

Exactly parallel with the development of abstract art runs another line of attack on the painting of the material world, one which begins with the work of visionary painters like Chagall and de Chirico, assumes a violently anti-art character in Dada, and finally emerges as a part of the international surrealist movement. Surrealism itself, it must be made clear, was neither an artistic style nor an aesthetic doctrine; it is best described as an attitude to life, a sort of religion, that if understood and accepted would bring about, it was believed, the economic and spiritual liberation of man. Its ideas were every bit as revolutionary and utopian as those of the abstract artists. But surrealism appealed to painters of a different temperament, and was romantic rather than classical in spirit, putting qualities of passion, intuition, feeling above reason, harmony and order.

Chagall and de Chirico arrived in Paris in 1910-11, young painters attracted by the reputation of modern French painting. They remained until the outbreak of war, and both caught Apollinaire's attention, for although he was a personal friend of the cubists, Apollinaire at heart preferred a more poetic, visionary art; he looked for artists who shared his ambitions and could find some way of transcending the everyday to reach the supreme-state of what he called *sur-réalisme*. Apollinaire even called his farce, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, 'une drame Surréaliste', and by the time of his premature death in 1918 had sown the seeds of a new literary movement.

Me and the Village (1911; Ill. 143) was the kind of picture Apollinaire admired. Marc Chagall (1887-1985) filled his canvases with images of his Russian-Jewish childhood - the wandering pedlar, the bearded rabbi, his eccentric violin-playing uncle, the farmhouses and farm animals. An immense nostalgia pervades his work; also a feeling that this world, left so far behind, expressed

in all its aspects a God-given joy that Paris could neither rival nor replace. It is of course the lost world of childhood, a moment of innocence and revelation. Memories flood back in no rational order, nor are they submitted to any logic. Upside-down and truncated figures, mundane objects in unusual associations, enormous disparities of size and space – all are freely permitted.

If Chagall's early painting is inspired day-dreaming, Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978) presents us with the dream itself. The world he created in his Parisian years lacks the childlike ingenuousness of Chagall: in 1913 Apollinaire had already commented upon 'these strange landscapes full of new intentions, of powerful architecture and of great sensibility'. De Chirico had trained in Munich and knew the work of the German symbolists. He was also familiar with the philosophy of Nietzsche, and in his paintings tried to capture a particular Nietzschean sense of foreboding and apprehension – the feeling that the superficial appearance of the exterior world concealed a different and a deeper reality. This was something enigmatic, something surprising to the artist himself. Yet he too drew on early memories: of Italian piazzas, of Greek sculptures, of the railways which his father had engineered. The title alone of *Nostalgia of the Infinite* (1913; Ill. 145) reveals its intentions, as does the irrational juxtaposition of objects – visual metaphors designed to disturb.

André Breton, the theorist of surrealism, saw in these early paintings of de Chirico a remarkable representation of that state of inescapable loneliness and irremediable anxiety which he believed to be part of the human condition. In accordance with Freud's theories, Breton was later to interpret the towers and arcades, the trains and stations, as sexual symbols. But de Chirico himself had used the imagery in all innocence, and, as if frightened by such interpretations, he at times denounced his early works. After 1915 and the return to Italy he could never paint in the same way again.

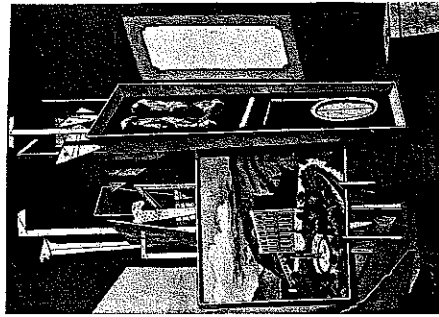
During the war years de Chirico practised another kind of painting which he called metaphysical; in these works the images are moved beyond the physical, into a world where mannequins replace human beings, and banal *trompe l'œil* objects – matchboxes, fish, biscuits and loaves of bread – impose themselves unexpectedly on the pictorial space, blurring any distinction one tries

to make between illusion and reality (Ill. 144). Such objects are obsessions: the logic is that of the dream, outside of measurable time and in an inescapable menacing present that is about to disintegrate at any moment. Then, around 1919, the vision died, and, like Chagall, de Chirico was left to grow old with an essentially commonplace imagination.

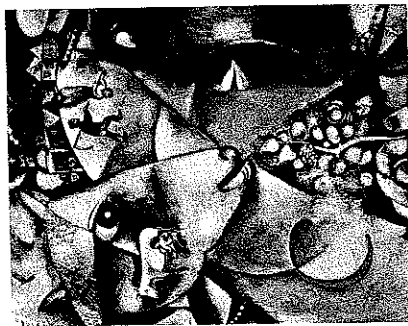
Both Chagall and particularly de Chirico came to be regarded as precursors of surrealism because of their emphasis on the dream and the irrational. At the same time, certain works executed by Picasso in these immediately pre-war years carried a comparably disturbing message. The *Woman in an Armchair* of 1913 (Ill. 111) marked the return of the assertive feminine image in Picasso's work after its near-disappearance at the height of hermetic cubism: it could only be regarded as a violent and erotic portent of the compulsive beauty to be sought by the surrealists. The cubist invention of collage and its extension into constructivism offered another way of approaching reality, carrying undertones of equivocation.

As we have seen, it was Marcel Duchamp who first asked awkward questions about the implications of these cubist practices; his scepticism was to culminate in his exhibiting signed ready-made objects, like a hat-stand or a urinal, which challenge us to deny that they are art at all. Such anarchic gestures were appropriate at the height of a world war, when civilized nations seemed to have plunged into an escalating lunacy in which all regard for the very human values they were meant to be defending had been lost. What could the artist do but protest? Duchamp had transferred his disruptive activities from Paris to New York, but in other neutral cities, Barcelona and Zürich in particular, other exiled poets and painters were meeting in the cafés, planning their anti-war, anti-bourgeois, anti-art demonstrations. It was in the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich, early in 1916, that Dada was born.

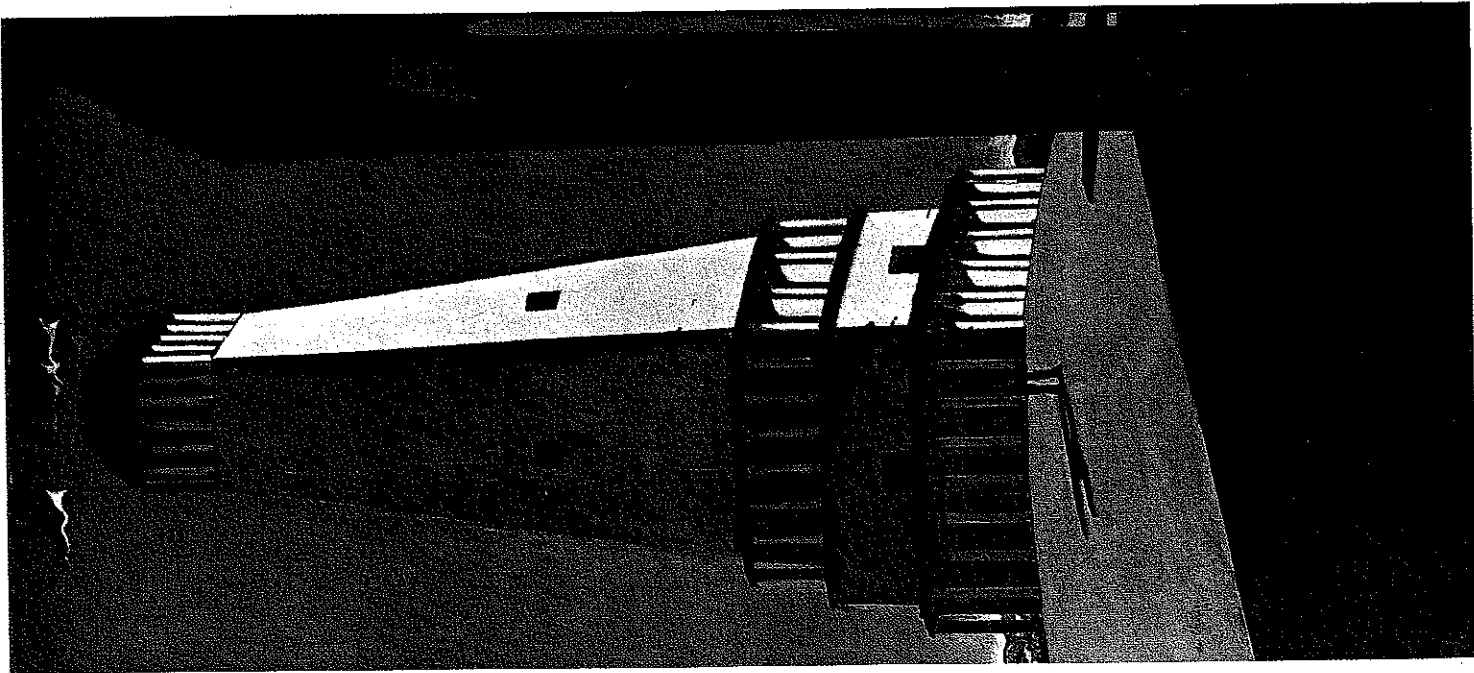
'Dada', said its inventor, the Rumanian poet, Tristan Tzara, 'signifies nothing'. But this initial nihilism was inevitably superseded by the positive action of art activity, and thus Dada began to develop as both protest movement and artistic philosophy. The most considerable artist associated with Zürich Dada was the Alsace-born Hans (Jean) Arp (1887–1966), who had before 1914 been acquainted with both the French cubists and the



144 GIORGIO DE CHIRICO (1888–1978) *Grand Metaphysica Interior, c. 1917. Oil on canvas, 37 3/4" x 27 1/2" (96 x 69.5). Museum of Modern Art, New York*



143 MARC CHAGALL (1887–1985) *Me and the Village, 1911. Oil on canvas, 6' 4" x 5' (193 x 152.5). Museum of Modern Art, New York (Mrs Simon Guggenheim Fund)*

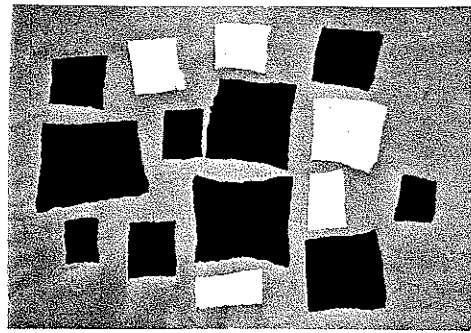


145 GIORGIO DE
CHIRICO (1888-1978)
Nostalgia of the Infinite,
1913. Oil on canvas, 4' 5"
x 2' 2" (135.5 x 64.5).
Museum of Modern Art,
New York

proto-abstract Munich *Blauer Reiter* painters. A refugee from the haphazard unreason of total war, Arp was, not surprisingly, preoccupied with the question posed by Mallarmé in his poem, *Un coup de dés n'abolira le hasard* — should we not allow for accident in artistic creation? Tearing up strips of coloured paper, Arp let the fragments fall at random; or he dropped a coil of rope upon the ground. It is clear from the *Collage with Squares arranged according to the Laws of Chance* of 1916-17 (Ill. 146) that the accidental did not altogether determine the composition: the squares are too neatly ordered for that. But Arp wanted to assert the principle that the laws of chance must be recognized as an essential part of the creative act. With an awareness of new thinking in psychology denied to Mallarmé he could be the more dogmatic. Exploitation of accident was one way of achieving the vital step of placing the unconscious in a fruitful relationship with art.

Between 1918 and 1920 Dada spread from Zürich into Germany. In Berlin, racked by inflation and revolution, it assumed a political role: 'Dada is German Bolshevism' was the cry. The Berlin Dadaists were immediately responsive to the artistic manifestations of the new Soviet regime, and helped make Berlin the Russian channel to the West. Their original contribution was the extension of collage into photography with the invention of *photo montage*. This technique was at once used by John Heartfield (born Helmut Herzfelde, 1891-1968) for direct political ends, but its artistic effectiveness was quickly to be irrevocably diluted by commercial exploitation.

Most of the artists involved with Berlin Dada found that their desire to use art for social criticism led them inevitably to adopt more realistic styles, as if this were the only way of reaching a large audience. This is particularly clear in the case of George Grosz (1893-1959), who became a savage satirical cartoonist, pillorying the Prussian ruling caste of army officer, capitalist and priest with drawings redolent of violence, cruelty and degraded sexuality. At the same time, Grosz, like his contemporary Otto Dix (1891-1969), adopted an exaggeratedly naturalistic style of portraiture in the manner of the German primitives (Ill. 147). Two labels were coined to describe this way of painting: *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) and Magic Realism. Both stress the return



146 JEAN ARP (1887-1966)
Collage with Squares arranged according to the Laws of Chance,
1916-17. Collage of coloured papers,
19 7/8" x 13 1/2" (45.5 x 33.5). Col-
lection Museum of Modern Art, New
York



147 GEORGE GROSZ (1893-
1959) *Portrait of the Poet Max
Hermann-Neisser*, 1924. Oil on
canvas, 39 1/2" x 36 3/4" (100 x 93).
Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim

to the object, to content rather than to form, but in a suggestive, somewhat mysterious context which underlines the subterranean connexion with nascent surrealism.

In Hanover, Dada found a lone adherent in Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948), who abandoned expressionism to, as he saw it, free art from the tyranny of traditional materials. Anything served Schwitters for the making of a work of art, any sort of old rubbish, picked up from the street or out of the dustbin. In his constructions and collages (Ill. 150), Schwitters handled this discarded refuse with affection, selecting it for its formal qualities of shape, colour, texture, etc., but not hiding its original identity in any way. Thus a fragment of the letter-heading 'Kommerzbank' (Commercial Bank) provides a non-sense generic title - *merz* - for all of Schwitters' artistic activities, which include Merz poetry, Merz building and a Merz review.

Schwitters made Merz into a way of life. He was committed to the practice of his art, but to nothing else; it was a private business without any broader implications, resolutely anti-utopian, anti-idealist. His artistic sympathies lay not with the surrealists, but with the second, pragmatic, generation of abstract artists, and it was to van Doesburg and Lissitzky that he opened the pages of the Merz review. The formal aspect of Schwitters' work reflects this position; and, although accident is introduced into the artistic process, it is subjected, as with Arp, to a logical ordering on the artist's part. Seeking a quiet place to work, Schwitters moved from Germany to Norway in 1935, and in 1940 to London and then to the English Lake District, where he died in the obscurity that his exquisite art seemed to invite.

Cologne Dada was dominated by the personality of Max Ernst (1891-1976). His wartime experiences in the German army had induced him to abandon academic study of philosophy and psychology (he already knew of Freud's theories) in order to 'find the myths of his time'. The only way Ernst could conceive of expressing these myths was by means of symbolic images, as in *The Elephant Célebes*, 1921, and *Oedipus Rex*, 1922 (Ill. 148) which possess undeniable hallucinatory power. The only precedent for such dislocation of the expected was set by de Chirico, whom Ernst revered, but from the beginning he was more successful in appealing to a collective unconscious, less trapped in private obsessions.

Ernst had had no training as a painter, and in a sense this would have been irrelevant to his art, which is a combination of esoteric book learning and autobiography, projected impersonally. He conceived of art as being 'beyond beauty and nature, beyond questions of good and bad taste.' Images exist everywhere to be used: thus art can as easily be made by the creative displacement of illustrations cut out of sale catalogues, scientific treatises, 19th-century pulp fiction, as it can by the spreading of paint over canvas. Self-analysis allowed Ernst an insight into his own motivations, and led him to concentrate upon that area hitherto almost forbidden to art, namely explicit sex. His early use of machine forms as analogues of male and female sexual organs confirms the pervasive influence of Marcel Duchamp in Dada circles immediately after the war.

Ernst, however, quickly replaced machine by metaphor, and, like Rossetti, sometimes added a poetic exegesis to the picture to make his intention absolutely clear. As if the visual imagery were not explicit enough, the prose poem pasted on the back of *Les hommes n'en savent rien* (Of this men shall know nothing) of 1923 (Ill. 149) tells us that this is a picture about the harmonious balance of the sexes:

'The crescent (yellow and parachute) stops the little whistle falling to the ground.

'The whistle... thinks it is climbing to the sun.

'The sun is divided into two so that it can revolve better.

'The right leg is bent...'

'The hand hides the earth. Through this movement the earth takes on the importance of a sexual organ.

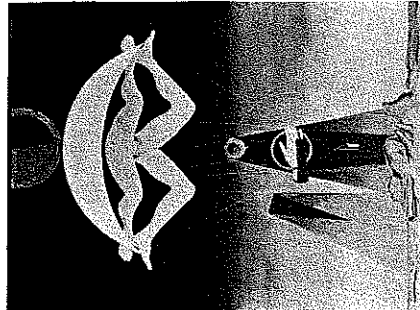
'The moon runs through its phases and eclipses with the utmost speed.'

Les hommes n'en savent rien is dedicated to André Breton, who had first heard of 'Dadamax' in 1920, and arranged to show his work in Paris. Ernst's reputation spread quickly in French literary circles, and in 1922 he left Germany to settle in Paris. To old Dada friends like Arp and Tzara new ones were added - the poets Paul Eluard, Philippe Soupault, and above all André Breton. From this circle surrealism was born.

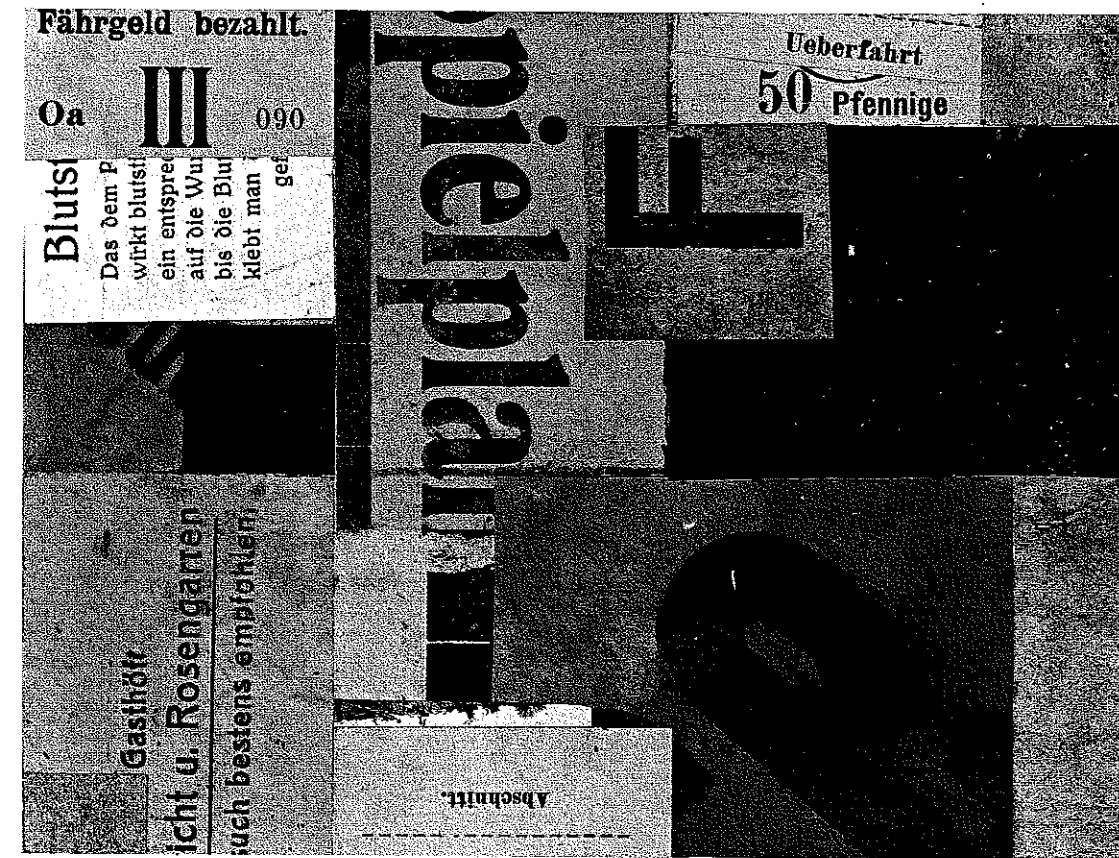
Its inventor and high priest, André Breton (1896-1966), was a complex character; like Marinetti he was a better publicist than poet. As a wartime medical auxiliary



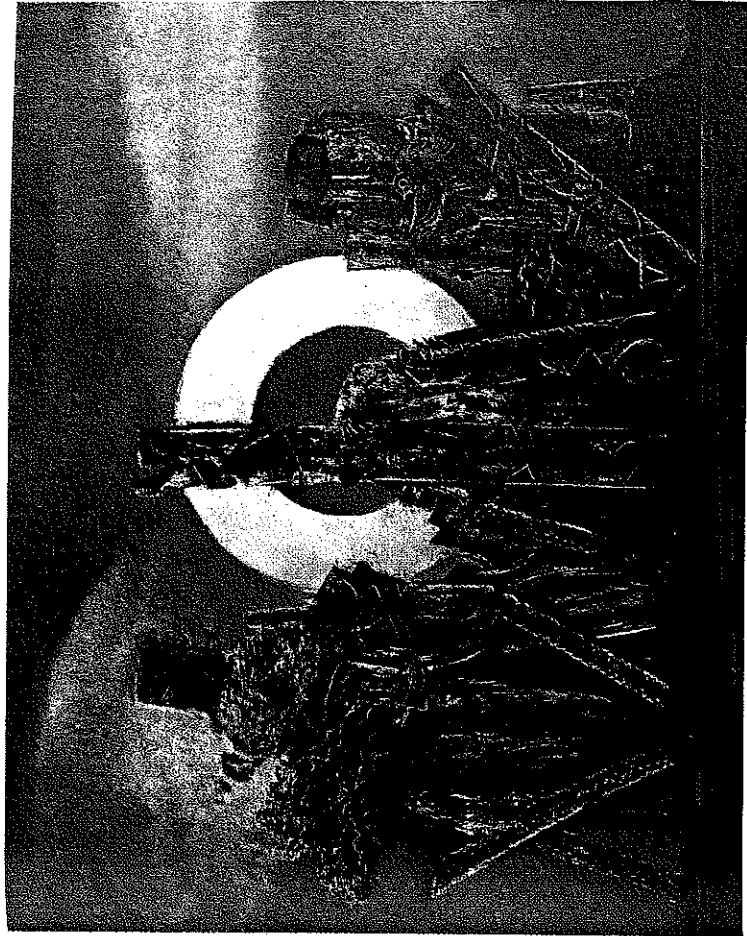
148 MAX ERNST (1891-1976)
Oedipus Rex, 1922. Oil on canvas
35" x 46" (89 x 116.5). *Priva*
Collection



149 MAX ERNST (1891-1976) C
this men shall know nothing, 1923
Oil on canvas, 31 1/2" x 25" (81 x 64).
Tate Modern, London



150 KURT SCHWITTERS (1887-1948) *Merz 83 (Drawing F)*, 1920. Collage of cut paper wrappers, announcements and tickets, 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (14.5 x 11.5). Collection Museum of Modern Art, New York (Katherine S. Dreier Bequest)



151 MAX ERNST (1891-1976) *Grande Forêt*, 1927. Oil on canvas 3'9" x 4'10" (114.5 x 146.4). Kunst Museum, Basel

he had discovered that Freud's concept of the unconscious gave a demonstrably better explanation of the human psyche than anything previously offered; and in 1921 he called on Freud in Vienna. Not that their ideas were identical; for one thing, Breton already believed that the dream is paramount and has its own objective reality. A whole life-style was crystallizing in his mind. Despite his personal commitment to experimental poetry and his involvement in Dada manifestations in Paris, Breton was an earnest and serious-minded man. Even nihilism and anarchy finally succumb to the French desire for clarity and order. So reason is put to the service of unreason and out of anti-art comes the new art of surrealism.

The Surrealist Manifesto of 1924 can simplistically be regarded as a restatement of Romanticism, brought up to date by Breton's awareness of Freud. For Breton believed that the balance between reason and imagination, between conscious and unconscious, had been upset with deleterious results - most apparent in the 1914-18 war, which he had been fortunate enough to survive.

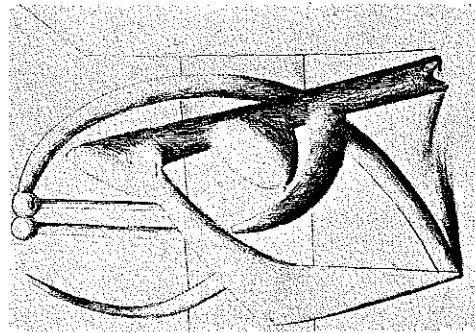
'Surrealism', he said, 'is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of association hitherto neglected, in the omnipotence of the dream, in the disinterested play of thought.' He wished to give primacy to the feminine qualities of feeling and intuition, placing them above reason and logic: hence the anti-classical bias.

To achieve his aim, Breton proposed the systematic exploration of the unconscious, which is most obviously revealed in dreams. 'I believe in the future resolution of these two states, apparently so contradictory, which are dream and reality, into a kind of absolute reality - a super-reality, if one may call it such.' He suggested a technique for achieving this super-reality, this union of dream and reality: 'pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to reveal the actual process of thought . . . in the absence of any control exercised by reason, and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations.' This idea had been adopted from Freud's use of automatic writing and of word association in the course of his psycho-analytical investigations. Breton had himself employed the technique on shell-shocked patients during the war, and realized that the images so obtained could be used to provide raw material for the artist.

With his poet friend Soupault, Breton from 1920 onwards experimented with automatic writing, and it soon became clear to them that - as in Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* - it is the visual imagery of dream-inspired or associational poetry that carries the power. Thus Breton, who conceived of surrealism as essentially a literary and philosophical movement came, a little unwillingly, to an acceptance of 'that lamentable expedient', painting.

No painter or sculptor signed the 1924 Manifesto, but several were mentioned as being surrealist, and with some others showed at the first surrealist exhibition in November 1925. Breton associated with the movement the names of Picasso, Duchamp, de Chirico, Klee, Ernst, Arp, Masson and Miró. By 1930 Tanguy, Magritte and Dali had come into Breton's orbit, and the first circle of surrealist painters was complete.

As we have seen, Picasso kept himself somewhat apart from surrealist activities, as befitted a person of his generation and artistic status, but there is no doubt that he found the surrealist eruption a stimulating one, and that it helped shape the direction his art took in the late 1920s and early 1930s. It gave him a new insight into



152 PABLO PICASSO (1881-1973)
Design for Monument: Cannes Bathes,
1927. Charcoal drawing, 11 1/2" x 8 1/2"
(30 x 22). Musée Picasso, Paris



153 PAUL KLEE (1879-1940)
Angel of Death, 1940. Oil on canvas,
20" x 26 1/2" (51 x 67). Paul Klee
Collection, Kunstmuseum, Bern

his own personality, and encouraged him to pursue suggestive, even irrational, associations, and to be less inhibited about expressing private feelings in his art. The idea of metamorphosis, fundamental to surrealism, fascinated Picasso, with such extraordinary results as his transformation of the nude figure into a colossal bone- or stone-like monument designed to celebrate the memory of Apollinaire (Ill. 152). Such pictures provided a point of reference for the younger surrealist painters: very few of them escaped the influence of Picasso.

Duchamp had apparently given up painting altogether by 1924, to concentrate on chess and some discreet art dealing in the support of old friends. De Chirico jeopardized Breton's enthusiastic admiration for his earlier work with his continued neo-classical paintings of prancing horses in landscapes strewn with improbable ruins. But Klee remained the joker in the surrealist pack, keeping his distance, geographically as well as spiritually, inviting inclusion and yet rejecting it.

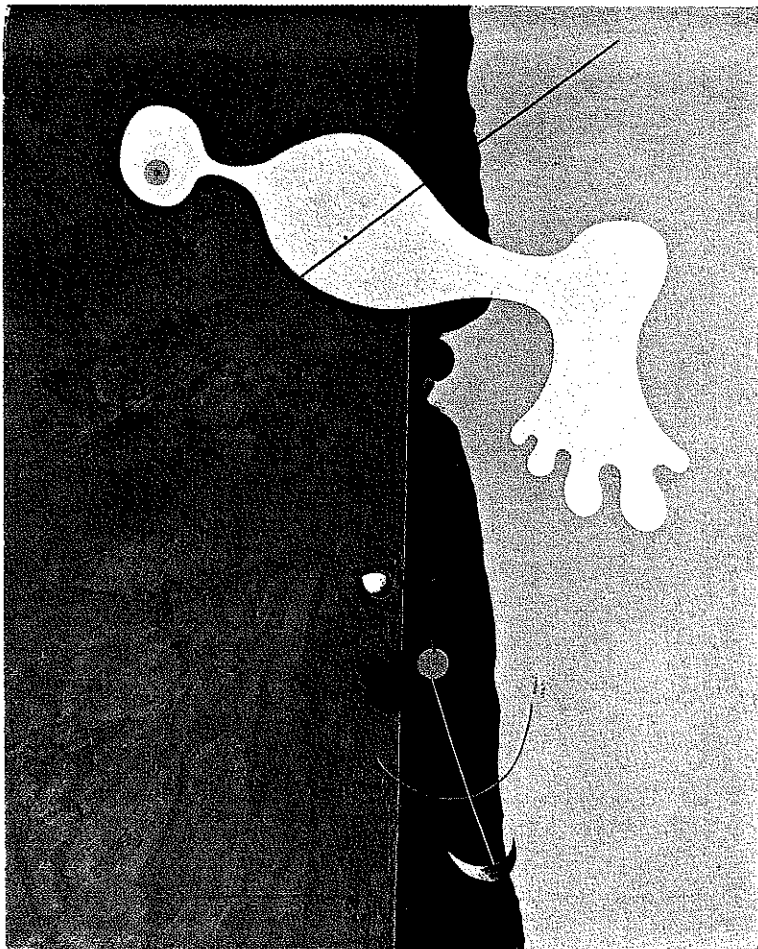
Paul Klee (1879-1940) indeed offers the same problem of fair assessment as does his Bauhaus colleague, Kandinsky. His Swiss birth, musical talent, poetic temperament, early facility as an etcher and contact with the *Blauer Reiter* (and Franz Marc in particular) all helped to shape a singular artistic personality. His art was endlessly inventive, but cold to the point of inhumanity, as Klee admitted when he confessed: 'what my art lacks is a kind of passionate warmth . . . I seek a distant point at the origins of creation, and there I sense a kind of formula

of 1940 (Ill. 153) is a hieroglyph for those Rilkean guardian figures that Klee felt were watching and waiting for him, heralds of impending death. Yet it transcends Klee's personal situation with the power of a universal image, and reminds us of the strange durability of the visual symbol, rooted in some sort of human pre-consciousness.

Klee's semi-automatic techniques, and later his invented signs and symbols offer a close parallel with surrealist practices in the 1920s and early 1930s respectively. Soon after his arrival in Paris, Ernst was encouraged by André Breton to experiment with means of starting work on a picture by recourse to the accidental. The idea was for the artist to 'make a stain' without conscious control, and then exploit the suggestions implicit in that stain. There was a variety of ways of making the stain: Ernst's favourite was *frottage*, or rubbing – that is, taking the imprint of wood graining or a leaf or sackcloth by pressing it into paint or prepared paper. Other methods included *smudge*, which involved utilizing the trail left by the smoke of a candle moved at random under a white canvas; and *decalcomania*, or making a blot with a paint-laden brush, and then smudging it by pressing another sheet of cloth or paper on top.

Ernst used these techniques most successfully in the pictures of *Forêts* which he made between 1927 and 1933 (Ill. 151). Pieces of wood have been pressed into the paint, so that natural textures provide a metaphor for the trees of the forest. The inevitable compass-drawn moon has a patently artificial quality, but the result is the creation of a secret, haunted place, alien to man. Ernst's pictorial world is slowly taken over by natural forces, and in the Arizona paintings of the 1940s rocks and desert vegetation exclude human participation. Always Ernst's search for 'the myths of his time' is paramount: painting is the making of symbols, and questions of aesthetic quality are irrelevant to the meaning of art.

The most enthusiastic surrealist practitioner of automatic techniques was André Masson (1896–1987). He adapted Breton's automatic writing to a kind of abstract calligraphy, where the rhythm of the fast-moving brush-stroke generates an extraordinary violence and vitality on the picture surface. Already in *Battle of Fishes* of 1927 (Ill. 155), coloured sand is scattered over canvas ran-

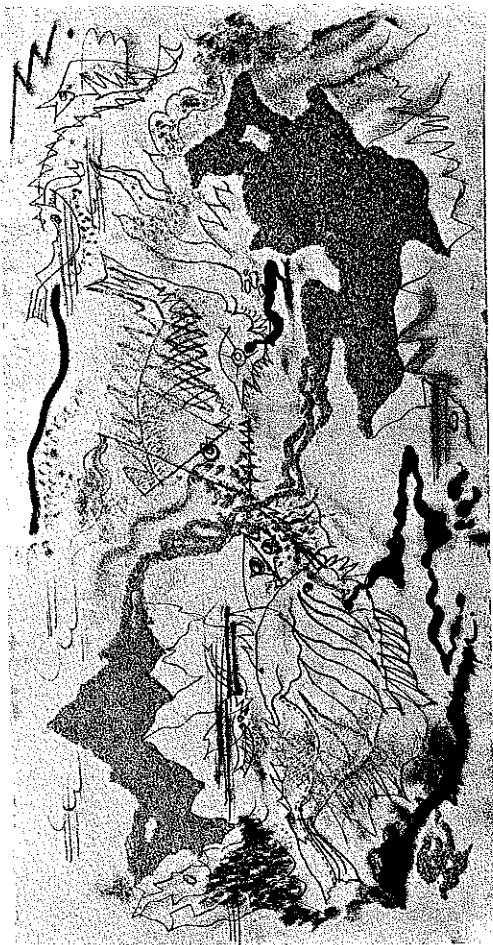


154 JOAN MIRÓ (1893–1983)
Person throwing a Stone at a Bird, 1926.
Oil on canvas, 29" × 36¼" (73.5 ×
92). *Museum of Modern Art*,
New York

for man, animal, plant, earth, fire, water, air, and all circling forces at once.

This philosophy led Klee to attempt to subject art to the laws of nature – to allow the work to grow in the artist's hands, starting without preconception in as primitive a state as possible, and seeing what emerges: in a celebrated phrase of Herbert Read's, 'letting a line go for a walk'. Though Klee never abjured the rational, it was this dependence on a semi-automatic process that so interested the surrealists. Klee's insistence on art as a way of reaching through to a primordial super-reality places him firmly between the surrealist and abstract camps, on the common ground that exists between them.

The irrational forces of the unconscious were very real to Klee, never more so than in the paintings of his final years. The charm and humour of the little Bauhaus pictures begin to cloy, even the fertile experiment looks trivial in the political situation of Germany in the 1930s, and Klee's work takes on a new dimension, both physically and in emotional content. The *Angel of Death*



155 ANDRÉ MASSON (1896-1987) *Battle of Fishes*, 1927. Oil, sand and pencil on canvas, 14 1/4" x 28 3/4" (36.5 x 73). *Museum of Modern Art, New York*

domly daubed with glue; as the title indicates, animal violence is used as a metaphor for human passion. After quarrelling with Breton in 1929, Masson was expelled from the surrealist movement. For a time he pursued metaphorical painting in search of a way of expressing his view of man's relationship to nature: like Ernst (and Redon before him), Masson was preoccupied with the idea of germination, of blossoming — the awakening of life in nature, in the human personality, and in the work of art. Restless experiment, constant changes of style, and a diminution of passion in the late work has somewhat tarnished Masson's reputation, and his decisive contribution to the development of Jackson Pollock's abstract expressionism has gone largely unremarked.

Of all the painters showing at the 1925 surrealist exhibition, Joan Miró (1893-1983) was, according to Breton, 'the most surrealist of us all'. As he had come from Barcelona with a chance to meet Picasso, Miró had a swift introduction to modern art. Yet, arriving in Paris as he did in the very early 1920s at a moment of reaction against extremism, Miró was affected by the search for a new kind of realism. His first mature paintings are nostalgic evocations of his childhood in Catalonia, in which the objects and occupants of the family farm are depicted with a scrupulous over-sharp realism that verges on the hallucinatory. Regressing into a child's world, Miró, now influenced by surrealist ideas, began to paint in a childlike manner. The *Person throwing a Stone at a Bird* of 1926 (Ill. 154) is half-recollection, half-

dream, with the enormous foot shape assuming the form of the person. Free play is given to irrational (and often erotic) associations. The picture has a spontaneity and a gaiety arising from an innocent eye and a knowing, even sophisticated, exploitation of form and colour.

Miró was breaking down pictorial conventions. For a time he introduced words into paintings to indicate his belief in the equivalence of poetry and painting, and like the other surrealists, Ernst in particular, he sought and found a way of depicting explicit sexuality. Simply drawn figures and animals, often with grotesquely exaggerated genitalia, cavort in the deep blue light of the stars and crescent moons (Ill. 156). Some sort of magic harmony is presumably intended, as though to say that we are released from inhibitions only in darkness, when sleep and dream displace the waking reality. But how far the naive and comic ideograms can be made to carry such a cosmic message is open to question. It was a perilous equation that Miró himself could not sustain for more than a year or so.

The whole character of surrealism changed very quickly in the 1930s. Faced with the Spanish Civil War and the spread of Fascism, the issue of whether or not a commitment to communism was a necessary condition of membership split the movement in two. But the ideas of Marx were less stimulating to the visual artist than those of Freud, and these new dimensions had little effect on painting. In any case, the four major artists associated



156 JOAN MIRÓ (1893-1983) *Person throwing a Stone at a Bird*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 4' 3" x 5' 3" (129.5 x 161.5). *Kunstmuseum Bern*



157 SALVADOR DALÍ (1904-89)
The Persistence of Memory, 1931.
 Oil on canvas, 9½" x 13" (24 x 33).
 Museum of Modern Art, New York

with the movement from the beginning - Arp, Ernst, Masson and Miró - wanted the kind of independence they admired in Picasso. The adherence of other surrealist painters - Tanguy, Dalí and Magritte - emphasized only that there was no surrealist style, no aesthetic, only certain vague preconceptions about the priority of imagination over reason, of pictorial content over form.

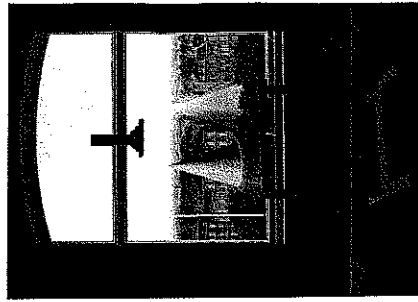
Yves Tanguy (1900-55) invented an eerie abstract landscape, inhabited by amorphous objects and presences, half-organic, half-mechanistic, but never identifiable as things seen in the waking world. Salvador Dalí (1904-89), on the other hand, in dream pictures such as *The Persistence of Memory* (1931; Ill. 157), painted soft watches hanging over walls and on the boughs of trees. Such images are at once disturbing, and meant to be so. Breton always maintained that 'Beauty will be convulsive, or it will not be', and Dalí, with perhaps more calculation than creative passion, developed his 'paranoiac-critical' method of assuming a state of hysteria and consciously elaborating the delusions of the insane. Thus familiar objects change their forms: Dalí tells us that the idea of the soft watches came to him as he sat eating a ripe Camembert cheese. Whether the picture is intended as an allegory of time is unclear: what is certain is the resonance of such imagery in 20th-century painting and sculpture.

Dalí's later religious pictures have served only to show the basic coarseness of his technique: as in the case of

Ernst, this is the Achilles' heel of surrealist painting. The Belgian, René Magritte (1898-1967), also isolated the object in a hallucinatory setting, but depicted it as though he were a naive painter attempting *trompe l'œil* realism (Ill. 158). We do not feel, as with Dalí, that we are encountering someone else's obsessions: things so commonplace might appear like this to any of us. Magritte's pictures are often conceived as riddles, asking teasing questions about the nature of objective reality and the implications of man's desire to master it by naming objects and painting them. They assume pretensions of commenting upon the human predicament, but one wonders whether Magritte's ingenuity did not sometimes lead him to turn pictures into visual puns that, once familiar, lose much of their point. It is as if imagery of stupefying banality could be defended simply on the grounds that the banality was intended.

For all its enduring dissensions, surrealism was a spectacularly successful *avant-garde* movement that injected a much-needed life-giving serum into all of the arts in the period between the wars. Despite a literary bias, and a lack of concern for aesthetic values that in the end proved prejudicial to its viability, surrealism had ensured that art must recognize the unconscious, whether revealed by the exploitation of accident or by the creative juxtaposition of irrational images. Such innovations were quickly absorbed into the fabric of art. And though it was apparently so bitterly opposed to the contemporary development of an abstract art, surrealism in fact shared much in common with it, as the perspective of time will surely show.

Surrealism spread beyond Paris in the early 1930s, to Belgium and in particular to England, where it was at once welcomed as a restatement of Romanticism, and spurred that re-interpretation of man's relationship to nature which is embodied in the paintings of Paul Nash (1889-1946), Ceri Richards (1903-71) and Graham Sutherland (1903-80), and in the sculptures of Henry Moore (which will be discussed later, see p. 189). And in the United States, where almost every leading figure associated with the movement took refuge in 1940, surrealism helped provide the seed-bed from which Arshile Gorky (1905-48) and Jackson Pollock (1912-56) were to spring, with such momentous consequences for the history of art.



158 RENÉ MAGRITTE (1898-1967) *Where Evident Walked*, 1967
 Oil on canvas, 64" x 51" (162 x 130)
 Minneapolis Institute of Arts