

# 15

## Surrealism

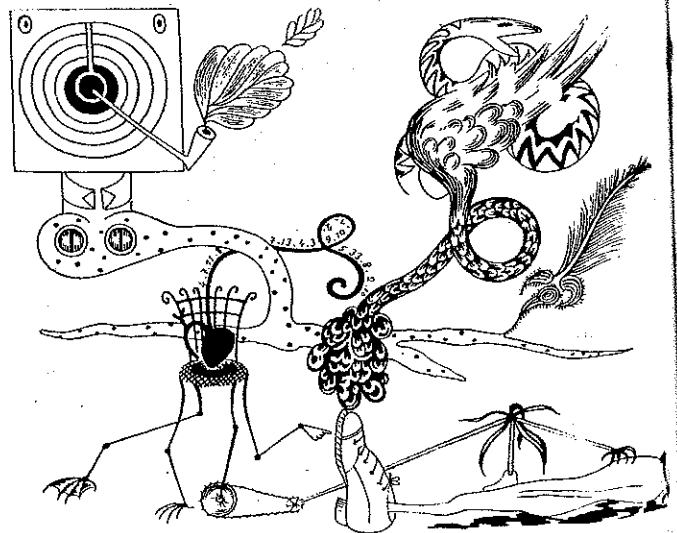
In 1917 French writer Guillaume Apollinaire referred to his own drama *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (*The Breasts of Tiresias*), and also to the ballet *Parade* produced by Diaghilev, as “surrealist.” The term was commonly used thereafter by the poets André Breton and Paul Éluard, as well as other contributors to the Paris journal *Littérature*. The concept of a literary and art movement formally designated as Surrealism, however, did not emerge until after the demise of Dada in Paris in the early twenties.

### Breton and the Background to Surrealism

In the years immediately after World War I, French writers had been trying to formulate an aesthetic of the non-rational stemming variously from the writings of Arthur Rimbaud, the Comte de Lautréamont (see below), Alfred Jarry, and Apollinaire. By 1922 Breton was growing disillusioned with Dada on the ground that it was becoming institutionalized and academic, and led the revolt that broke up the Dada Congress of Paris. Together with Philippe Soupault, he explored the possibilities of automatic writing in his 1922 Surrealist texts called *The Magnetic Fields*. Pure psychic automatism, one of the fundamental precepts of Surrealism, was defined by Breton as “dictation of thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, and beyond any aesthetic or moral preoccupation.” While this method of composing without any preconceived subject or structure was designed for writing, its principles were also applied by the Surrealists to drawing.

After 1922 Breton assumed the principal editorship of *Littérature* and gradually augmented his original band of writers with artists whose work and attitudes were closest to his own: Francis Picabia, Man Ray, and Max Ernst. This group met Breton regularly at his or Paul Éluard’s home, or at some favorite café, where they discussed the significance of the marvelous, the irrational, and the accidental in painting and poetry. One of the exercises in which the

artists engaged during their gatherings was the so-called “exquisite corpse.” The practice was based on an old parlor game in which one participant writes part of a sentence on a sheet of paper, folds the sheet to conceal part of the phrase, and passes it to the next player, who adds a word or phrase based on the preceding contribution. Once the paper made it around the room in this manner, the provocative, often hilarious, sentence was read aloud. One such game produced “The exquisite corpse will drink the young wine,” hence the name. When this method was adapted for collective drawings (fig. 15.1), the surprising results coincided with the Surrealist love of the unexpected. The elements of chance, randomness, and coincidence in the formation of a work of art had for years been explored by the Dadaists. Now it became the basis for intensive study for the Surrealists, whose experience of four years of war made them attach much importance to their isolation, their alienation from society and even from nature.



15.1 André Breton, Valentine Hugo, Greta Knutson, and Tristan Tzara, *Exquisite Corpse*, c. 1930. Ink on paper, 9¼ × 12¼ (23.5 × 31.1 cm). Morton G. Neumann Family Collection.

From the meetings between writers and painters emerged Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* in 1924, containing this definition:

SURREALISM, noun, masc., pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, either verbally or in writing, the true function of thought. Thought dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason, and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations. ENCYCL. Philos. Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of association heretofore neglected, in the omnipotence of the dream, and in the disinterested play of thought. It leads to the permanent destruction of all other psychic mechanisms and to its substitution for them in the solution of the principal problems of life.

This definition emphasizes words rather than plastic images, literature rather than painting or sculpture. Breton was a serious student and disciple of Freud, from whose teachings he derived the Surrealist position concerning the central significance of dreams and the subconscious, as well as the use of free association (allowing words or images to suggest other words or images without imposing rational connections or structures) to gain access to the subconscious. Breton conceived of the Surreal condition as a moment of revelation in which are resolved the contradictions and oppositions of dreams and realities. In the second manifesto of Surrealism, issued in 1930, he said: "There is a certain point for the mind from which life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable, the high and the low cease being perceived as contradictions."

Two nineteenth-century poets had irresistible appeal to the Surrealists. Isidore Ducasse, known as the Comte de Lautréamont (1846–70), and Arthur Rimbaud (1854–91) were outspoken critics of established poets and of forms and concepts of nineteenth-century poetry. Unknown to each other, both lived almost in isolation, wandered from place to place, and died young; they wrote great poetry while still adolescents, tearing at the foundations of Romantic verse. The idea of revolt permeates Lautréamont's poetry: revolt against tradition, against the family, against society, and against God. The ideas of Rimbaud at seventeen years of age seemed to define for the Surrealists the nature of the poet and poetry. Rimbaud believed that the poet, like a Christian mystic, must attain a visionary state through rigid discipline—but here a discipline of alienation, monstrosities of love, suffering, and madness. Like the Surrealists later, Rimbaud was concerned with the implications of dreams, the subconscious, and chance.

An influential and charismatic figure, Breton was the self-appointed but generally acknowledged leader of Surrealism. He was ruthless in the role as he invited artists to join the group only to exclude them when they failed to toe the party line. As Breton formulated a dogma of Surrealist principles, schisms and heresies inevitably

appeared, for few of its exponents practiced Surrealism with scrupulous literalness. In fact, the works of the major Surrealists have little stylistic similarity, aside from their departure from traditional content and their rejection of journalist approaches to art. The first group exhibition of Surrealist artists was in 1925 at the Galerie Pierre. It included Arp, de Chirico, Ernst, Klee, Man Ray, Masson, Miró, and Picasso. In that year Yves Tanguy joined the group. A Surrealist gallery was opened in 1927 with an exhibition of these artists joined by Marcel Duchamp and Picabia. Except for René Magritte, who joined later that year, and Salvador Dalí, who did not visit Paris until 1929, this was the roster of the first Surrealist generation.

### The Two Strands of Surrealism

From its inception, Surrealism in painting tended in two directions. The first, represented by Miró, André Masson, and, later, Matta (see below), is biomorphic or abstract Surrealism. In this tendency, automatism—"dictation of thought without control of the mind"—is predominant, and the results are generally close to abstraction, although some degree of imagery is normally present. Its origins were in the experiments in chance and automatism carried on by the Dadaists and the automatic writing of Surrealist poets. The other direction in Surrealist painting is associated with Salvador Dalí, Yves Tanguy, and René Magritte (see below). It presents, in meticulous detail, recognizable scenes and objects that are taken out of natural context, distorted and combined in fantastic ways as they might be in dreams. Its sources are in the art of Henri Rousseau, Chagall, Ensor, de Chirico, and nineteenth-century Romantics. These artists attempted to use images of the subconscious, defined by Freud as uncontrolled by conscious reason (although Dalí, in his "paranoiac-critical methods," claimed to have control over his subconscious). Freud's theories of the subconscious and of the significance of dreams were, of course, fundamental to all aspects of Surrealism. To the popular imagination it was the naturalistic Surrealism associated with Dalí, Tanguy, and others of that group that signified Surrealism, even though it has had less influence historically than the abstract biomorphism of Miró, Masson, and Matta.

Both strands of Surrealism differed from Dada in their essentially Romantic privileging of the unconscious (rather than the forms and rhythms of the machine). Like Dada, however, Surrealism delighted in the exploration of unconventional techniques and in discovering creative potential in areas that lay outside the conventional territory of art.

### Political Context and Membership

Surrealism was a revolutionary movement not only in literature and art but also in politics. The Surrealist period in Europe was one of deepening political crisis, financial collapse and the rise of fascism, provoking moral anxiety within the avant-garde. Under Breton's editorship (1925–29) the periodical *La Révolution surréaliste*

maintained a steady communist line during the twenties. The Dadaists at the end of World War I were anarchists, and many future Surrealists joined them. Feeling that government systems guided by tradition and reason had led humankind into the bloodiest holocaust in history, they insisted that government of any form was undesirable, and that the irrational was preferable to the rational in art and in all of life and civilization. The Russian Revolution and the spread of communism provided a channel for Surrealist protests during the twenties. Louis Aragon and, later, Paul Éluard joined the Communist Party, while Breton, after exposure to the reactionary bias of Soviet communism or Stalinism in art and literature (discussed in chapter 11), took a Trotskyist position in the late thirties. Picasso, who made Surrealist work in the thirties, became a communist in protest against the fascism of Franco. By 1930, although schisms were occurring among the original Surrealists, new artists and poets were being recruited by Breton. Dalí joined in 1929, the sculptor Alberto Giacometti in 1931, and René Magritte in 1932. Other later recruits included Paul Delvaux, Henry Moore, Hans Bellmer, Oscar Dominguez, and Matta Echaurren. The list of writers was considerably longer. Surrealist groups and exhibitions were organized in England, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Egypt, Denmark, Japan, Holland, Romania, and Hungary. Despite this substantial expansion, infighting resulted in continual resignations, dismissals, and reconciliations. Also, artists such as Picasso were adopted by the Surrealists without joining officially.

During the thirties the major publication of the Surrealists was the lavish journal *Minotaure*, founded in 1933 by Albert Skira and E. Tériade. The last issue appeared in 1939. Although emphasizing the role of the Surrealists, the editors drew into their orbit any of the established masters of modern art and letters who they felt had made significant contributions. These included artists as diverse as Matisse, Kandinsky, Laurens, and Derain.

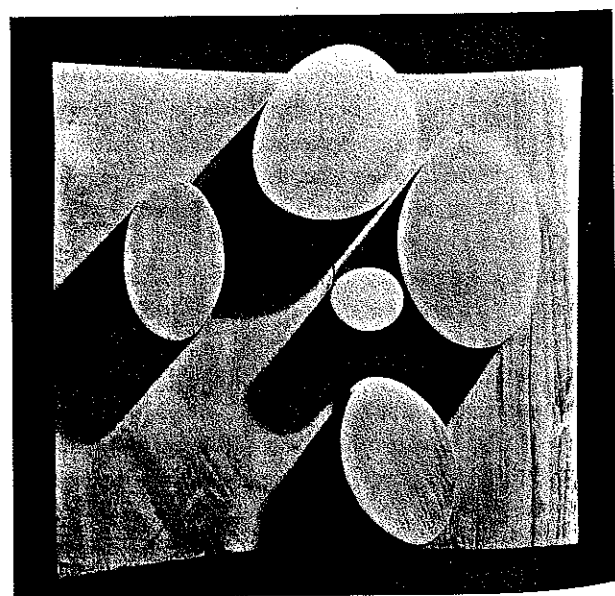
### "Art is a Fruit": Arp's Later Career

One of the original Zurich Dadaists (see chapter 13), Jean (Hans) Arp (1886–1966) was active in Paris Dada during its brief life, showing in the International Dada Exhibition of 1922, at the Galerie Montaigne, and contributing poems and drawings to Dada periodicals. When official Surrealism emerged in 1924, Arp was an active participant. At the same time, he remained in close contact with German and Dutch abstractionists and Constructivists. He also contributed to Theo van Doesburg's *De Stijl* and with El Lissitzky edited *The Isms of Art*. He and his wife and fellow artist Sophie Taeuber eventually made their home in Meudon, outside of Paris.

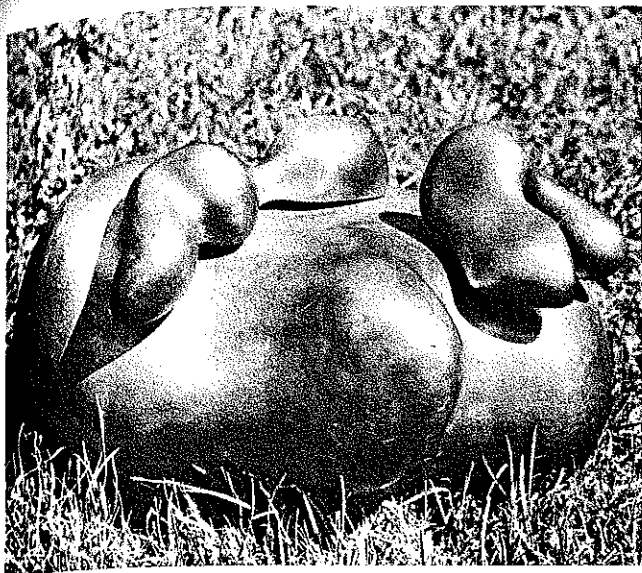
During the twenties Arp's favorite material was wood, which he made into painted reliefs. He also produced paintings, some on cardboard with cutout designs making a sort of reverse collage. Although Arp had experimented

with geometric abstractions between 1915 and 1920 (see fig. 13.11), frequently collaborating with Sophie Taeuber, he abandoned geometric shapes after 1920. His art would increasingly depend on the invention of biomorphic, abstract forms, based on his conviction that "art is a fruit that grows in man, like a fruit on a plant, or a child in its mother's womb." Yet Arp championed the geometric work of Van Doesburg and Sophie Taeuber (see figs. 11.36, 13.13) and collaborated with these two artists in decorating ten rooms of the Café l'Aubette in his native city, Strasbourg (see fig. 11.37). His murals for the café (now destroyed) were the boldest, freest, and most simplified examples of his biomorphic abstraction. They utilized his favorite motifs: the navel and mushroom-shaped heads, sometimes sporting a mustache and round-dot eyes. *Rising Navel and Two Heads* was simply three flat, horizontal, scalloped bands of color, with two color shapes suggesting flat mushrooms floating across the center band. *Navel-Sun* was a loosely circular white shape floating on a blue background (though most of the actual color scheme is lost). There are no parallels for these large, boldly abstracted shapes until the so-termed Color Field painters of the fifties and sixties.

Of particular interest among Arp's reliefs and collages of the late twenties and early thirties were those entitled or subtitled *Objects Arranged According to the Laws of Chance*, or *Navels* (fig. 15.2). These continued the 1916–17 experiment in *Collage with Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance* (see fig. 13.11), although most of the forms were now organic rather than geometric. Arp made several versions of this wooden relief in 1930–31; he often employed the oval shapes seen here, which were for him variations on a navel, his universal emblem of human life.



15.2 Jean (Hans) Arp, *Objects Arranged According to the Laws of Chance, or Navels*, 1930. Varnished wood relief, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (26.3 × 28.3 × 5.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



**15.3** Jean Arp, *Head with Three Annoying Objects*, 1930 (cast 1950). Bronze, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 10 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (35.9 × 26 × 19.1 cm). Estate of Jean Arp.

He also produced string reliefs based on chance—loops of string dropped accidentally on a piece of paper and seemingly fixed there. It seems, however, that he may have given the laws of chance some assistance, for which he had a precedent in Duchamp's *3 Stoppages Étalon* (see fig. 13.18).

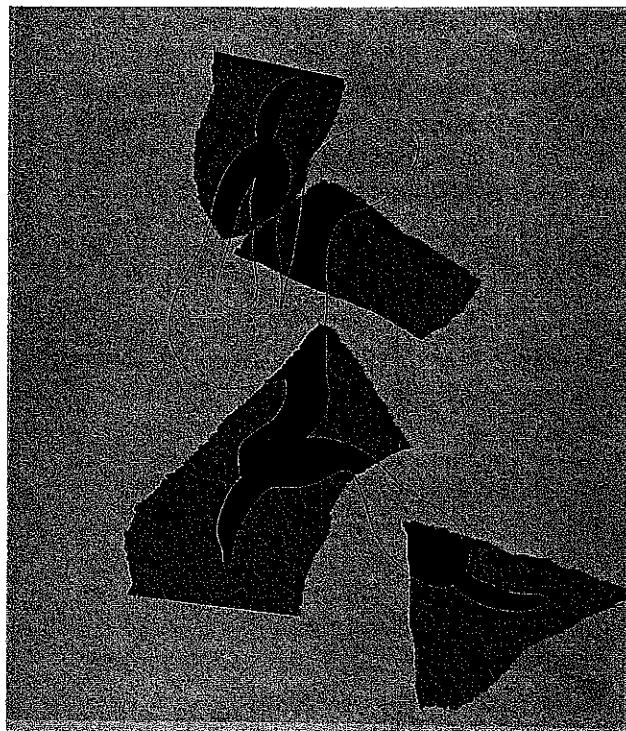
Arp's great step forward in sculpture occurred at the beginning of the thirties, when he began to work completely in the round, making clay and plaster models for later bronze or marble sculptures. Arp shared Brancusi's devotion to mass rather than space as the fundamental element of sculpture (see fig. 9.16), and he, in turn, influenced major sculptors of the next generation—among them Alexander Calder, Henry Moore, and Barbara Hepworth. He thus stands at the opposite pole from the Constructivists Tatlin or Gabo (see figs. 11.24, 11.31). In developing the ideas of his painted reliefs, he had introduced seemingly haphazard detached forms that hovered around the matrixlike satellites. *Head with Three Annoying Objects* (fig. 15.3) was originally executed in plaster, Arp's preferred medium for his first sculptures in the round. On a large biomorphic mass rest three objects, identified as a mustache, a mandolin, and a fly. The three strange forms were named in Arp's earliest title for the work, derived from one of his stories in which he describes himself waking up with three "annoying objects" on his face. The objects were not secured to the "head," for Arp intended that they be moved around by the spectator, introducing yet another element of chance in his work. A number of artists in the early thirties were exploring the notion of kineticism in painting or sculpture with interchangeable parts, including Alberto Giacometti (see fig. 15.55) and Alexander Calder (see fig. 17.28). Arp applied titles to his works after he had made them, with the intention of inspiring associations between images and ideas or, as he said, "to ferret out the dream." Thus, the meaning of the work, like the arrangement of the forms themselves, was open-ended. Like many of Arp's plasters, *Head with Three*

*Annoying Objects* was not cast in bronze until much later, in this case not until 1950.

To his biomorphic sculptural forms Arp applied the name "human concretion," for even forms that are not derived from nature, he said, can still be "as concrete and sensual as a leaf or a stone." In 1930 Van Doesburg had proposed the name "concrete art" as a more accurate description for abstract art. He contended that the term "abstract" implied a taking away from, a diminution of, natural forms and therefore a degree of denigration. What could be more real, he asked, more concrete than the fundamental forms and colors of nonrepresentational or nonobjective art? Although Van Doesburg's term did not gain universal recognition, Arp used it faithfully, and as "human concretions," it has gained a specific, descriptive connotation for his sculptures in the round. Arp said:

Concretion signifies the natural process of condensation hardening, coagulating, thickening, growing together. Concretion designates the solidification of a mass. Concretion designates curdling, the curdling of the earth and the heavenly bodies. Concretion designates solidification, the mass of the stone, the plant, the animal, the man. Concretion is something that has grown.

This statement could be interpreted as a manifesto in opposition to the Constructivist assertion of the primacy of space in sculpture. More pertinent, however, is its emphasis on sculpture as a process of growth, making tangible the life processes of the universe, from the microscopic to the macrocosmic. Thus a human concretion was not only



**15.4** Jean Arp, *Composition*, 1937. Collage of torn paper, india ink wash, and pencil, 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 9" (29.8 × 22.9 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

an abstraction based on human forms but also a distillation in sculpture of life itself.

The art of Jean Arp took many different forms between 1930 and 1966, the year of his death. Abstract (or concrete) forms suggesting sirens, snakes, clouds, leaves, owls, crystals, shells, starfish, seeds, fruit, and flowers emerged continually, suggesting such notions as growth, metamorphosis, dreams, and silence. While developing his freestanding sculpture, Arp continued to make reliefs and collages. To make his new collages, Arp tore up his own previously made work (fig. 15.4). In this example from 1937, he essentially recomposed the work by connecting the new forms with curvilinear lines drawn in pencil. This new collage technique, a liberating release from the immaculateness of the sculptures, was described by Arp:

I began to tear my papers instead of curving them neatly with scissors. I tore up drawings and carelessly smeared paste over and under them. If the ink dissolved and ran, I was delighted. ... I had accepted the transience, the dribbling away, the brevity, the impermanence, the fading, the withering, the spookishness of our existence. ... These torn pictures, these *papiers déchirés* brought me closer to a faith other than earthly.

Many of these torn-paper collages found their way to the United States and offered a link between organic Surrealism and postwar American Abstract Expressionism.

## Hybrid Menageries: Ernst's Surrealist Techniques

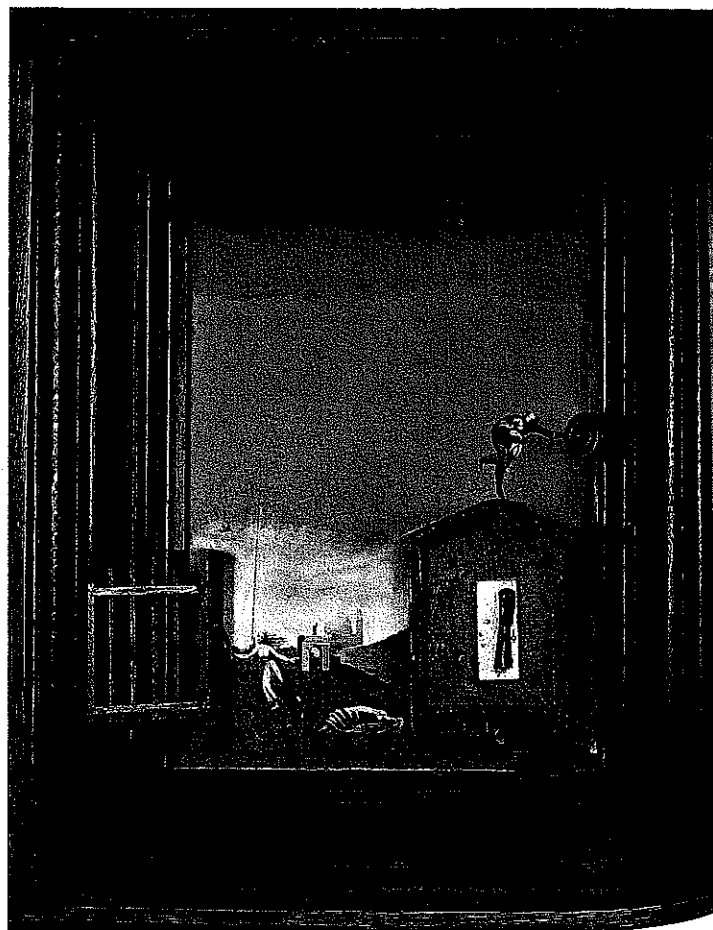
The career of Max Ernst (1891–1976) as a painter and sculptor, interrupted by four years in the German army, began when he moved to Paris from Cologne in 1922. At the end of 1921, the Dadaist Ernst had resumed painting after having devoted himself to various collage techniques since 1919 (see fig. 13.32). The manner of *Celebes*, the chief painting of his pre-Paris period (see fig. 13.33), is combined with the technique of his Dada assemblages in *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale* (fig. 15.5), a 1924 dream landscape in which two girls—one collapsed on the ground, the other running and brandishing a knife—are frightened by a tiny bird. The fantasy is given peculiar emphasis by the elements attached to the panel—the house on the right and the open gate on the left. A figure on top of the house clutches a young girl and seems to reach for the actual wooden knob on the frame. Contrary to Ernst's usual method of working, the title of this

enigmatic painting (inscribed in French on the frame) preceded the image. Ernst himself, speaking in the third person, noted:

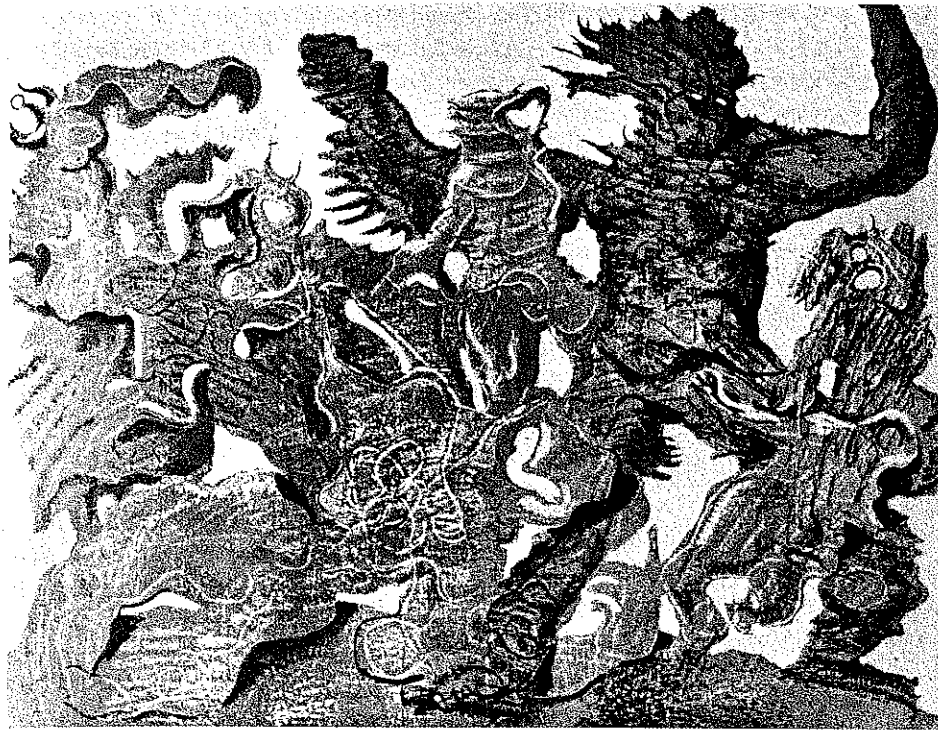
He never imposes a title on a painting. He waits until a title imposes itself. Here, however, the title existed *before* the picture was painted. A few days before, he had written a prose poem which began: *à la tombée de la nuit, à la lisière de la ville, deux enfants sont menacés par un rossignol* (as night falls, at the edge of town, two children are threatened by a nightingale) ... He did not attempt to illustrate this poem, but that is the way it happened.

In 1925, Ernst became a full participant in the newly established Surrealist movement. That year he began to make drawings that he termed “frottage” (rubbing), in which he used the child's technique of placing a piece of paper on a textured surface and rubbing over it with a pencil. The resulting image was largely fortuitous, but Ernst consciously reorganized the transposed textures in new contexts, creating new and unforeseen associations. Not only did frottage provide the technical basis for a series of unorthodox drawings, it also intensified Ernst's perception of the textures in his environment—wood, cloth, leaves, plaster, and wallpaper.

Ernst applied this technique, combined with grattage (scraping), to his paintings of the late twenties and the thirties. The 1927 canvas *The Horde* (fig. 15.6) expresses the



**15.5** Max Ernst, *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale*, 1924. Oil on wood with wood construction, 27½ × 22½ × 4½" (69.8 × 57.1 × 11.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

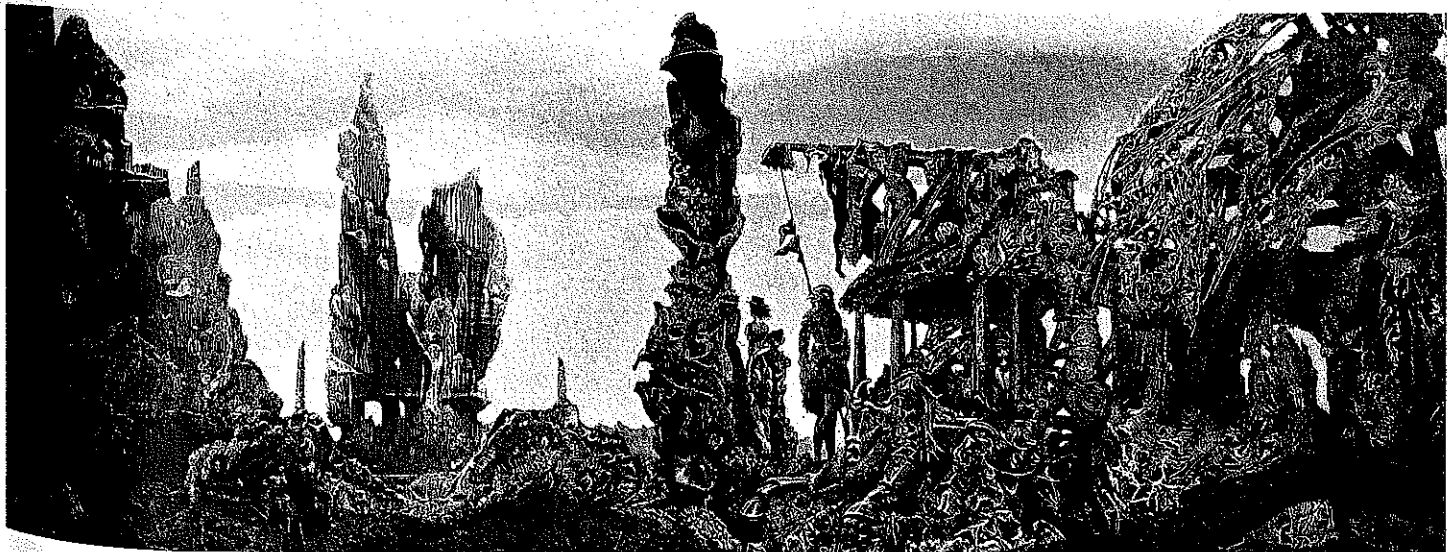


**15.6** Max Ernst, *The Horde*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 44 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 57 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (114 × 146.1 cm). Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

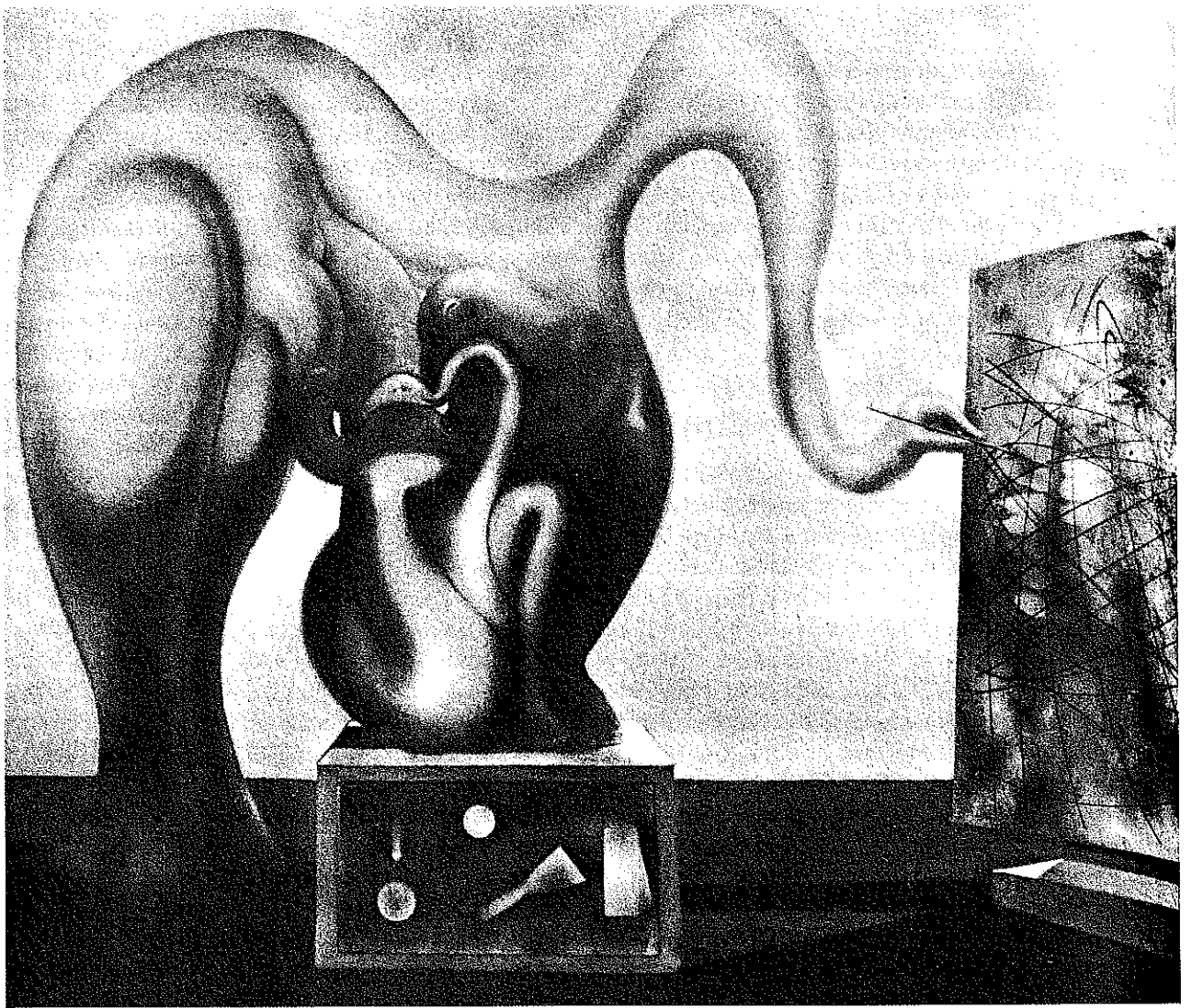
increasingly ominous mood of Ernst's Surrealist paintings. The monstrous, treelike figures are among the many frightening premonitions of the conflict that would overtake Europe in the next decade. In 1941, Ernst escaped the war in Europe and settled in New York City, where his presence, along with other Surrealist refugees, would have tremendous repercussions for American art. Ernst's antipathy toward the rise of fascism was given fullest expression in *Europe after the Rain* (fig. 15.7), which has been aptly described as a requiem for the war-ravaged continent. In this large painting Ernst employed yet another technique, which he called "decalcomania." Invented by the Spanish

Surrealist Oscar Dominguez, this technique involved placing paper or glass on a wet painted surface, then pulling it away to achieve surprising textural effects. It appealed to Ernst and other Surrealists for the startling automatic forms that could be created in this way.

Of all the menageries and hybrid creatures that Ernst invented, he most closely identified with the image of the bird, eventually adopting one of his inventions, named Loplop, as a kind of surrogate self-image. The 1942 painting *Surrealism and Painting* (fig. 15.8), also the title of a book by Breton, shows a birdlike beast made of smoothly rounded sections of human anatomy, serpents, and birds'



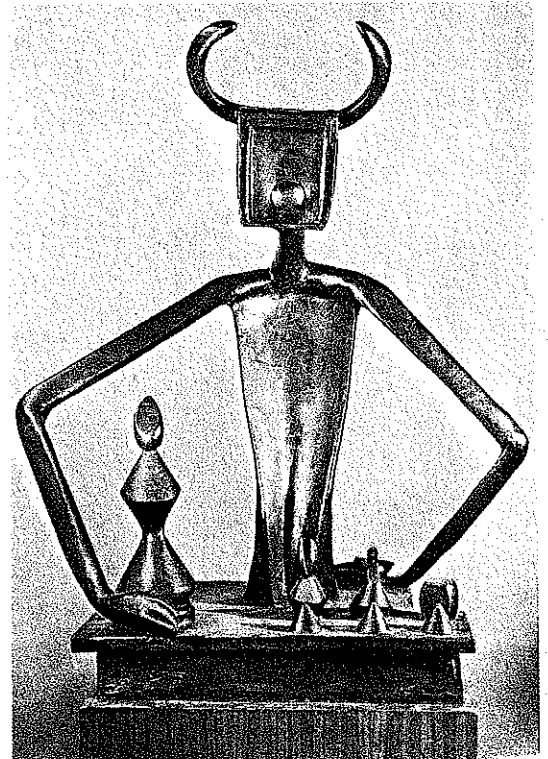
**15.7** Max Ernst, *Europe after the Rain*, 1940–42. Oil on canvas, 21 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 58 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (54.6 × 147.6 cm). Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.



**15.8** Max Ernst, *Surrealism and Painting*, 1942. Oil on canvas, 6'4¼" × 7'7¾" (2 × 2.3 m). The Menil Collection, Houston.

heads. The monster, painted in delicate hues, is composing an abstract painting, perhaps "automatically." In fact, Ernst engaged in a partially automatic process to create the painting—he swung paint over the canvas from a hole in a tin can. The full implications of this "drip" technique would be explored by Jackson Pollock to make his revolutionary, mural-sized abstract paintings in the fifties (see fig. 19.10).

Ernst was drawn to sculpture in 1934 through his friendship with Giacometti, at the moment when the latter was abandoning Surrealism for his own new vision of reality (see below). Ernst's first works were modified, egg-shaped boulders whose surfaces he carved with abstract patterns in the manner of Arp. He then went on to several



**15.9** Max Ernst, *The King Playing with the Queen*, 1944. Bronze (cast 1954 from original plaster), 38½" (97.8 cm) high, at base, 18¾ × 20½" (46.7 × 52.1 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

sculptures in which he made plaster casts of found objects for casting in bronze, such as *Oedipus II* (1934), which is based on casts of precariously balanced wooden pails. In the United States, Ernst eventually settled in Arizona with his wife, the artist Dorothea Tanning, and developed a strong interest in the art of the Zuni and Hopi peoples. He created a series of frontalized figures in 1944 (fig. 15.9) that drew upon his diverse interests in Native American art, African sculpture, Picasso, and, at times, Duchamp.

## “Night, Music, and Stars”: Miró and Organic-Abstract Surrealism

Although active for many years in Paris, the Spanish artist Joan Miró (1893–1983) constantly returned to his native country, and his Catalan roots remained a consistent force in his art throughout his life. In art schools in Barcelona, where he was born, he was introduced to French art, and his first mature paintings, executed in 1915–16, show the influence of Cézanne. But he also admired more contemporary masters, especially Matisse and fellow Spaniard Picasso. Though never a Cubist, he freely adapted aspects of the style to suit his own purposes.

*Nude with Mirror* (fig. 15.10), begun in the spring of 1919, combines Cubist faceting, flat-color areas, and geometric pattern with a sculptural figure. Painted from a live model, the nude is set against a spare, terracotta-colored background that contrasts sharply with the highly decorative patterns of the stool and rug on which she sits. Despite the Cubist fracturing of certain parts of the anatomy, the figure has a strong three-dimensional presence of rounded

volumes. In the monumental simplicity of *Nude with Mirror* there is evidence of Miró’s admiration for Henri Rousseau (see fig. 3.16). A hint of the unreality to come in Miró’s work emerges as we realize that the model gazes at herself in the mirror with nearly closed eyes.

In 1920 Miró began to spend winters in Paris and summers in Montroig, Spain. He was drawn to the work of the Dadaists as well as Paul Klee and, by 1923, was working from his imagination rather than from nature. He became friendly with Breton and the other poets in Paris who were soon to launch the Surrealist revolution. Yet these encounters, as well as Miró’s natural inclination to fantasy, do not entirely account for the richly imaginative imagery that he said was “always born in a state of hallucination.”

*Carnival of Harlequin*, 1924–25 (fig. 15.11) is one of the first Surrealist pictures where Miró’s playful sense of caprice has been given full rein. His space, the suggested confines of a grayish-beige room, teems with life of the strangest variety. At the left is a tall ladder to which an ear has been attached along with, at the very top, a tiny, disembodied eye. Animating the inanimate was a favorite Surrealist theme. To the right of the ladder is a man with a disk-shaped head who sports a long-stemmed pipe beneath a tendriled moustache and stares sadly at the spectator. At his side, an insect with blue and yellow wings pops out of a box. Surrounding this group is every sort of hybrid organism, all having a fine time. Miró’s unreal world is painstakingly rendered and remarkably vivid; even his inanimate objects have an eager vitality. He derived his imagery from many sources beyond his own fertile imagination. While some are based on forms in nature, others may stem from medieval art or the paintings of his fellow Surrealists. As they float in the air or cavort on the ground, his creatures are spread equally across the entire surface of the painting, so our eyes do not alight in one central place. In

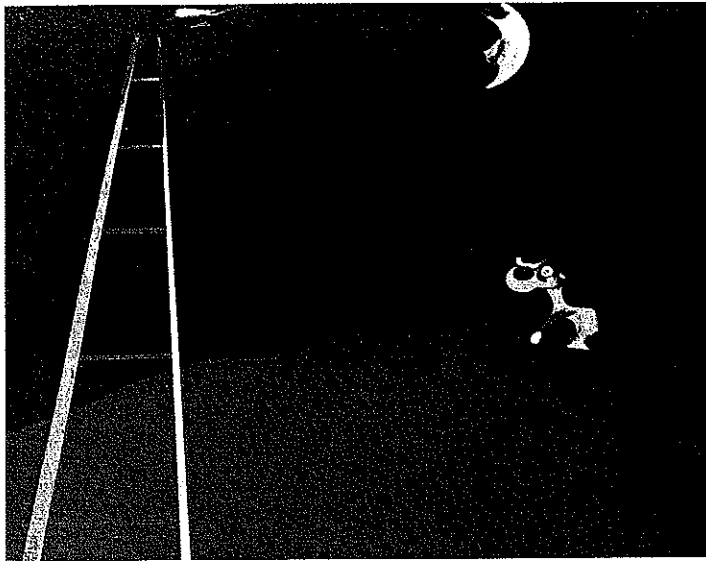


15.10 Joan Miró, *Nude with Mirror*, 1919. Oil on canvas, 44½ × 40½" (113 × 102 cm). Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.



15.11 Joan Miró, *Carnival of Harlequin*, 1924–25. Oil on canvas, 26 × 36½" (66 × 93 cm). Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.





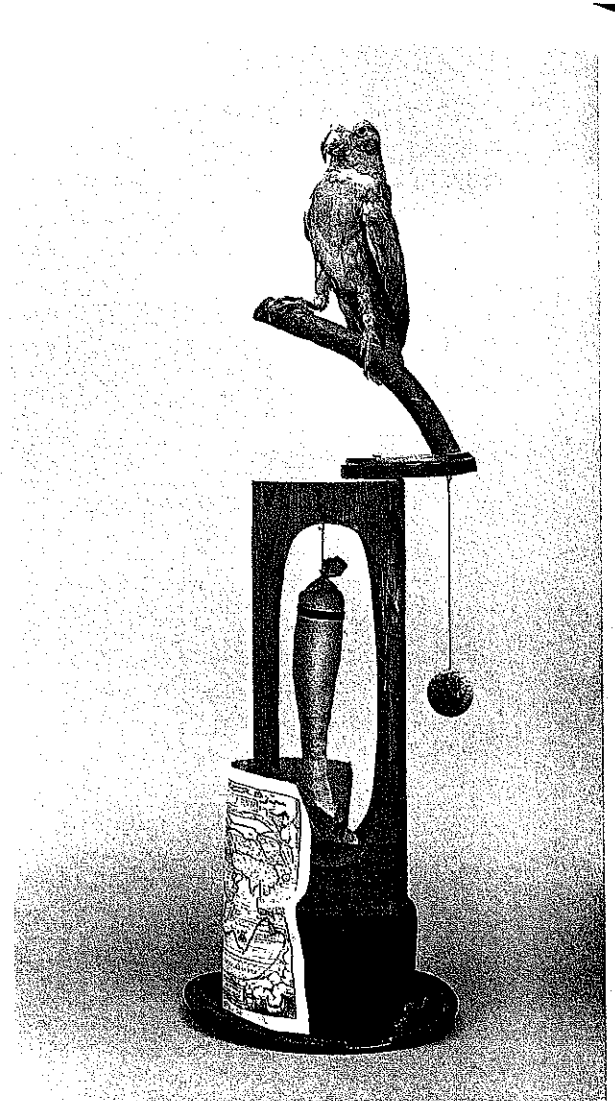
**15.12** Joan Miró, *Dog Barking at the Moon*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 28¾ × 36¼" (73 × 92 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

this picture, as well as in a number of others around this time, Miró mapped out his compositional organization with red lines arranged in a diagonal grid that can still be detected through the paint layer.

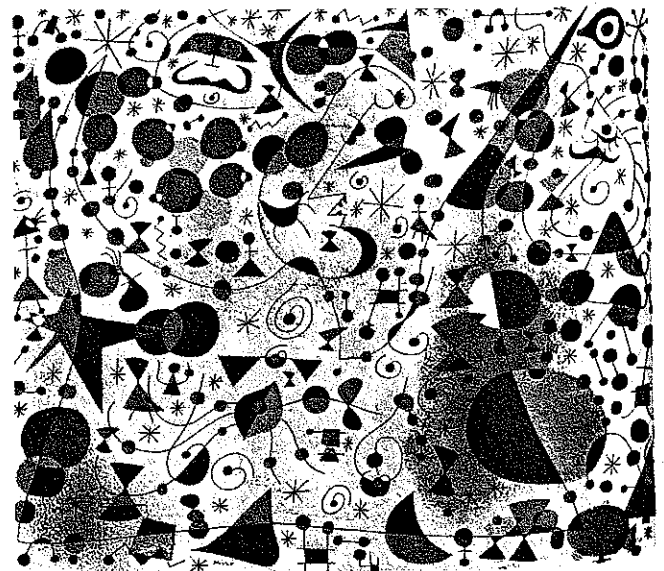
The second half of the twenties was an especially prolific period for Miró. His first solo show was held in Paris in 1925, and in November of that year he took part in the first exhibition of Surrealist painting, which included *Carnival of Harlequin*. Much of the work of this period is marked by a reduction of means, moving from the complexity of *Carnival of Harlequin* to the magic simplicity of a painting such as *Dog Barking at the Moon* (fig. 15.12). Again we find the ladder, for Miró a symbol of transcendence and a bridge to another, unearthly realm. But it is



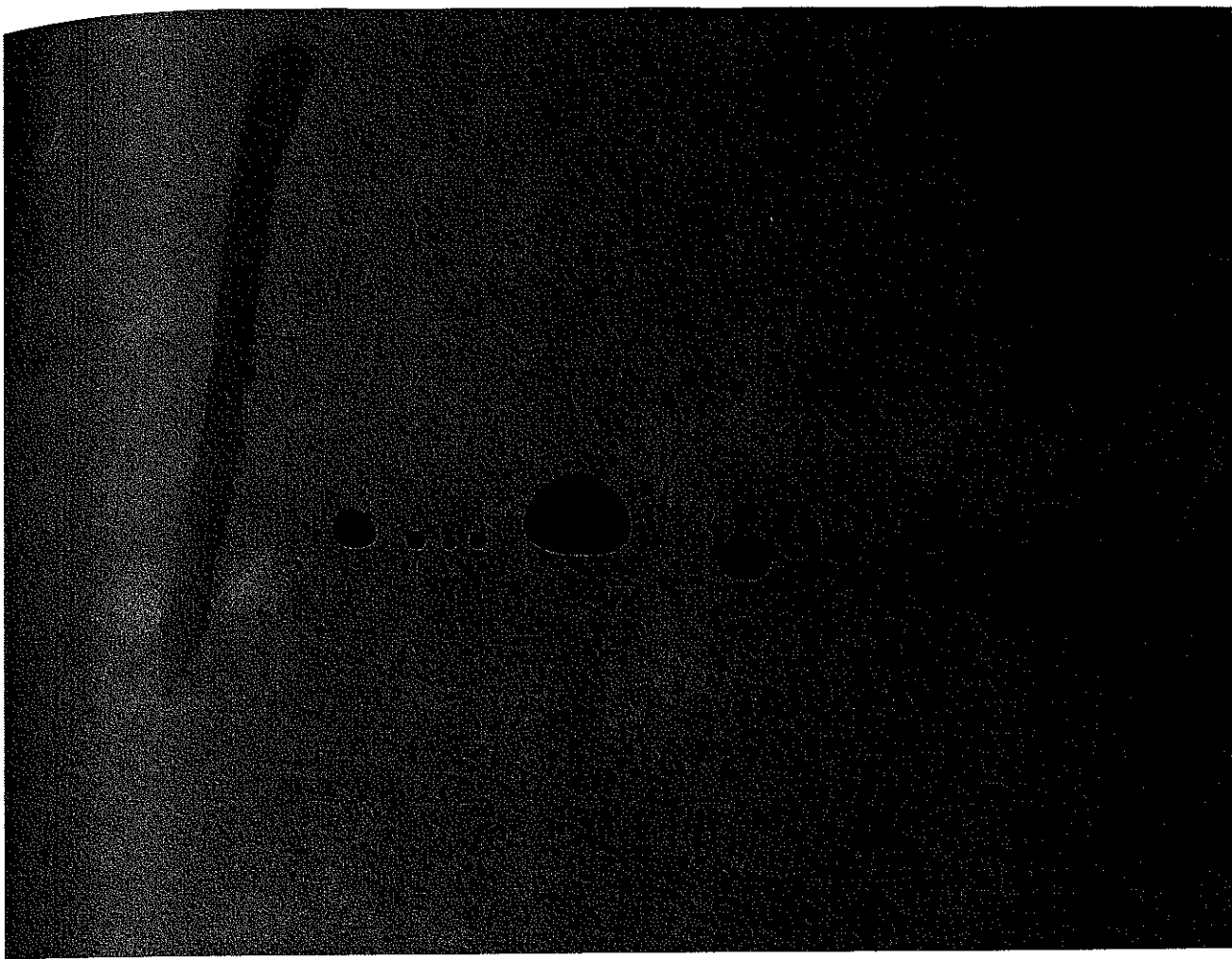
**15.13** Joan Miró, *Painting*, 1933. Oil on canvas, 5'8½" × 6'5½" (1.74 × 2 m). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



**15.14** Joan Miró, *Object*, 1936. Assemblage: stuffed parrot on wood perch, stuffed silk stocking with velvet garter and doll's paper shoe suspended in hollow wood frame, derby hat, hanging cork ball, celluloid fish, and engraved map, 31¾ × 11¾ × 10¾" (81 × 30.1 × 26 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



**15.15** Joan Miró, *The Poetess* from the series *Constellations*, December 31, 1940. Gouache and oil wash on paper, 15 × 18" (38.1 × 45.7 cm). Private collection.



**15.16** Joan Miró, *Blue II*, 1961. Oil on canvas, 8'10¼" × 11'7¼" (2.7 × 1.4 m). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris.

now a player in a depopulated nocturnal landscape, a dark and foreboding place that resembles a scene from a dream.

In 1933 Miró made a remarkable group of eighteen paintings that were based on collages of realistic details torn from newspapers and pasted on cardboard. The motifs—tools, machines, furniture, and dishes—suggested to him organic–abstract shapes, sometimes with implied faces or figures. The predominantly abstract intent of these paintings is indicated by their neutral titles. One of the paintings that resulted from this process is *Painting* (fig. 15.13). Although this work appears completely non-figurative, many observers have found a resemblance between the mysterious forms and animals, such as a seated dog at the upper left. These organic–abstract shapes are perhaps closest to the biomorphic inventions of Arp.

A classic example of the Surrealist “object” that proliferated in the movement in the thirties is Miró’s sculpture that takes this very word for its title (fig. 15.14). The object consists of a wooden cylinder that holds in its cavity a high-heeled, doll-sized leg, the fetishistic nature of which typifies Surrealist eroticism. The cylinder is surrounded by other found objects, including a stuffed parrot from whose perch is suspended a little cork ball. The whole construction sits on a base made of a Derby hat; in its brim “swims”

a red plastic fish. The Surrealist juxtaposition of disparate objects was meant to evoke surprise and trigger further associations in the mind of the viewer. The notion of found objects was introduced by Duchamp (see fig. 13.16), but Miró did not adopt that artist’s attitude of aesthetic indifference in this whimsical, carefully composed object.

With the outbreak of World War II, Miró had to flee from the home he had set up in Normandy and go back to Spain, where a rightwing government under General Franco had been established in 1939 following Franco’s victory, with support from Nazi Germany, in the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39. The isolation of the war years and the need for contemplation and reevaluation led Miró to read mystical literature and to listen to the music of Mozart and Bach. “The night, music and stars,” he said, “began to play a major role in suggesting my paintings.” While fleeing from the Nazis in France to Franco’s Spain, Miró, in contrast to his inclination in response to the Spanish Civil War to revisit representation, committed himself to an abstract art consistent with his evocative Surrealist compositions of the twenties. Between January 1940 and September 1941 he worked on a series of twenty-three small gouaches entitled *Constellations* (fig. 15.15), which are among his most intricate and lyrical creations. In the



**15.17** Joan Miró, *Lunar Bird*, 1966. Bronze, 7'8½" × 6'10¾" × 5'1½" (2.3 × 2.1 × 1.5 m). The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

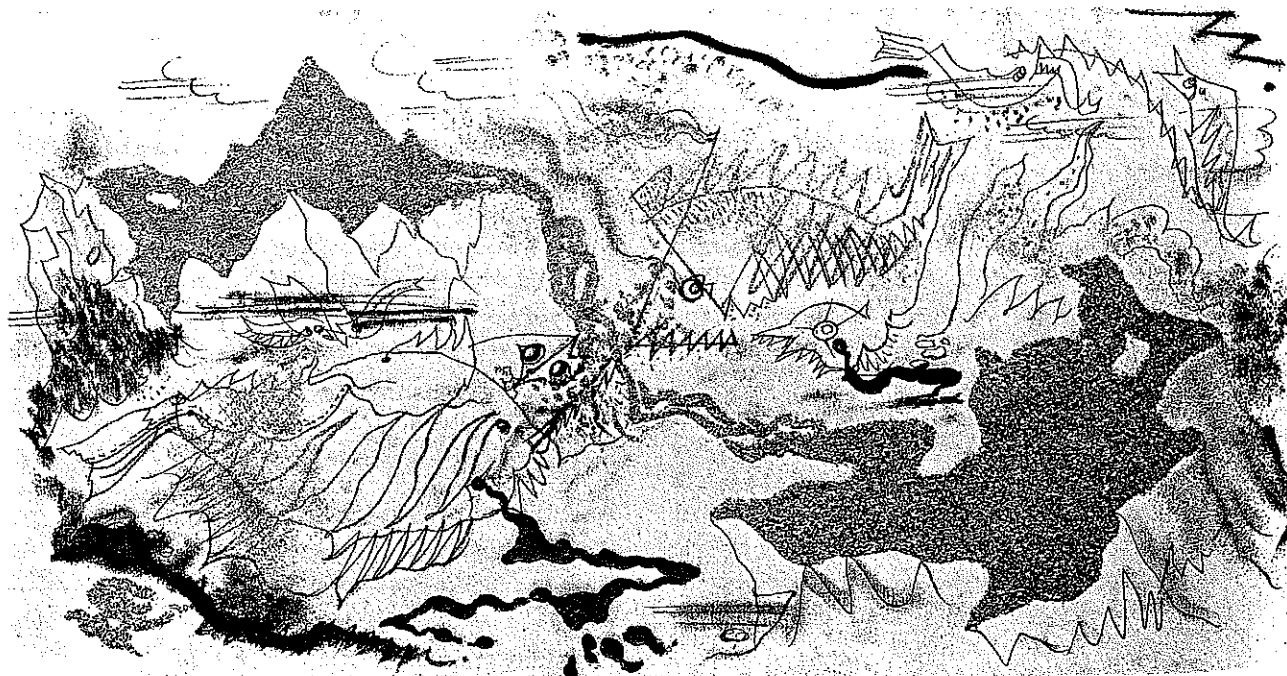
sparkling compositions the artist was concerned with ideas of flight and transformation as he contemplated the migration of birds, the seasonal renewal of butterfly hordes, and the flow of constellations and galaxies. Miró dispersed his imagery evenly across the surface. In 1945 the

*Constellations* were shown at New York's Pierre Matisse Gallery, where they affected the emerging American Abstract Expressionist painters who were then seeking alternatives to Social Realism and Regionalism (see figs. 19.3, 19.33). As the leader of the organic-abstract tendency within Surrealism, Miró had a major impact on younger American painters.

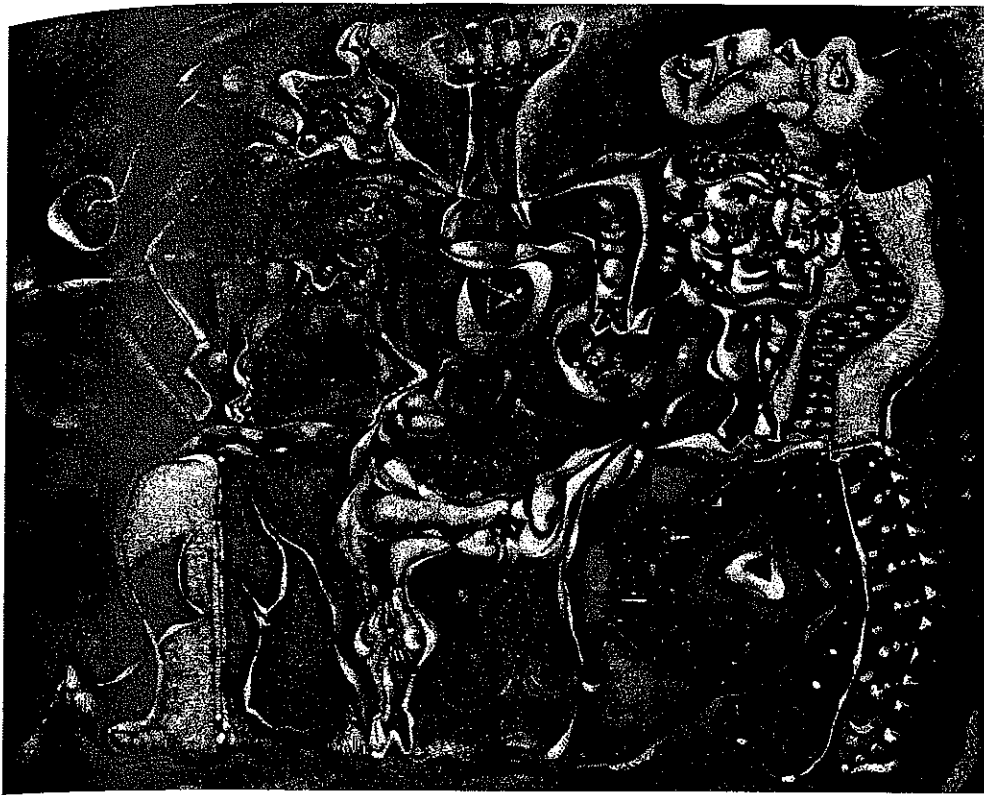
By the end of World War II, Miró was working on a large scale, with bold shapes, patterns, and colors. In his work of the sixties Miró showed an interest in the American Abstract Expressionists, who earlier had been influenced by him. The mural-sized painting *Blue II* (fig. 15.16) of 1961 is an almost pure example of Color Field painting—a delicately inflected blue ground punctuated only by a vertical red slash and a trail of black oval shapes. Since the twenties the color blue had held metaphorical significance for Miró. It is a favorite color of his native Catalonia, and a hue he particularly associated with the world of dreams. In addition to mural-size paintings, Miró created sculpture on a monumental scale in the sixties. To make *Lunar Bird* (fig. 15.17), he enlarged a small bronze *Bird* from 1944. With its massive, crescent-shaped head, phallic protruberances, and powerful stance, the creature has all the presence of an ancient cult statue.

### Methodical Anarchy: André Masson

One of the Surrealist artists who would eventually emigrate from Paris to New York was **André Masson** (1896–1987). Among the first Surrealists, Masson was the most passionate revolutionary, a man of vehement convictions who had been deeply spiritually scarred by his experiences in



**15.18** André Masson, *Battle of Fishes*, 1926. Sand, gesso, oil, pencil, and charcoal on canvas, 14¾ × 28¾" (36.2 × 73 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



**15.19** André Masson, *Pasiphaë*, 1943. Oil and tempera on canvas, 39¼ × 50" (101 × 127 cm). Private collection.

World War I. Almost fatally injured, he was hospitalized for a long time, and after partially recovering, he continued to rage against the insanity of humankind and society until he was confined for a while to a mental hospital. Masson was by nature an anarchist, whose convictions were fortified by his experience. He joined the Surrealist movement in 1924, though his anticonformist temperament caused him to break with the controlling Breton. Masson first left the group in 1929, rejoined it in the thirties, and left again in 1943.

Masson's paintings of the early twenties reveal his debt to Cubism, particularly that of Juan Gris (see chapter 10). In 1925 Masson was regularly contributing automatic drawings to *La Révolution surréaliste*. These works directly express his emotions and contain various images relating to the sadism of human beings and the brutality of all living things. *Battle of Fishes* (fig. 15.18) is an example of Masson's sand painting, which he made by freely applying adhesive to the canvas, then throwing sand over the surface and brushing away the excess. The layers of sand would suggest forms to the artist, "although almost always irrational ones," he said. He then added lines and small amounts of color, sometimes directly from the paint tube, to form a pictorial structure around the sand. Here the imagery is aquatic, though the artist described the fish as anthropomorphic. As in the frottage technique used by Ernst (see fig. 15.6), Masson here allows chance to help determine his composition, though his firm belief that art should be grounded in conscious, aesthetic decisions eventually led him away from this method.

In the late thirties, after living principally in Spain for three years, Masson temporarily painted in a style closer to the more naturalistic wing of Surrealism. He painted

monstrous, recognizable figures from mythological themes in a manner influenced by Picasso and possibly Dalí. To escape World War II, Masson lived for a time in the United States, where, he said, "Things came into focus for me." He exhibited regularly in New York, influencing some of the younger American painters, particularly Jackson Pollock. Masson would later say that Pollock carried automatism to an extreme that he himself "could not envision." Living in rural Connecticut, Masson reverted to a somewhat automatist, Expressionist approach in works such as *Pasiphaë* (fig. 15.19). The classical myth of the Minotaur provided one of Masson's recurrent themes in the thirties and forties. (It was he who named the Surrealist review after this part-man, part-bull beast from Greek mythology.) Because she displeased the sea god Poseidon, Pasiphaë was made to mate with a bull, giving birth to the Minotaur. Masson said he wanted to represent the violent union of woman and beast in such a way that it is impossible to tell where one begins and the other ends. This subject, which had become a major theme in Picasso's work (see fig. 15.48), also appealed to the young Pollock, who made a painting of Pasiphaë in the same year as Masson.

### Enigmatic Landscapes: Yves Tanguy

Yves Tanguy (1900–55) had literary interests and close associations with the Surrealist writers Jacques Prévert and Marcel Duhamel in Paris after 1922. With Prévert he discovered the writings of Lautréamont and other prophets of Surrealism. In 1923, inspired by two de Chirico paintings in the window of the dealer Paul Guillaume, he decided to become a painter. Entirely self-taught, Tanguy painted in a naive manner until 1926, at which time he destroyed many



**15.20** Yves Tanguy, *Mama, Papa Is Wounded! (Maman, Papa est blessé)*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 36¼ × 28¾" (92.1 × 73 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

of these canvases. After meeting André Breton, Tanguy began contributing to *La Révolution surréaliste* and was adopted into the Surrealist movement. Tanguy's subsequent progress was remarkable, in both technique and fantastic imagination. *Mama, Papa Is Wounded!* (fig. 15.20) was the masterpiece of this first stage and exhibited all the obsessions that haunted him for the rest of his career. The first of these was an infinite-perspective depth, rendered simply by graded color and a sharp horizon line—a space that combines vast emptiness and intimate enclosure, where ambiguous organic shapes, reminiscent of Arp's biomorphic sculptures, float in a barren dreamscape.

After traveling in Africa in 1930 and 1931, where he saw brilliant light and color and desert rock formations, Tanguy began to define his forms precisely. It has been proposed that the vast spaces in his paintings during the thirties, so strongly suggestive of a submarine world, were inspired by Tanguy's childhood memories of summers spent on the Brittany coast. In these works, Tanguy endowed his forms with a tangible, literal presence by virtue of his highly illusionistic manner, yet those forms have no equivalent in nature. His unique contribution was this co-opting of realist techniques to conjure up abstract



**15.21** Yves Tanguy, *Multiplication of the Arcs*, 1954. Oil on canvas, 40 × 60" (101.6 × 152.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

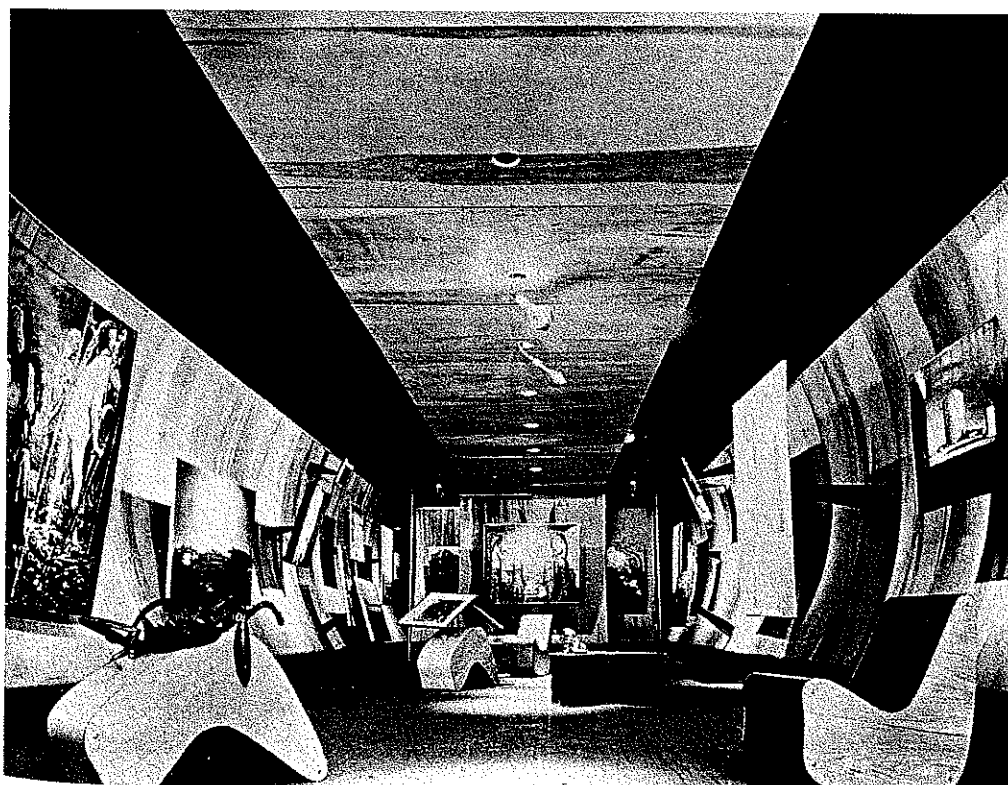
images. After moving to the United States in 1939 and settling in Woodbury, Connecticut, with his wife, the American Surrealist painter Kay Sage, Tanguy continued to evoke his barren, destroyed universe. In one of his last paintings, *Multiplication of the Arcs* (fig. 15.21), the objects fill the ground area back to a newly established horizon line, to create an enigmatic, foreboding scene that the art historian James Thrall Soby called “a sort of boneyard of the world.”

## “A Laboratory for New Ideas”: Surrealism and the Americas

Surrealism made its debut in the United States in 1931 with an exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, organized by James Thrall Soby. It traveled to New York in 1932 to the Julien Levy Gallery. In the thirties American interest in Surrealism tended to focus on the dream imagery of Salvador Dalí (see below), which was merged, to varying degrees, with America’s indigenous realist traditions. This was the era of the economic crisis in America known as the Great Depression (1929–33), when many artists reinforced the sense of political isolationism by looking to local cultural traditions as subjects for their art, suspiciously viewing Surrealism as a product of leftist European artists. By 1942, however, the center of Surrealist activity had effectively shifted to New York as artists fled the war in Europe. The city’s Museum of Modern Art had already presented a landmark exhibition in 1936 called *Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism*, and a small number of important dealers, such as Levy,

Pierre Matisse, and Sidney Janis, provided support for the movement. The American Surrealist journals *View* and *VVV* were established in the early forties, serving as venues for exchange between European Surrealists and American followers of the movement. In 1942, an exhibition called *First Papers of Surrealism* (referring to the European artists’ immigration papers) was held in an old New York mansion with an installation by Marcel Duchamp, who crisscrossed the room with two miles of string. The result resembled a giant spider web through which one could barely distinguish the works of art.

Another famous installation of Surrealist art was designed in 1942 by the architect Frederick Kiesler (1890–1965) for the Art of this Century gallery, the brainchild of the patron, collector, and dealer Peggy Guggenheim. Guggenheim had befriended many of the Surrealists while living in Europe before the war; in 1941, she married and divorced Max Ernst. Engaged in building what would become one of the world’s greatest collections of modern art, she was one of several remarkable American women who were instrumental in the development of avant-garde art. For her Art of this Century gallery, Kiesler designed the Surrealist room with curved walls from which paintings were hung on cantilevered arms that moved (fig. 15.22). Sculptures such as Giacometti’s *Woman with Her Throat Cut* (see fig. 15.56) can be seen on the biomorphic chairs that Kiesler designed. Not surprisingly, the installation caused a great stir in New York art circles. Guggenheim’s unique venture lasted for five years (it closed when she returned to Europe), but not before she had mounted numerous groundbreaking exhibitions, fostered the careers



**15.22** Frederick Kiesler, Design of the Surrealist gallery, Art of this Century, 1942. Installation photo by Berenice Abbott from the periodical *VV*.

of some of the most promising young Americans (most notably, Jackson Pollock), and provided a kind of modern-day salon (or “laboratory for new ideas” as she called it) to encourage exchange between American and European artists.

Surrealism in the forties was also enriched by the contributions of the Chilean artist Matta and the Cuban Wilfredo Lam, both of whom traveled to Europe and participated in Parisian Surrealist circles before returning to the Americas. Their long careers provide links between the later phases of Surrealism and other art movements of the postwar period.

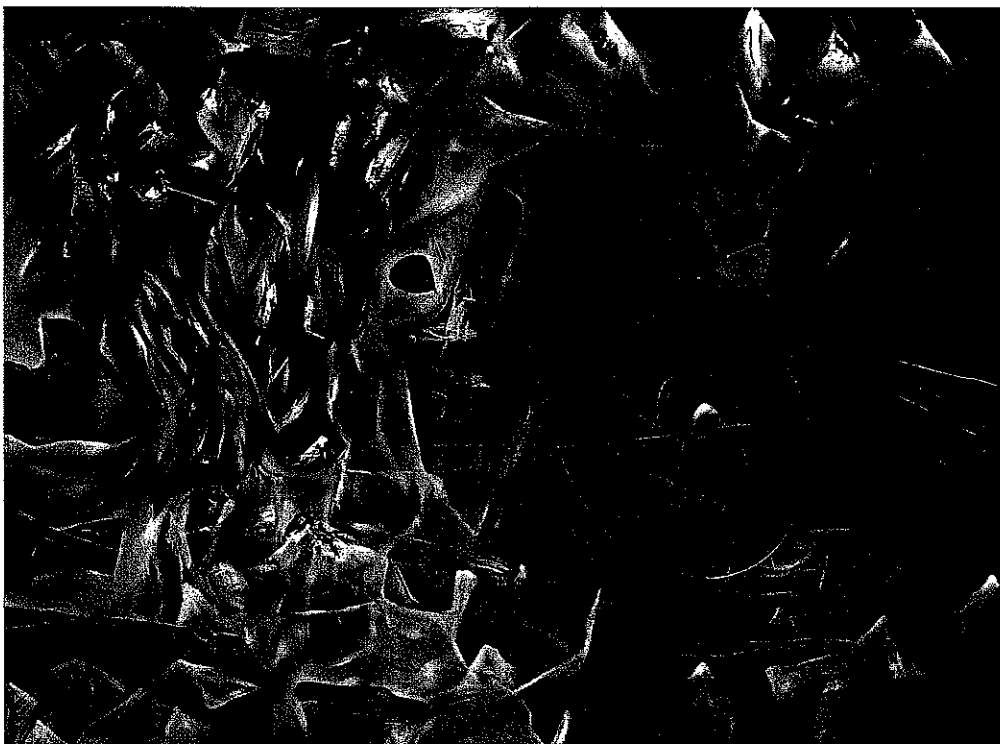
### Matta and Lam

Born in Chile as Roberto Sebastiano Antonio Matta Echaurren, Matta (b. 1911) studied architecture in the Paris office of Le Corbusier until, in 1937, he showed some of his drawings to Breton, who immediately welcomed him into the Surrealist fold. When he emigrated to the United States in 1939 (on the same boat as Tanguy), Matta was relatively unknown, despite his association with the Surrealists in Paris. His 1940 one-man show at the Julien Levy Gallery, the most important commercial showcase for Surrealist art in New York, had a momentous impact on American experimental artists. Although Matta—the last painter, along with Arshile Gorky (see chapter 19), claimed for Surrealism by André Breton—was much younger than most of his better-known expatriate European colleagues, his paintings marked the step that American artists were seeking.

Over the next few years, together with the American painter Robert Motherwell, Matta, who unlike many emi-

gré artists from Europe spoke English fluently, helped to forge a link between European Surrealism and the American movement to be called Abstract Expressionism. Matta’s painting at that point is exemplified in the 1942 *Disasters of Mysticism* (fig. 15.23). Although this has some roots in the work of Masson and Tanguy, it is a powerful excursion into uncharted territory. In its ambiguous, automatist flow, from brilliant flame-light into deepest shadow, it suggests the ever-changing universe of outer space. Soby, who owned *Disasters of Mysticism*, detected in its dark, volcanic spaces a debt to sixteenth-century nocturnal mysticism, exemplified in painting by Mathias Grünewald’s masterpiece, the *Isenheim Altarpiece* (see fig. 1.7).

Wilfredo Lam (1902–82) brought a broad cultural background to his art and, once he arrived in Paris in 1938, to the Surrealist milieu. Born in Cuba to a Chinese father and a European–African mother, he studied art first in Havana and, in 1923, in Madrid. In Spain he fought on the side of the Republicans during the Civil War, a fact that endeared him to Picasso when he moved to Paris. Through Picasso, Lam was introduced to members of the Parisian Surrealist circle, including Breton. He explored imagery in his paintings that was heavily influenced by Picasso, Cubism, and a continuing interest in African art. Lam left Paris because of the war, eventually traveling with Breton to Martinique, where they were joined by Masson. The Frenchmen moved on to New York while Lam returned to Cuba in 1942. His rediscovery of the rich culture of his homeland helped to foster the emergence of his mature style: “I responded always to the presence of factors that emanated from our history and our geography, tropical flowers, and black culture.”



**15.23** Matta, *Disasters of Mysticism*, 1942. Oil on canvas, 38¼ × 51¼" (101.6 × 152.4 cm). Estate of James Thrall Soby, New Canaan, Connecticut.

15.24 Wilfredo Lam,  
*The Jungle*, 1943.  
Gouache on paper  
mounted on canvas,  
7'10½" × 7'6½" (2.4 ×  
2.3 m). The Museum of  
Modern Art, New York.



While in Cuba, Lam made the large, sumptuously colored painting *The Jungle* (fig. 15.24). Based in part on the Cuban religion of Santería, which blends mystical and ritualistic traditions from Africa with old-world Catholicism, *The Jungle* presents a dense tropical landscape populated by odd, long-limbed creatures whose disjointed heads resemble African masks. These human-animal hybrids, who assemble in a lush dreamscape, give evidence of the artist's Surrealist background. Lam returned to France in 1952, though he continued to travel widely and visit Cuba. His art was especially important to postwar European and American artists, especially the CoBrA painters of northern Europe (see chapter 20).

### "The Association of Delirious Phenomena": Salvador Dalí

The artist who above all others symbolizes Surrealism in the public imagination is the Spaniard Salvador Dalí (1904–89). Not only his paintings, but his writings, his utterances, his actions, his appearance, his mustache, and his genius for publicity have made the word "Surrealism" a common noun

in all languages, denoting an art that is irrational, erotic, mad—and fashionable. Dalí's life was itself so completely Surrealist that his integrity and his pictorial accomplishment have been questioned, most bitterly by other Surrealists. The primary evidence must be the paintings themselves, and no one can deny the immense talent, the power of imagination, or the intense conviction that they display.

Dalí was born at Figueras, near Barcelona. Like Picasso, Miró, and, before them, the architect Gaudí (see chapter 5), he was a product of the rich Catalan culture. A substantial part of the iconography of Dalí, real or imagined, is taken from episodes in his childhood and adolescence. The landscape of these early years appears constantly in his paintings, which are marked by the violence of his temperament—ecstatic, filled with fantasy, terror, and megalomania. Dalí encountered Italian and French art, Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, and Futurism before he went to Madrid's Academy of Fine Arts in 1921. He followed the normal academic training, developing a highly significant passion for nineteenth-century academicians and artists such as Millet, Böcklin, and particularly the meticulous narrative painter Ernest Meissonier. His discoveries in modern



painting during the early twenties were Picasso, de Chirico, Carrà, and the Italian Metaphysical School, whose works were reproduced in the periodical *Valori Plastici*. More important for his development was the discovery of Freud, whose writings on dreams and the subconscious seemed to answer the torments and erotic fantasies he had suffered since childhood. Between 1925 and 1927 he explored several styles and often worked in them simultaneously: the Cubism of Picasso and Gris, the Purism of Le Corbusier and Ozenfant, the Neoclassicism of Picasso, and a precise realism derived from the seventeenth-century Dutch master Vermeer.

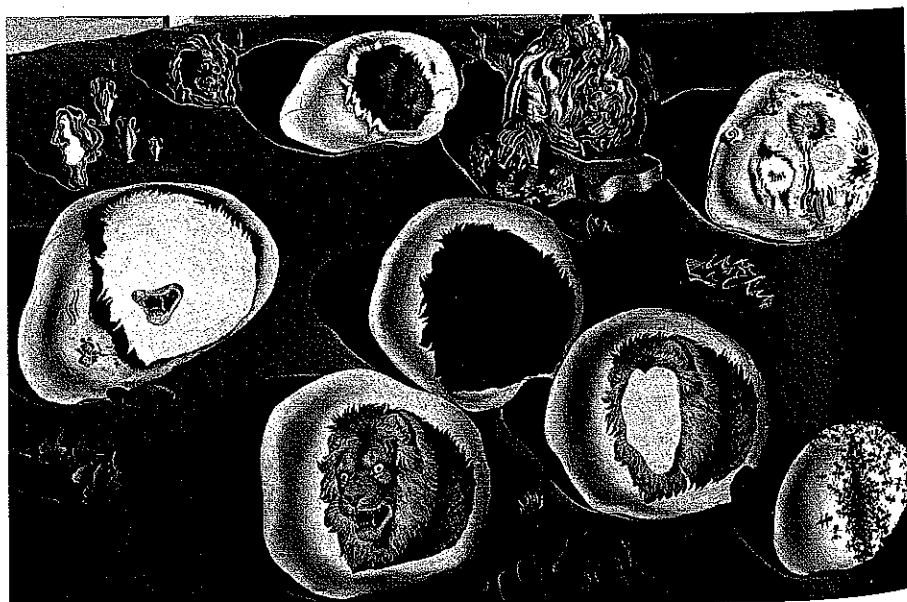
In 1929 Dalí visited Paris for several weeks and, through his friend Miró, met the Surrealists. He moved to the French capital for a time the following year (though his main residence was Spain) to become an official member of the movement. Breton regarded the dynamic young Spaniard as a force for renewal in the group, which was plagued by endless ideological conflict. Dalí became deeply involved with Gala Éluard, the wife of the Surrealist writer Paul Éluard, and he married her in 1934. He had by now formulated the theoretical basis of his painting, described as “paranoiac-critical”: the creation of a visionary reality from elements of visions, dreams, memories, and psychological or pathological distortions.

Dalí developed a precise miniaturist technique, accompanied by a discordant but luminous color. His detailed *trompe l'oeil* technique was designed to make his dreamworld more tangibly real than observed nature (he referred to his paintings as “hand-painted dream photographs”). He frequently used familiar objects as a point of departure—watches, insects, pianos, telephones, old prints or photographs—imparting to them fetishistic significance. He declared his primary images to be blood, decay, and excrement. From the commonplace object Dalí set up a chain of metamorphoses that gradually or suddenly dissolved and transformed the object into a nightmare image, given conviction by the exacting technique. He was determined to paint as a madman—not in an occasional state of receptive somnambulism, but in a continuous frenzy of induced paranoia. In collaboration with Luis Buñuel, Dalí turned to the cinema and produced two classics of Surrealist film, *Un Chien andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog*)

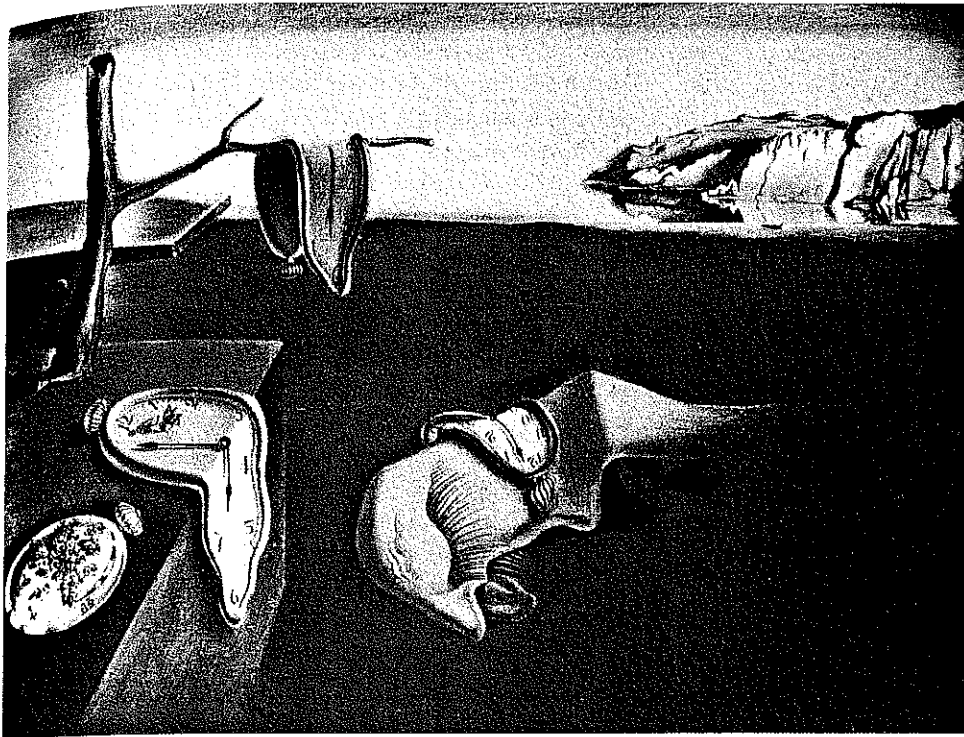
(1929) and *L'Âge d'or* (*The Golden Age*) (1930). The cinematic medium held infinite possibilities for the Surrealists, in the creation of dissolves, metamorphoses, and double and quadruple images, and Dalí made brilliant use of these.

The microscopic brand of realism that Dalí skillfully deployed to objectify the dreamworld reached full maturity in a tiny painting from 1929, *Accommodations of Desire* (fig. 15.25). The work is actually a collage, created using two illustrations of lions' heads that Dalí cut from a book and placed on what appear to be stones. These strange forms cast dark shadows in the desolate landscape and serve as backdrops to other imagery, including an army of ants. In one of the most disturbing images in *Un Chien andalou*, which had been made earlier the same year, ants swarm over a hand. They appear again, this time over a pocket watch, in one of Dalí's later paintings (see fig. 15.26). Dalí's own painted incarnations of a lion's head appear at the upper left of *Accommodations* and with the group of figures at the top of the composition. In his mostly fictional autobiography of 1942, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, the artist said that he undertook this painting during his courtship with Gala (who was then still married to Paul Éluard). The experience of intense sexual anxiety led him to paint this work, in which “desires were always represented by the terrorizing images of lions' heads.”

In his book *La Femme visible* (*The Visible Woman*) (1930), Dalí wrote: “I believe the moment is at hand when, by a paranoiac and active advance of the mind, it will be possible (simultaneously with automatism and other passive states) to systematize confusion and thus to help discredit completely the world of reality.” By 1930 Dalí had left de Chirico's type of metaphysical landscape for his own world of violence, blood, and decay. He sought to create in his art a specific documentation of Freudian theories applied to his own inner world. He started a painting with the first image that came into his mind and went on from



**15.25** Salvador Dalí,  
*Accommodations of Desire*, 1929.  
Oil and collage on panel,  
8 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (22 × 34.9 cm).  
Private collection.



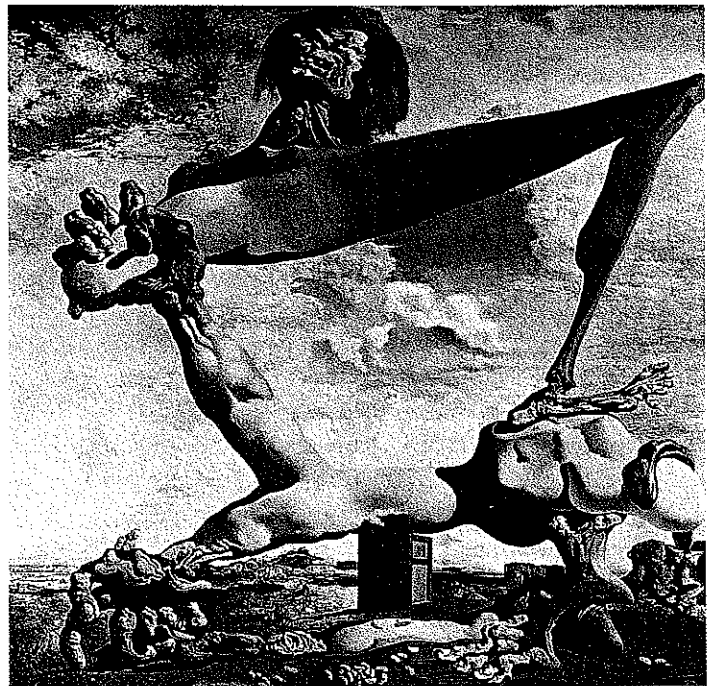
**15.26** Salvador Dalí,  
*The Persistence of Memory*  
(*Persistence de la mémoire*),  
1931. Oil on canvas,  
9½ × 13" (24.1 × 33 cm).  
The Museum of Modern Art,  
New York.

one association to the next, multiplying images of persecution or megalomania like a true paranoiac. He defined his paranoiac-critical method as a "spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based upon the interpretative-critical association of delirious phenomena."

Dalí shared the Surrealist antagonism to art that defined itself in terms of formal qualities rather than content. *The Persistence of Memory* of 1931 (fig. 15.26) is a denial of every twentieth-century experiment in abstract organization. Its miniaturist technique (the painting is only just over a foot wide) goes back to fifteenth-century Flemish art, and its sour greens and yellows recall nineteenth-century chromolithographs. The space is as infinite as Tanguy's (see fig. 15.20), and rendered with hard objectivity. The picture's fame comes largely from the presentation of recognizable objects—watches—in an unusual context, with unnatural attributes, and on an unexpected scale. Throughout his career Dalí was obsessed with the morphology of hard and soft. Here, lying on the ground, is a large head in profile (which had appeared in several previous paintings) seemingly devoid of bone structure. Drooped over its surface, as on that of a tree and shelf nearby, is a soft pocket watch. Dalí described these forms as "nothing more than the soft, extravagant, solitary, paranoiac-critical Camembert cheese of space and time." He painted the work one night after dinner, when, after all the guests were gone, he contemplated the leftover Camembert cheese melting on the table. When he then looked at the landscape in progress in his studio—with shoreline cliffs and a branchless olive tree—the image of soft watches came to him as a means of representing the condition of softness. This pictorial metamorphosis, in which matter is transformed from one state into another, is

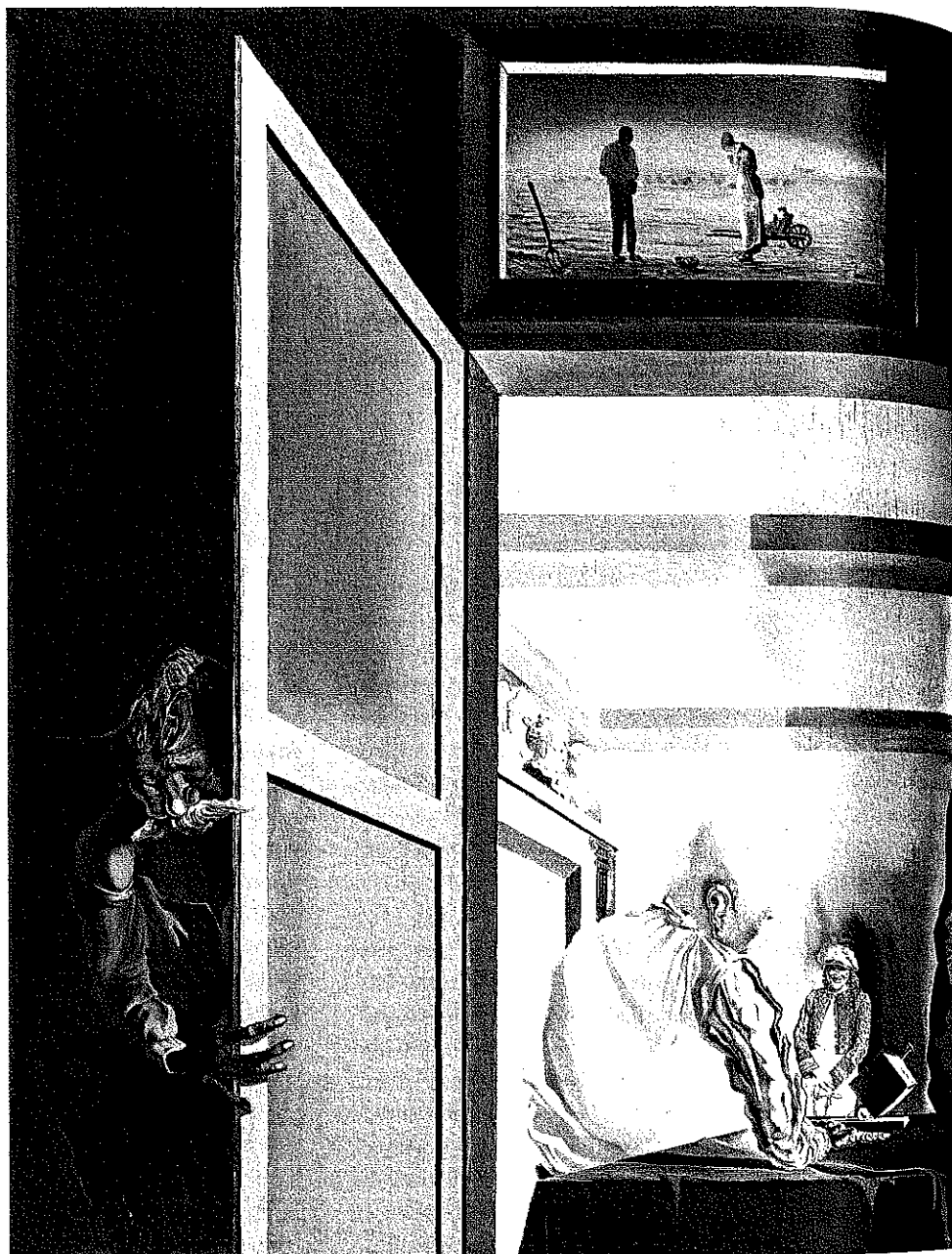
a fundamental aspect of Surrealism. Softness as a condition in sculpture would be further explored in the sixties by the American artist Claes Oldenburg (see fig. 21.25).

Dalí's painting during the thirties vacillated between an outrageous fantasy and a strange atmosphere of quiet achieved less obviously. *Gala and the Angelus of Millet Immediately Preceding the Arrival of the Conic Anamorphoses* (fig. 15.28) exemplifies the first aspect. In the back of



**15.27** Salvador Dalí, *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonitions of Civil War*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 39¼ × 39" (100 × 99 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art.

**15.28** Salvador Dalí, *Gala and the Angelus of Millet Immediately Preceding the Arrival of the Conic Anamorphoses*, 1933. Oil on panel, 9 1/4 × 7 3/4" (23.8 × 18.7 cm). National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



a brilliantly lit room is Gala, grinning broadly, as though snapped by an amateur photographer; in the front sits an enigmatic male, actually a portrait of Vladimir Lenin. Over the open doorway is a print of Millet's *Angelus*, a painting that, in Dalí's obsessive, Freudian reading, had become a scene about predatory female sexuality. Around the open door a monstrous comic figure (Maxim Gorky) emerges from the shadow, wearing a lobster on his head. There is no rational explanation for the juxtaposition of familiar and phantasmagoric, but the nightmare is undeniable. Dalí painted *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonitions of Civil War* (fig. 15.27) in Paris in 1936, on the eve of the Spanish Civil War. It is a horrific scene of psychological torment and physical suffering. A gargantuan figure with a grimacing face is pulled apart, or rather pulls itself apart ("in a delirium of auto-strangulation" said the artist), while other body parts are strewn among the

excretory beans along the ground. Despite the anguish expressed in his painting, Dalí reacted to the civil war in his native country—as he did to fascism in general—with characteristic self-interest (he had earlier quarreled bitterly with the Surrealists in 1934 over his refusal to condemn Hitler).

In 1940 Dalí, like so many of the Surrealists, moved to the United States where he painted society portraits and flourished in the role of Surrealist agent provocateur. His notoriety and fashionable acceptance reached their height with designs for the theater, jewelry, and objets d'art. In 1941 came a transition in Dalí's painting career. He announced his determination to "become Classic," to return to the High Renaissance of Raphael, though his paintings still contained a great deal of Surrealist imagery. He and Gala resettled permanently in Spain in 1948. After 1950 Dalí's principal works were devoted to Christian religious art exalting the mystery of Christ and the Mass.

### Three Northern European Surrealists: Magritte, Delvaux, and Bellmer

In contrast to Dalí, René Magritte (1898–1967) has been called the invisible man among the Surrealists. George Melly, in the script for a BBC film on Magritte, wrote: “He is a secret agent; his object is to bring into disrepute the whole apparatus of bourgeois reality. Like all saboteurs, he avoids detection by dressing and behaving like everybody else.” Thanks perhaps to the artist’s anonymity, due in part to Breton’s lukewarm support of his art, the works of Magritte have had a gradual but powerful impact. In particular, his exploration of how we “read” visual images as part of a code, or system of signs, looked forward to the investigations of semiotics that became central to post-modern critical discourse.

After years of sporadic study at the Brussels Academy of Fine Arts, Magritte, like Tanguy, was shocked into realizing his destiny when in 1923 he saw a reproduction of de Chirico’s 1914 painting *The Song of Love*. In 1926 he emerged as an individual artist with his first Surrealist paintings inspired by the work of Ernst and de Chirico. Toward the end of that year, Magritte joined other Belgian writers, musicians, and artists in an informal group comparable to the Paris Surrealists. He moved to a Paris suburb in 1927, entering one of the most highly productive phases of his career, and participated for the next three years in Surrealist affairs. Wearying of the frenetic, polemical atmosphere of Paris after quarreling with the Surrealists, and finding himself without a steady Parisian dealer to promote his work, Magritte returned to Brussels in 1930 and lived there quietly for the rest of his life. Because of this withdrawal from the art centers of the world, Magritte’s paintings did not receive the attention they deserved. In Europe he was seen as a marginal figure among the Surrealists, and in the United States, in the heyday of painterly abstraction after World War II, his meticulous form of realism seemed irrelevant to many who were drawn instead to the work of Masson or Miró. But subsequent generations, such as that of the Pop artists, appreciated Magritte’s genius for irony, uncanny invention, and deadpan realism. Important exhibitions were held in Europe and the United States after World War II, climaxing in the retrospective at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in 1965. Another major survey exhibition

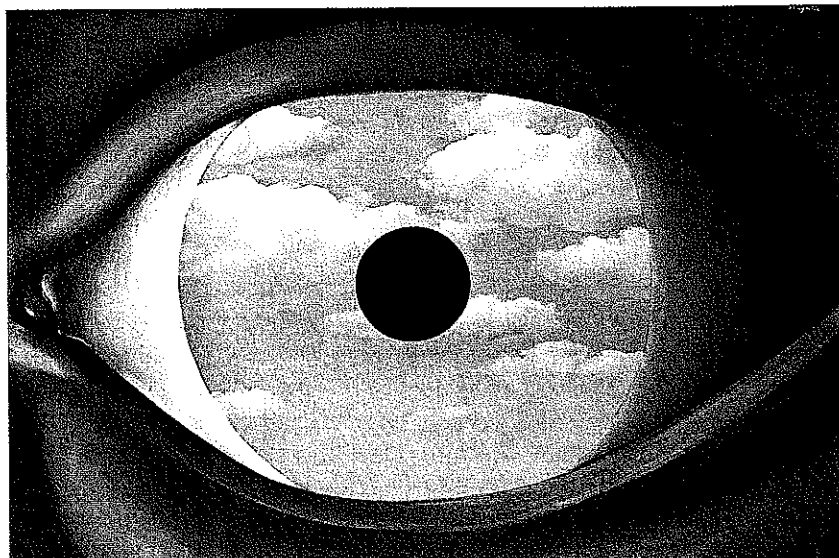
**15.30** René Magritte, *The False Mirror*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 21¼ × 31¾" (54 × 81 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



**15.29** René Magritte, *The Treachery (or Perfidy) of Images*, 1928–29. Oil on canvas, 23¼ × 31½" (60 × 80 cm). Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

in 1992 brought the work of this brilliant artist once again to the forefront, and his unique contribution to Surrealism as well as his tremendous impact on art and commercial design is now more fully recognized.

The perfect symbol for his approach is the painting entitled *The Treachery (or Perfidy) of Images* (fig. 15.29). It portrays a briar pipe so meticulously that it might serve as a tobacconist’s trademark. Beneath, rendered with comparable precision, is the legend *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (This is not a pipe). This delightful work confounds pictorial reality and underscores Magritte’s fascination with the relationship of language to the painted image. It undermines our natural tendency to speak of images as though they were actually the things they represent. A similar idea is embodied in *The False Mirror* (fig. 15.30): the eye as a false mirror when it views the white clouds and blue sky of nature. This might be another statement of the artist’s faith, for *The False Mirror* introduces the illusionistic theme of the landscape that is a painting, not nature itself.



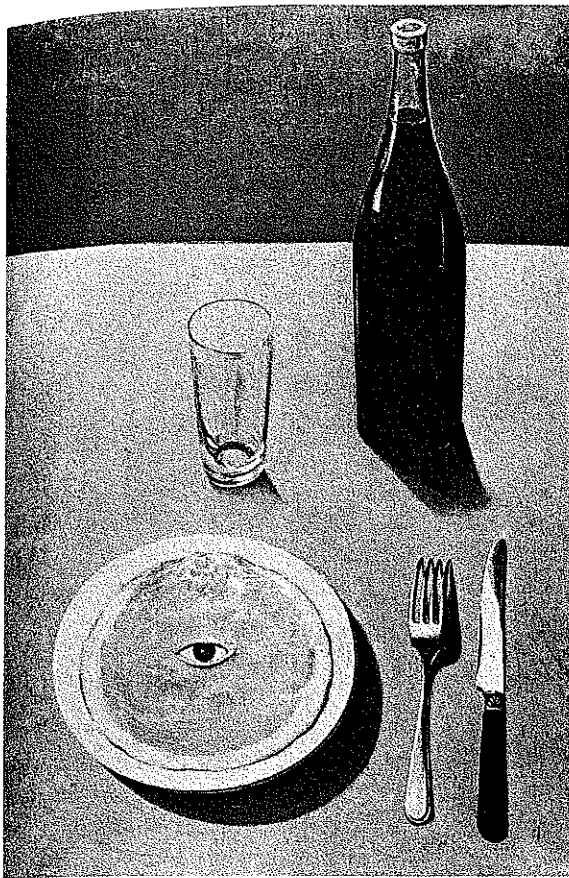
**15.31** René Magritte, *The Human Condition*, 1933. Oil on canvas, 39 3/4 x 31 1/2" (100 x 81 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



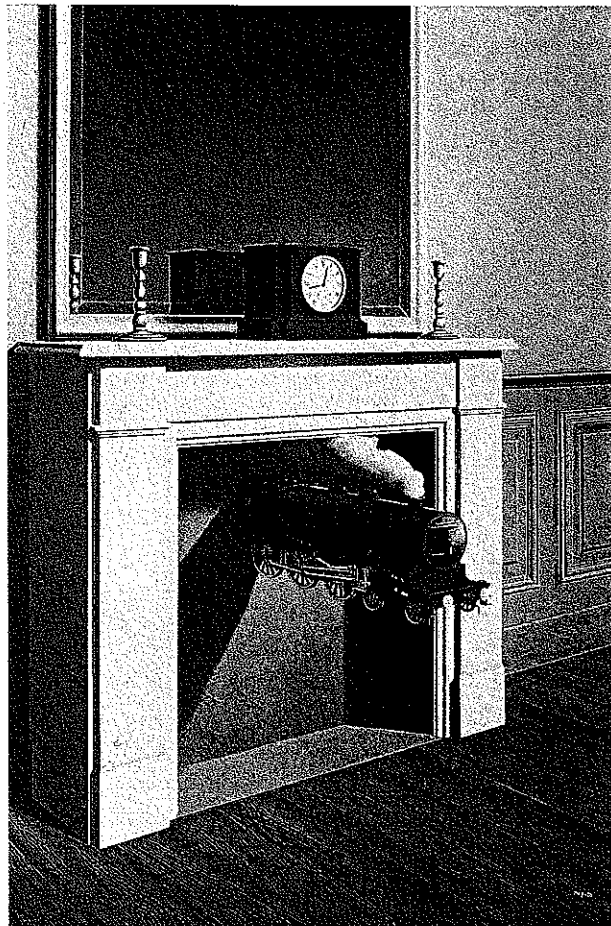
After 1926 Magritte changed his style of precise depiction very little, except for temporary excursions into other sometimes alarmingly divergent manners, and he frequently returned to earlier subjects. In 1933, he reconciled with the Parisian Surrealists, and throughout the decade he made many of the key works of his career, usually in compositions of the utmost clarity and simplicity. In *The Human Condition* (fig. 15.31), we encounter a pleasant landscape framed by a window. In front of this opening is a painting on an easel that “completes” the very landscape it blocks from view. The problem of real space versus spatial illusion is as old as painting itself, but it is imaginatively treated in this picture within a picture. Magritte’s classic play on illusion implies that the painting is less real than the landscape, when in fact both are painted fictions. The tree depicted here, as the artist explained (somewhat confus-

ingly, in view of the illusory nature of the “real” landscape, as he defines it), exists for the spectator “both inside the room in the painting, and outside in the real landscape. Which is how we see the world: we see it as being outside ourselves even though it is only a mental representation of it that we experience inside ourselves.”

Magritte’s visual jokes can border on the gruesome. The succinctly titled *Portrait* (fig. 15.32) is a still life of a succulent slice of ham accompanied by wine bottle, glass, knife, and fork, all drawn with the utmost precision. The table on which they rest is a vertical rectangle of dark gray. Out of the center of the slice of ham stares a human eye. Magritte recreated this scene as a life-size, three-dimensional installation for a 1945 exhibition in Brussels. In another painting from the thirties called *Time Transfixed* (fig. 15.33), the artist introduced the



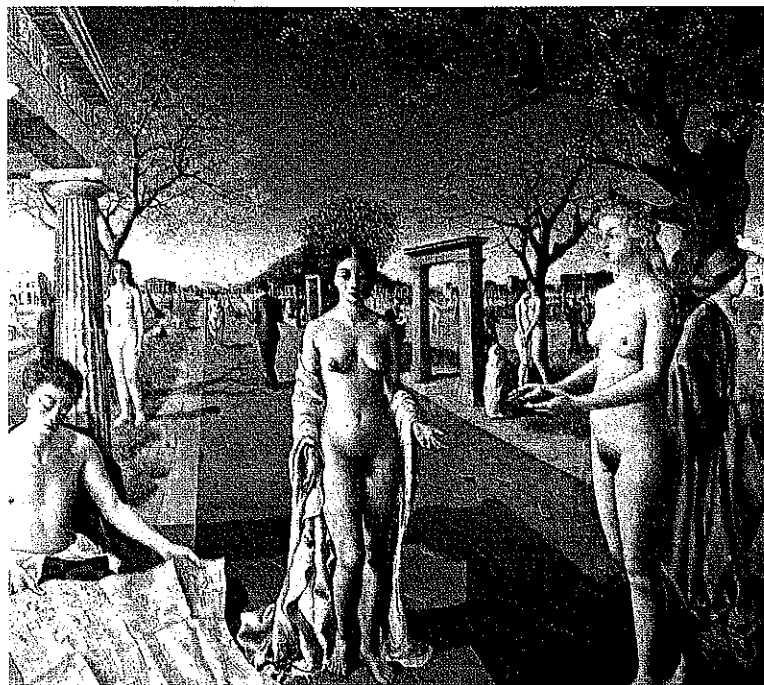
**15.32** René Magritte, *Portrait*, 1935. Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 19 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (73.3 × 50.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



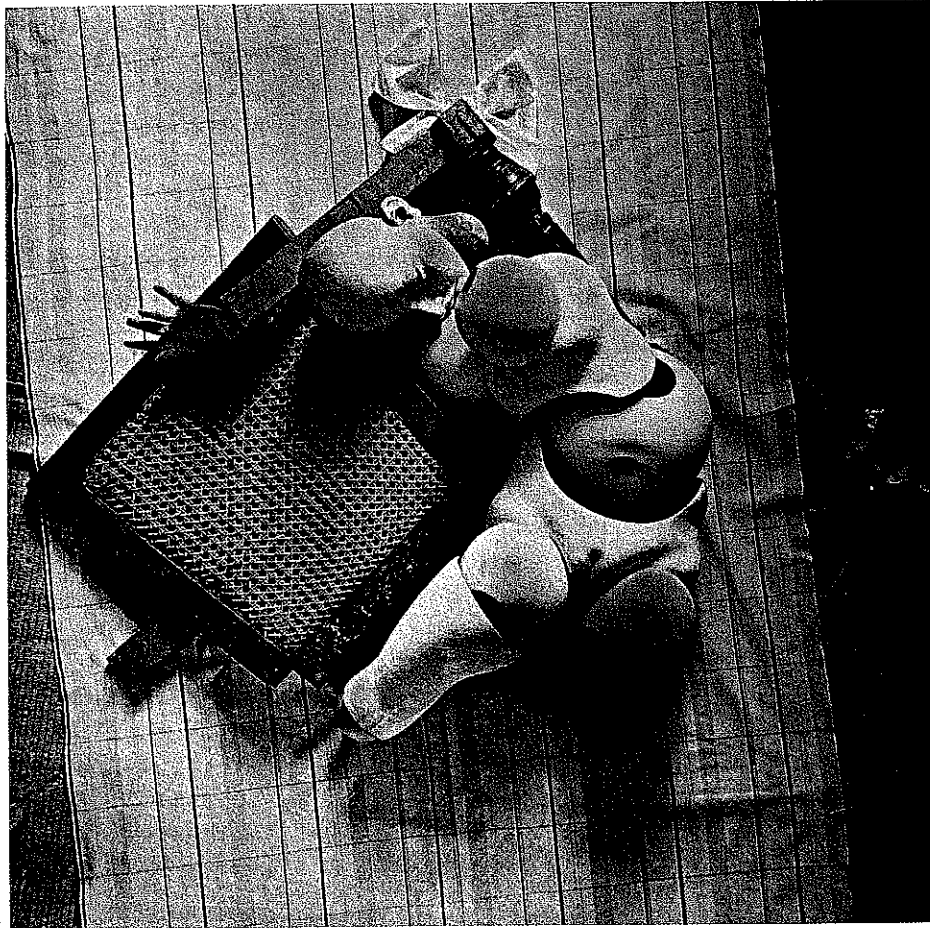
**15.33** René Magritte, *Time Transfixed*, 1938. Oil on canvas, 57 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (146.1 × 97.8 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago.

unexpected into an otherwise unremarkable scene: a tiny locomotive emerges from a fireplace, transforming the latter into a kind of domestic railway tunnel. The trains in de Chirico's paintings (see fig. 13.5) may have contributed to Magritte's vision, as did the fireplace in a friend's house. The effect here of ominous mystery is not unlike that of the Italian's, but Magritte accomplished it with characteristic restraint and an almost geometric precision.

**Paul Delvaux** (1897–1994), like Magritte a long-time resident of Brussels, came to Surrealism slowly. Beginning in 1935, he painted women, usually nude but occasionally clothed in chaste, Victorian dress. Sometimes lovers appear, but normally the males are shabbily dressed scholars, strangely oblivious to the women. *Entrance to the City* (fig. 15.34) gives the basic formula: a spacious landscape; nudes wandering about, each lost in her own dreams; clothed male figures, with here a partly disrobed young man studying a large plan; here also a pair of embracing female lovers and a bowler-hatted gentleman (reminiscent of Magritte) reading his newspaper while walking. The chief source seems to be fifteenth-century painting, and even the feeling of withdrawal in the figures



**15.34** Paul Delvaux, *Entrance to the City*, 1940. Oil on canvas, 63 × 70 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (160 × 180 cm). Private collection.



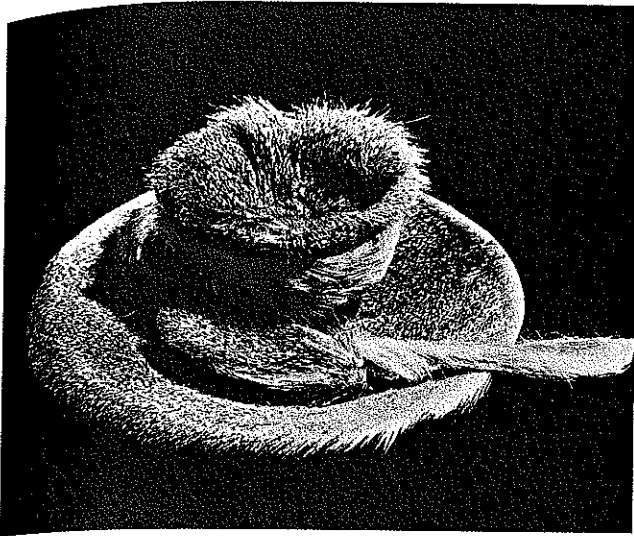
**15.35** Hans Bellmer, *Doll*, 1935. Wood, metal, and papier-mâché. Manoukian Collection, Paris.

suggests the influence of Piero della Francesca (see fig. 1.3) translated into Delvaux's peculiar personal fantasy. Delvaux's dreamworld is filled with a nostalgic sadness that transforms even his erotic nudes into something elusive and unreal.

Another artist who, like Delvaux, belonged to a later, second wave of Surrealism is **Hans Bellmer** (1902–75). In 1923–24 this Polish-born artist trained at the Berlin Technical School, studying drawing with George Grosz (see chapter 13) and establishing contact with other figures related to German Dada. In the thirties, he began assembling strange constructions called “dolls” (fig. 15.35), adolescent female mannequins whose articulated and ball-jointed parts—heads, arms, trunks, legs, wigs, glass eyes—could be dismembered and reassembled in every manner of erotic or masochistic posture. The artist then photographed the fetishistic objects, whose implied sadism appealed to the Surrealists. This led to publication of Bellmer's photographs in a 1935 issue of *Minotaure*; a career for the artist in the Surrealist milieu of Paris; and a place for his camera-made images in the history of photography. Bellmer also expressed his rather Gothic imagination in a number of splendid, if sometimes unpublishable, drawings. His particular brand of photography, whereby he invented actual objects or tableaux as subjects for his camera, would find its eighties equivalent in work by artists such as Cindy Sherman (see fig. 26.4).

## Women and Surrealism: Oppenheim, Tanning, and Carrington

As a movement, Surrealism was not particularly hospitable to women, except as a terrain onto which male artists projected their erotic desires. Nevertheless, it attracted a number of gifted women artists in the thirties. **Meret Oppenheim** (1913–85), a native of Berlin, arrived in Paris as an art student in 1932 when she was not yet twenty years old. She soon met Alberto Giacometti, who introduced her to members of the Surrealist circle. She began to take part in the group's exhibitions in 1935 and is recorded in a number of photographs by Man Ray. Although she produced a large body of work—paintings, drawings, sculpture, and poetry—until her death in 1985, Oppenheim was known primarily for her notorious *Object (Le Déjeuner en fourrure)* (*Luncheon in Fur*) (fig. 15.36), a cup, plate, and spoon covered with the fur of a Chinese gazelle. The idea for this “fur-lined tea cup,” which has become the very archetype of the Surrealist object, germinated in a café conversation with Picasso about Oppenheim's designs for jewelry made of fur-lined metal tubing. When Picasso remarked that one could cover just about anything with fur, Oppenheim quipped, “Even this cup and saucer.” In Oppenheim's hands, this emblem of domesticity and the niceties of social intercourse metamorphosed into a hairy object that is both repellent and

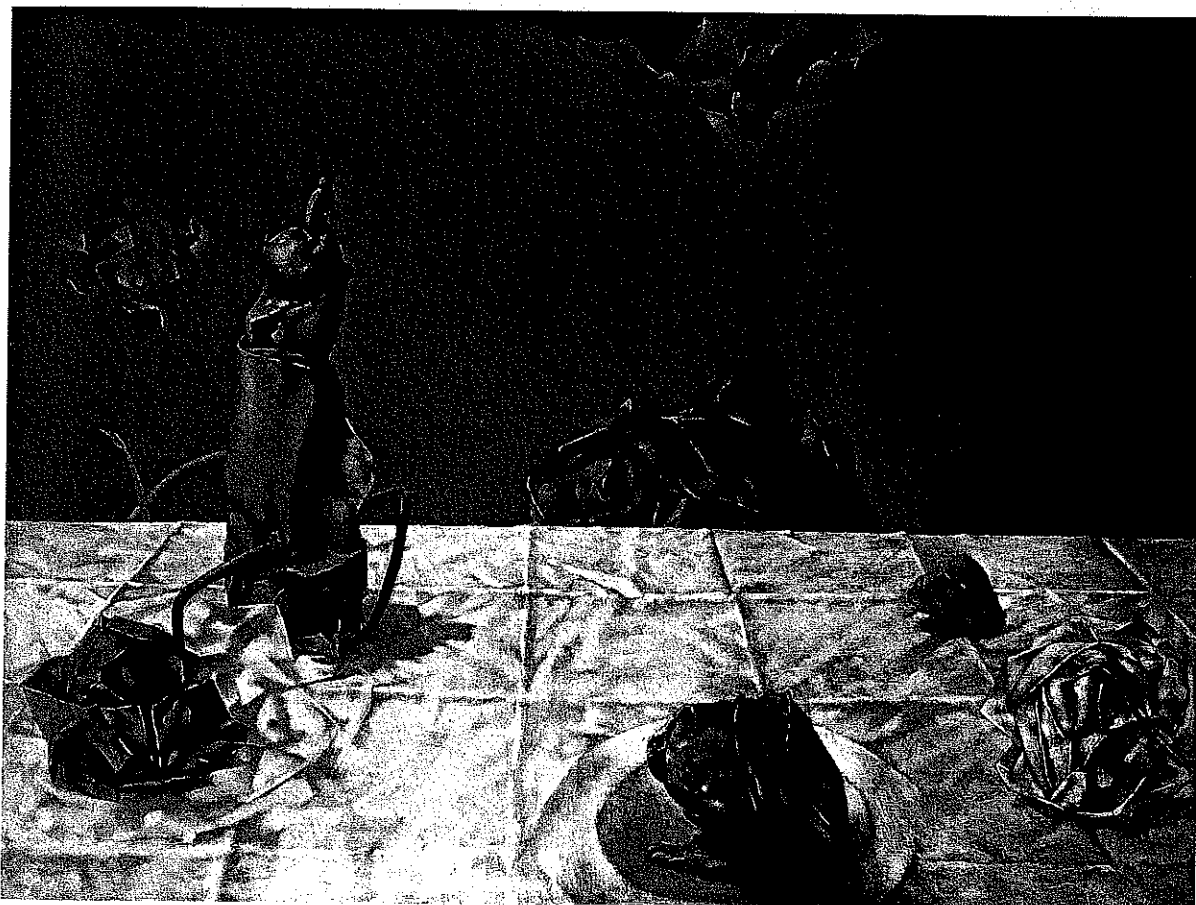


**15.36** Meret Oppenheim, *Object (Le Déjeuner en fourrure)* (*luncheon in Fur*), 1936. Fur-covered cup, diameter 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (10.9 cm); saucer, diameter 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (23.7 cm); spoon, length 8" (20.2 cm). Overall height 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (7.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

eroticized, challenging with Surrealist freedom the dominant notions of masculine culture. Such inventions fulfilled brilliantly Breton's notion of the reconciliation of opposites by bringing together in a single form materials of the most disparate nature imaginable.

The career of American artist **Dorothea Tanning** (b. 1910) was somewhat overshadowed by that of her husband, Max Ernst, whom she married in 1946. Tanning had met Ernst in New York, where she moved after her brief art studies in Chicago. Like so many American artists, she was deeply moved by the experience of the important exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism*, held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1936. She also came into contact with Surrealist refugee artists from Paris, including Ernst and Breton. By the early forties, Tanning had produced her first mature paintings, and in 1944 she was given a solo exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery. In 1946, she moved with Ernst to Sedona, Arizona, and later settled in France. Tanning's skills as a painter and her penchant for the bizarre are given rich expression in the 1950 still life *A Few Roses and Their Phantoms* (fig. 15.37). Across a table covered with strange, rose-hybrid formations and a tablecloth marked by grid-shaped folds, a monstrous creature raises its head. Tanning's meticulous style intensifies the hallucinatory quality of the scene. As she claimed, "It's necessary to paint the lie so great that it becomes the truth."

Slightly younger than Tanning was British-born **Leonora Carrington** (b. 1917), who distinguished herself both as a writer and a painter. Carrington scandalized her wealthy Catholic parents by moving to Paris with Max Ernst at the age of twenty and becoming an associate



**15.37** Dorothea Tanning, *A Few Roses and Their Phantoms*, 1952. Oil on canvas, 29 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 40" (75.9 × 101.6 cm). Collection Sir Roland Penrose, London.





**15.38** Leonora Carrington, *Self-Portrait (The White Horse Inn)*, 1936–37. Oil on canvas, 25½ × 32¼" (65 × 81.5 cm). Private collection.

of the Surrealists. During the war, when Ernst was interned by the French as an enemy alien (and imprisoned for a time in a cell with Hans Bellmer), Carrington suffered a mental collapse, about which she wrote eloquently after her recovery. After living in New York for two years, she settled in Mexico in 1942. The enigmatic imagery that surrounds the artist in her *Self-Portrait (The White Horse Inn)* (fig. 15.38) is closely tied to Celtic mythology and memories of her childhood. These are themes she also explored in her literary works: in two of her short stories the protagonists befriend, respectively, a hyena and a rocking horse, both of which have magical powers. Carrington, who apparently kept a rocking horse in her Paris apartment, created a lead character in one of the stories who is capable of transforming herself into a white horse. In the painting, Carrington, wearing her white jodhpurs, reaches out to a hyena heavy with milk, while at the same time a toy horse levitates inexplicably above her head. Given the subject of Carrington's own fable, the galloping white horse seen through the window becomes a kind of liberated surrogate self. In a larger context, this arresting painting abounds with classic Freudian dream imagery, in which horses are symbols of sexual desire. After she moved to Mexico, Carrington cast her mystical subjects of alchemy and the occult in imagery reminiscent of the late fifteenth-century Netherlandish painter Hieronymus Bosch.

## Never Quite "One of Ours": Picasso and Surrealism

In 1925, André Breton claimed Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) as "one of ours," but sensibly exempted the great artist (at least for a time) from adopting a strict Surrealist regime. Picasso was never a true Surrealist. He did not share the group's obsession with the subconscious and the dreamworld, though his paintings could certainly plumb the depths of the psyche and express intense emotion. The powerful strain of eroticism and violence in Picasso's art also helped ally him to the Surrealist cause. He had considerable sympathy for the group, exhibiting with them and contributing drawings to the second number of *La Révolution surréaliste* (January 15, 1925). In the fourth number of the magazine (July 15, 1925) Breton, the editor, included an account of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (see c.p. 89) and reproduced collages by Picasso and his new painting, *Three Dancers (The Dance)* (fig. 15.39).

### Painting and Graphic Art, mid-1920s–1930s

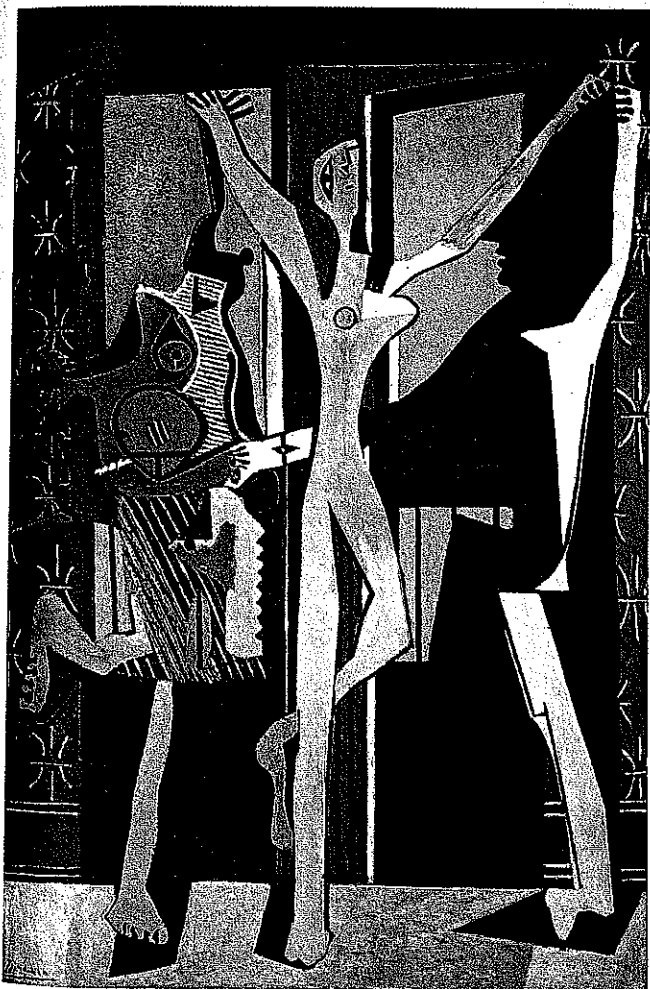
We have already seen in *Studio with Plaster Head* (see fig. 14.27) how a new emotionalism was entering Picasso's work in the mid-twenties. Also dating from the summer of 1925, *Three Dancers* was an even more startling departure from the artist's classically lyrical drawings of dancers of the previous months. Before a French window, three figures

perform an ecstatic dance. The dancer in the center seems frozen, pinned in space in a crucified position. The figure to her right is jagged and angular. The figure to the left is disjointed and bends back in a state of frenzied abandon, baring her teeth in a terrifying grimace. Given her relationship to the “crucified” dancer, this figure has been compared to a mourning woman at the foot of the Cross. The subject of the Crucifixion would preoccupy the artist in the early thirties (see fig. 15.43). Picasso used every device in the Synthetic Cubist vocabulary—simultaneous views, full face and profile, hidden or shadow profiles, faceting, interpenetration, positive and negative space—to create his image. The anguish expressed in the painting can be attributed to the increasing marital tension between the artist and his wife Olga Koklova (who was a dancer), as well as to the recent death of Picasso’s close friend, the Catalan painter Raymon Pichot, whose profile can be seen here silhouetted against the window.

Violence and anxiety (a favorite emotional coupling of the Surrealists) also permeate *Large Nude in Red Armchair* (fig. 15.40), 1929. It is a timeless subject—a figure seated in a red chair draped in fabric and set against green

flowered wallpaper (these saturated hues persisted in Picasso’s work of the thirties). But the woman’s body is pulled apart as though made of rubber. With knobs for hands and feet and black sockets for eyes, she throws her head back not in sensuous abandon but in a toothy wail, resulting in what Breton called “convulsive” beauty. While he did it to rather different effect, the photographer André Kertész subjected the female body to a similar kind of elasticity in the thirties (see fig. 15.62). In many ways, Picasso’s paintings can be read as running commentaries on his relationships, and his paintings of the late twenties, when his marriage was disintegrating, were filled with women as terrifying monsters. As the poet Paul Éluard observed, “He loves with intensity and kills what he loves.” In 1932, when Picasso began to make portraits of a young woman named Marie-Thérèse Walter (see fig. 15.45) the explicit eroticism in his paintings shifted to a gentler mood.

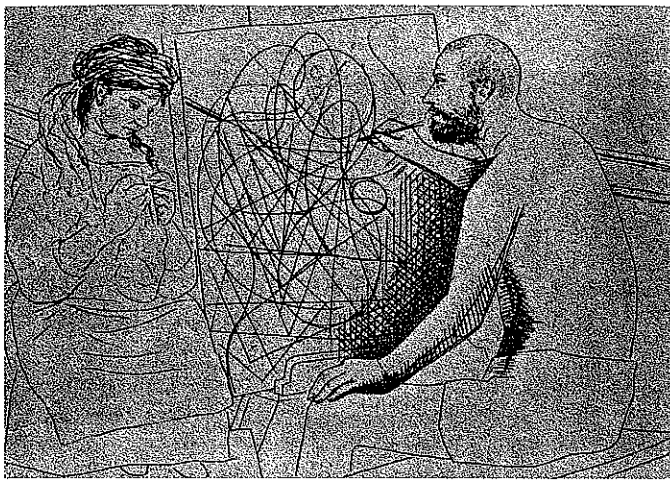
One of Picasso’s favorite subjects was the artist in his studio. He returned to it periodically throughout his career, often exploring the peculiarly voyeuristic nature of the painter’s relationship to the model. His interest may have been aroused by a commission from the dealer



**15.39** Pablo Picasso, *Three Dancers (The Dance)*, 1925. Oil on canvas, 7'8" × 4'8¼" (2.1 × 1.43 m). Tate Gallery, London.



**15.40** Pablo Picasso, *Large Nude in Red Armchair*, May 5, 1929. Oil on canvas, 6'4¾" × 4'3¼" (1.9 × 1.3 m). Musée Picasso, Paris.

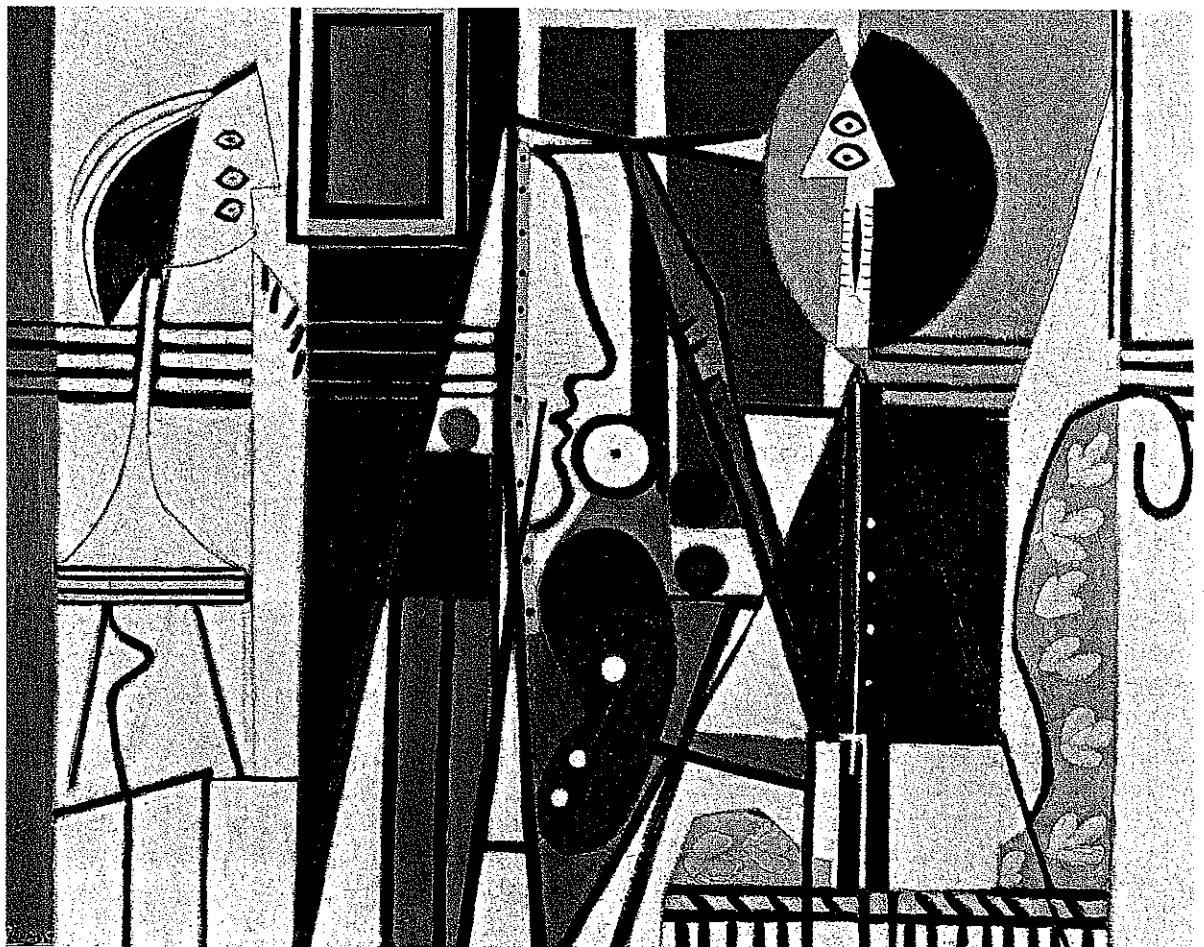


**15.41** Pablo Picasso, *Painter and Model Knitting* (executed in 1927) from *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, by Honoré de Balzac, Paris, Ambroise Vollard, 1931. Etching, printed in black, plate 7 $\frac{5}{16}$  × 10 $\frac{7}{16}$ " (19.2 × 27.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Ambroise Vollard to provide drawings for an edition of Honoré de Balzac's novel, *The Unknown Masterpiece*. The illustrated edition was published in 1931. This story concerns a deranged painter who worked for ten years on a portrait of a woman and ended with a mass of incompre-

hensible scribbles. Picasso's interpretation (fig. 15.41) may illustrate his mistrust in complete abstraction, for he had already warned against trying "to paint the invisible." In a highly geometric composition of 1928 (fig. 15.42), reality and illusion as presented in the drawing are reversed. The painter and model are highly abstracted, Surrealist ciphers, while the "painted" portrait on the artist's canvas is a more "realistic" profile.

Picasso rarely painted the religious subjects so dear to Spanish artists, so the small, brilliant *Crucifixion* (fig. 15.43) from 1930 comes as a surprise. He had, however, been making drawings related to this Christian theme, and as we have seen, the subject played a role in *Three Dancers*. The artificial palette of bright reds, yellows, and greens seems unsuited to the somber subject, but Picasso's is hardly a conventional treatment. In a small canvas he manages to cram a crowd of disjointed figures in such a dizzying variety of scales and styles that it is extremely difficult to read the picture. We can recognize certain familiar aspects of the story. For example, a tiny red figure at the top of the ladder nails Christ's hand to the Cross. The mourning Virgin is located just before the Cross, her face distorted in the same grimace we encountered in *Large Nude in Red Armchair*. In the foreground two soldiers throw dice for



**15.42** Pablo Picasso, *Painter and Model*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 51 $\frac{1}{4}$  × 64 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (130 × 163.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



**15.43** Pablo Picasso, *Crucifixion*, 1930. Oil on plywood, 20% × 26" (51.1 × 66.1 cm). Musée Picasso, Paris.

Christ's clothes, but the anatomies of the figures are drastically distorted by unexpected shifts in scale. *The Crucifixion* is a highly personal version of this sacred subject, one that drew on many sources, including ancient legends and rituals. What is clear is its sense of tortured agony, which looks back to the *Isenheim Altarpiece* (see fig. 1.7) and forward to *Guernica* (see fig. 15.46). Picasso's drawings after the *Isenheim Altarpiece* were published in 1933 in the first issue of *Minotaure*, for which he designed the cover. Also included in that issue was a suite of drawings called *An Anatomy*, in which the female figure is constructed in terms of abstract shapes or household objects. A woman's head, for example, becomes a goblet, or her breasts, a pair of teacups. *An Anatomy* is generally regarded as one of Picasso's most thoroughly Surrealist works.

In 1928 Picasso made sketches of the figure compartmentalized into strange bonelike forms. Variations on these highly sexualized "bone figures" continued into the thirties. One startling example is *Seated Bather* (fig. 15.44), which is part skeleton, part petrified woman, and all monster, taking her ease in the Mediterranean sun. *Seated Bather* simultaneously has the nonchalance of a bathing beauty and the predatory countenance of a praying mantis, one of the Surrealists' favorite insect images (because the female sometimes devours the male after mating). Careful inspection of the righthand portion of *Crucifixion* (see fig. 15.43) proves that this strange head first made an appearance in that work. *Seated Bather* is a *tour de force* of the use of negative space. Picasso was, after all, an artist deeply involved with sculptural form both in painting and in three-dimensional objects.



**15.44** Pablo Picasso, *Seated Bather*, early 1930. Oil on canvas, 64¼ × 51" (163.2 × 129.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



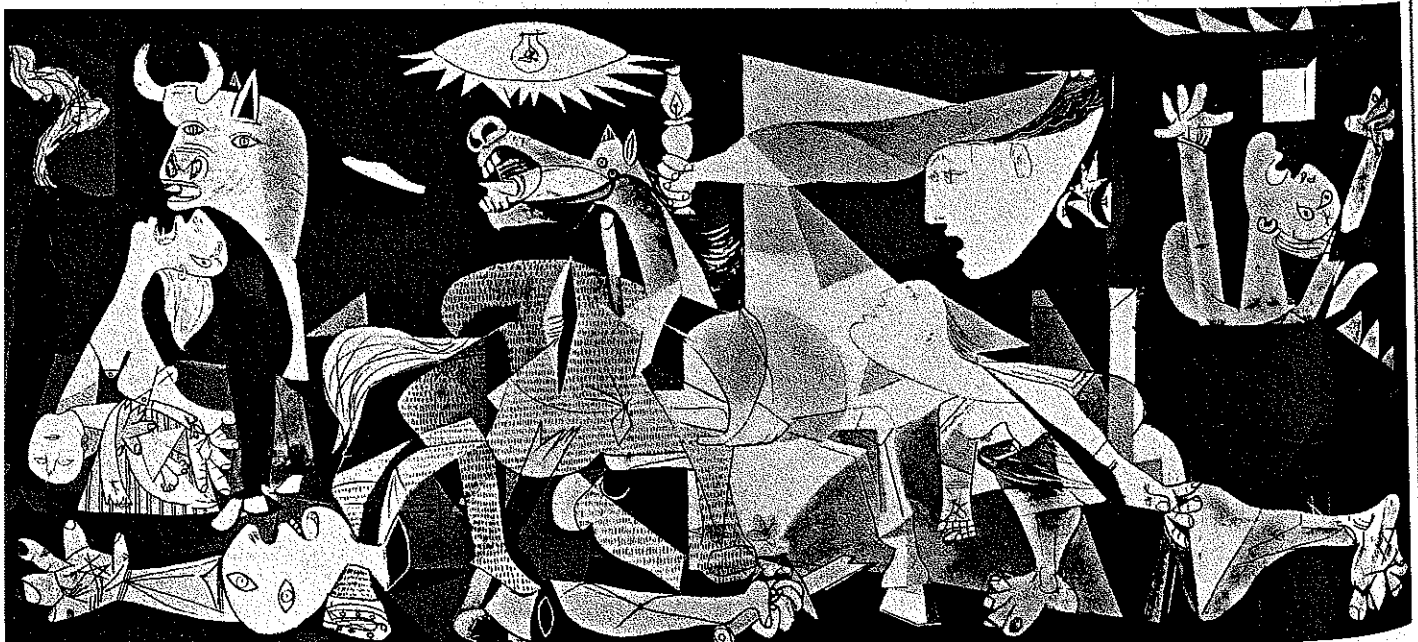
**15.45** Pablo Picasso, *Girl Before a Mirror*, Boisgeloup, 1932. Oil on canvas, 64 × 51¼" (162.3 × 130.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

**15.46** Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 11'6" × 25'8" (3.5 × 7.8 m). Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.

In 1932 Picasso painted some of his most beautifully lyrical paintings of women, a change of heart inspired by his love affair with Marie-Thérèse Walter. Although she had been involved with Picasso since 1927, when she was only seventeen, Marie-Thérèse did not become the overt subject of Picasso's paintings until their liaison was more public. His magical portrait of her (fig. 15.45), which assimilates classical repose with Cubist space, is a key painting of the thirties. Such moments of summation for Picasso alternate with cycles of fertile and varied experiment. *Girl Before a Mirror* brings together brilliant color patterns and sensual curvilinear rhythms. Rapt in contemplation of her mirror image, the girl sees not merely a reversed reflection but some kind of mysterious alter ego. In the mirror her clear blonde features become a disquieting series of dark, abstracted forms, as though the woman is peering into the depths of her own soul.

### **Guernica and Related Works**

Picasso's major painting of the thirties and one of the masterworks of the twentieth century is *Guernica* (fig. 15.46). Executed in 1937, the painting was inspired by the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War—specifically, the destruction of the Basque town of Guernica by German bombers in the service of the Spanish fascists. In January 1937, Picasso, who supported the Republicans in their fight against the fascist General Francisco Franco, created two etchings, each composed of a number of episodes, and accompanied by a poem, *Dream and Lie of Franco*. General Franco is shown as a turnip-headed monster, and the bull the symbol of resurgent Spain. The grief-stricken woman in *Guernica* who shrieks over the body of her dead child first appeared in this etching. In May and June 1937 Picasso painted his great canvas *Guernica* for the Spanish Republican Pavilion of the Paris World's Fair. It is a huge





**15.47** Pablo Picasso, *Weeping Woman with Handkerchief*, July 1937. Etching, aquatint, and drypoint on paper, 27¼ × 19½" (69.2 × 49.5 cm). Musée Picasso, Paris.

painting in black, white, and gray, a scene of terror and devastation. Although Picasso used motifs such as the screaming horse or agonized figures derived from his Surrealist distortions of the twenties, the structure is based on the Cubist grid and returns to the more stringent palette of Analytical Cubism (see fig. 10.18). With the exception of the fallen warrior at the lower left, the human

protagonists are women, but the central victim is the speared horse from *Minotauremachy*. *Guernica* is Picasso's most powerfully expressionist application of Cubism and one of the most searing indictments of war ever painted.

Picasso made dozens of studies for *Guernica*, of individual motifs as well as the entire composition, which went through several changes. Its impact on the artist himself may be seen in innumerable works during the next decades. One image that continued to haunt him in the wake of *Guernica* is that of the weeping woman (fig. 15.47). In the etching shown here, the woman holds a handkerchief to her face with spiky fingers while tears fall from her displaced, comma-shaped eyes like long nails. The sense of palpable, uncontrollable sorrow expressed in this and related works was, on a political level, Picasso's continuing reaction to the disastrous events in his native Spain.

Though *Guernica* was created in response to current events, elements in the painting can be traced back to Picasso's work of the twenties. Some of its forms first appear in the *Three Dancers* of 1925. The figure of the Minotaur, the bull-man monster of ancient Crete and a Surrealist subject as we have seen, first appeared in Picasso's work in a collage of 1928. In 1933 he made a series of etchings, collectively known as the *Vollard Suite*, in which the Minotaur is a central character. During 1933 and 1934 Picasso also drew and painted bullfights of particular savagery. These explorations climaxed in the etching *Minotauremachy* of 1935 (fig. 15.48), one of the great prints of the twentieth century and a demonstration of this artist's consummate skill as a draftsman. It presents a number of figures reminiscent of Picasso's life and his Spanish past, including: recollection of the prints of Goya; the women in the window; the Christ-like figure on the ladder;



**15.48** Pablo Picasso, *Minotauremachy*, March 23, 1935. Etching and engraving on copper plate, printed in black; plate 19½ × 27¾" (49.6 × 69.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



**15.49** Pablo Picasso, *Still Life with Steer's Skull*, April 5, 1942. Oil on canvas, 51¼ × 38¾" (130.2 × 97.2 cm). Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

the little girl holding flowers and a candle (a symbol of innocence); the screaming, disemboweled horse (which becomes the central player in *Guernica*) carrying a dead woman (dressed as a toreador); and the Minotaur groping his way. The place of the Minotaur (or the bull) in Picasso's iconography is ambiguous. It may be a symbol of insensate, brute force, sexual potency and aggression, a symbol of Spain, or of the artist himself.

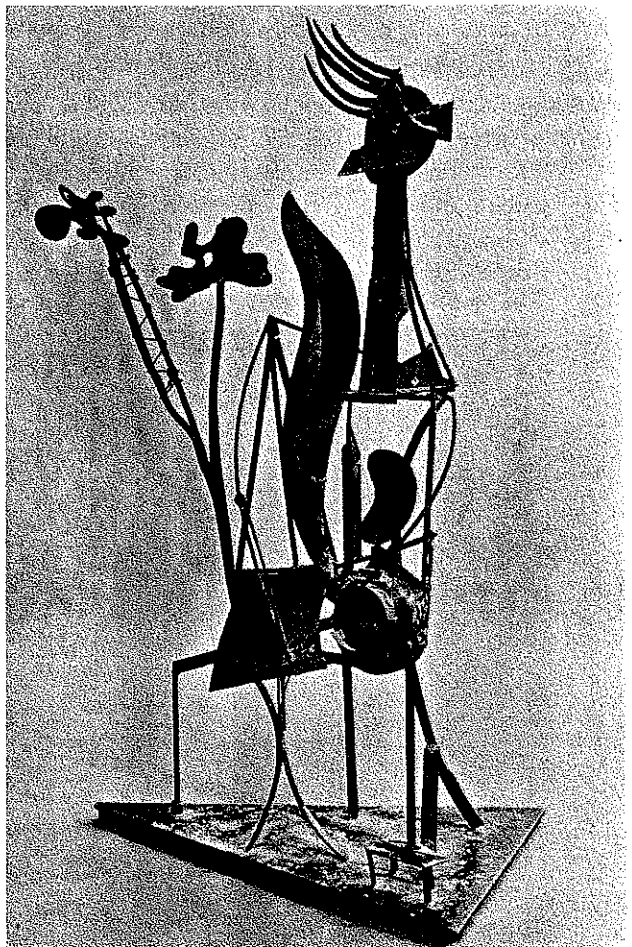
Picasso remained in France after the outbreak of World War II and subsequent German occupation of the country. Many of his paintings and sculptures from this period reveal his response to the war (and of Spain's final capitulation to Franco's fascism) through stark, spare imagery. Animal skulls appear frequently, first in 1939, after the artist learned of the death of his mother, and again in 1942 (fig. 15.49) following the death of his friend, the sculptor Julio González (see below). Picasso often commemorated the death of a loved one with a significant painting, and this dark, majestic still life is filled with ominous imagery. A steer's skull, painted in shades of gray, is set against the cross-shaped mullions of a French door, beyond which lies a black night. Picasso thus created a variation on traditional

*vanitas* still lifes, which include a human skull to remind us of life's transitory nature (see fig. 14.30).

### Sculpture, late 1920s–1940s

In 1928 Picasso's Surrealist bone paintings revived his interest in sculpture, which, except for a few sporadic assemblages, he had abandoned since 1914. In broader terms, sculpture can be seen to gain greater importance around 1930 as part of a movement away from modernism's earlier emphasis on individual, experimental enquiry toward more public forms of expression, of which *Guernica* is a powerful example.

With the technical help of his old friend Julio González, a skilled metalworker, Picasso produced welded iron constructions that, together with similar constructions produced around the same time by González himself (see figs. 15.53, 15.54), marked the emergence of direct-metal sculpture as a major, modern medium. Picasso's *Woman in the Garden* (fig. 15.50), a large, open construction in which the figure consists of curving lines and organic-shaped planes, is one of the most intricate and monumental examples of direct-metal sculpture produced to that date. The woman's face is a triangle with strands of windswept hair and the by-



**15.50** Pablo Picasso, *Woman in the Garden*, 1929–30. Bronze after welded and painted iron original, height 6'10¾" (2.1 m). Musée Picasso, Paris.



**15.51** Pablo Picasso, *Bull's Head*, 1943. Bicycle saddle and handlebars, 13¼ × 17½ × 7½" (33.5 × 43.5 × 19 cm). Musée Picasso, Paris.



**15.52** Pablo Picasso, *Man with a Sheep*, 1943. Bronze, height 7'3" (2.2 m). Musée Picasso, Paris.

now familiar gaping mouth. The bean-shaped form in the center stands for her stomach, while the disk below it is one of Picasso's familiar signs for female genitalia. The original version of this work was made of welded and painted iron. Picasso commissioned González to make a bronze replica.

Carried away by enthusiasm, Picasso modeled in clay or plaster until by 1933 his studio at Boisgeloup was filled: massive heads of women, reflecting his contemporaneous curvilinear style in painting and looking back in some degree to his Greco-Roman style; torsos transformed into anthropomorphic monsters; surprisingly representational animals including a cock and a heifer; figures assembled from found objects organized with humor and delight. Of the found-object sculptures perhaps the most renowned is the *Bull's Head* of 1943 (fig. 15.51), which consists of an old bicycle seat and handlebars—a wonderful example of the way Picasso remained alert to the formal and expressive potential of the most commonplace objects.

The full range of Picasso's experiments in sculpture becomes clear when we realize that *Bull's Head* was made shortly before *Man with a Sheep* (fig. 15.52). This work, which was created through the more conventional medium of plaster for bronze, is one of the artist's most moving conceptions. On the one hand the figure could refer to the Early Christian figure of the Good Shepherd, Christ the protector of the oppressed, a figure that may be traced back to classical pagan religions as well as to the Old Testament. On the other, it could recall ancient rituals of animal sacrifice. Picasso insisted, "There is no symbolism in it. It is just something beautiful." This sculpture stood prominently in the artist's Paris studio at the time of the liberation of France in 1944 by the Allied forces where, in the words of one Picasso scholar, it "came to epitomize an act of faith in humanity."

### Pioneer of a New Iron Age: Julio González

Julio González (1876–1942), another son of Barcelona, had been trained in metalwork by his father, a goldsmith, but he practiced as a painter for many years. In Paris by 1900, he came to know Picasso and Brancusi, but after the death of his brother Jean in 1908, he lived in isolation for several months. In 1910 González began to make masks in a metal repoussé technique. In 1918, he learned the technique of oxyacetylene welding, and by 1927 he was producing his first sculptures in iron. In the late twenties he made a series of masks (fig. 15.53) from sheets of flat metal. The sharp, geometric contours in the mask, as González's drawings make clear, are derived from the strong, angular shadows cast over faces in the hot sun. Their openwork construction had no real precedents in figural sculpture. In 1928, Picasso asked González for technical help in constructed sculpture, Picasso's new interest. It may be said that González began a new age of iron for sculpture, which he described in his most famous statement:

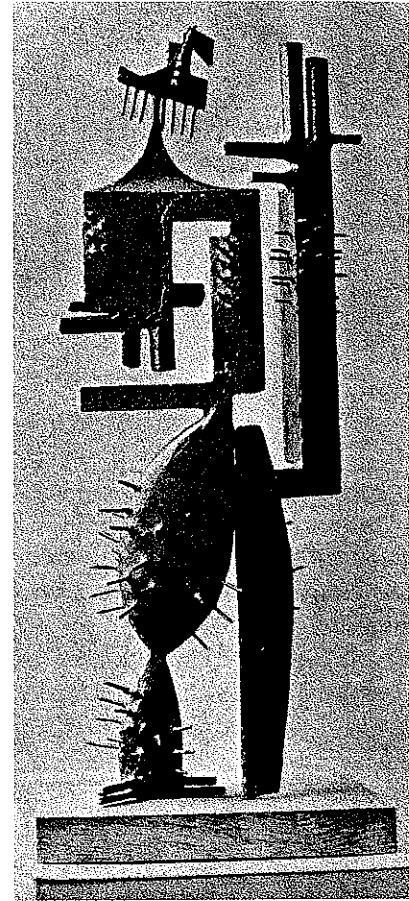




**15.53** Julio González, *Mask of Roberta in the Sun*, c. 1929. Iron, height 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (18.1 cm). Collection Roberta Gonzalez, Paris.

The age of iron began many centuries ago by producing very beautiful objects, unfortunately for a large part, arms. Today, it provides as well, bridges and railroads. It is time this metal ceased to be a murderer and the simple instrument of a super-mechanical science. Today the door is wide open for this material to be, at last, forged and hammered by the peaceful hands of an artist.

By 1931 González was working in direct, welded iron, with a completely open, linear construction in which the solids were merely contours defining the voids. The difference between these constructions and the earlier ones of Gabo and the Russian Constructivists (see figs. 11.26, 11.31) lies not only in the technique—which was to have such far-reaching effects on younger sculptors—but also in the fact that, however abstract his conceptions, González was always involved with the figure. Side by side with these openwork, direct-metal constructions, González continued to produce naturalistic heads and figures, such as his large wrought-iron and welded *Montserrat*, a heroic figure of a Spanish peasant woman, symbol of the resistance of the Spanish people against fascism. *Montserrat* is the name of the mountain range near Barcelona, a symbol of Catalonia. This work was commissioned by the Spanish Republic for the 1937 World's Fair in Paris, where it was shown with murals by Miró and Picasso's *Guernica*. Dating from 1939, *Monsieur Cactus I (Cactus Man I)* (fig. 15.54), as the name implies, is a bristly and aggressive individual, suggesting a new authority in the artist's work, which death cut short. The original version of this work was made of welded iron; it was then cast in bronze in an edition of eight. Scholars have posited that the angry, aggressive



**15.54** Julio González, *Monsieur Cactus I (Cactus Man II)*, 1939. Bronze (cast from original iron), height 26" (66 cm). Private collection.

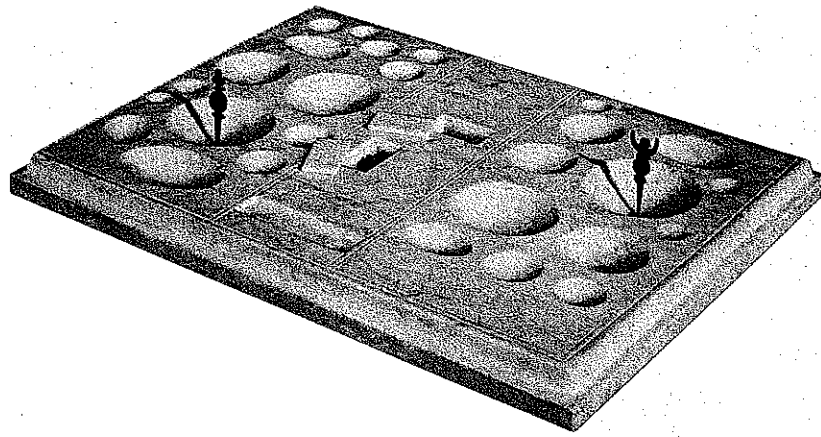
forms of *Monsieur Cactus I* may embody the artist's reactions to the recent fascist defeat of resistance forces in his beloved Barcelona, signaling the end of civil war in Spain.

The sculpture of Picasso and González after the twenties has had a special relevance to contemporary sculpture for its exploration of the techniques of direct metal and the use of the found object. For example, when American sculptor David Smith came upon González's work in the early thirties, he was inspired to make welded metal sculpture (see fig. 19.39).

## Surrealism's Sculptural Language: Giacometti's Early Career

If González was the pioneer of a new iron age, Alberto Giacometti (1901–66) created a new sculptural image of humanity. After studies in Geneva and a long stay with his father, a painter, in Italy, where he saturated himself in Italo-Byzantine art and became acquainted with the Futurists, Giacometti moved to Paris in 1922. Here he studied with Bourdelle (see fig. 6.14) for three years and then set up a studio with his brother Diego, an accomplished technician who continued to be his assistant and model to the end of his life. His first independent sculptures reflected awareness of the Cubist sculptures of Lipchitz and

**15.55** Alberto  
Giacometti, *No More  
Play*, 1931–32. Marble,  
wood, bronze,  $1\frac{1}{2} \times$   
 $22\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{1}{4}$ " (4.1 × 58  
× 45.1 cm). National  
Gallery of Art,  
Washington, D.C.



Laurens and, more importantly, of African, Oceanic, and prehistoric art. Giacometti's *Femme cuiller* of 1926–27 is a frontalized, Surrealist–primitive totem, probably inspired by a Dan spoon from West Africa that the artist saw in the Paris ethnographic museum. Evincing a spiritual if not a stylistic affinity to the work of Brancusi, *Femme cuiller* has the totemic presence of an ancient fertility figure.

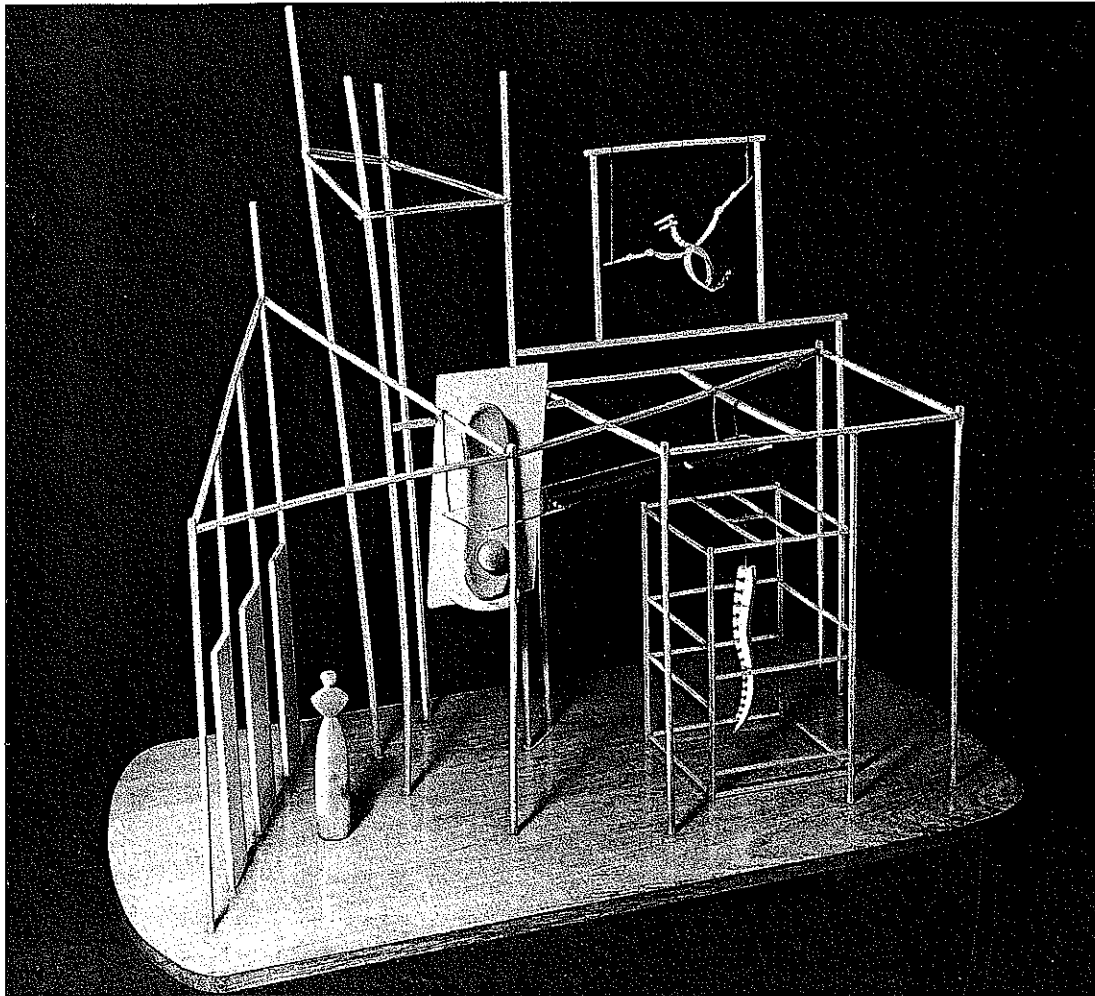
At the end of the twenties Giacometti was drawn into the orbit of the Paris Surrealists. For the next few years he made works that reflected their ideas, and, until 1935 (when he was expelled by the Surrealists), he exhibited with Miró and Arp at the Galerie Pierre. The sculptures he produced during these years are among the masterpieces of Surrealist sculpture. *No More Play* (fig. 15.55) is an example of Giacometti's tabletop compositions. Here the base becomes the actual sculpture on which movable parts are deployed like pieces in a board game (as the title implies). In two of the rounded depressions carved in the lunarlike surface are tiny male and female figurines in wood. Between them are three cavities, like coffins with movable lids. One of these contains an object resembling a skeleton. The viewer can interact with the work, moving aside the lids of the "tombs" to discover their contents and crossing over the usually inviolable space between object and viewer.

*Woman with Her Throat Cut* (fig. 15.56), a bronze construction of a dismembered female corpse, bears a family resemblance to Picasso's 1930 *Seated Bather* (see fig. 15.44). The spiked, crustacean form of the sculpture suggests the splayed and violated body of a woman. According to the artist, the work should be shown directly on the floor, without a base. From a high vantage point, looking down, the Surrealist theme of sexual violence is even more palpable. Although the work, like *No More Play*, can be moved by the viewer, the phallic shaped form should be placed in the leaflike "hand" of the figure, for Giacometti related the sculpture to the common nightmare of being unable to move one's hand.

In a number of his Surrealist sculptures Giacometti experimented with the format of an open cage structure, a series that climaxed in *The Palace at 4 a.m.* of 1932–33 (fig. 15.57), a structure of wooden rods defining the outlines of a house. At the left a woman in a long dress (the artist's recollection of his mother) stands before three tall rectangular panels. She seems to look toward a raised panel on which is fixed a long, oval spoon shape with a ball on it. To the right, within a rectangular cage, is suspended an object resembling a spinal column, and in the center of the edifice hangs a narrow panel of glass. Above, floating in a



**15.56** Alberto  
Giacometti, *Woman with  
Her Throat Cut* (*Femme  
égorgée*), 1932 (cast  
1949). Bronze,  $8 \times 34\frac{1}{2}$   
 $\times 25$ " (20.3 × 87.6 ×  
63.5 cm). The Museum of  
Modern Art, New York.



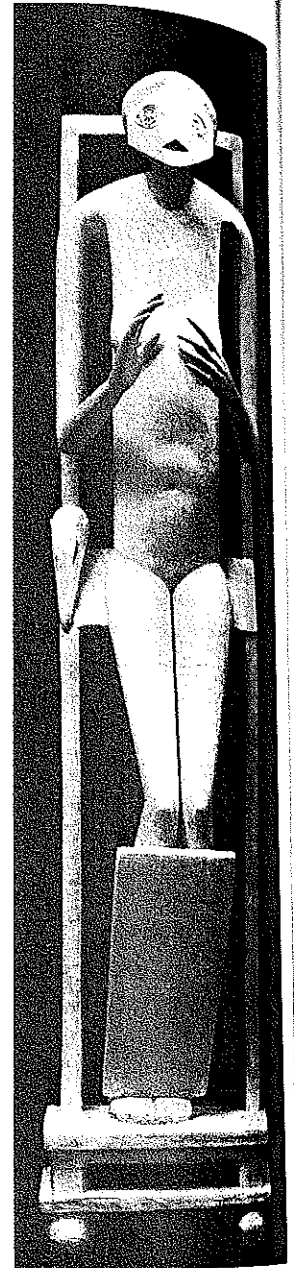
**15.57** Alberto Giacometti, *The Palace at 4 a.m.*, 1932–33. Construction in wood, glass, wire, and string, 25 × 28¼ × 15¾" (63.5 × 71.8 × 40 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

rectangle that might be a window, is a sort of pterodactyl—"the skeleton birds that flutter with cries of joy at four o'clock." This strange edifice was the product of a period in the artist's life that haunted him and about which he has written movingly:

for six whole months hour after hour was passed in the company of a woman who, concentrating all life in herself, made every moment something marvelous for me. We used to construct a fantastic palace in the night (days and night were the same color as if everything had happened just before dawn; throughout this time I never saw the sun), a very fragile palace of matchsticks: at the slightest false move a whole part of the miniscule construction would collapse: we would always begin it again.

Whatever the associations and reminiscences involved, *The Palace at 4 a.m.* was primarily significant for its wonderful, haunting quality of mystery.

*Invisible Object (Hands Holding a Void)* of 1934 (fig. 15.58), is one of Giacometti's last Surrealist sculptures. The elongated female personage half sits on a cage/chair structure that provides an environment and, when com-



**15.58** Alberto Giacometti, *Invisible Object (Hands Holding a Void)*, 1934. Plaster, height 61½" (156.2 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.

bined with the plank over her legs, pins her in space. With a hieratic gesture, she extends her hands to clasp an unseen object, as though partaking in some mysterious ritual. The work has been connected to sources in Oceanic and ancient Egyptian art. The form of a single, vertical, attenuated figure is significant for Giacometti's later work (see chapter 20).

## Bizarre Juxtapositions: Photography and Surrealism

Paris in the twenties and thirties was especially fertile ground for photography. From many countries, several of the medium's greatest practitioners came together with painters and sculptors in an era of remarkably fruitful exchange between the arts. The twenties, in particular, was a highly experimental period for photography that

witnessed, among other related media, the explosion of cinema. The Surrealists valued photography for its ability to capture the bizarre juxtapositions that occur naturally in daily experience. The Surrealist sense of dislocation could be made even more shocking when documented in a photograph than in, for example, a literally rendered painting by Dalí. The Surrealists regularly featured photography, ranging from Bellmer's constructed "dolls" (see fig. 15.35) to vernacular snapshots by amateurs, in their various journals. Their embrace of the medium, however, was not unequivocal. Breton viewed photography as a threat to what he regarded as the more important activity of painting, and mistrusted its emphasis on the external world rather than internal reality. Nevertheless, photography was even used by artists in the Surrealist movement who were not necessarily photographers. Max Ernst, for example, incorporated photographs into his collages; Bellmer's creations, as we have seen, were wholly dependent upon photography; and Magritte made photographs of his family and friends, a practice apart from his paintings. Others, who were not card-carrying Surrealists but who shared a kindred vision with the movement's official practitioners, were claimed by the Surrealists. The movement's lasting legacy extended beyond still photography to film, and to other media, notably literature, that are outside the scope of this account.

### Atget's Paris

By no means a practicing Surrealist, **Eugène Atget** (1857–1927) was one of the artists co-opted by the group through Man Ray, who sensed that his vision lay as much in fantasy as in documentation. After having failed at the military and at acting, Atget taught himself photography and began a business to provide photographs, on virtually any subject, for use by artists. By 1897, he had begun to specialize in images of Paris and conceived what a friend called "the ambition to create a collection of all that which both in Paris and its surroundings was artistic and picturesque. An immense subject." Over the next thirty years Atget labored to record the entire face of the French capital, especially those aspects of it most threatened by "progress." Although he was often commissioned by various official agencies to supply visual material on Paris, Atget proceeded with a single-minded devotion to transform facts into art. His unforgettable images go beyond the merely descriptive to evoke a dreamlike world that is also profoundly real though infused with a mesmerized nostalgia for a lost and decaying classical past.

Among the approximately ten thousand pictures by Atget that survive—images of streets, buildings, historic monuments, architectural details, parks, peddlers, vehicles, trees, flowers, rivers, ponds, the interiors of palaces, bourgeois apartments, and ragpickers' hovels—are a series of shop fronts (fig. 15.59) that, with their grinning dummies and superimposed reflections from across the street, would fascinate the Surrealists as "found" images of dislocated



**15.59** Eugène Atget, *Magasin, avenue des Gobelins*, 1925. Albumen-silver print, 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 7" (24 × 18 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

time and place. Man Ray was so taken with *Magasin* that he arranged for it to be reproduced in *La Révolution surréaliste* in 1926. The sense it evokes of a dreamworld, of a strange "reality," of threatened loss, could only have been enhanced by equipment and techniques that were already obsolescent when Atget adopted them and all but anachronistic by the time of his death. As John Szarkowski wrote in *Looking at Pictures*:

Other photographers had been concerned with describing specific facts (documentation), or with exploiting their individual sensibilities (self-expression). Atget encompassed and transcended both approaches when he set himself the task of understanding and interpreting in visual terms a complex, ancient, and living tradition. The pictures that he made in the service of this concept are seductively and deceptively simple, wholly poised, reticent, dense with experience, mysterious, and true.

### Man Ray, Kertész, Tabard, and the Manipulated Image

The photographer most consistently liberated by Surrealism was the one-time New York Dadaist Man Ray (1890–1976) (see figs. 13.24, 13.25), who after 1921 lived in Paris and became a force within the circle around André Breton. In the course of his long career, Man Ray worked not only in photography but also in painting, sculpture, collage, constructed objects, and film. Despite

his preference for the art of painting, it was through photography and film that Man Ray found the most successful expression of his aesthetic goals. From 1924 through the thirties he contributed his photographs regularly to the Surrealist journals as well as to books by Surrealist writers.

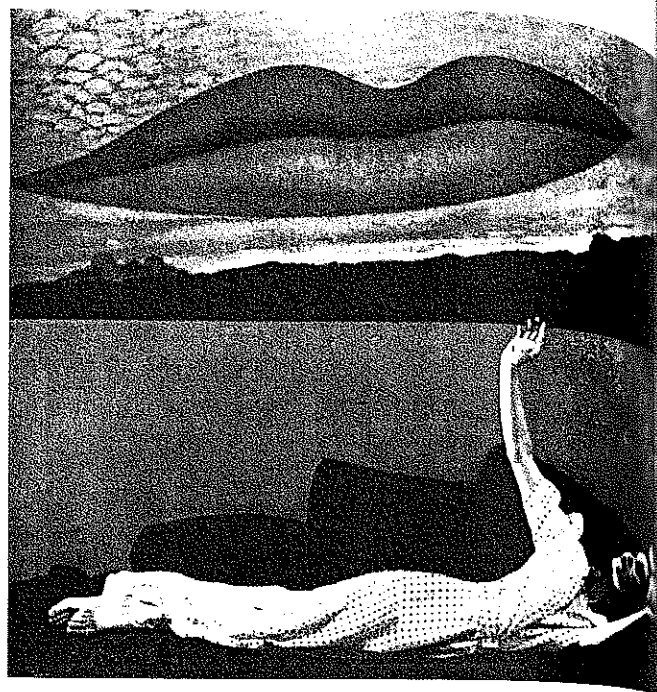
In Paris Man Ray continued to experiment with unorthodox methods in the darkroom. In his Sabattier prints (so named for the early inventor of the technique but generally known as “solarizations”), a developed but unfixed print is exposed to light and then developed again, producing a reversal of tones along the edges of forms and transforming the mundane into something otherworldly (fig. 15.60). Regarding one of his most famous paintings, *Observatory Time—The Lovers* executed in 1930–32, Man Ray wrote:

One of these enlargements of a pair of lips haunted me like a dream remembered: I decided to paint the subject on a scale of superhuman proportions. If there had been a color process enabling me to make a photograph of such dimensions and showing the lips floating over a landscape, I would certainly have preferred to do it that way.

To support himself while carrying out such ambitious painting projects, Man Ray made fashion photographs and photographic portraits of his celebrated friends in art, literature, and society. For *Harper's Bazaar* in 1936 he posed a model wearing a couturier beach robe against the backdrop of *Observatory Time—The Lovers* (fig. 15.61),



**15.60** Man Ray, *Fingers*, 1930. Solarized gelatin-silver print from negative print, 11½ × 8¾" (29.2 × 22.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

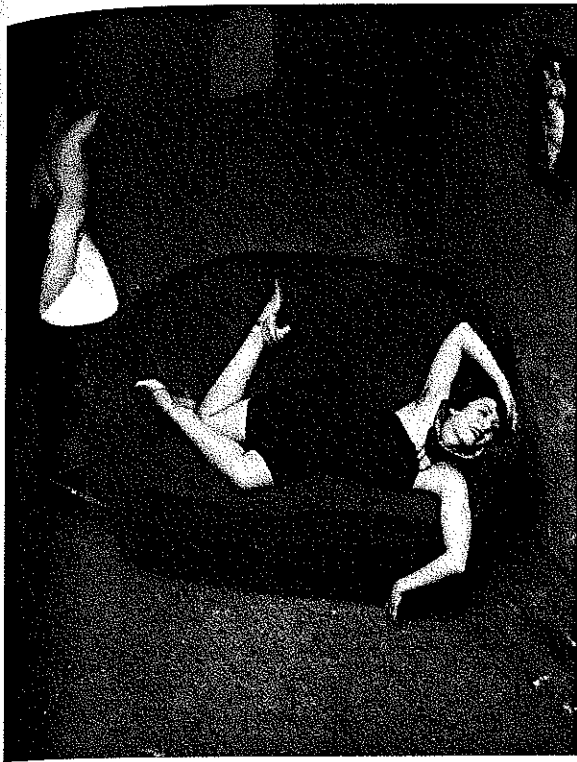


**15.61** Man Ray, *Observatory Time—The Lovers*, 1936. Halftone reproduction. Published in *Harper's Bazaar*, November 1936.

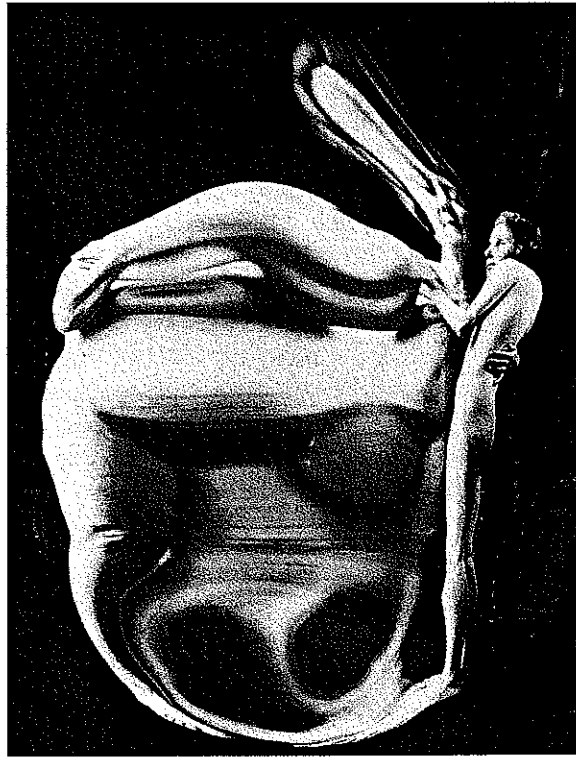
thereby grafting on to this elegant scene of high fashion a hallucinatory image of eroticism and Freudian association so revered by the Surrealists.

A lyrical, life-affirming *joie de vivre*, tethered to a rigorous, original sense of form, characterizes the work of **André Kertész** (1894–1985). Unlike his friend and fellow Hungarian Brassai (see below), Kertész was already a practicing photographer when he arrived in France from Budapest in 1925. It was there, however, that he became a virtuoso of the 35mm camera, the famous Leica introduced in 1925, and emerged as a pioneer of modern photojournalism. Though the handheld camera had been used for years by amateurs, the desire for spontaneity among professionals meant that, by the thirties, the Leica became the preferred camera of photojournalists. In his personal work, Kertész used the flexible new equipment not so much for analytical description, which the large-format camera did better, as for capturing the odd, fleeting moment or elliptical view when life is most, because unexpectedly, revealed. Photographed in the studio of a sculptor friend, Kertész's image of a woman in a pose like a human pinwheel (fig. 15.62) playfully mimics the truncated limbs of the nearby sculpture.

The kind of elastic distortion achieved by Picasso through sheer force of imagination opened a rich vein of possibilities for photography, equipped as this medium was with every sort of optical device. Kertész created his funhouse effects (what he called “Distortions”) by photographing nude models reflected in a special mirror (fig. 15.63). Despite the visual affinities with Surrealist-inspired imagery, Kertész never claimed any allegiance with the Surrealists and was not asked by Breton to enlist in



15.62 André Kertész, *Satiric Dancer, Paris, 1926*. Gelatin-silver print.



15.63 André Kertész, *Distortion No. 4, 1933*. Gelatin-silver print.

their ranks. In 1936 he emigrated to America, where he freelanced for the leading illustrated magazines, with the exception of *Life*. The editors of that publication, one crucial to the development of American photography in the thirties (see fig. 18.46), told him his photographs “spoke too much.”

**Maurice Tabard** (1897–1984) was born in France but came to the United States in 1914. After studying at the New York Institute of Photography and establishing himself as a portrait photographer in Baltimore, Tabard returned to Paris in 1928 to make fashion photographs. He soon came to know photographers Man Ray, Henri Cartier-Bresson (see below), and Kertész, as well as the painter Magritte, and became a well-known figure in Parisian avant-garde circles. Like Man Ray, he made solarized photographs and continued his creative photography alongside his more commercial fashion work. The methods by which Tabard obtained his Surrealistic imagery differed significantly from those of artists like Kertész or Cartier-Bresson. While these artists found their images by chance or, in the case of Kertész’s *Distortions*, a special mirror, Tabard engaged in the elaborate manipulation of his craft in the darkroom. His haunting photographs involve double exposures and negative printing, sometimes combining several techniques within the same image. In an untitled work (fig. 15.64), Tabard locked the figure into place with a ladder-shaped shadow pattern that slyly mimics the very shape of a roll of negative film. Other superimposed



15.64 Maurice Tabard, *Untitled, 1929*. Gelatin-silver print. Collection Robert Shapazian, Fresno, California.

imagery, including what appears to be the shadow of a tennis racket at the lower left, contributes to an overall sense of disorienting complexity.

### The Development of Photojournalism: Brassai, Bravo, Model, and Cartier-Bresson

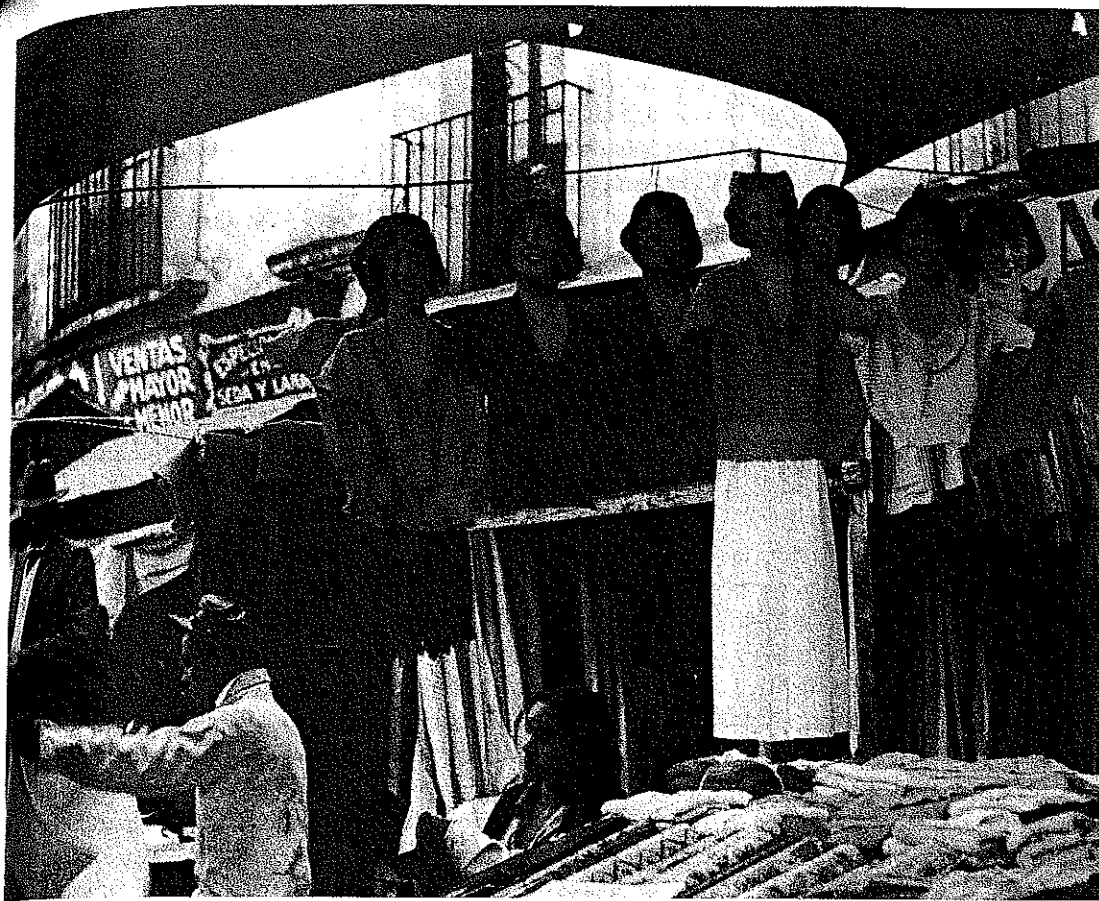
Brassai (Gyula Halász) (1899–1984) took his pseudonym from his native city, Brasso, in the Transylvanian part of Romania. Following his days as a painting student in Budapest and Berlin, Brassai arrived in the French capital in 1924 and promptly fell in love with its streets, bars, and brothels, artists, poets, and writers, even its graffiti. He sought out these subjects nightly and slept throughout the day. Once introduced to the small-format camera by his friend Kertész, Brassai proceeded to record the whole of the Parisian human comedy, doing so as faithfully and objectively as possible (fig. 15.65). That desire for objectivity prompted Brassai to turn down an invitation from Breton to join the Surrealists. He watched for the moment when character seemed most naked and most rooted in time and place. Brassai published the results of his nocturnal Parisian forays in the successful book *Paris de nuit* (1933). In a more Surrealist vein, he produced images of *sculptures involontaires* (“involuntary sculptures”), close-up photographs of the bizarre shapes formed by discarded tickets, cigarette ends, and other throwaway objects.



**15.65** Brassai, *Dance Hall*, 1932. Gelatin-silver print, 11½ × 9¼" (29.2 × 23.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Born in Mexico City, Manuel Álvarez Bravo (b. 1902) was a self-taught photographer whose work contributed to the artistic renaissance that flourished in Mexico during the thirties. He befriended many of Mexico's leading avant-garde artists during this period, including the muralists Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco, whose work, often recorded in Álvarez Bravo's photographs, is discussed in chapter 18. In addition, Mexico attracted many exceptional photographers from abroad. Among those foreigners was Tina Modotti (see fig. 18.61), who encouraged Álvarez Bravo's work and put him in contact with the American photographer Edward Weston (see fig. 9.15). Álvarez Bravo also met Paul Strand (see fig. 18.21) in Mexico in 1933 and befriended Cartier-Bresson (see fig. 15.68) during the Frenchman's visit to Mexico the following year. His work represents a distinctive blend of cultural influences, fusing imagery and traditions indigenous to Mexico with current ideas imported from Europe and America, including those of the Surrealists. His work was illustrated in the last issue of *Minotaure*. Like Cartier-Bresson, Álvarez Bravo's penchant for discovering the visual poetry inherent in the everyday world could result in delightful and mysterious found images. He happened upon a group of mannequins, a favorite Surrealist stand-in for the human figure, which he captured in a photograph of an outdoor market from the early thirties (fig. 15.66). The smiling cardboard mannequins, themselves merely mounted photographs, repeat the same woman's face, which unlike their real counterparts below, meet the viewer's gaze.

Perhaps closer in spirit to the Austrian Expressionists than to the Surrealists is the work of Lisette Model (1901–83), a photographer born in turn-of-the-century Vienna to an affluent family of Jewish and Catholic descent. Model wanted first and foremost to become a concert pianist. In Vienna, she studied music with the composer Arnold Schönberg and through his circle became aware of the activities of the Viennese avant-garde. In 1926, following the loss of the family's fortune during the war, she moved to France with her mother. It was in Paris, in 1933, that she decided to abandon music and become a professional photographer, learning the rudiments of the technique from her younger sister, her friend Florence Henri, and Rogi André, a photographer (and former wife of Kertész) who advised her to photograph only those things that passionately interested her. Model was, above all, interested in people. She regarded the world as a vast cast of characters from which she constructed her own narratives. With her twin-lens Rolleiflex in hand, during a visit to Nice to see her mother, she photographed wealthy vacationers soaking up the Riviera sun along that city's Promenade des Anglais (fig. 15.67). Model wielded her camera like an invasive tool. Catching her wary subjects off-guard, she approached them closely, sometimes squatting to record their reactions at eye level. She then cropped her images in the darkroom, augmenting the



**15.66** Manuel Álvarez Bravo, *Laughing Mannequins*, c. 1932. Gelatin-silver print, 7 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (18.6 × 24.3 cm). The Art Institute of Chicago.



**15.67** Lisette Model, *Promenade des Anglais*, 1934. Gelatin-silver print on paper, mounted on pasteboard, 13 $\frac{1}{2}$  × 10 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (34.2 × 27.6 cm). The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

confrontational nature of the close-up effect. In 1935 her photographs from Nice were published in the leftwing journal *Regards* as disparaging examples of a complacent middle class, “the most hideous specimens of the human animal.” While it is not clear whether Model intended the photographs to be interpreted in this way, she did allow their publication again in 1941 in the weekly *PM*, one of the American publications for which she worked after she settled in New York in 1938. *PM* published the photos to demonstrate the French characteristics that, in its opinion, led to the country’s capitulation in World War II. This photograph was illustrated under the heading “Cynicism.” By the fifties Model had become an influential teacher; her students included the American photographer Diane Arbus (see fig. 21.81).

With its power to record, heighten, or distort reality—a power vastly increased with the invention of the small, handheld 35mm Leica—photography proved a natural medium for artists moved by the Surrealist spirit. One of the most remarkable of these was France’s **Henri Cartier-Bresson** (b. 1908), who, after studying painting with the Cubist André Lhote, took up photography and worked as a photojournalist covering such epochal events as the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). His is a photojournalism broadly defined, however, for his magical images, especially those made before World War II, have little to do with a discernible narrative or straight reportage of visual fact. From a very young age Cartier-Bresson was powerfully influenced by the Surrealist theories of André Breton. He matured quickly as a photographer, and in the first half of





**15.68** Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Cordoba, Spain*, 1933. Gelatin-silver print.

the thirties, in photographs made in France, Spain, Italy, and Mexico, he created some of the most memorable images of the twentieth century.

The photographer, freed from the encumbrance of a tripod, could exploit new opportunities, pursuing the action as it unfolded. Cartier-Bresson has said of his practice:

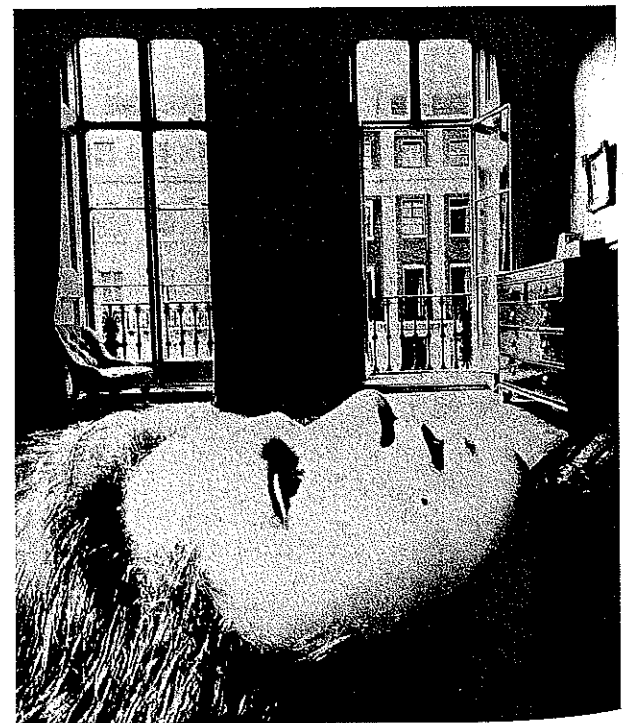
I prowled the streets all day feeling very strung up and ready to pounce, determined to ‘trap’ life—to preserve life in the act of living. Above all, I craved to seize the whole essence, in the confines of a single photograph, of some situation that was in the process of unrolling itself before my eyes.

Citing Man Ray, Atget, and Kertész as his chief influences, Cartier-Bresson allowed his viewfinder to “discover” a composition within the world moving about him. Once this had been seized upon, the photographer printed the whole uncropped negative, an image that captured the subject in “the decisive moment” (the title of his 1952 book). *Cordoba, Spain* (fig. 15.68) is a witty juxtaposition of art and life, as in the collages of his friend Max Ernst. A woman clasps a hand to her bosom, unconsciously repeating the gesture in the corset advertisement behind her. The woman squints into the photographer’s lens while the eyes of the poster model are “blinded” by an advertisement that has been pasted over her face. In this deceptively simple

image, the artist sets up a complex visual dialogue between art and life, illusion and reality, youth and old age. Cartier-Bresson’s pictures, with their momentary equipoise among form, expression, and content, have served as models of achievement to photographers for more than half a century.

### An English Perspective: Brandt

Although England’s **Bill Brandt** (1904–83) was trained as a photographer in the late twenties in Paris, where he worked in the studio of Man Ray, he made mostly documentary photographs in the thirties, including a famous series on the coal miners in the North of England during the depression. After World War II, he rediscovered his early days in Surrealist Paris and gave up documentation in favor of reexploring the “poetry” of optical distortion, or what he called “something beyond reality.” Between 1945 and 1960, he photographed nudes with a special Kodak camera that had an extremely wide-angle lens and a tiny aperture. The distortions transformed the nudes into Surreal dream landscapes. He exploits the same distorted perspective in *Portrait of a Young Girl, Eaton Place, London* from 1955 (fig. 15.69). The dreamlike effect is enhanced by the artist’s characteristically high-contrast printing style, where portions of the room disappear into blackness. Brandt also continued to make portraits after the war, recording the likenesses of many of the greatest luminaries in the world of literature and art, including leading Surrealists such as Magritte, Arp, Miró, and Picasso.



**15.69** Bill Brandt, *Portrait of a Young Girl, Eaton Place, London*, 1955. Gelatin-silver print, 17 × 14¾" (43.2 × 37.5 cm).

