 13.28, 13.35). George Grosz made many savage social and political drawings and paintings for the journal. One of the publications financed by the Herzfelde brothers was *Every Man Is His Own Football*. Although the work was quickly banned, its title became a rallying cry for German revolutionists. In 1919 the first issue of *Der Dada* appeared, followed in 1920 by the first international Dada-Messe, or Dada Fair, where the artists covered the walls of a Berlin gallery with photomontages, posters, and slogans like "Art is dead. Long live the new machine art of Tatlin." The rebellious members of Dada never espoused a clear program, and their goals were often ambiguous and sometimes contradictory: while they used art as a means of protest, they also questioned the very validity of artistic production.

### Hausmann, Höch, and Heartfield

The Zurich Dada experiments in noise-music and in abstract phonetic poetry were further explored in Berlin.

Raoul Hausmann (1886–1971), the chief theoretician and writer of the group (nicknamed "the Dadasoph"), claimed the invention of a poetic form involving "respiratory and auditive combinations, firmly tied to a unit of duration," expressed in typography by "letters of varying sizes and thicknesses which thus took on the character of musical notations." In his *Spirit of Our Time (Mechanical Head)* (fig. 13.26), 1919, Hausmann created a kind of three-dimensional collage. To a wooden mannequin head he attached real objects, including a metal collapsing cup, a tape measure, labels, and a pocketbook. Through his use of common found objects, Hausmann partook of the iconoclastic spirit of Duchamp's readymades and implied that human beings had been reduced to mindless robots, devoid of individual will.

In the visual arts, a major invention or discovery was photomontage, created by cutting up and pasting together photographs of individuals and events, posters, book jackets, and a variety of typefaces in new and startling configurations—anything to achieve shock. The source material for this medium was made possible by the tremendous growth in the print media in Germany. Hausmann and Höch (who were lovers and occasional collaborators), along with Grosz, claimed to have originated Dada photomontage, although it was a technique that had existed for



**13.26** Raoul Hausmann, *The Spirit of Our Time (Mechanical Head)*, 1919. Wood, leather, aluminum, brass, and cardboard, 12½ × 9" (32.1 × 22.9 cm). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris.



**13.27** Hannah Höch, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada Through the Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany*, 1919–20. Photomontage, 44% × 35½" (114 × 90.2 cm). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie.

years in advertising and popular imagery. Precedent can also be identified in Cubist collage of *papier collé* and Futurist collage (see fig. 11.7). Photomontage, with its clear integration of images of modern life into works of art, proved to be an ideal form for Dadaists and subsequently for Surrealists.

A large photomontage of 1919–20 by Hannah Höch (1889–1978), with a typically sardonic title, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada Through the Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany* (fig. 13.27), was included

in the Dada-Messe, despite the efforts of Grosz and Heartfield to exclude her work. The dizzying profusion of imagery here demonstrates the ways in which photomontage relies on material appropriated from its normal context, such as magazine illustration, and introduces it into a new, disjunctive context, thereby investing it with new meaning. Höch here presents a satirical panorama of Weimar society. She includes photographs of her Dada colleagues, communist leaders, dancers, sports figures, and Dada slogans in varying typefaces. The despised

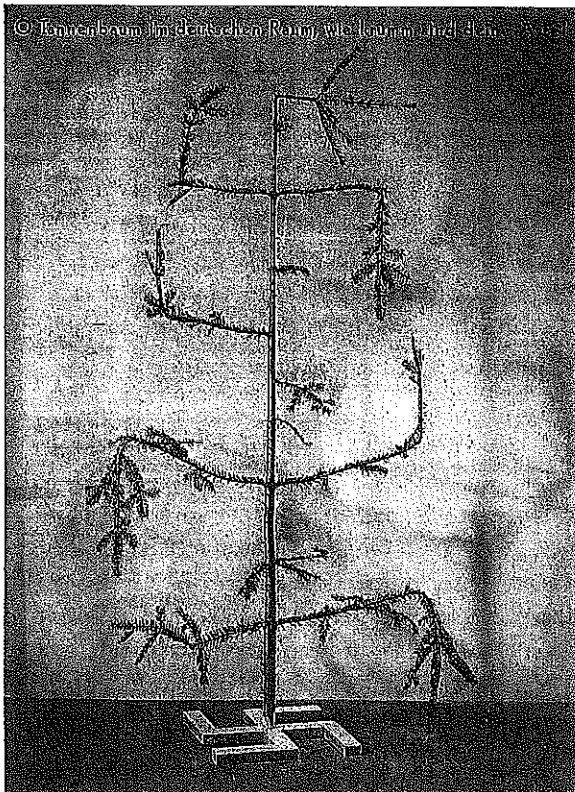
Weimar government leaders at the upper right are labeled “anti-Dada movement.” At the very center of the composition is a photo of a popular dancer who seems to toss her out-of-scale head into the air. The head is a photo of Expressionist printmaker Käthe Kollwitz (see figs. 8.15, 8.16). Although the Dadaists reviled the emotive art of the Expressionists, it seems likely that Höch respected this leftwing woman artist. Throughout the composition are photographs of gears and wheels, both a tribute to technology and a means of imparting a sense of dynamic, circular movement. One difference between Höch and her colleagues is the preponderance of female imagery in her work, indicative of her interest in the new roles of women in postwar Germany, which had granted women the vote in 1918, two years before the United States.

**John Heartfield** (1891–1968) made photomontages of a somewhat different variety. He composed images from the clippings he took from newspapers, retouching them in order to blend the parts into a facsimile of a single, integrated image. These images were photographed and made into photogravures for mass reproduction. Beginning in 1930, as the rise of Nazism began to dominate the political landscape, Heartfield contributed illustrations regularly to the leftwing magazine *AIZ* or *Workers’ Illustrated Newspaper*. For one of his most jarring images of protest, made in 1934 after Hitler had become German chancellor (and had assumed dictatorial powers), he altered the words of a

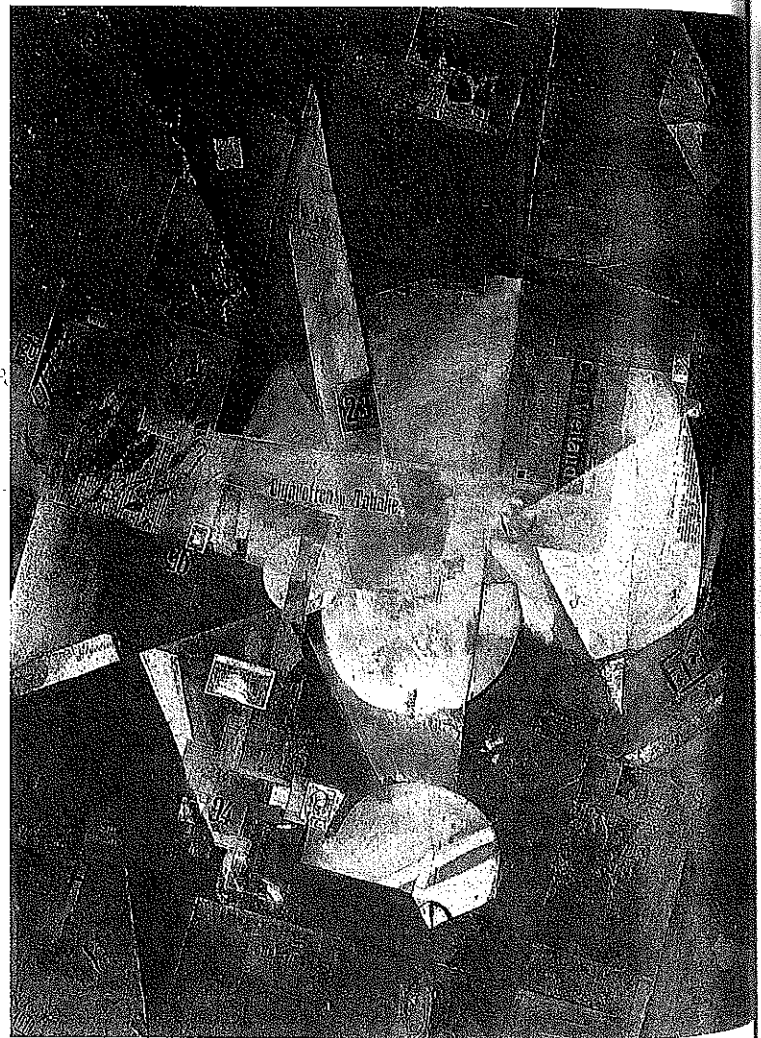
traditional German Christmas carol and twisted the form of a Christmas tree into a swastika tree (fig. 13.28). “O Tannenbaum im deutschen Raum, wie krumm/sind deine Äste!” (“O Christmas tree in German soil, how crooked are your branches!”) the heading reads. The text below states that in the future all trees must be cut in this form.

### Schwitters

Somewhat apart from the Berlin Dadaists was the Hanoverian artist **Kurt Schwitters** (1887–1948), who completed his formal training at the Academy in Dresden and painted portraits for a living. He quarreled publicly with Huelsenbeck and was denied access to Club Dada because of his involvement with the apolitical and pro-art circle around Herwarth Walden’s Der Sturm Gallery. He was eventually reconciled with other members of the group, however, and established his own Dada variant in Hanover under the designation “Merz,” a word in part derived from the word “Commerzbank” included in one of his collages. “At the end of 1918,” he wrote, “I realized that all values only exist in relationship to each other and that restriction



**13.28** John Heartfield, *Little German Christmas Tree*, 1934. Photomontage, 10¼ × 7¾" (26 × 20 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



**13.29** Kurt Schwitters, *Picture with Light Center*, 1919. Collage of cut-and-pasted papers and oil on cardboard, 33¼ × 25¾" (84.5 × 65.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



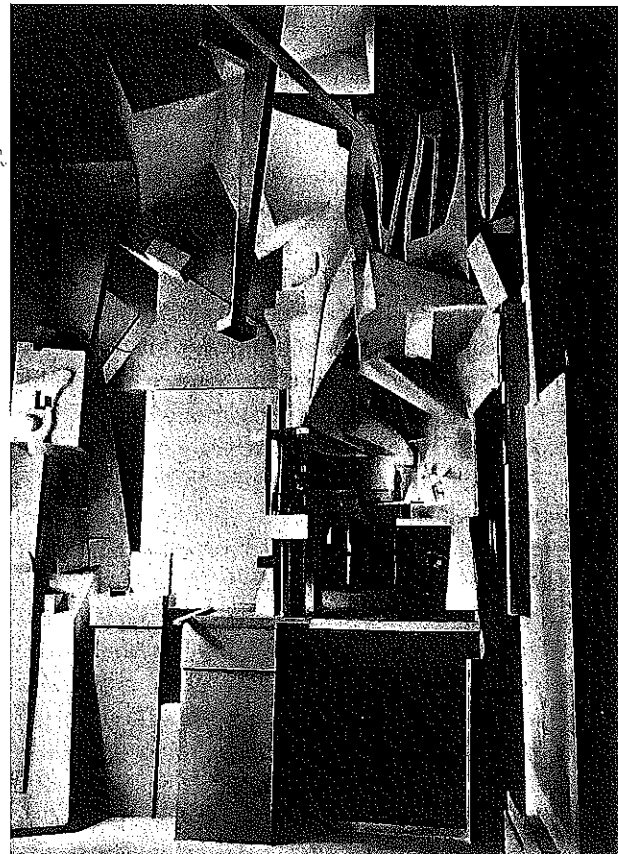
**13.30** Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbild 25A (Das Sternenbild)* (Stars Picture), 1920. Assemblage, 41 × 31½" (104.1 × 79.1 cm). Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

to a single material is one-sided and small-minded. From this insight I formed Merz, above all the sum of individual art forms, Merz-painting, Merz-poetry." Schwitters was a talented poet, impressive in his readings and deadly serious about his efforts in painting, collage, and construction. These always involved a degree of deadpan humor delightful to those who knew him, but disturbing to unfamiliar audiences.

Schwitters's collages were made of rubbish picked up from the street—cigarette wrappers, tickets, newspapers, string, boards, wire screens, and whatever caught his fancy. In these so-called *Merzbilder* or *Merzzeichnungen* (Merz-pictures or Merz-drawings) he transformed the detritus of his surroundings into strange and wonderful beauty. In *Picture with Light Center* (fig. 13.29) we see how Schwitters could extract elegance from these lowly found materials. He carefully structured his circular and diagonal elements within a Cubist-derived grid, which he then reinforced by applying paint over the collage, creating a glowing, inner light that radiates from the picture's center. For his 1920 assemblage, *Merzbild 25A (Das Sternenbild)* (Stars Picture) (fig. 13.30), Schwitters did not restrict himself to the two-dimensional printed imagery we have seen in the photomontages of Heartfield and Höch. He incorporates rope, wire mesh, paint, and other materials that indicate the artist's strong concern for physicality in his

surfaces. But his are not accidental juxtapositions or ones made purely for formal effect. The snatches of text from German newspapers in this *Merzbild* can be decoded as referring to recent political events in Germany.

Schwitters introduced himself to Raoul Hausmann in a Berlin café in 1918 by saying, "I am a painter and I nail my pictures together." This description applies to all his relief constructions, since he drew no hard-and-fast line between them and *papiers collés*, but most specifically to his series of great constructions that he called *Merz-Column* or *Merzbau* (fig. 13.31), the culmination of Schwitters' attempts to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art. He began the first one in his house in Hanover around 1920 as an abstract plaster sculpture with apertures dedicated to his Dadaist and Constructivist friends and containing objects commemorating them: Mondrian, Gabo, Arp, Lissitzky, Malevich, Richter, Mies van der Rohe, and Van Doesburg. The *Merzbau* grew throughout the twenties with successive accretions of every kind of material until it filled the room. Having then no place to go but up, he continued the environmental construction with implacable logic into the second story. "As the structure grows bigger and bigger," Schwitters wrote, "valleys, hollows, caves appear, and these lead a life of their own within the overall structure. The juxtaposed surfaces give rise to forms twisting in every direction, spiraling upward." When he was driven from Germany by the Nazis and his original



**13.31** Kurt Schwitters, *Hanover Merzbau, Destroyed*. Photo taken c. 1931.

*Merzbau* was destroyed, Schwitters started another one in Norway. The Nazi invasion forced him to England, where he began again for the third time. After his death in 1948, the third *Merzbau* was rescued and preserved in the University of Newcastle. The example of Schwitters was crucial for later artists who sought to create sculpture on an environmental scale. They include figures as diverse as Louise Nevelson (see fig. 19.56), Red Grooms (see fig. 21.21), and Louise Bourgeois (see fig. 19.52).

Early in the twenties, the de Stijl artist Theo van Doesburg (see chapter 11) had become friendly with Schwitters, and they collaborated on a number of publications, and even made a Dada tour of Holland. Schwitters became more and more attracted to the geometric abstractionists and Constructivists, for despite the fantasy and rubbish materials in his works, they demonstrated relationships and proportions that rival Mondrian's Neo-Plastic paintings in their subtlety and rigor.

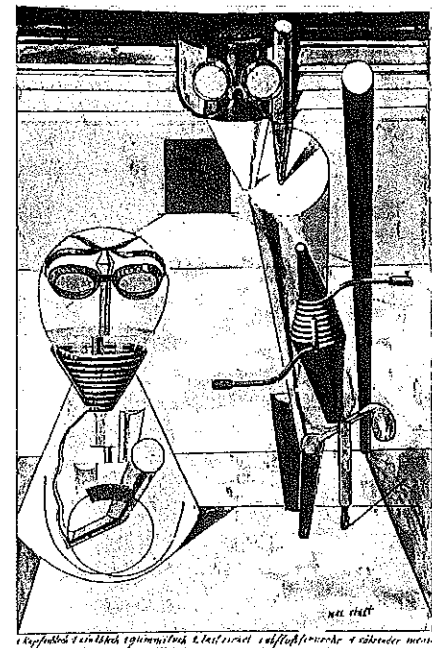
### Ernst

When Max Ernst (1891–1976) saw works by modern artists such as Cézanne and Picasso at the 1912 Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne, he decided to forgo his university studies and take up art. He went to Paris in 1913, and his works were included that year in the First German Autumn Salon at Der Sturm in Berlin, when the artist was only twenty-two years old. In 1919–20, Jean Arp established contact with Ernst in Cologne, and the two were instrumental in the formation of yet another wing of international Dada. The two had met in Cologne in 1914, but Ernst then served in the German army. At the end of the war, he discovered Zurich Dada and the paintings of de Chirico and Klee. Ernst's early paintings were rooted in a Late Gothic fantasy drawn from Dürer, Grünewald (see fig. 8), and Bosch. The artist was also fascinated by German Romanticism in the macabre forms of Klinger and Böcklin. This "gothic quality" (in the widest sense) remained a consistent characteristic of Ernst's fantasies. In 1919–20, a staggeringly productive period, he produced collages and photomontages that demonstrated a genius for suggesting the metamorphosis or double identity of objects, a topic later central to Surrealist iconography. In an ingenious work from 1920 (fig. 13.32), Ernst invented his own mechanistic forms as stand-ins for the human body. As he frequently did during this period, the artist took a page from a 1914 scientific text illustrating chemistry and biology equipment and, by overpainting certain areas and inserting his own additions, he transformed goggles and other laboratory utensils into a pair of hilarious creatures before a landscape. The composition bears telling comparison with Picabia's mechanomorphic inventions (see fig. 13.22).

During the winter of 1920–21, Ernst and Arp collaborated on collages entitled *Fatagagas*, short for *Fabrication des Tableaux Garantis Gasométriques*. Ernst usually provided the collage imagery while Arp and other occasional collab-

orators provided the name and accompanying text. In the *Fatagaga* titled *Here Everything Is Still Floating*, an anatomical drawing of a beetle becomes, upside-down, a steamboat floating through the depths of the sea. Some of the *Fatagagas* were sent to Tristan Tzara in Paris for illustration in his ill-fated publication *Dadaglobe*. Ernst had been in close contact with the Parisian branch of Dada (see below) and many of the artists who would develop Surrealism. By the time he moved to Paris in 1922, he had already created the basis for much of the Surrealist vocabulary.

Despite the close friendship between Ernst and Arp, their approaches to painting, collage, and sculpture were different. Arp's was toward abstract, organic Surrealism in which figures or other objects may be suggested but are rarely explicit. Ernst, following the example of de Chirico and fortified by his own "gothic" imagination, became a principal founder of the wing of Surrealism that utilized Magic Realism—that is, precisely delineated, recognizable objects, distorted and transformed, but nevertheless presented with a ruthless realism that throws their newly acquired fantasy into shocking relief. *Celebes* (fig. 13.33) is a mechanized monster whose trunk-tail-pipeline sports a cow skull-head above an immaculate white collar. A headless classical torso beckons to the beast with an elegantly gloved hand. The images are unrelated on a rational level; some are threatening (the elephant), while others are less explicable (the beckoning torso). The rotund form of the elephant was actually suggested to Ernst by a photograph of a gigantic communal corn bin made of clay and used by people in southern Sudan. While not constructed as a collage, *Celebes*, with its many disparate motifs, is informed



**13.32** Max Ernst, *1 Copper Plate 1 Zinc Plate 1 Rubber Cloth 2 Calipers 1 Drainpipe Telescope 1 Pipe Man*, 1920. Gouache, ink, and pencil on printed reproduction, 9½ × 6½" (24.1 × 16.7 cm). Whereabouts unknown.



**13.33** Max Ernst, *Celebes*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 51½ × 43¾" (129.9 × 109.9 cm). Tate Gallery, London.

by a collage aesthetic as well as by the early paintings of de Chirico; it appeals to the level of perception below consciousness. Ernst, who worked in a remarkably broad range of media and styles, became a major figure of Surrealism (see figs. 15.6, 15.8, 15.9).

### Idealism and Disgust: The "New Objectivity" in Germany

Immediately following Germany's defeat in World War I and the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II, some of the leaders of German Expressionism formed the November Group and were soon joined by Dadaists. In 1919, under the newly established Weimar Republic, the Workers' Council for Art was organized. It sought more state support, more commissions from industry, and the reorganization of art schools. These artists included many of the original Expressionists, such as architects as Walter Gropius and Erich Mendelsohn (see chapter 12), and leading poets, musicians, and critics. Many of the aims of the November Group and the Workers' Council were incorporated into the program of the Weimar Bauhaus.

In their exhibitions, the November Group reestablished contact with France and other countries, and antagonisms among the various new alignments were submerged for a time on behalf of a common front. The Expressionists were exhibited, as well as representatives of Cubism, abstraction, Constructivism, and Dada, while the new architects showed projects for city planning and large-scale housing. Societies similar to the November Group sprang up in

many parts of Germany, and their manifestos read like a curious blend of socialist idealism and revivalist religion.

The common front of socialist idealism did not last long. The workers whom the artists extolled and to whom they appealed were even more suspicious of the new art forms than was the capitalist bourgeoisie. It was naturally from the latter that new patrons of art emerged. By 1924 German politics was shifting inexorably to the right, and the artists' utopianism was in many cases turning into disillusionment and cynicism. There now emerged a form of Social Realism in painting to which the name the New Objectivity (*Die Neue Sachlichkeit*) was given. Meanwhile, the Bauhaus, the design school run by Gropius since 1919 at Weimar, had tried to apply the ideas of the November Group and the Workers' Council toward a new relationship between artist and society. In 1925 it was forced by the rising tide of conservative opposition to move to Dessau. Its faculty members still clung to postwar Expressionist and socialist ideas, although by 1925 their program mostly concerned the training of artists, craft workers, and designers for an industrial, capitalist society.

### Grosz

The principal painters associated with the New Objectivity were **George Grosz** (1893–1959), Otto Dix, and Max Beckmann—three artists whose style touched briefly at certain points but who had essentially different motivations. Grosz studied at the Dresden Academy from 1909 to 1911 and at the Royal Arts and Crafts School in Berlin off and on from 1912 to 1916, partially supporting himself with drawings of the shady side of Berlin nightlife. These caustic works prepared him for his later violent statements of disgust with postwar Germany and humankind generally. In 1913 he visited Paris and, despite later disclaimers, was obviously affected by Cubism and its offshoots, particularly Robert Delaunay and Italian Futurism. After two years in the army (1914–16), Grosz resumed his caricatures while convalescing in Berlin. They reveal an embittered personality, now fortified by observations of autocracy, corruption, and the horrors of a world at war. Recalled to the army in 1917, Grosz ended his military career in an asylum on whose personnel and administration he made devastating comment.

After the war Grosz was drawn into Berlin Dada and its overriding leftwing direction. He made stage designs and collaborated on periodicals, but continued his own work of political or social satire. *Dedication to Oskar Panizza* of 1917–18 (fig. 13.34) is his most Cubist-inspired work. The title refers to the writer Panizza, whose work had been censored at the end of the nineteenth century. But the larger subject, according to Grosz, was "Mankind gone mad." He said that the dehumanized figures represent "Alcohol, Syphilis, Pestilence." Showing a funeral turned into a riot, the painting is flooded with a blood or fire red. The buildings lean crazily; an insane mob is packed around the paraded coffin on which Death sits triumphantly, swigging at a bottle; the faces are horrible masks; humanity is

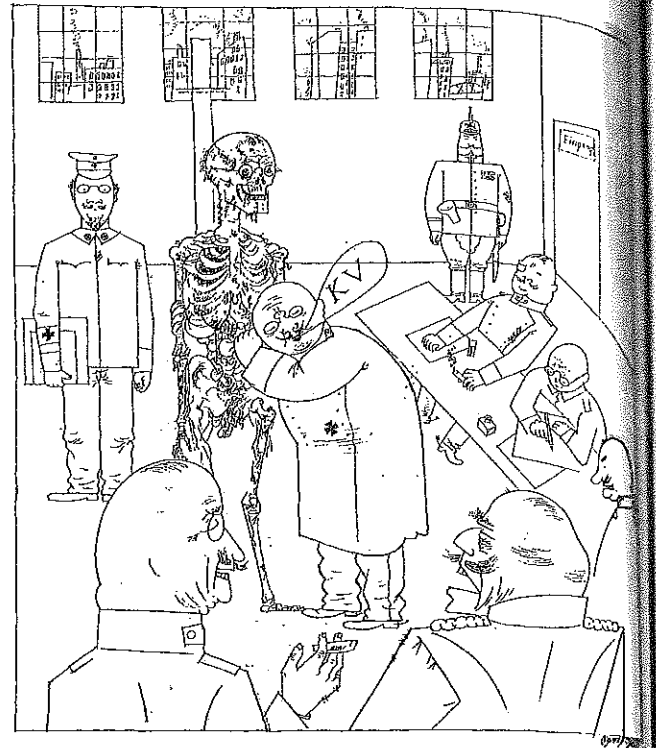




**13.34** George Grosz, *Dedication to Oskar Panizza*, 1917–18. Oil on canvas, 55¼ × 43¼" (140 × 109.9 cm). Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.

swept into a hell of its own making; and the figure of Death rides above it all on a black coffin. Yet the artist controls the chaos with a geometry of the buildings and the planes into which he segments the crowd.

The drawing *Fit for Active Service* (fig. 13.35) was used as an illustration in 1919 for *Die Pleite* (*Bankruptcy*), one of the many political publications with which Grosz was involved. The editors, Herzfelde, Grosz, and Heartfield, filled *Die Pleite* with scathing political satire, which occasionally got them thrown into prison. This work shows Grosz's sense of the macabre and his detestation of bureaucracy, with a fat complacent doctor pronouncing his "O.K." of a desiccated cadaver before arrogant Prussian-type officers. The spare economy of the draftsmanship in Grosz's illustrations is also evident in a number of the artist's paintings done in the same period. *Republican Automatons* applies the style and motifs of de Chirico and the Metaphysical School to political satire, as empty-headed, blank-faced, and mutilated automatons parade loyally through the streets of a mechanistic metropolis on their way to vote as they are told. In such works as this, Grosz comes closest to the spirit of the Dadaists and Surrealists. But he expressed his most passionate convictions in drawings and paintings that continue an Expressionist tradition of savagely denouncing a decaying Germany of brutal profiteers and obscene prostitutes, and of limitless gluttony and sensuality in the face of abject poverty, disease, and death. Normally Grosz worked in a



**13.35** George Grosz, *Fit for Active Service* (*The Faith Healers*), 1916–17. Pen, brush, and India ink, sheet 20 × 14¾" (50.8 × 36.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

style of spare and brittle drawing combined with a fluid watercolor. In the mid-twenties, however, he briefly used precise realism in portraiture, close to the New Objectivity of Otto Dix (see fig. 13.37).

Grosz was frequently in trouble with the authorities, but it was Nazism that caused him to flee. In the United States during the thirties, his personality was quite transformed. Although he occasionally caricatured American types, these were relatively mild, even affectionate. America for him was a dream come true, and he painted the skyscrapers of New York or the dunes of Provincetown in a sentimental haze. His pervading sensuality was expressed in warm portrayals of Rubenesque nudes.

The growth of Nazism rekindled his power of brutal commentary, and World War II caused Grosz to paint a series expressing bitter hatred and deep personal disillusionment. In the later works, sheer repulsion replaces the passionate convictions of his earlier statements. He did not return to Berlin until 1958, and he died there the following year.

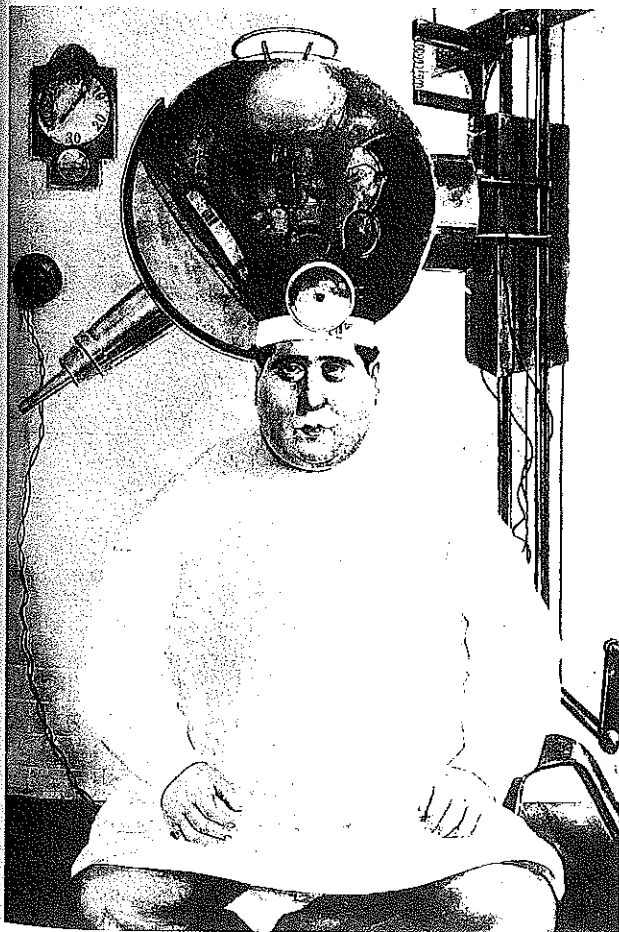
### Dix

The artist whose works most clearly define the nature of the New Objectivity was **Otto Dix** (1891–1969). Born of working-class parents, he was a proletarian by upbringing as well as by political conviction. Dix's combat experience made him fiercely antimilitaristic. His war paintings, gruesome descriptions of indescribable horrors, are rooted

**13.36** Otto Dix, *The Trench*, 1923. Destroyed 1943–45. Oil on canvas.



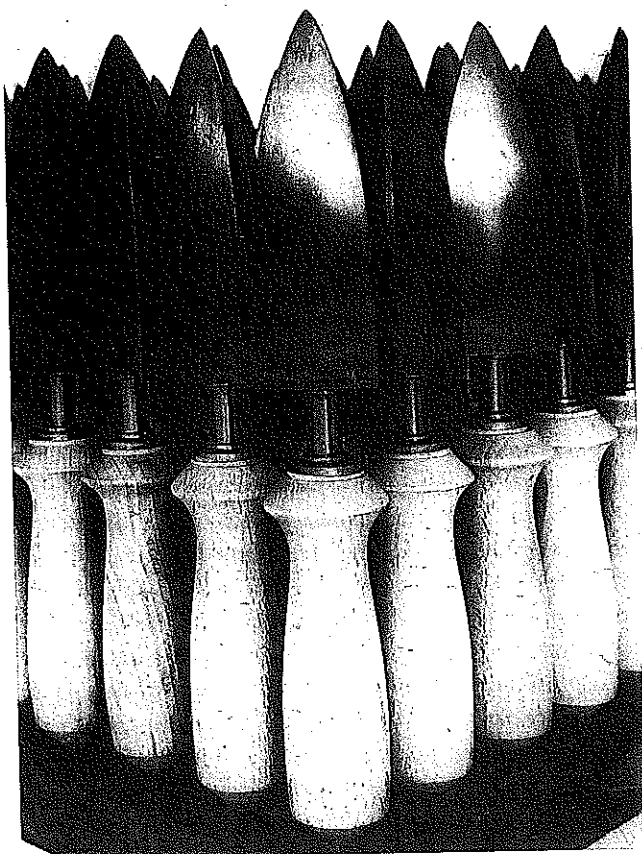
**13.37** Otto Dix, *Dr. Mayer-Hermann*, 1926. Oil and tempera on wood, 58¼ × 39" (149.2 × 99.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



in the German Gothic tradition of Grünewald (see fig. 8). His painting *The Trench* (fig. 13.36) traveled throughout Germany as part of an exhibition mounted by a group called No More War. It was stored for a time by Ernst Barlach (see fig. 9.9), but it was eventually destroyed, perhaps when the Nazis set fire to works of “degenerate” art in Berlin toward the end of World War II. Like Grosz, Dix was exposed to diverse influences from Cubism to Dada, but from the beginning he was concerned with uncompromising realism. This was a symptom of the post-war reaction against abstraction, a reaction most marked in Germany but also evident in most of Europe and in America. Even many of the pioneers of Fauvism and Cubism were involved in it. However, the superrealism of Dix was not simply a return to the past. In his portrait of the laryngologist, *Dr. Mayer-Hermann* (fig. 13.37), the massive figure is seated frontally, framed by the vaguely menacing machines of his profession. Although the painting includes nothing bizarre or extraneous, the overpowering confrontation gives a sense of the unreal. For this type of superrealism (as distinct from Surrealism) the term Magic Realism was coined: a mode of representation that takes on an aura of the fantastic because commonplace objects are presented with unexpectedly exaggerated and detailed forthrightness. Dix remained in Germany during the Nazi regime, although he was forbidden to exhibit or teach and was imprisoned for a short time. After the war he turned to a form of mystical, religious expression.



**13.38** August Sander, *Wandering People (Fahrendes Volk)*, from the series *Citizens of the 20th Century (Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts)*, from the portfolio *Traveling People, Düren*. (Cologne), Germany, 1930. Gelatin-silver print, 8¼ × 10" (21.0 × 25.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



**13.39** Albert Renger-Patzsch, *Irons Used in Shoemaking, Fagus Works*, c. 1925. Gelatin-silver print. Galerie Wilde, Cologne.

### The Photography of Sander and Renger-Patzsch

The portraiture of artists like Dix may very well have been influenced by the contemporary photographs of August Sander (1876–1964), a German artist and former miner who became a powerful exponent of the New Objectivity. Trained in fine art at the Dresden Academy, Sander set about to accomplish nothing less than a comprehensive photographic portrait of “Man in Twentieth-Century Germany.” He was convinced that the camera, if honestly and straightforwardly employed, could probe beneath appearances and dissect the truth that lay within. Sander photographed German society in its “sociological arc” of occupations and classes, presenting cultural types in the environments that shaped them (fig. 13.38). In 1929 he published the first volume of his magnum opus—one of the most ambitious in the history of photography—under the title *Antlitz der Zeit (Face of Time)*, only to see the book suppressed and the plates (but not the negatives) destroyed in the early thirties by the Nazis, who inevitably found the photographer’s ideas contrary to their own pathological views of race and class. For his part, Sander wrote: “It is not my intention either to criticize or to describe these people, but to create a piece of history with my pictures.”

The German photographer most immediately identified with the New Objectivity was Albert Renger-Patzsch (1897–1966). Like Paul Strand in the United States (see fig. 18.21), Renger-Patzsch avoided the double exposures and photographic manipulations of Man Ray (see fig. 13.25) and Moholy-Nagy (see fig. 17.2), as well as the artificiality and soulfulness of the Pictorialists, to practice “straight” photography closely and sharply focused on objects isolated, or abstracted, from the natural and man-made worlds (fig. 13.39). But for all its stark realism, such an approach yielded details so enlarged and crisply purified of their structural or functional contexts that the overall pattern they produce borders on pure design. Still, Renger-Patzsch insisted upon his commitment to factuality and his “aloofness to art for art’s sake.”

### Beckmann

Max Beckmann (1884–1950) was the principal artist associated with the New Objectivity but could only briefly be called a precise Realist in the sense of Dix. Born of wealthy parents in Leipzig, he was schooled in the Early Renaissance painters of Germany and the Netherlands, and the great seventeenth-century Dutch painters. After studies at the Weimar academy and a brief visit to Paris, Beckmann settled in 1903 in Berlin, then a center of German Impressionism and Art Nouveau. Influenced by Delacroix and by the German academic tradition, he painted large religious and classical murals and versions of contemporary disasters such as the sinking of the *Titanic* (1912), done in the mode of Géricault’s bleak masterpiece commemorating an 1816 shipwreck, *Raft of the Medusa*. By 1913 Beckmann was a well-known academician. His

service in World War I brought about a nervous breakdown and, as he later said, "great injury to his soul." The experience turned him toward a search for internal reality. Beckmann assumed many guises in over eighty-five self-portraits made throughout his life. The *Self-Portrait with Red Scarf* of 1917 (fig. 13.40) shows the artist in his Frankfurt studio, haunted and anxious. Beckmann's struggle is apparent in a big, unfinished *Resurrection*, on which he painted sporadically between 1916 and 1918. Here he attempted to join his more intense and immediate vision of the war years to his prewar academic formulas. This work liberated him from his academic past. In two paintings of 1917, *The Descent from the Cross* and *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*, he found a personal expression, rooted in Grünewald, Bosch, and Brueghel, although the jagged shapes and delimited space also owed much to Cubism. Out of this mating of Late Gothic, Cubism, and German Expressionism emerged Beckmann's next style.

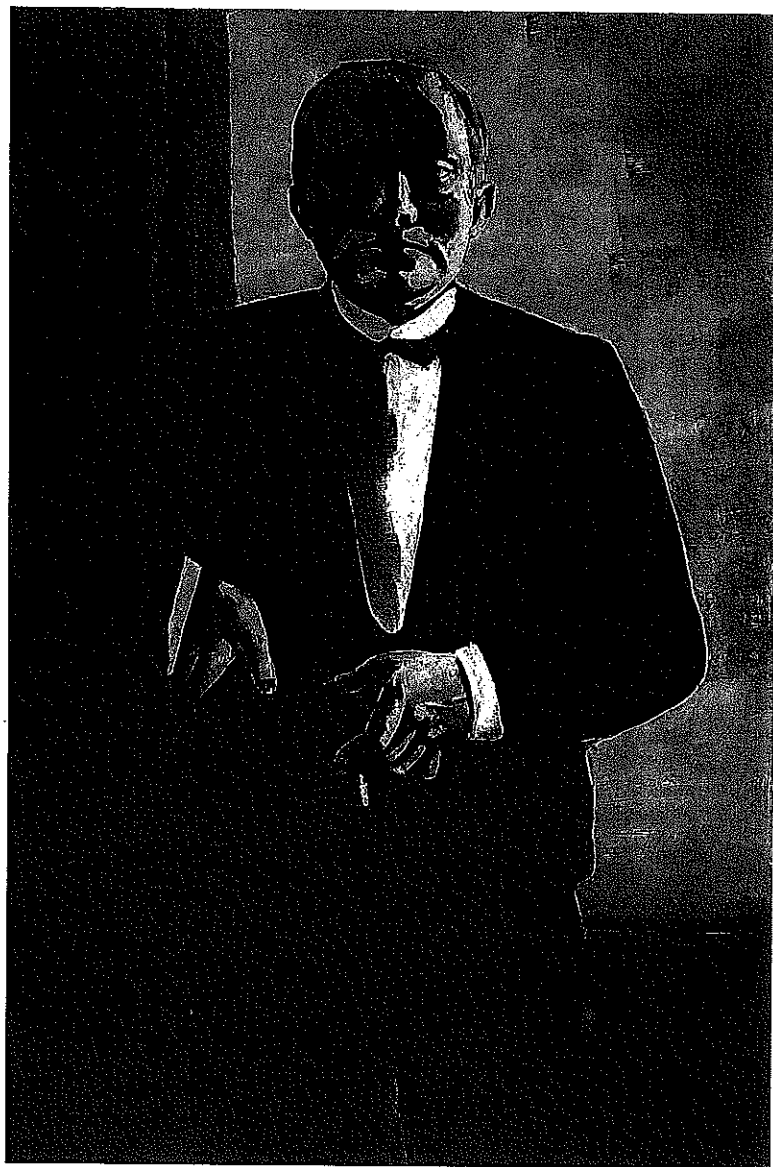
Although he was not politically oriented, Beckmann responded to the violence and cruelty of the last years of the

war by painting dramas of torture and brutality—symptomatic of the lawlessness of the time and prophetic of the state-sponsored genocide of the early forties. Rendered in pale, emotionally repulsive colors, the figures could be twisted and distorted within a compressed space, as in late medieval representations of the tortures of the damned (in Beckmann's work, the innocent), and the horror heightened by explicit and accurate details. Such works, which impart symbolic content through harsh examination of external appearance, were close to and even anticipated the New Objectivity of Grosz and Dix.

In *Self-Portrait in Tuxedo* from 1927 (fig. 13.41), Beckmann presents a view of himself quite different from the one ten years earlier. Now a mature figure, he appears serious and self-assured, debonair even. The composition is striking in its elegant simplicity, with deep blacks, for which Beckmann is understandably admired, set against the blue-gray wall and the artist's stark white shirt. In the later twenties, as is clear from this image, Beckmann, moving from success to success, was regarded as one of Germany's



**13.40** Max Beckmann, *Self-Portrait with Red Scarf*, 1917. Oil on canvas, 31½ × 23¾" (80 × 60 cm). Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.



**13.41** Max Beckmann, *Self-Portrait in Tuxedo*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 55½ × 37¾" (141 × 96 cm). Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

leading artists. Nevertheless, when the Nazis came to power in 1933, Beckmann was stripped of his teaching position in Frankfurt, and 590 of his works were confiscated from museums throughout Germany. On the opening day of the 1937 Degenerate Art show in Munich, which included several works by Beckmann (including fig. 13.40), the artist and his wife fled to Amsterdam. In 1947, after years of hiding from the Nazis (he never returned to Germany), Beckmann accepted a teaching position at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, where he filled a position vacated by the Abstract Expressionist painter Philip Guston (see figs. 19.20, 19.21) and became a highly influential teacher. He remained in the United States for the rest of his life.

Throughout the thirties and forties, Beckmann continued to develop his ideas of coloristic richness, monumentality, and complexity of subject. The enriched color came from visits to Paris and contacts with French artists, particularly Matisse and Picasso. However, his emphasis on literary subjects having heavy symbolic content reflected his Germanic artistic roots. The first climax of his new, monumental-symbolic approach was the large 1932–33 triptych *Departure* (fig. 13.42). Beckmann made nine paintings in the triptych format, obviously making a connection between his work and the great ecclesiastical art of the past. Alfred Barr described *Departure* as “an allegory of the triumphal voyage of the modern spirit through and beyond the agony of the modern world.” The right wing shows

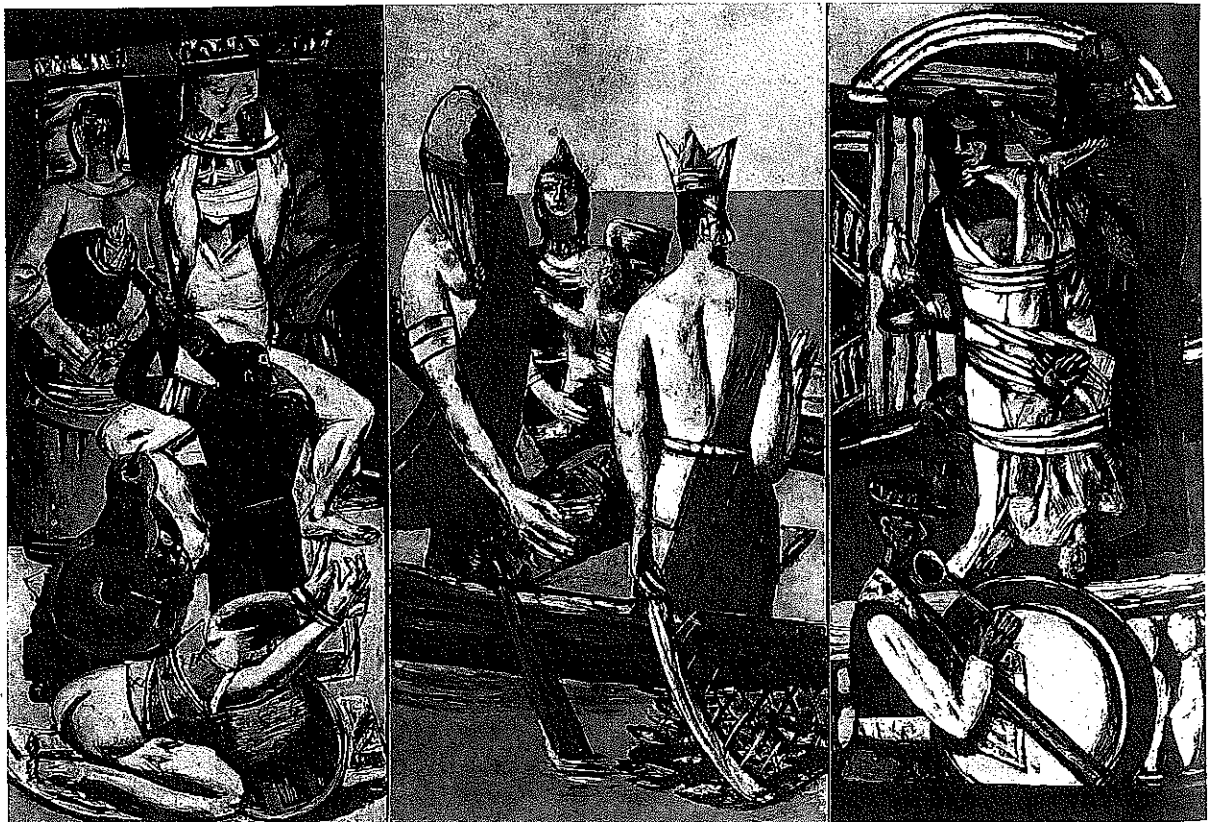
frustration, indecision, and self-torture; in the left wing, sadistic mutilation, and the torture of others. Beckmann said of this triptych in 1937:

On the right wing you can see yourself trying to find your way in the darkness, lighting the hall and staircase with a miserable lamp dragging along tied to you as part of yourself, the corpse of your memories, of your wrongs, of your failures, the murder everyone commits at some time of his life—you can never free yourself of your past, you have to carry the corpse while Life plays the drum.

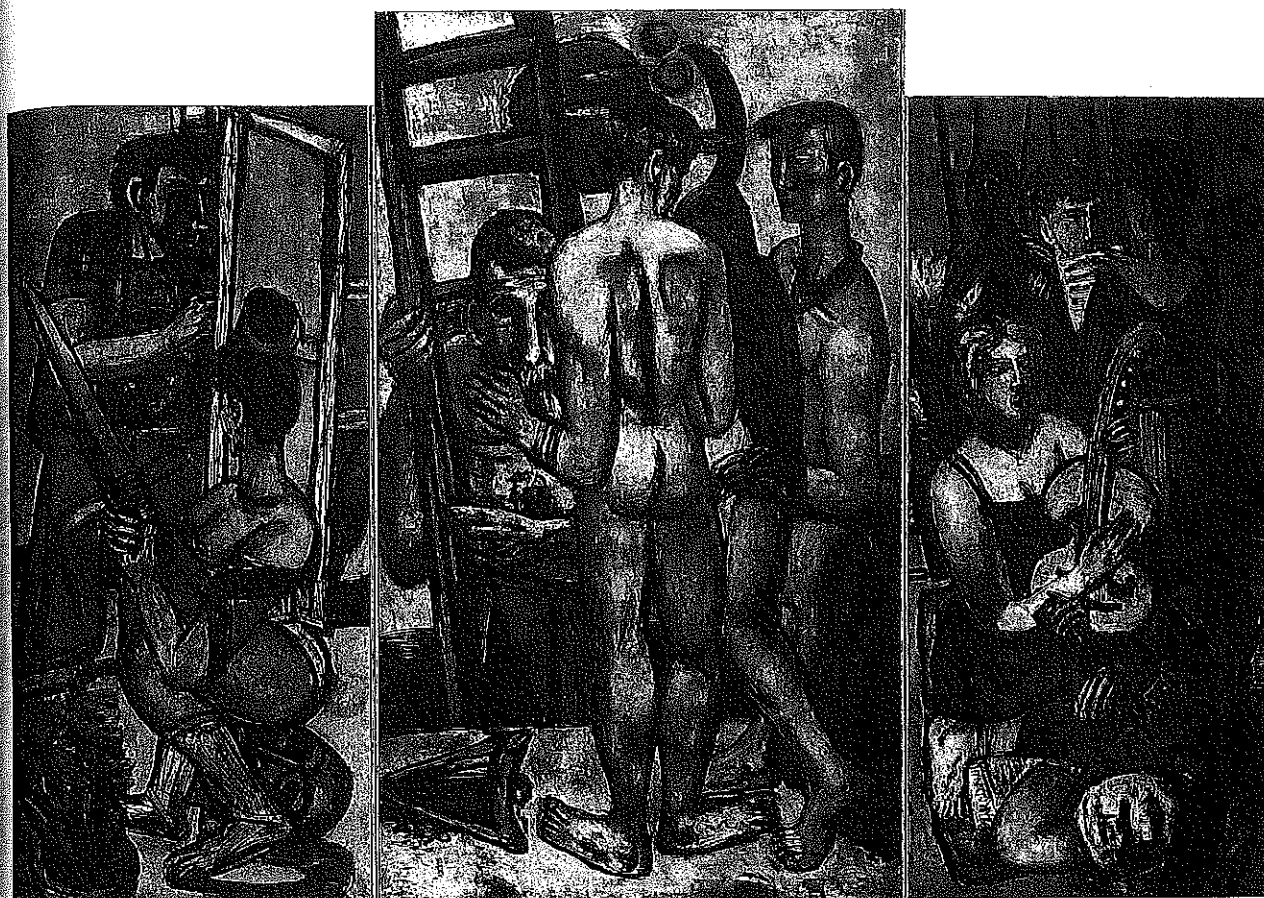
Also, despite his disavowal of political interests, the left-hand panel must refer to the rise of dictatorship that was driving liberal artists, writers, and thinkers underground.

The darkness and suffering in the wings are resolved in the brilliant sunlight colors of the central panel, where the king, the mother, and the child set forth, guided by the veiled boatman. Beckmann said: “The King and Queen have freed themselves of the tortures of life—they have overcome them. The Queen carries the greatest treasure—Freedom—as her child in her lap. Freedom is the one thing that matters—it is the departure, the new start.”

It is important to emphasize the fact that Beckmann’s allegories and symbols were not a literal iconography to be read by anyone given the key. The spectator had to participate actively, and the allusions could mean something different to each viewer. In addition, the allusions in Beckmann’s work could be very complex. His last triptych,



**13.42** Max Beckmann, *Departure*, 1932–33. Oil on canvas, triptych, center panel 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  $\times$  3'9 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (2.2  $\times$  1.15 m); side panels each 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  $\times$  3'3 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (2.2  $\times$  1 m). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



**13.43** Max Beckmann, *The Argonauts*, 1949–50. Triptych, oil on canvas: left panel 6'1" × 2'9½" (1.8 × 0.85 m), center panel 6'9" × 4' (2.1 × 1.22 m), right panel 6'1" × 2'9½" (1.8 × 0.85 m). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

*The Argonauts* (fig. 13.43), was completed the day before he died. Beckmann originally intended the work as an allegory about the arts. Painting is represented in the left panel where an artist, presumably a surrogate self-portrait, works at a canvas. The women playing instruments in the right panel symbolize music, while the figures in the center depict poetry. Prompted by a dream to rename the painting *The Argonauts*, Beckmann gave his image a more mythological content. The model in the lefthand wing becomes Medea; the central figures represent Jason, the poet Orpheus, and the sea god Glaucus; and the women at the right form an ancient Greek chorus. But the triptych also has a biographical dimension, since, during his years in Amsterdam, Beckmann associated with a group of writers and artists called the Argonauts. Thus, Jason's heroic search for the golden fleece becomes an allegory about the voyage of Beckmann's own life.

## Dada Divided: Developments in Paris

By the time Max Ernst left Cologne in 1921, Dada as an organized movement was dead, except in Paris. Duchamp had largely given up creative activity (unless his very exist-

ence might be so described) apart from occasional motion experiments, the completion of his *Large Glass*, and participation in commemorative exhibitions and publications. In Germany only Kurt Schwitters continued, a one-man Dada movement. Many of the original Dadaists, if they had not done so already, left Germany in the thirties. But their efforts were not forgotten in the Degenerate Art exhibition organized by the Nazis in 1937 in Munich (fig. 13.44). On the "Dada wall," Grosz's statement, "Take Dada seriously! It's worth it!" is derisively inscribed next to works by Schwitters and enlarged details from works by Kandinsky (whom the organizers mistook for a Dada artist).

By 1918 writers in Paris, including Louis Aragon, André Breton, and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, were contributing to the Zurich periodical *Dada*, and shortly Tristan Tzara began writing for Breton and Aragon's journal *Littérature*. Picabia, after visiting the Dadaists in Zurich, published No. IX of *391* in Paris, and in 1919 Tzara himself also arrived there. Thus, by the end of the war, a Dada movement was growing in the French capital, but it was primarily a literary event. While in painting and sculpture Dada was largely an imported product, in poetry and theater it was in a tradition of the irrational and absurd that extended from Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé to

Alfred Jarry, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Jean Cocteau. Paris Dada in the hands of the literary men consisted of frequent manifestos, demonstrations, periodicals, events, and happenings more violent and hysterical than ever before. The artists Arp, Ernst, and Picabia took a less active part in the demonstrations, although Picabia contributed his own manifestos. The original impetus and enthusiasm seemed to be lacking, however, and divisive factions arose, led principally by Tzara and by Breton. The early Dadaists, like the

Bolsheviks of the Russian Revolution, sought to maintain a constant state of revolution, even anarchy, but new forces led by Breton sought a more constructive revolutionary scheme based on Dada. In its original form Dada expired in the wild confusion of the Congress of Paris called in 1922 by the Dadaists. The former Dadaists, including Picabia, who followed Breton, were joined by powerful new voices, among them Cocteau and Ezra Pound. By 1924 this group was consolidated under the name Surrealism.



13.44 Room 3 including Dada wall in Degenerate Art Exhibition, Munich, 1937.

