

Modern art despite modernism

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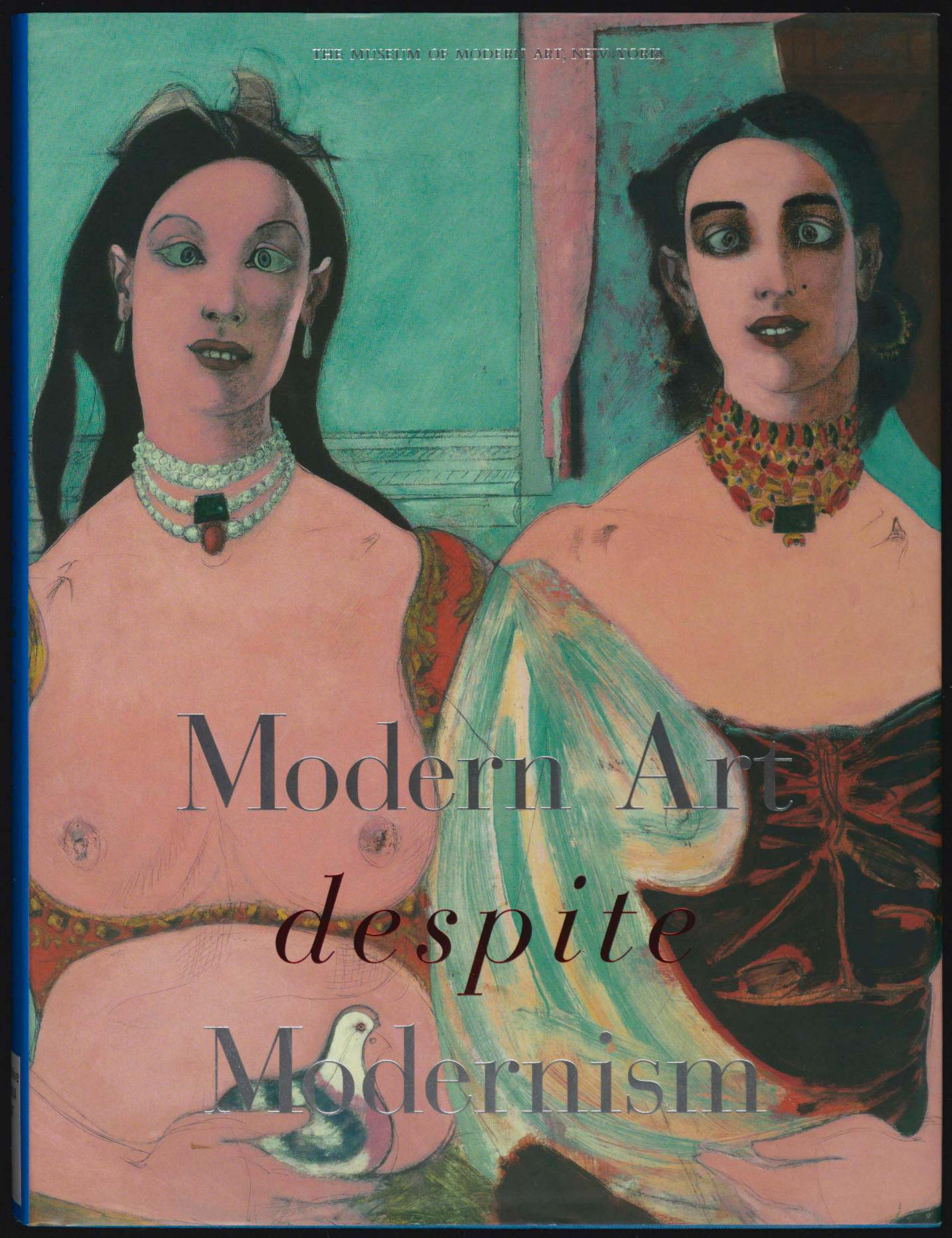
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index of participating artists.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK



Modern Art
despite
Modernism

Modern Art *despite* Modernism

Robert Storr

Throughout the twentieth century, the evolution of mainstream modernism in the arts has been shadowed and complicated by alternative expressions intended either to set back the clock or to redirect the stream of "progress." This book, published in conjunction with an exhibition drawn from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, explores the antimodernist impulse and, in so doing, presents a new vision of the complexities of modern art. In an in-depth study, Robert Storr, Senior Curator in the Museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture, traces the development of what he calls the anti-avant-garde, from its first appearance as the widespread "return to order" in European art after World War I through the reemergence of figuration in international work of the 1980s.

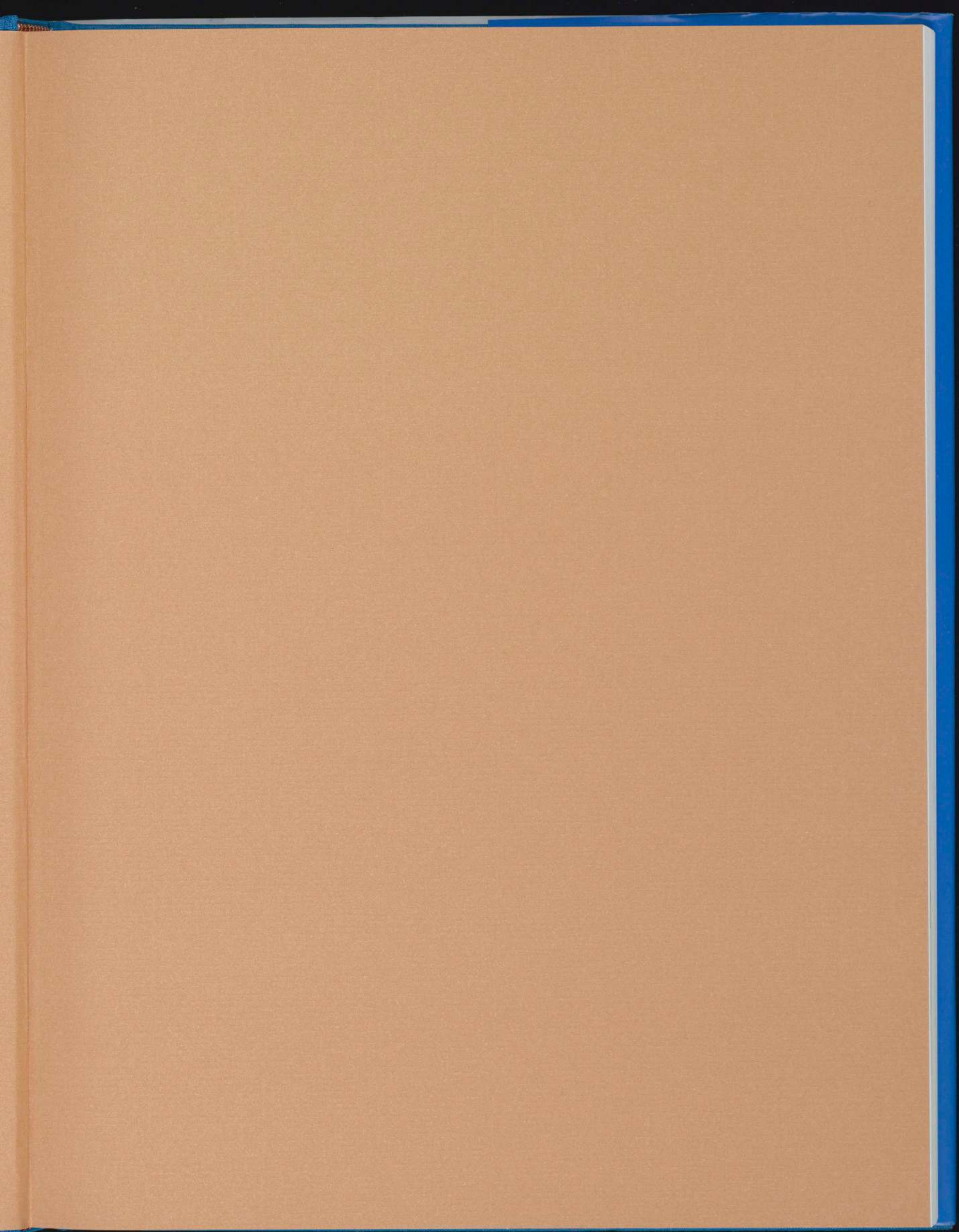
Storr discusses the social, political, and historical forces affecting paintings, sculpture, drawings, and prints, along with the influence of such major figures as Pablo Picasso, Otto Dix, and Philip Guston on the ascendancy of classicizing, narrative, and so-called traditional art at various times in the twentieth century. The fact that artists often crossed the boundary between modernism and the anti-avant-garde—and that their aesthetic choices were not necessarily aligned with their political views—may surprise readers. Storr also looks at changing notions of taste and the reception of avant-garde art in the United States, a process in which The Museum of Modern Art played a key role.

Among the art reproduced in this richly illustrated volume are works by School of Paris painters Balthus and Henri Matisse; American artists Georgia O'Keeffe and Ben Shahn; Neue Sachlichkeit affiliates Max Beckmann and George Grosz; Surrealists Giorgio de Chirico and Salvador Dalí; British figurative artists Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud; and postmodernists Francesco Clemente and Gerhard Richter.

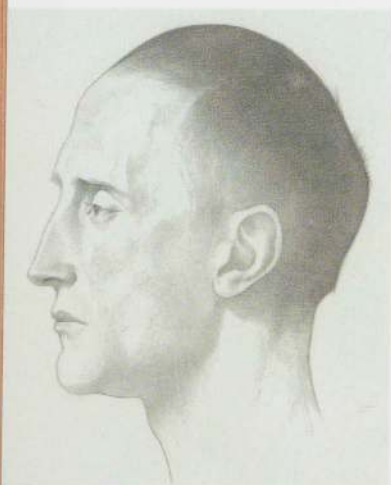
248 pages with 198 illustrations (172 in color)

Front cover: John D. Graham (Ivan Dombrowski). American, born Ukraine, 1881–1961. Detail of *Two Sisters (Les Mamelles d'outre-mer)*, 1944. Oil, enamel, pencil, charcoal, and casein on composition board, 47 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 48" (121.4 x 121.8 cm). Alexander M. Bing Fund, 1968

Back cover: David Salle. American, born 1952. *Muscular Paper*, 1985. Oil, synthetic polymer paint, and charcoal on canvas and fabric, with painted wood, in three parts, overall 8'2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 15'7 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (249.3 x 475 cm). Gift of Douglas S. Cramer Foundation, 1991



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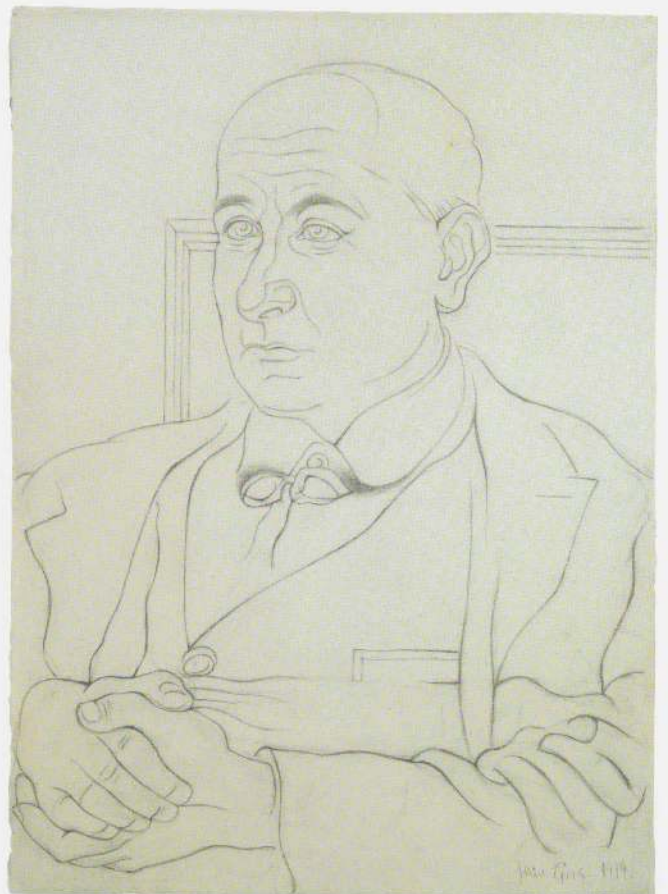
Drawing Lesson I



Note to the plates:
 All works reproduced in this volume are from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, unless otherwise indicated. Works in the plate sections are identified from left to right wherever possible.

PABLO PICASSO. Spanish, 1881–1973.
Riccio Canudo. 1918. Pencil on paper, 14 x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (35.4 x 26.2 cm). Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1951

JUAN GRIS (JOSÉ VICTORIANO GONZÁLEZ). Spanish, 1887–1927. *Max Jacob*. 1919. Pencil on paper, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (36.5 x 26.7 cm). Gift of James Thrall Soby, 1958





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ROGER DE LA FRESNAYE. French, 1885–1925.
Mask. 1921. Pencil on paper, 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
(16.1 x 13.8 cm). Gift in memory of
Otto M. Gerson, 1963

DIEGO RIVERA. Mexican, 1886–1957.
Angeline Beloff. 1917. Pencil on paper,
13 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 10" (33.7 x 25.4 cm). Gift of Mrs.
Wolfgang Schoenborn in honor of
René d'Harnoncourt, 1975



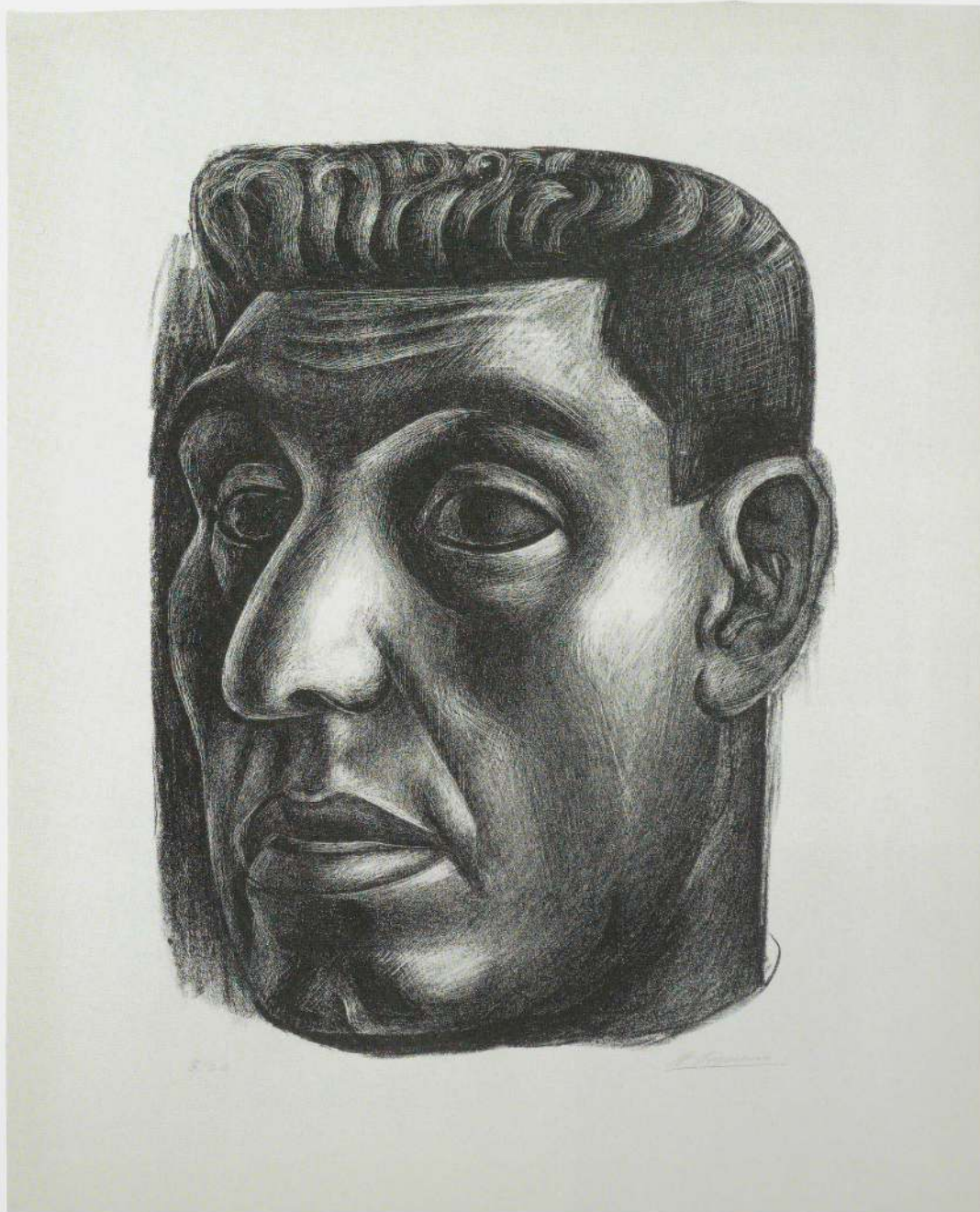
JOSÉ CLEMENTE OROZCO. Mexican, 1883–1949.
Head of Quetzalcoatl. c. 1932–34. Crayon on tracing paper, mounted on colored paper, 32¼ x 24⅞" (81.7 x 61.1 cm). Gift of Clemente Orozco, 1962



GIORGIO DE CHIRICO. Italian, born Greece, 1888–1978.
Euripides. 1921. Pencil on paper, 12½ x 8½" (31.7 x 21.5 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Wolfgang Schoenborn in honor of René d'Harnoncourt, 1971



FERNAND LÉGER, French, 1881–1955.
Foot and Hands. 1933. Pen and ink on paper, 12¼ x 9¾" (32.4 x 24.8 cm). Purchase, 1935



DAVID ALFARO SIQUEIROS, Mexican, 1896–1974.
Moisés Sáenz, 1931. Lithograph, comp.: 21 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (54.3 x 41 cm), sheet: 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (71.8 x 57.8 cm). Inter-American Fund, 1943



SALVADOR DALÍ. Spanish, 1904–1989.
Studies of a Nude. 1935. Pencil on paper,
6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (17.5 x 14 cm). James Thrall Soby
Bequest, 1979

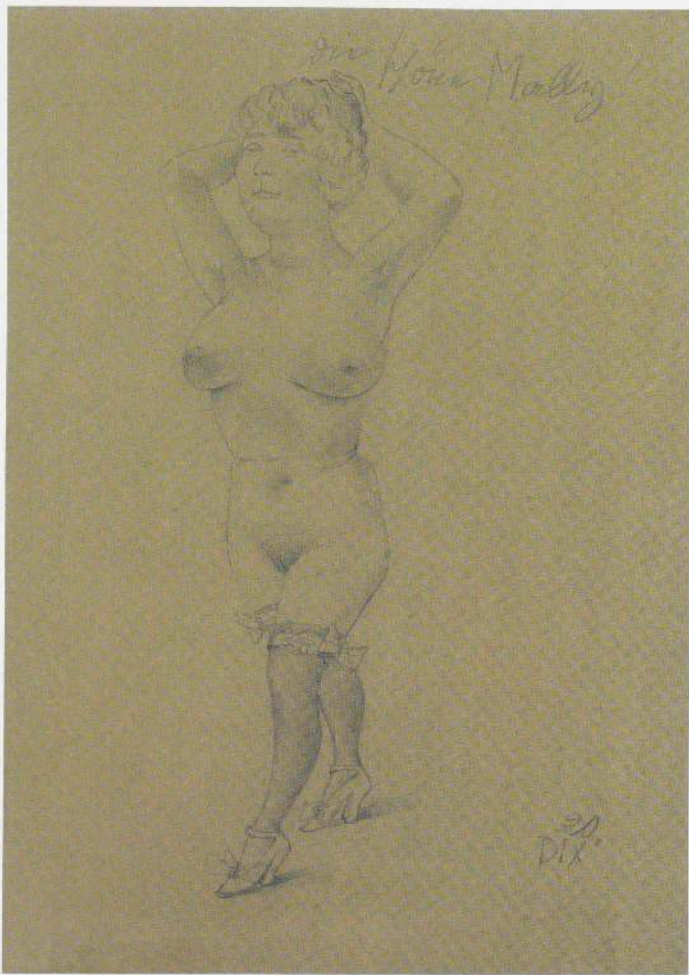
HENRI MATISSE. French, 1869–1954.
Seated Woman with Vase of Tulips. 1940.
Pencil on paper, 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (41.9 x 54 cm).
Gift of Agnes Gund, The Edward John
Noble Foundation, and the Committee on
Drawings. By exchange: The Estate of
Nina and Gordon Bunshaft, Mr. and Mrs.
Sidney Elliot Cohn, Maxine Hermanos,
and Mrs. Bliss Parkinson, 1996



JEAN DUBUFFET. French, 1901–1985.
Mme Arthur Dubuffet. 1921. Crayon on
 paper, 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (45.9 x 36.5 cm). Gift of
 the artist, 1968

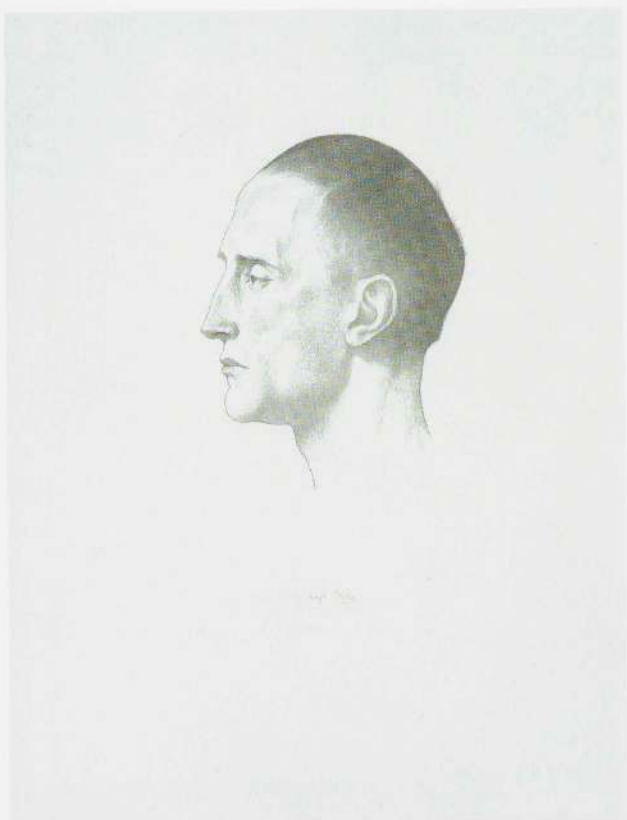
NATALIA GONTCHAROVA. Russian,
 1881–1962. *Portrait*. c. 1920. Pencil on
 paper, 20 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (51.2 x 33.2 cm).
 Gift of Mrs. Alfred P. Shaw, 1974





OTTO DIX. German, 1891–1969.
Beautiful Mally. 1920. Pencil on paper,
 16½ x 11 7⁄8" (42.4 x 30 cm). John S.
 Newberry Fund, 1967.

GEORGE GROSZ. American, born Germany,
 1893–1959. *Anna Peter*. 1926–27. Pencil
 on paper, 27 1⁄2 x 21 1⁄4" (69 x 53.9 cm).
 Gift of Paul J. Sachs, 1929.



JOSEPH STELLA. American, born Italy,
1877–1946. *Marcel Duchamp*. c. 1920.
Silverpoint on prepared paper, 27 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 21"
(69.2 x 53.3 cm). The Katherine S. Dreier
Bequest, 1953

WYNDHAM LEWIS. British, 1884–1957.
Self-Portrait. 1920. Pencil and watercolor on
paper, 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (38.3 x 30.2 cm; irreg.).
Gift of Carol O. Selle, 1975





JOHN D. GRAHAM (IVAN DOMBROWSKI).
 American, born Ukraine, 1881–1961.
 Study after *Celia*. 1944–45. Pencil on
 tracing paper, 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (58.2 x 47.7 cm).
 The Joan and Lester Avnet Collection, 1978

ARSHILE GORKY (VOSDANIG MANOOG ADOIAN).
 American, born Armenia, 1904–1948.
Leonora Portnoff. 1935. Pencil on paper,
 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (32 x 24.3 cm; irreg.). Kay Sage
 Tanguy Bequest (by exchange), 1975





FREDERICK J. KIESLER. American, born Austria, 1890–1965. *Jean Arp*. 1947. Pencil on paper, 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (65.2 x 50.1 cm). Gift of the D. S. and R. H. Gottesman Foundation, 1963

HENRY MOORE. British, 1898–1986. *Seated Figures, II*. 1942. Crayon, wash, and pen and ink on paper, 22 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (57.5 x 46 cm). Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1943

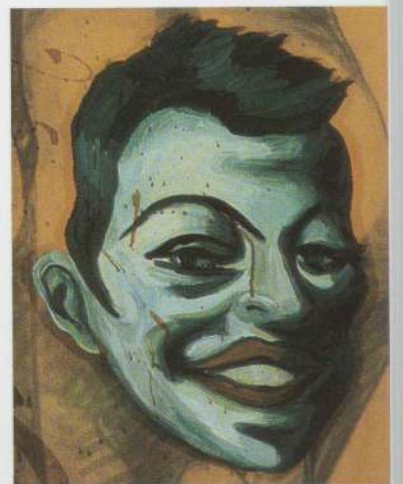
Robert Storr

Modern Art



t *despite*
Modernism

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK
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The images on pp. 16–17 are details of works reproduced on pp. 118–19 and 220–21.

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Foreword

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A collective enterprise involving staff members from all quarters of The Museum of Modern Art, *MoMA2000* is a seventeen-month-long, three-cycle reconsideration of modern art as it has evolved over the past century. For this occasion, curators have been invited to collaborate with colleagues from other departments and to delve into material outside their fields of specialization, so that the works in The Museum of Modern Art's collection may be viewed from fresh vantage points and presented to the public in new combinations and formats. It is thus a multifaceted experiment in the cross-pollination of ideas and the reintegration of artistic disciplines.

The second cycle of *MoMA2000*, *Making Choices*, concentrates primarily on the years 1920 to 1960. One component of *Making Choices* is *Modern Art despite Modernism*, which addresses work in four primary mediums—painting, sculpture, drawing, and printmaking—made by artists who were considered, or who considered themselves, in revolt against programmatic modernism. Several of those included were, at other stages of their careers, among the most renowned modernists of their day, Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse foremost among them. Their presence in this group identifies a paradox at the heart of the exhibition and at the core of the collection from which it is drawn. For if being modern means being up-to-date, then at numerous times in the course of modern art's evolution the "latest thing" was to look back. This was true for Picasso in 1915, when he began to pastiche the style of the great academic painter and draftsman J. A. D. Ingres, and it was again true in the 1980s, when contemporary artists such as David Salle started to appropriate images from the old masters. Between Picasso's elegantly ambiguous antimodernism and Salle's cool postmodernism stretches one of the many histories of modern art that can be told through works

culled from The Museum of Modern Art's collection. In the spirit of *MoMA2000*, the culling has been done by someone who is not usually involved with art from the first half of the twentieth century but rather with contemporary art: Robert Storr, Senior Curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture.

Customarily, a foreword such as this one provides me the opportunity to thank the lenders to an exhibition. Since the *MoMA2000* exhibitions are based on The Museum of Modern Art's collection, it is fitting to recognize and thank our many donors and patrons, especially the collectors who have generously lent works that are promised gifts to the Museum. It is not boasting to say that the Museum's holdings are without parallel, and the generosity of the collectors, artists, artists' families, and other benefactors who have faithfully and discerningly contributed to building that collection has been unparalleled as well. As with all the exhibitions in this three-cycle series, canonical objects take on new meanings when seen in the context of others less familiar but no less essential to the texture of the Museum's holdings and to the overall fabric of art history. However, *Modern Art despite Modernism* in particular brings to light works that have been seen much less frequently than many others housed under the same roof. As such, it is a chance both to tend the abiding significance of lesser-known examples and to honor those donors who have made them a permanent chapter in the Museum's ongoing tale of art in the modern era.

The best way to celebrate a resource of this kind is to use it for the purposes intended. In conjunction with the approximately twenty-five separate exhibitions that comprise the second cycle of *MoMA2000*, and the many others making up the first and third cycles, *Modern Art despite Modernism* is an effort to do just that.

Glenn D. Lowry
Director, The Museum of Modern Art

Preface & Acknowledgments

"The Museum" does not exist. It is an abstraction, monstrous and authoritarian to some; to others it is something wondrous and infinite like the ideal library containing all of human knowledge. Yet anything we may say about the concept of "The Museum" in general must be qualified by what we know about the great differences among museums in particular. Each has its own mandate and history, and those histories are written in the distinctive assortments of artworks separately housed by these many institutions. No matter how rich the collection of any given museum, the material represented in it is only a fraction of what is needed to accurately show the production of an artist, a period, or an aesthetic tendency in all of its essential details—hence the constant traffic in loans among the world's museums, and the great, comprehensive exhibitions that result.

Modern Art despite Modernism, like the other parts of the exhibition series *MoMA2000*, is entirely made up of works from The Museum of Modern Art. Rather than view this limitation as a handicap, I have taken it as an opportunity to examine the Museum's changing focus over a seventy-year period. In the process, I have discovered not only how many aspects "The Museum" can assume when disparate paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints are juxtaposed but how many incarnations *this* Museum has had since it was founded in 1929.

Necessarily, the account of "conservative" modern art rendered in *Modern Art despite Modernism* reflects the Museum's strengths and its weaknesses in various areas, which in turn attest to the approaches and experiences of several generations of curators and patrons. For the most part, theirs has been a specifically American (and more specifically New York) orientation. This exhibition, and the catalogue that accompanies and enlarges upon it, accept that fact as an operating premise. There is, nevertheless, an important distinction to be made between cultural bias and circumstantial perspective. In selecting and discussing works, my overall aim has been to point out and respond to certain attitudes implicit or explicit in the Museum's collecting patterns rather

than to affirm or contest them. In sum, I hope that the exhibition and this book take a position from which it is possible to look in at least two directions: outward, from the collection to larger artistic phenomena in some instances tangential to or even distinct from the Museum's central concerns, and inward, toward the contrasts between the selected works and the art commonly thought to be the Museum's main fare. The moral of the story, if there is one, is that modern art was never monolithic, and that The Museum of Modern Art never spoke with one voice or saw with one pair of eyes. This allowance for diverging opinions and different optics has made the Museum the great institution and the incomparable resource that it is.

I have many colleagues to thank for their assistance and support. First among them are, from the Department of Painting and Sculpture, Carina Evangelista, Research Assistant, who has attended to every detail of this project's conception and execution with critical insight and imagination, and Beth Handler, Curatorial Assistant, who has overseen *Making Choices*, the second cycle of *MoMA2000*, with equal care, intelligence, and ingenuity. A special debt of gratitude is due to Peter Galassi, Chief Curator, Department of Photography, and Anne Umland, Associate Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, with whom I have shared curatorial responsibility for organizing *Making Choices*. I also offer thanks to Michael Margitich, Deputy Director for Development, and Mary Lea Bandy, Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs, for their goodwill and good humor throughout this long process.

As Publisher for the Museum, Michael Maeraith has been a steadfast supporter of this undertaking. Also from the Department of Publications, Marc Sapir, Production Manager, and Gina Rossi, Publications Designer, produced and designed this book, respectively, with distinction, and Laura Morris, Editor, scrupulously edited it. My thanks go to Harriet Schoenholz Bee, Managing Editor, for her indispensable help and good humor, and to Jasmine Moorhead, Associate Editor;

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In the Department of Painting and Sculpture, I am greatly indebted to Ramona Bronkar Bannayan, Manager; my assistant, Cary Levine; Avril Peck, Loan Assistant; Laura Rosenstock, Assistant Curator; and Cora Rosevear, Associate Curator, who facilitated the inclusion of a large number of works from the Painting and Sculpture collection, the core of both the exhibition and the publication. The research and administrative assistance provided by interns Benjamin Lima, Ann Baldoni, Mafalda Rodriguez, Reyes Mayeranoff, and Deniz Artun was crucial, as was the support of temporary assistants Aurora Cole-Reimer, Charice Harris, and Shawnte Mitchell.

I am grateful to Margit Rowell, Chief Curator, Department of Drawings, and Deborah Wye, Chief Curator, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, for allowing the *Making Choices* team to literally comb their respective holdings, which proved to be an indispensable resource in developing and organizing the exhibition. For their generous assistance, I thank, in the Department of Drawings, Kathleen Curry, Assistant Curator; Kristin Helmick-Brunet, Curatorial Assistant; Laura Hoptman, Assistant Curator; and David Moreno, Preparator; and, in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, Charles Carrico,

Preparator; Elaine Mehalakes, Senior Cataloguer; Harper Montgomery, Curatorial Assistant; Jennifer Roberts, Study Center Supervisor; Sarah Suzuki, Cataloguer; and Wendy Weitman, Associate Curator. In the Department of Photography, Sarah Hermanson, Assistant Curator, graciously accommodated our visits to the Photography Study Center and our requests for information and material used in the catalogue.

I am grateful to Jennifer Russell, Deputy Director for Exhibitions and Collections Support, who has, true to her style, adroitly steered the logistics of the exhibition. I would like to thank, in the Department of Exhibition Design and Production, Jerome Neuner, Director, and Andrew Davies, Production Manager, who skillfully met all the demands for this show along with the many other components of *Making Choices*; Mari Shinagawa, Production Manager; Mark Steigelman, Production Manager; and Elizabeth Gray, Administrative Assistant, also provided invaluable assistance. I would also like to thank Peter Perez, Foreman, Frame Shop; Attilio Perrino, Foreman, Carpentry Shop; Santos Garcia, Foreman, Paint Shop; and Peter Geraci, Lighting Mechanic; along with their respective staffs. In the Department of Registration, I am especially grateful to Diane Farynyk, Registrar; Terry Tegarden, Associate Registrar; Pete Omlor, Manager, Art Handling and Preparation; Chris Engel, Assistant Manager, Art Handling and Preparation; Stefani Ruta-Atkins, Senior Assistant Registrar; Jennifer Wolfe, Assistant Registrar; Jana Joyce, Senior Assistant Registrar; Jennifer Culvert, Registrar Assistant; Rachel Natelson, Administrative Assistant; and the staff of art handlers, who ensured that the preparation of works and the exhibition installation ran smoothly. I would also like to acknowledge, in the Exhibition Program office, Linda Thomas, Coordinator of Exhibitions, and Kathy Bartlett, Associate Coordinator, for overseeing the exhibition administration with the assistance of Wellington Chin, Accountant, and Carlos Yepes, Executive Secretary. The Department of Conservation has had to deal with an unusually large number of works for *MoMA2000* overall, and particularly for *Modern Art despite Modernism*, whose checklist, though featuring a good number of "masterpieces," includes many objects that have not been seen in our permanent-collection galleries in quite a while. My sincere thanks go to James Coddington, Chief Conservator; Ellen Pratt, Assistant Conservator; Michael Duffy, Associate Conservator; Patricia Houlihan,

Associate Conservator; Roger Griffith, Conservation Fellow; Karl Buchberg, Senior Conservator; and Erika Mosier, Associate Conservator.

In addition, I would like to thank Patterson Sims, Deputy Director for Education and Research Support, and Josiana Bianchi, Public Programs Coordinator, for organizing the panel discussion and overseeing the production of the accompanying educational brochures. I would like to acknowledge Amy Horschak, Associate Educator/Internship Program Coordinator, and Christine Broderick, Education Assistant, Internship Program, for their astute choices in intern assignments, as well as Jennifer Tobias, Associate Librarian, who provided assistance with a Library Special Collections piece reproduced in the catalogue. Michelle Elligott, Museum Archivist, and Claire Dienes, Assistant Archivist/Mellon Fellow, helped with archival research.

Under the direction of Elizabeth Addison, Deputy Director for Marketing and Communications, the publicity for the exhibition was coordinated by Mary Lou Strahlendorff, Director, Department of Communications, and Kim Mitchell, Assistant Director, with the assistance of Jessica Ferraro, Publicist; Kena Frank, Publicist; Daniela Carboneri, Publicity Coordinator; and Stefanie Cohen, Press Assistant. The marketing efforts were spearheaded by Elisa Behnk, Director,

Marketing, and the graphics were produced by John Calvelli, Director, Department of Graphic Design; Claire Corey, Production Manager; Hsien-Yin Ingrid Chou, Senior Designer; Jill Weidman, Senior Designer; and Burns Magruder, Graphic Designer. In the Department of Writing Services, Anna Hammond, Director, and Joe Hannan, Senior Editor, contributed to the publicity efforts, and Andrea Buzyn, Associate Editor, coordinated the Web site production. Ethel Shein, Director, Special Programming and Events, and her staff choreographed the public and private opening receptions. My appreciation is extended to them all.

To Kirk Varnedoe, Chief Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, I offer my ongoing gratitude for the opportunity to work empirically, and to Glenn Lowry, Director of The Museum of Modern Art, my thanks for his permission to push the envelope when it seemed required. Finally, I would like to dedicate this book to Bobsy Chapman, Joseph Brewer, and Lincoln Kirstein, all of whom gave me privileged glimpses into parts of the world described in these pages, and to James Thrall Soby, whom I did not know personally but whose legacy as a writer, exhibition organizer, and collector continues to immeasurably enhance this Museum.

Robert Storr
Senior Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture



PABLO PICASSO. Spanish, 1881–1973.
The Rape. 1920. Tempera on wood, 9 1/8 x 12 7/8" (23.8 x 32.6 cm). The Philip L. Goodwin Collection, 1958

Typologies & Twists

One God is born. Others die. Truth
Did not come or go. Error changed.
—Fernando Pessoa¹

“Modernism” is a term on which no one can agree, but one to which everyone nods in tacit understanding. Ordinarily, such a discrepancy between the vagueness of a word and its frequent use would raise suspicion, inspiring mistrust in the listener who is caught pretending to know what is meant by it, then doubts about the license taken by the speaker who resorts to it, and finally impatience with the word itself for harboring so much ambiguity. The conceptual error inherent in all these responses stems from treating “modernism” as a common noun referring to a specific thing, style, epoch, or quality, when, in fact, it is the omnibus label for a wide range of aesthetic tendencies, each of which intended to define once and for all what made art “modern.”

In practice, then, modernism names a shared aspiration and series of disparate hypotheses. Seemingly bound together in a common enterprise, the actual diversity of projects undertaken by avowed modernists fractures any but the most theoretical sense of cohesion among them. Generally fundamentalist in their approach, often exclusive in their aesthetic associations, and sometimes belligerent in the propagation of their ideas and methods, the various factions within the avant-garde at a given time have, as a rule, strenuously disputed each other's claims. From a historical or conceptual perspective, modernism is best understood as the sum of these disputes and conflicting proposals.

The most compelling of those proposals are readily enumerated—Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, and Constructivism in the 1910s and 1920s, and so on

down to Minimalism, Conceptualism, and postmodernism in our own era—but the relative success or failure of each of these avant-gardes remains a matter of active controversy. So long as the debate surrounding these issues has meaning for the culture as a whole, then modernism endures. When they cease to matter to anyone making art and become solely the concern of academics and scholars, then modernism will have reached its end.

We are not there yet. How close we have come is likewise a matter of contention. The prevalent use of the term postmodernism suggests that we are already living the aftermath of modernism, though modernism's shadow is so expansive and so deep that only the prefix “post” anchors our hope of moving beyond it. Among optimists, that hope represents possibilities that fall outside the strict logic of any of the previously reigning orthodoxies. Among pessimists, the advent of postmodernism signals a heretofore unimagined confusion in which even the contested heritage of modernism is no longer strong enough to focus discussion.

However, optimists and pessimists cannot easily be sorted out if one judges only by whether a person is advanced or conservative, pro- or anti-modern in the usual sense. Some conservatives—the English critic Charles Jencks, to cite one—herald the end of modernism as the dawn of an age in which modernism and neoclassicism will be reconciled to the marked advantage of an amorphous *neo*-neoclassicism that drapes a grab bag of contemporary stylistic devices in eclectically antique garb. It is a strange and historically incoherent sort of optimism, but it is optimism all the same. Despite Jencks's protests to the contrary, however, it remains an implicitly antimodernist position. Other conservatives—the American critic Hilton

Kramer, for example—view postmodernism with unmitigated dread, even though they have objected to much, if not most, of the avant-garde art of their day in the name of established masters and bygone avant-gardes. Theirs is the pessimism of people who struggle to retain a slipping hold on arguments over matters in which they share a stake with their adversaries, fearing that soon the only arguments that count will be between those adversaries and challengers who have no interest, win or lose, in the old controversies. They dislike what modernism has become, but cleave to it in defense against more radical, and even more intolerable, mutations.

Advanced thinking is similarly divided and ambivalent. Those born into the ostensibly postmodern era frequently take its reality and its independence from the past for granted. Some conjure up dystopias that, more than mourning the collapse of early modern utopias, extrapolate horrific futures from the evidence of the present, even though the language in which those ominous visions are expressed is frequently vigorous and invigorating. Others announce their own brave new worlds apparently unbothered by the historical odds against them. The first is pessimism without history; the second is optimism without history. One might go so far as to say that the postmodernist condition is that of living in history unconscious of the drag it exerts upon one's thoughts and actions.

A variant on this detachment is to play fast and loose with artifacts of the past, dislocating and conflating them so that they no longer relate to the time and place of their origins but operate as free-floating signs whose sense is wholly dependent on their newfound context. This is the strategy often favored by artists, critics, and aficionados who cautiously welcome postmodernism as the opening up of opportunities for new vanguards, which would function much as the old ones did but with gradually diminishing constraints from established views of the ever-accumulating modernist legacy. And then there are those who embrace postmodernism only on the condition that its exponents behave according to long-sanctioned models of "experimental" practice. Much like their unapologetically conservative counterparts, these avant-garde pessimists resent the liberties taken by younger generations and devote whatever energy they reserve for the present to championing a handful of artists they deem

the saving remnant of the true modernist covenant in a period of overall decline.

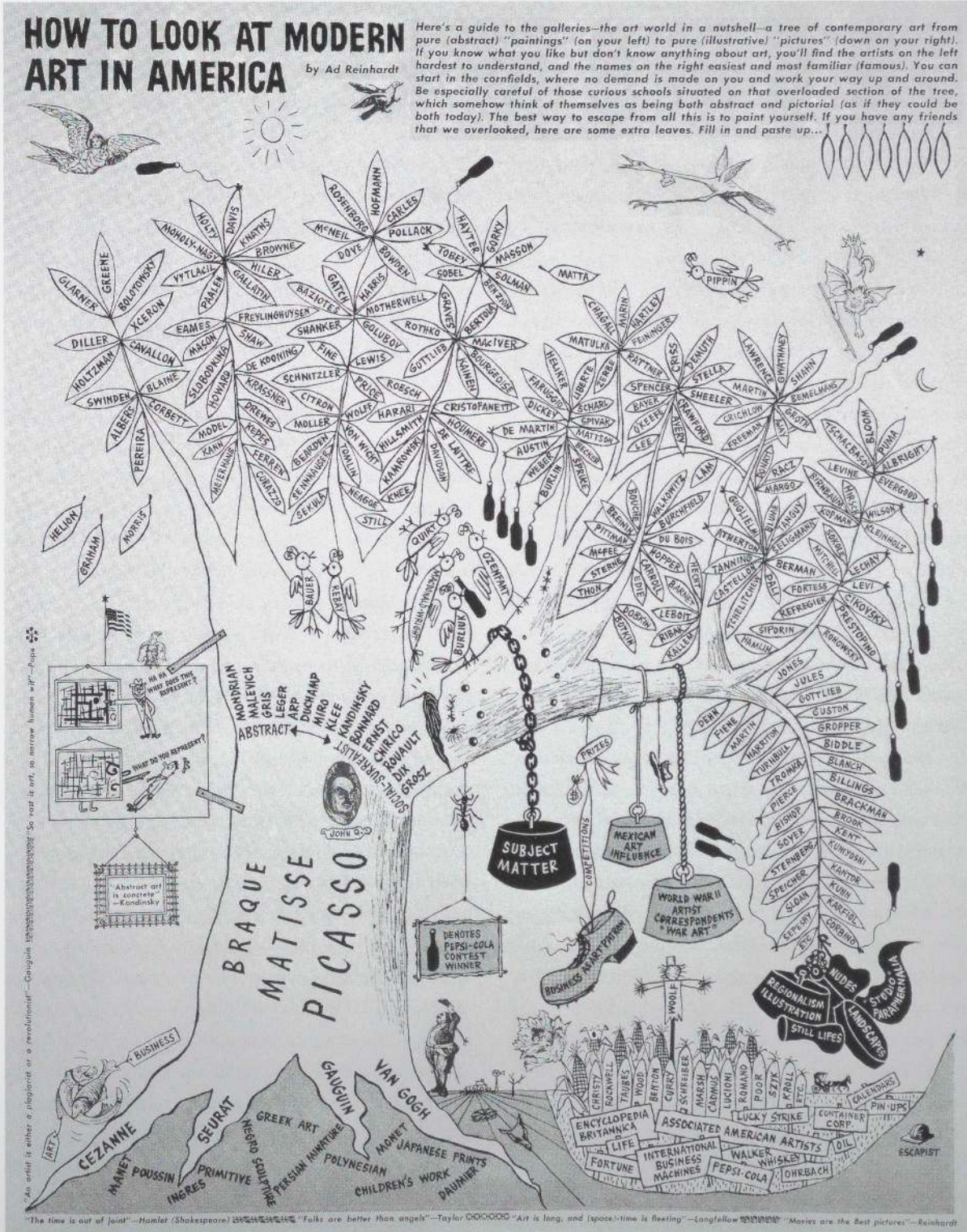
In short, the idea of postmodernism resembles the idea of modernism in its uncertain significance. Insofar as postmodernism has fostered a lively, critical discourse, it too has meaning. But not the meaning its chronologically oriented name implies. Modernism has not concluded with the onset of postmodernism; the second does not punctuate the first. Rather, the debates over the two "isms" are unfolding in sometimes parallel, sometimes overlapping patterns. Time will tell whether those points of contact describe a period of transition from the former to the latter—or to whatever categorical new reality supersedes them both—or whether postmodernism will turn out to be another current in the always churning waters of modernism, different from previous avant-gardes not in regarding itself as the ultimate stage in modernism's development but in thinking of itself as the start of what comes next.

Almost from the first, predictions of modernism's impending demise have been a staple of art talk and art satire. Avant-garde work has always been subjected to crude caricature; Marcel Duchamp's Cubist picture *Nude Descending a Staircase [No. 2]* (1912) was ridiculed by one critic as an explosion in a shingle factory. In the same vein, there has been derisive laughter about the "emptiness" of modern abstraction ever since the appearance of monochrome paintings such as Kazimir Malevich's *Composition: White on White* (1918–20) and on down to the work of Robert Ryman, whose 1991 retrospective inspired Yasmina Reza's hit play *Art* (1995), with its situation-comedy gags about an all-white canvas cast as Diderotesque philosophical dialogue. Such hostility has often been interpreted by artists as inverse proof of the convention-destroying importance of their efforts. Despite the general recognition eventually accorded some of these trailblazers, labels invented by writers to lampoon their work—Fauvism, Cubism, and so on—have stuck. Meanwhile, several of the most caustic aesthetic jokesters have emerged from the ranks of the avant-garde itself. Duchamp's wit has had a chilling effect on the appreciation of purely "retinal art," his disparaging description of painting as distinct from the conceptual modes he turned to soon after the scandalous success of his *Nude* in the 1913 Armory Show in New York. And in the 1950s, Ad Reinhardt, painter of numerous

red, blue, white, and black monochromes and the self-proclaimed author of "the last painting which anyone can make,"² mercilessly knocked his Abstract Expressionist colleagues along with just about every other artist and movement of the postwar era (p. 27).

Attacked from without by those who believed that the avant-garde had led the public down the garden

path and from within by vanguardists keen to check-mate the competition, modernism grew accustomed both to jeering antagonists and to subversive endgame moves. Throughout its history, modernism has faced dissent from other quarters as well. Some could be easily confused with the clamorous philistines just mentioned but for the forcefulness and, at times,



AD REINHARDT. American, 1913–1967. *How to Look at Modern Art in America*. 1946. Published in *P.M.*, June 2, 1946

sophistication of the alternatives to the avant-garde they represented. (Among the artists who came perilously close to adopting the rhetoric of modernism's die-hard rejectionists was Francis Bacon.) Others simply bypassed modernism on their way to forms of expression that coexisted with it, constantly fending off modernism's claims to hegemony in order to maintain their positions. More than a few were apostates from the modernist cause itself with an insider's knowledge and an outsider's refusal to accept part or all of modernism's essential premises. And finally there were the mavericks who, refusing to join any movement that would have them, went to special pains to insult the sensibilities of the modernist tendencies to which they seem most closely aligned. Having jumped from Cubo-Futurism and Dada to pictographic abstractions by way of hybrid cartooning, debased montages of neoclassical imagery, and pornographic kitsch, Francis Picabia, rude Sancho Panza to Duchamp's perversely laconic Quixote, belongs to the last group. For most of his roughly forty-year career, Picabia was a one-man fifth column behind avant-garde lines. A serial traitor to seriousness within his own enclave and denounced by modernist stalwarts for the impertinence and coarseness of his late work, Picabia unexpectedly became a major influence on such contemporary figures as Sigmar Polke and David Salle, thus representing just one example of how difficult it is to separate the strands that bind postmodernism to modernism.

Before further characterizations of this "anti-avant-garde" appear, a clarification is in order. It is customary to use the expressions modern art and modernism interchangeably, but there is an important distinction. For the sake of simplicity, one may say that modern art is the art produced in the modern era, which, depending upon one's larger sense of art history, began at the end of the eighteenth century or in the middle or end of the nineteenth, that is, with Francisco Goya in Spain, with Gustave Courbet or Édouard Manet in France, or with the Post-Impressionists Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, and Georges Seurat, the four painters who, as it happened, were the subject of The Museum of Modern Art's first exhibition. Modernism—and this is the unifying theoretical idea previously mentioned—is that art that takes itself—its compositional techniques, methods of image making, physical presence, and constructive or destructive relation to the traditions of art—as its primary subject.

Before modernist art is about anything else—an image, a symbol, the communication of an experience—it is about the logic and structure of the thing that carries meaning, and about how that thing came into being. In this respect, all modernist art is essentially abstract, even though only some modernist art looks it.

It is the habit of avant-gardes to treat their opponents as retrograde. One must, however, be careful of the epithets employed. While it is fair to say that much art made in the twentieth century is intentionally antimodernist, one cannot say that it is antimodern. No art made in modern times is antimodern, even when it strives, as a great deal does, to flee backward in time by either resuscitating archaic styles, depicting lost worlds, or evoking primordial states of mind in which the clocks have stopped. The unavoidable fact confronting these time travelers, Giorgio de Chirico, for example, was that their hopes of escaping the orbit of modernity were as improbable as the geometric reveries of vanguard artists like Malevich, who sought to transcend the laws of gravity by juggling futurist constellations in space. There is an almost Manichaean symmetry to their separate flights of fancy. Neither tendency felt at home in the present; between them, they divided the lightness from the dark. Indeed, one of the paradoxes of much deliberately anachronistic art is its weightiness and gloom, as if the smoke of the industrial landscape and the shadowy density of the city had somehow suffused every aspect of the visionary world summoned up in contrast to it—as if, in effect, the luster of the Golden Age had been covered by a layer of soot.

Dreams are compensatory fables of unfulfilled desire, and nightmares subconscious amplifications of deep-seated fears. Antimodernist artworks that wished modernity away or turned it into costumed horror fiction have the same twisted but uncuttable ties to the situation and moment that produced them as dreams and nightmares do to waking reality. While it is a mistake to take imaginary constructs literally, uncritical responses to antimodernist art often do, forgetting that the illusions created were known to be illusions by the creators. The aesthetic value and emotional and intellectual impact of such legerdemain depend upon a recognition of the specific manner in which an artistic conceit and its source are brought into tension.

Retreat from actuality is dialectically matched to that actuality; the former necessarily invokes and confirms the importance of the latter. Some work does this

explicitly, and some implicitly; the best—once again, de Chirico is the example that first comes to mind—uses ambiguity of authorial intent to heighten rather than obscure this tension. Thus, the content of anti-modern art that has conjured castles in Spain, piazzas in Ferrara and Venice, Greek statuary in Rome, and simple country life in France or America has been melancholy more than nostalgia, regret and resignation more than comfort in memory. Contemporary existence was unbearable, but any return to Eden was blocked. The aura of the past was always a reminder of the present, and the antimodern artists who tried to evoke that aura were trapped into being modern despite themselves.

Art that aches for a glorious yesteryear but markedly fails to achieve the excellence it emulates is commonly called decadent. Modern culture has long been haunted by the prospect of its own disintegration. The pervasiveness of an organic view of civilization's growth and deterioration has been buttressed by the tale of Rome's rise and fall, its grandeur and corruption. The doubtful truth of that legend—and the aptness of botanical metaphors to history—is irrelevant to the power that images of decay have demonstrably exerted for generations. Nineteenth-century Romantic and Symbolist art is replete with depictions of crumbling ruins, rampant plant life, and sickly flesh. There are many examples to be found in modern art as well; Max Ernst's *Napoleon in the Wilderness* (1941) is a case in point. Decadence may not be a verifiable historical phenomenon, but it is a recurrent philosophical and aesthetic trope. Around the beginning of the twentieth century, two warnings of culture's inexorable falling off helped set the tone for public discussion: Max Nordau's 1895 jeremiad *Degeneration* and Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, published in 1918. These doom-laden books bridge the gap between the fin de siècle and the roaring twenties, during which time decadence as a self-conscious attitude was reinvented in the modern mode. Although the bars, salons, opium dens, studios, and bordellos that provided the archetypal setting for generation after generation of "decadents" to gather in were redecorated to keep up with the times, their ambience remained essentially unchanged from the 1860s to the 1940s.³

Making a virtue of what they considered an inevitability, numerous artists thus enthusiastically embraced the epithet "decadent" and cultivated personae

to suit the role of the enervated, dissipated, or debauched aesthete at the end of his tether and at the end of the line historically. Dandies of this sort were self-made mandarins, and their personal style was simultaneously a pastiche and a parody of highborn manners and taste. The masquerade's piquancy derives from this doubling of impersonation and send-up, longing and clowning, qualities underscored by the bourgeois or petty bourgeois origins of many dandies. Inasmuch as decadence as a style came into full, unhealthy flower during the nineteenth century, its resurgence during the twentieth, in waves beginning in the 1920s, 1940s, and 1980s, constituted a retreat to an already backward-looking position, the second, third, and fourth coming of an anxious, modern archetype who loved what he could not truly have or be and hated the life he was destined to lead.

Languidness and laziness are not synonymous. Like a ballet dancer who slumps into a theatrical swoon, the dandy who affected neurasthenic exhaustion had to devote all his efforts to striking and sustaining the pose. True dandyism was a vocation requiring the utmost discipline, an exquisite balance between refined appetites and spent energies that could not survive careless excess. It was an intellectual stance disguised as pure sensuality, a critical position articulated by mannerisms rather than reason. The object of that critique was the modern myth of the unimpeded—and unquestioned—betterment of mankind by science, industry, and democracy under the leadership of professional elites. Charles Baudelaire's acid 1846 salute to the enlightened bourgeois as the rising patron of the arts is paradigmatic of the dandy's disdain for such utilitarianism: "The governance of the state is yours, and that is as it should be, because you have the power. But you must also be capable of feeling beauty, for just as not one of you today has the right to forego power, equally not one of you has the right to forego poetry. . . . For to allow oneself to be forestalled in art or politics is to commit suicide, and a majority cannot commit suicide."⁴

Baudelaire earned his living by explaining the "science" of enjoyment to this new class, and his resentful dependence upon its members laces his essays with derisive sociology. The poet-critic's predicament and his occupational ambivalence were handed down to others, who found themselves in the unmarked territory between the thriving middle class and the



IVAN LE LORRAINE
ALBRIGHT. American,
1897–1983. *Self-
Portrait*—55 Division
Street. 1947.
Lithograph, comp.:
14¼ x 10¼" (36.2 x
26.2 cm), sheet:
16½ x 13¾" (41.9 x
33.5 cm). Publisher:
Associated American
Artists, New York.
Printer: George
Miller, New York.
Edition: 250.
Purchase Fund, 1953

dwindling aristocracy. To avoid contact with the broad public, many artists haunted the last of the ancien régime households—from the 1930s through the 1950s, for example, both the Neo-Romantics and the Surrealists rallied around the salon of the Vicomtesse de Noailles—or adorned the drawing rooms of tycoons and heiresses dead set on emulating nobility. Taste was the stock-in-trade of such latter-day courtiers. Their aestheticism did more than shun or mask the ugly dimensions of modern life; it attacked the modern faith that all was for the best in this best of all rationalized, standardized worlds. Flamboyant regress was the rejoinder to an unqualified belief in progress. Dandies have always known that triumphing over modernity was out of the question. Yet losing beautifully remained an option. Those who chose it sometimes seem like the well-turned-out officers who led the last cavalry charges of the modern era, a valiant but futile feature of the two world wars, in which saber and horse were pitted against machine guns and tanks. In fact, the American painter and art-world intermediary John Graham—born Ivan Dombrowski—earned the Cross of Saint George while serving in the Circassian Regiment of the czar's cavalry from 1915 until the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917.

Desperate arrogance frequently informs this strain of antimodernist modern art, but, apart from social pre-

tense, there has also been a bid for spiritual superiority. That has not always come from fellow travelers of the Right. Allen Ginsberg's "retro axioms," written in the last months of his life in 1997 under the title "New Democracy Wish List," open with the statement "'Progress' ended in XX century."⁵ Ginsberg epitomizes the bohemian poet. However, in this declaration he parted ways with the avant-garde to the extent that it, having been born in revolt against bourgeois positivism, gradually had become the aesthetic outrider of that ideology. In this country, it was Clement Greenberg who eased the sting of Baudelaire's jab-and-parry manner of addressing his middle-class readers, just as it was Greenberg who normalized relations with the academy by laying the critical foundations for a new modernist wing. Positivism was Greenberg's watchword, and, to varying degrees, postwar American avant-gardes have subscribed to his credo of continuity and advancement by purification. The implicit cost of this forward-looking enterprise was the renunciation of supposedly obsolete approaches, which gave rise to periodic announcements of "the end of figuration," "the end of painting," and so on.

Cyclical models of time are antithetical to the linear chronology of positivism, yet such alternatives have appealed to many modern artists. Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of the eternal return, whereby history winds back on itself and allows individuals to leave their mark upon ancient forms, is among the most influential examples. Although Buddhist mysticism, rather than Nietzsche, brought Ginsberg to a similar conclusion, the rejection of aesthetic "progress" remains anathema to the avant-garde, making it possible for Ginsberg to be a prophet without honor in his own community—or a prophet with the sort of honor that preempts his challenge from being taken seriously.

Baudelaire and Ginsberg were literary men, and, understandably, the visual art they favored was generally literary as well. However, banishing literature from painting and sculpture has been among the central goals of a powerful, though not always dominant, portion of the avant-garde. In the United States, the status of Surrealism split the modernist camp down the middle in the 1940s on just this issue. Here again Greenberg played a key part, since it was his view that Surrealism's attempt to create pictorial poetry was dragging modernism back into the past, when art's function had been to illustrate texts rather than manifest its own intrinsic

qualities and the formal beauty or expressive ugliness that basic materials and processes could reveal. From this perspective, no matter how high a work's quality may have been, any concessions made to art's earlier depictive functions were interpreted as evidence of lingering rear-guard tendencies. Overt theatricality was a cardinal sin.⁶ The fault in putting painting and sculpture at the service of literature was in trying to make them do something writing did better while neglecting the essential strengths of those two distinct mediums. Theater, a hybrid of words, dance, music, and decor, was the ultimate misalliance of separate art forms.

Antimodernist modern art is rife with storytelling pictures, dramatic bronzes and marbles, theatrical effects, and actual forays into stage design. In the 1910s and 1920s, the ballet world was the petri dish in which many of these impurities were cultivated. From the 1920s through the 1940s, social malaise provided the occasion for a flood of more or less politically committed, narrative art. In both situations, a significant number of artists saw the solution to their dilemma in modernizing—that is, updating—old-fashioned styles or, conversely, in antiquing contemporary motifs. While the results vary as greatly as the circumstances in which works were made and the reasons for their making, the overall consequence is a vast quantity of art that was never fresh, but instead arrived on the scene freighted with homages, debts, aesthetic envy, and unrealized heroic ambition or fey, antiheroic sadness. And, as noted before, darkness permeates a great deal of what was made during and between the two world wars. In this connection, one is reminded of Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* (1928), in which Elizabethan England thrives in constant sunlight while nineteenth-century England is perpetually befogged. Likewise, clouds gathered over modern art around 1914, and they did not disperse until well after 1945.

Irony comes to the rescue of some historicizing art. Often, it is hard to be sure whether the irony is intentional or not, whether the work in question is simply kitsch, that is, debased high art; camp, art of sincere ambition that laughably but ingratiatingly overshoots its target; or something else that knows it must fail in comparison to the ideal yet nevertheless pursues its goal to the fullest extent of its capacities, in the process making a critical spectacle of its predicament and the traditions it both mines and undermines. Baroque revivals are a regular feature of antimodernist modern

art, particularly of the 1930s and the 1980s. Given that the original baroque represented an exaggeration and distortion of Renaissance conventions—a simultaneous move toward naturalism and the theatrical—baroque modern art has been much the same thing with respect to canonical modernism. Overlapping with the decadent manner but determined, on occasion, to go out with a bang rather than a whimper, the baroque is, in the words of Jorge Luis Borges, “that style that deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) its own possibilities, and borders on self-caricature. . . . I would venture to say that the Baroque is the final stage in all art, when art flaunts and squanders its resources.”⁷

If, for the sake of argument, we accept that modernism is an aesthetic based on the systematic analysis, purification, and reduction of its own means, then baroque antimodernism accomplishes the purposes of modernism's self-criticism by systematic play, impurity, and extenuation. The metamorphosis of Borges's youthful modernism into his later postmodernism hinged upon the writer's scholarly dandyism, and it is among the clearest indications we have of the continuity between the two “isms.” Further, Borges's time-spiraling parables are a reminder that when history repeats itself what was once tragic does not necessarily return as farce, as Karl Marx suggested, but may, in art at least, come back as whimsical revelation.

In contrast to the dandies and aesthetes, other contingents of the anti-avant-garde have been resolutely modern in their choice of subject matter and, occasionally, in their technical innovations. One can only speak of them as being conservative in their reliance upon figuration and in their partial or wholesale recourse to traditional methods for describing the contemporary world. Yet a great many gravitated to the radical Left, and, as their work was designed to expose social and economic systems, it was only antimodernist insofar as it was not equally involved in exposing its own formal aesthetic systems. The artistic results varied from Renaissance revival pictures of current events and neo-baroque depictions of class struggle to photographically realistic images of common people and everyday life.

The periodic and far-flung appearance of such art identifies an important split between the political avant-garde and the aesthetic one. As the history of German, Mexican, and American art between the two world wars shows, dedication to radical ideas in one

arena does not automatically signify a comparable commitment in the other. On the contrary, in the heat of parallel struggles fidelity to political causes has often seemed to demand sacrificing purely artistic goals, as many former modernists did in the 1920s and 1930s. The difficult questions of conscience and the artistic nuances entailed in such choices are frequently lost on commentators who fight ideological battles retrospectively, with full knowledge of how events played themselves out. To say, for example, that the turn to hard-focus realism made by Left-leaning artists in Weimar Germany was a harbinger of the sinister banalities of Third Reich naturalism and neoclassicism is hindsight of a particularly skewed and narrow kind; yet it has been said more than once.

Moreover, it is erroneous to regard realism of any period as intrinsically reactionary. Realism worthy of the name takes observation of the given world as its primary task. The realists' aim is to document the facts of experience and perception, and the most rigorous are prepared to sacrifice formal perfection and personal or consensus taste to that purpose. Thus, as critic and historian Linda Nochlin has argued, realism asserts the importance of the specific over the general, the actual over the ideal.⁸ For this reason, realism has always been the adversary of academic rules. In that same spirit, it has continually violated the laws of modernist abstraction as laid down by those who have interpreted its principles and practices as universal and absolute. In abstraction's own struggle against the academy, avant-garde artists have sometimes carelessly, sometimes conveniently forgotten that strict realists are no less the enemies of canonical figuration than they are. Nevertheless, by persistently depicting what they see while refusing to tailor the results to a preconceived model, realists regularly offend both the avant-garde and the academy. Although academic sensibilities would never confuse strict realism with avant-garde art, advocates of the avant-garde have tended to lump all representational artists together, pushing realists into the opposition.

Of course, a realist's choice of subject matter is never entirely neutral, regardless of how scrupulously neutral the final execution of the work may seem. The decision to paint factories or nudes, cabaret singers or rural still lifes, is an ideological as well as an aesthetic one. Symbolism thus enters into images that may have no explicit narrative, and even the most documentary pic-

tures invite exegesis. Beyond this, any description of a world in which everything has its place is a statement about order and stability. Appearances can be deceptive though, and much antimodernist art has exploited two opportunities inherent in such illusions. The first option is to unite in a single context objects, spaces, people, or events that could not possibly coexist in actuality. Surrealism does this blatantly; much superficially realist art does it discreetly. The effect of the latter can be as disorienting as that of the former, and sometimes more so, since the delayed jolt of a nagging "offness" in what seems at first glance like a perfectly ordinary scene threatens assumptions of normalcy at least as much as blatant fantasy does. The second option is to intensify the naturally static qualities of fixed images, evoking a preternatural immobility that can range in poetic connotation from amber eternity to icy inertia.

The danger modernists have always seen in illusionism is that a public hungry for entertainment or affirmation will naively accept artifice as truth, and thus allow itself to be lulled or manipulated into a passive relationship with culture. This happens. Modernists have opposed spectacle for the same reason, fearing that it will overwhelm viewers so completely as to deprive them of their critical faculties. This happens too. In both cases, the problem lies in the artist's doing all the imaginative work, thereby transforming the public into a mere receptor or consumer while concealing the mechanics of the art and the artist's decisions under a veneer of aesthetic wholeness. This seamless integrity seems to say that what is seen could have been no other way; what the image means is nothing other than its stated content.

But not all anti-avant-garde art is antimodernist in this respect. Frequently, anti-avant-garde art boldly announces its artificiality and asks for a suspension of disbelief equivalent to that called for in the theater. Under these terms, art is a fiction that can only be appreciated if one remains conscious that it is a fiction. It can be entered into only on the condition that one's frame of mind operates like a proscenium arch, explicitly dividing the reality of the audience from that of the inventions onstage, and the reality of the stage from the dreams of the audience. Conversely, anti-avant-garde art that downplays style does not necessarily take the public's participation for granted. Rather, it may emphasize legibility in order to establish a bond with spectators the better to guide them into unfamiliar

territory, effectively making access to the work easier as a basis for making full experience of it harder later on. Both types of art identify the slice of the potential audience they wish to attract by their way of addressing the public as a whole. Highly stylized art can be elitist or populist, rarefied or spectacular; art that shows greater stylistic restraint can be exquisite and exclusive, or unassuming and broadly appealing.

The fact that a work of art has wide appeal does not automatically render the intentions or qualities of that work suspect. Carefully analyzed, however, it invariably says a good deal about those drawn to it and prompts speculation about the nature of their engagement. If such a work becomes popular through an institution, it also raises questions about the artistic company it keeps there. Take two of the best-known paintings in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art: Pavel Tchelitchew's *Hide-and-Seek* (1940–42; pp. 154–55) and Andrew Wyeth's *Christina's World* (1948; p. 188). It is ironic that these works should be emblematic of a museum whose reputation rests on having championed Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, and Jackson Pollock. As it happened, one of Pollock's seminal allover abstractions in the Museum's collection, *Number 1A, 1948*, was painted the same year as the Wyeth, and both Pollock and Wyeth exhibited under the Museum's auspices in a 1944–45 touring exhibition. It was Pollock's first involvement with the Museum; a year earlier, eight works by Wyeth had been included in the exhibition *American Realists and Magic Realists*. Although Pollock is now as famous as Wyeth, *Number 1A, 1948* is not an icon in the same sense that *Christina's World* is. *Hide-and-Seek* falls slightly short of being one, but only because its overall effect depends on shifting, hard-to-remember images. Without being certain of its name, visitors come looking for "that picture with the children, the picture where shapes dissolve."

These three paintings form a continuum. At one end is the immediately intelligible and emotionally obvious *Christina's World*; at the other is the formally and expressively ambiguous—and for many people unintelligible—*Number 1A, 1948*. In the middle is *Hide-and-Seek*, a mare's nest of peekaboo imagery that verges on abstraction but deploys all the tricks of the classically trained illusionist. It is fair to say that many who are entranced by the Wyeth would be inclined to view the Pollock as problematic, if not the outright antithesis of what they look for in *Christina's World*. It is

certain that an equal number of those drawn to the Pollock will regard the Wyeth as reactionary and dismissable. By occupying the middle ground, the Tchelitchew stirs fewer passions perhaps; yet on both sides of this vector, *Hide-and-Seek* is likely to exert a horrid fascination, a mixture of attraction and repulsion that results not only from the painter's woozy confusion of forms but from his blurring the boundaries of taste.

That all three works belong to The Museum of Modern Art and are a notable part of its history establishes a provocative congruence between the spectrum of public preference and the sweep of the Museum's interests. Specifically underscored is the fact that the institution is not a museum of modernism but a museum of modern art. For inasmuch as the Pollock unquestionably fits the description of an avant-garde work, the Wyeth and the Tchelitchew canvases are, in their quite different ways, prime examples of anti-avant-garde art.

The problem becomes more slippery the deeper one digs. Opening in November 1929, The Museum of Modern Art's first exhibition, *Cézanne, Gauguin, Seurat, van Gogh*, laid a solid foundation in early European modernism. The second exhibition to appear, *Paintings by Nineteen Living Americans*, also outlined the Museum's purview. Its participants ranged from the folksy "Pop" Hart⁹ and illustrator-landscapist Rockwell Kent to Matisse's student Max Weber and native Cubist John Marin. Edward Hopper was represented as well, and one of his works, *House by the Railroad* (1925; p. 172), was the first painting to be acquired by the Museum. Works by Hart, Kent, Weber, and Marin all followed the Hopper into the collection, but it is *House by the Railroad* that has remained on the walls almost continually since its acquisition. It is not an avant-garde painting and never was. Nor is it modernist by most of the criteria used above. Yet Hopper's painting is categorically modern, and, by virtue of its matter-of-fact imagery and formal discipline, emblematic not only of the period in which it was made but of a perennially fresh variety of visual experience.

Turning attention to the School of Paris painters that the Museum helped make household names in America—Picasso, Matisse, and Miró—all are represented in the collection by avant-garde works as well as others that fall far afield of that designation. Many of these modern but incompletely modernist pictures

were created in the years just preceding The Museum of Modern Art's founding or during the Depression era's burgeoning of interest in modern art, of which the Museum was both a partial cause and a partial consequence. In the United States, awareness of European modern art began in medias res, with the artists' early breakthroughs and formative phases seen alongside their mid-career second thoughts and retrenchments. As far as most of the general public and many art patrons were concerned, Picasso's Blue and Rose paintings (1901–06), Analytic and Synthetic Cubist pictures (primarily 1910–21), and commedia dell'arte and neoclassical caprices (primarily 1914–25) became simultaneously familiar starting in the late 1920s and early 1930s, just as Matisse's Fauve paintings (1905–07), patterned semiabstractions (1907–17), and more traditional Nice period pictures (1916–29) did. The discovery of Miró came later, in the mid-1930s, but with a roughly coincident awakening to canvases as dissimilar as *The Ear of Grain* (1922–23; p. 110) and *Birth of the World* (1925). The discrepancy between the moment in which these very different works were made and the timing of their widespread public exposure effectively collapsed any idea of a strict progression of styles, except when someone retrospectively spoke of the "periods" in a given artist's development. As far as most people were concerned, it was all new, all quintessentially modern. That Picasso and Matisse had apparently assimilated the radicality of their pre-World War I work into comparatively conventional, "mature" styles further snarled straight, linear ideas of modern art's trajectory.

More fundamentally still, the internal dialectic suggested by these artists' traditional works—and the correspondences they establish with works by artists who were never avant-garde—is integral to any understanding of the dynamic contradictions of modern art overall. Modern art has always been a chessboard, and each of the pieces, according to its role, moves in zigs and zags, side to side, forward and backward. As in chess, they may also pass from black square to white. Duchamp was a chess master, and the game has become a symbol of the conceptual avant-garde. But the game theory of the avant-garde, while permitting zigzags, disallows all but forward motion, and, if the black squares may be thought of as modern but not modernist positions, it forbids play on any but the white squares. Picasso, who had no use for chess but was a shrewd competitor in every other domain, knew

that in aesthetic contests all the squares are open. Without Picasso's bravado, Matisse asserted the same right, and to a lesser extent so did Miró.

Because of circumstance, conviction, or other limitations, some artists stick to the black squares. To the avant-garde, they are the black sheep, but the black squares are interspersed and interlocked with the white, and those who occupy them cannot be lumped together and treated as a herd. Yet even as modernists pretend that antimodernists are simply outside the game, the avant-garde needs these evil twins to sharpen the edges of their own positions. The hard-core anti-avant-garde reciprocates this disdain, yet shares this dependency. Where the "action" is at any given moment on any given board is raw data in the history of taste and ideas. Why such a raft of antimodernist modern art was produced from the 1920s to the mid-1950s is a complex question that must be answered decade by decade, place by place, tendency by tendency, and artist by artist. The generalizations that seemed apt in the 1950s and 1960s have become unconvincing. Since the 1970s, the gradual exhaustion of old antinomies of Left and Right, radical and conservative, abstract and figurative, conceptual and perceptual, has required a more pluralistic, integrated, and nuanced appraisal of what happened in modern art. Moreover, the heterogeneously modernist, postmodernist, and antimodernist production of the 1980s and 1990s has rewritten that imperative in capital letters.

As to the quality of the anti-avant-garde art this book presents for consideration, the first thing to be said is that it is pointless to compare apples to oranges, much less overripe fruits to those in their first blush. If one has no stomach for decadent art, why bother to evaluate it case by case, invidiously juxtaposing hopeful experiments in the new with purposeful reworkings of the old? Even judging what is decadent serves little purpose. One must, if only for the sake of the exercise, assume that there is good decadent art and bad, just as there is successful and unsuccessful dandyism. By the same token, there is effective and ineffective political art, worthy narratives or bathos and cant. One must further assume that there is no recipe for making the good, and no single grounds for rejecting the less good out of hand. The alchemy that results in a particular work's seizing the imagination and then refusing to relinquish its grasp exceeds our powers of explanation. Describing the work and one's experience of it is more

nearly within our scope. As Gertrude Stein reportedly said, "Description *is* explanation"; or, at any rate, it is the best account we can make of what the work is and where and why it came into being and how it affects us.

In selecting the images for this book, I have followed my own instincts. That does not mean that I have hewed strictly to my own taste. Quite the opposite, much of the work represented here is distasteful to me. However, I do not regard the disturbance it causes as a verification of the work's unredeemable nullity but rather as a useful challenge to my habits of mind and eye. For if an image disturbs, it has struck a chord, proving that something forceful in it has touched something alive in the viewer. Mediocrity will not do this except cumulatively; it simply fades into the background. Art that stands out therefore deserves the attention it has claimed, at least to the extent of one's examining the reasons for its having achieved that threshold of effect. If the impact lingers, then the viewer becomes responsible in a larger way, since any break in consciousness that throws off sparks or brings repressed thoughts and feelings to the surface demands to be taken seriously. That is what the avant-garde expects in response to the shocks it administers; correspondingly, it is reasonable to treat the memorable gestures of the anti-avant-garde with equivalent seriousness.

A large percentage of the art to which we pay heed in this manner withers under extended scrutiny and seems unlikely, by that measure, to stand the test of time. Still, the effort made has not been wasted; it is the price exacted for broadening our culture while refining our criteria for judgment. And always we owe it to ourselves and the art in question to stay alert to the manner in which the artists' failures shed light on our own susceptibilities. The truth is that artists are periodically bound to lose their bearings. Consequently, art is more than likely to go off its rails. Risk is meaningless if the possibility of provocative deviance is excluded from this equation. Moreover, risk is merely rhetorical if exemption from failure is guaranteed by programmatic preapproval. Success grounded in such attitudes is a security built on historical quicksand. It is more instructive—and more amusing—for the viewer to attend to the courageously wrongheaded than the cautiously "correct." Minor lapses are typical of minor and unadventurous artists; those who truly gamble with their talent—even when they lose

badly—are usually better company than the two-dollar bettors. Though outside it, such high-stakes players are always closer to the winner's circle than their timid counterparts.

Certainty, like pride, comes before the fatal slip. The most treacherous kind of certainty is an uncritical trust in one's unexamined assumptions and best intentions. On this score, Igor Stravinsky voiced a too often neglected caveat: "Most artists are sincere and most art is bad, though some insincere (sincerely insincere) works can be quite good."¹⁰ Thus, well-meaning art may be false to its high standards, while art of doubtful character may satisfy according to alternative standards. (Stravinsky, of course, is one of those members of the anti-avant-garde who in the 1920s and 1930s was denounced by colleagues as a traitor to his own radicality of the 1910s—much as Picasso was in relation to Cubism.) Stravinsky's rule of thumb applies to critics and connoisseurs as well as to creators. Taste alone is a poor guide to aesthetic importance, for taste must be attached to appetite if it is to adequately feed the intelligence and the spirit. People without any real hunger for art are plentiful, and their opinions are freely given; however, such appraisals are worthless to those who genuinely crave art, those whose life, in effect, depends upon securing a true sufficiency. Moreover, since appetites change according to circumstance and the availability of nourishment—playing French gourmet in the dust bowl is starvation vanity—taste must stay fluid. When taste becomes heartfelt and earnest, fixed and rigid, authoritative and authoritarian, it betrays art, regardless of how admirable its temporary objects of devotion may be. When taste becomes a censor with too many principles—or too few—it kills appetite and its own capacity to savor and make distinctions.

W. H. Auden, who quoted Stravinsky's remark in *The Dyer's Hand* (1948), offered two other useful bits of advice. "Good taste," he said, "is much more a matter of discrimination than of exclusion, when good taste feels compelled to exclude, it is with regret, not with pleasure." As to the proper enjoyment of art that does not live up to expectations, Auden, attaching a warning to those who have eyes only for greatness, suggested that its unfulfilled promise may yet justify its author's ambitions: "The more powerful and original a writer, the more dangerous he is to lesser talents who are trying to find themselves. On the other hand, works

which were in themselves poor have often proved a stimulus to the imagination and become the indirect cause of good work in others."¹¹

On the one hand, this essay and the anthology of images constitute a brief for lost, forgotten, or perennially unfashionable aesthetic causes. On the other hand, they are a census of the art that has been found wanting by the avant-garde in periods of its greatest dominance. Locating the work has been easy. What was not already woven into The Museum of Modern Art's display of "mainstream" art was in the Museum's basements and closets. "Raiding the ice box," Andy Warhol called such retrieval when in 1970 he chose an exhibition out of the storage bins of the museum at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. Warhol too was among the artists who moved back and forth between the avant-garde and the anti-avant-garde, and his was a felicitous turn of phrase, since it linked taste and appetite with opportunity.

This book is also a reflection on The Museum of Modern Art's pattern of collecting. All the works reproduced figure in what has generally been accredited to be the best synoptic collection of modern art in the world. At the time of its acquisition, each item was not only thought to have intrinsic merit but was understood to embody something essential to the global understanding of the art of the day, and each was an educated guess about what would last. Unlike doctors, curators cannot bury their mistakes—or not forever—and the braver ones make many. History, of course, makes no mistakes, but that is because it has

no will. Sometimes it imitates musician Doc Watson's notion that life is just one damn thing after another, and at other times it seems keyed to the idealist and materialist dialectics of philosophers G. W. F. Hegel and Marx, respectively. At any given moment, though, what we think of as history is the most plausible and comprehensive description of how things are and how they got that way that anyone can offer. Looking back at the diversity of modern art and appraising its various statements about what was fundamental to aesthetic practice at a particular juncture, we are confronted by a huge matrix of disagreements and ambivalence.

The debate over the many proposals for what modern art should be is alive on the Museum's walls, and, as was said at the outset, echoes of those disagreements will continue so long as modern art can be spoken of in the present tense. The ambivalence the works inspire resides within the viewer. Complements to the general misgivings we now feel when confronted by orthodox modernism's unrevised claims are the specific doubts that surface when we consider modernism's digressions and inversions. The aim of recalling them is to explore those doubts in detail and readjust the big picture accordingly. Speaking through a typically apocryphal man of letters, Herbert Quain, Borges wrote, "I belong not to art but to the history of art."¹² Some of the works in this compendium belong to art and some to art history. Which examples belong to which category is the unsettled question. And so, all said and done, it shall remain.

Notes

1. Fernando Pessoa, "Christmas," in *Poems of Fernando Pessoa*, trans. and ed. Edwin Honig and Susan M. Brown (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), p. 160.
2. Quoted in Bruce Glaser, "An Interview with Ad Reinhardt," *Art International* 10, no. 10 (Dec. 20, 1966), p. 18.
3. For an illuminating discussion of the history of the concept of decadence, see Richard Gilman, *Decadence: The Strange Life of an Epithet* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979).
4. Charles Baudelaire, "The Salon of 1846: To the Bourgeois," in *Selected Writings on Art and Artists: Baudelaire*, trans. P. E. Charvet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 47, 49.
5. Allen Ginsberg, *Death and Fame: Poems, 1993-1997*, ed. Bob Rosenthal, Peter Hale, and Bill Morgan (New York: HarperFlamingo, 1999), p. 1.
6. See Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 148-72.
7. Jorge Luis Borges, "A Universal History of Iniquity: Preface to the 1954 Edition," in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Viking Press, 1998), p. 4.
8. Linda Nochlin, "The Realist Criminal and the Abstract Law," part 1, *Art in America* 61, no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1973), pp. 54-61.
9. Although little known today, "Pop" Hart was once so familiar an art-world name that when the artist Jim Dine first heard the term "Pop art" he did not realize that it was a label being applied to his work and not a reference to the older painter.
10. Quoted in W. H. Auden, "Writing," in *The Dyer's Hand* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 17.
11. Both quotes are from W. H. Auden, "Reading," in *The Dyer's Hand* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), pp. 5 and 10.
12. Jorge Luis Borges, "A Survey of the Works of Herbert Quain," in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Viking Press, 1998), p. 107.

Heads



ERNST BARLACH. German, 1870–1938.
Head (Detail, *War Monument, Güstrow Cathedral*). 1927. Bronze, $13\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{3}{8}$ "
(34.3 x 34.5 x 37 cm). Gift of Edward
M. M. Warburg, 1941



CHARLES DESPIAU. French, 1874–1946. *Young Peasant Girl*. 1909, cast 1929. Pewter, 11½ x 7½ x 11¼" (29.2 x 19 x 28.5 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1939



GASTON LACHAISE. American, born France, 1882–1935. *Egyptian Head*. 1923. Bronze, 20 x 9¼ x 9¾" (50.8 x 24.7 x 23.1 cm), including base. Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1939



ELIE NADELMAN. American, born Poland, 1882–1946. *Head of a Woman*. c. 1942. Rose marble, 15¾" (39.7 cm) high. Gift of William S. Paley (by exchange), 1948



ISAMU NOGUCHI. American, 1904–1988. *Portrait of My Uncle*. 1931. Terracotta, 12½ x 8½ x 9¾" (31.7 x 21.6 x 23 cm), on base, 9¼ x 8¼ x 8¼" (24.8 x 21 x 21 cm). Gift of Edward M. M. Warburg, 1950



JULIO GONZÁLEZ. Spanish, 1876–1942. *Head of the Montserrat, II*. 1942. Bronze, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (31.3 x 19.6 x 28.1 cm). Cast 3 of 6. Gift of Mrs. Harry Lynde Bradley, 1965



WILLIAM ZORACH. American, born Lithuania, 1889–1966. *Head of Christ*. 1940. Stone, 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (52.4 x 26 x 29.6 cm), including marble base. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1940



JACQUES LIPCHITZ. American, born Lithuania, 1891–1973. *Gertrude Stein*. 1920. Bronze, 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 10" (44.4 x 21 x 25.4 cm), including base. Fund given by friends of the artist, 1963



MAX BECKMANN. German, 1884–1950. *Self-Portrait*. 1936, cast 1951. Bronze, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 13" (36.8 x 28.6 x 33 cm). Gift of Curt Valentin, 1951



HONORÉ SHARRER. American, born 1920.
Workers and Paintings. 1943 (date on work 1944). Oil on composition board, 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 37" (29.5 x 94 cm). Gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1944

Backward March!

The laws of physics do not apply to art. What is cyclical in nature is often spasmodic in culture. Strong actions do not invariably trigger equally strong reactions, but they do trigger reactions. When innovations occur, tradition defends itself before it is altered. The quality of that defense in turn alters the effects of the challenge. Sustaining the momentum of the original intervention meanwhile requires a different concentration of energies than that which created the breakthrough.

With an apologetic nod to the Abstract Expressionist Barnett Newman, who once recommended that the term *avant-garde* be given back to the French army, military analogies are more apt in describing this process than scientific ones. When the *avant-garde* strikes, it is usually dispersed along a wide front but highly focused in its individual attacks. When the *avant-garde* mobilizes as a whole and is transformed from a loosely coordinated force into a phalanx, it marshals itself in ways that mirror the guardians of tradition. In essence it becomes a counter-academy. As the conflict between the old and the new academies slows to the pace of a set-piece confrontation, secret negotiations between the camps begin and stragglers from both sides skirmish and regroup. In the confusion, some desert to become freelancers or bandits, and others make common cause with their former enemies.

Overshadowed by the large-scale maneuvers that ended in 1914 with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian empire pitted against England, France, Belgium, Italy, and Russia, the various *avant-gardes* responsible for the jolting redirection of European art after 1900 were undergoing something like the consolidation and realignment described above. The leading edge of the wedge was Cubism, flanked by Fauvism, Expressionism, Futurism, and lesser tendencies. The

first two were linked by the ranking Fauve Georges Braque, who had joined Pablo Picasso in the invention of Cubism in 1907. In that year, Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* (O.J. no. 116) shattered the mold of classical figuration, and together Picasso and Braque picked up and rearranged the pieces. War cut short their collaboration. After the two comrades parted at the railroad station when Braque was called to report for military duty in 1914, Picasso said, "We never saw each other again."¹ Literally speaking that was untrue, but Picasso accurately foresaw that the end of their joint development of Cubism had arrived, and with it the end of Cubism as a pioneering enterprise. Already by 1912, Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger—camp followers who contributed nothing essential to Braque's and Picasso's invention—had taken it upon themselves to lay down the movement's aesthetic principles in their text *Du cubisme*. Within six years of the completion of *Les Femmes d'Alger*, the academy of Cubism had found its professors. *Avant-gardes* never last long.

Also present with Picasso and Braque on the train platform was André Derain. The most able of the Fauves after Henri Matisse, Derain had around 1912 drained high-key color out of his palette and returned to traditional draftsmanship and composition, apparently determined to fulfill Paul Cézanne's ambition "to become classic again through nature, that is to say, through sensation."² As a Fauve, Derain had in effect made Impressionism a flamboyant and "sensational" art form rather than one just based on sensory data. Derain's directional shift fundamentally reordered his aesthetic priorities, not merely by subduing the retinal buzz of his pictures but by subordinating optical phenomena to the values—literally, the tones and tints—of pictorial construction. Ostensibly looking beyond

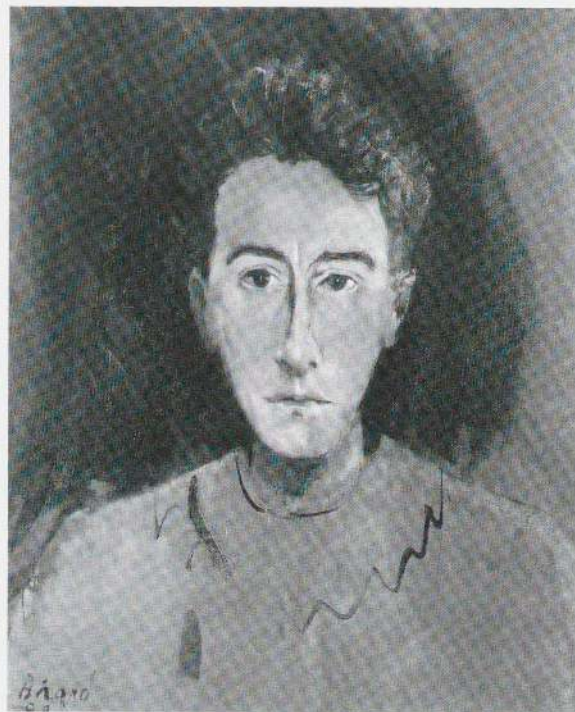
Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, and Fauvism, Derain looked back to a time before them all, intending, as Cézanne had, "to revive Poussin in contact with nature."³ Derain, even more so than his mentor, favored Poussin—that is, preconceived form—over perception.

External pressures aggravated by the war encouraged Picasso, Braque, Derain, and their cohort to mount a staged retreat from "pure" Cubism, even as they spurred on Gleizes, Metzinger, and others in their attempts to codify Cubism as a style to be applied to old painting problems. The first factor to be reckoned with in this connection is the wave of anxiety and compensatory chauvinism that swept France during and after the war. Shaken by near defeat in the early phases of the conflict (in places, the frontlines snaked so near Paris that artists in their studios went about their business within earshot of soldiers going about theirs), demoralized by the excruciating stalemate of the trenches, and finally shocked by the level of devastation documented by aerial photography or discovered by battlefield tourists after hostilities ceased, the French experienced a broad upsurge of nationalism accompanied by sharp xenophobic tremors. In culture as in propaganda, hysterical patriotism set the tone. France's enemies were foreign; tradition was her bastion. Or so the logic went. All that failed to confirm those traditions, and even more so anything that actively upset them, was the work of subversives. France's vulnerability at the outset of the struggle was proof that she had allowed herself to be seduced by alien ideas. Under the pressure of invasion, France would purge herself of such illusions, drive out her enemies, and deny native-born seducers future opportunities to gain influence.

Modern artists were chief among the suspects, and the Cubists were emblematic of them all. In reality, many modernists were foreigners, as were many of their dealers. And in an increasingly paranoid and perennially anti-Semitic climate, the fact that a fair percentage were Jewish—and of these most were German Jews—sealed the argument. The backlash against modern art, Cubism in particular, that had been building for years burst into the open and became part of a nationwide, nation-defining, reactionary campaign. France's survival supposedly demanded, in lieu of formally disorienting pictures, positive images that anchored the viewer in an unchanged and unchangeable world. *La gaieté parisienne* of the prewar era was replaced by a markedly provincial sobriety. Even among

artists this sobriety took hold, as the heady ferment of a still youthful generation came to an abrupt halt at the sound of cannonades.

While most French members of the avant-garde went into uniform, some remained civilians along with the citizens of noncombatant countries like Spain. Braque and Derain trooped off with Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Gleizes, Roger de La Fresnaye, Fernand Léger, Metzinger, Jacques Villon, and Maurice de Vlaminck; Matisse stayed home, as did Juan Gris, Picasso, and Gino Severini. The difference in status was keenly felt on both sides. In 1916, Matisse wrote:



"Derain, who came back yesterday, displayed a state of mind so marvelous, so grand, that in spite of the risks, I shall always regret that I could not see all the upheavals. How irrelevant the mentality of the home front must appear to those who are at the front." But Matisse also foresaw that the war would have an effect even on those who did not fight. Echoing the patriotic sentiments of those who criticized the softness and frivolity of prewar France—but not their hatred of cosmopolitanism—he anticipated that that effect would be positive rather than negative: "This war will have its rewards—what a gravity it will have given even the lives of those who did not participate in it if they can share the feelings of the simple soldier who gives his life without exactly knowing why, but who has an inkling that the gift is necessary."⁴

CHRISTIAN BÉRARD.
French, 1902–1949.
Jean Cocteau. 1928.
Oil on canvas, 25% x
21 1/2" (65.1 x 54 cm).
Abby Aldrich
Rockefeller Fund,
1940

Meanwhile, Severini tested the waters with a 1916 exhibition entitled *First Futurist Exhibition of the Plastic Art of War*, in which, among other canvases, he exhibited *Armored Train in Action* (1915), now in The Museum of Modern Art's collection. An offshoot of Cubism that celebrated war and judged the Cubist genres of portraiture, still life, and landscape too tame, Futurism imagined itself the ideal language in which to express machine-age dynamism and machine-age destruction. Several artists on duty in the trenches concurred. Léger, for one, rhapsodized over the vivid, quasi-Cubist slang of his comrades and the formal dynamism of heavy armament.⁵ But the siege-weary public had lost what enthusiasm for Cubist paintings it had acquired in peacetime, and Severini's exhibition flopped. The physical violence all around them had apparently reduced people's tolerance for violence inflicted upon their cultural habits; it also provided reactionary critics with an opening to launch their counterattack on formerly confident modernists. Within a year of Severini's failure in the marketplace and press, the artist was painting neoclassical Madonnas and weird pastiches of Renaissance painting that included eighteenth-century Harlequins and Cubist decorations.

Between Matisse, with his newfound but still hedonistic gravity, and the skittish but talented Severini stands Picasso, and next to him hovers Jean Cocteau. It is an awkward fact that while war devastates whole societies, it often affords "Society" special dispensations that allow the privileged to pursue their pleasures and nurture their enthusiasms with little constraint. At the same time then that support for creative experimentation generally contracted, in select enclaves patronage for extravagant aesthetic display increased dramatically. In short, as Left Bank Paris bohemians began to feel the pinch of wartime austerity, worldly denizens of the Right Bank played the game of artistic catch-up and co-optation with ever-greater abandon. Ballet was the principal site of the Right Bank's bid for supremacy; Picasso was the most heavily courted artist on either side of the Seine; Cocteau was the go-between. Ruefully reflecting on the encounter between the money and the talent, Ernest Hemingway described his own experience in ways that can be applied to that of others in the late 1910s and early 1920s:

It was the year that the rich showed up. The rich have a sort of pilot fish who goes ahead of them, sometimes a little deaf, sometimes a little blind, but always smelling affable and hesitant ahead of them. The pilot fish talks like this: "Well, I don't know. No of course not really. But I like them both. . . . Don't be silly, and don't be difficult. I like them truly. Both of them I swear. . . ." Then you have the rich, and nothing is ever as it was again. The pilot fish leaves of course. He is always going somewhere, or coming from somewhere, and he is never around for very long. He enters and leaves politics or the theater in the same way he enters and leaves countries and people's lives in his early days. He is never caught and he is not caught by the rich. Nothing ever catches him and it is only those who trust him who are caught and killed. He has the irreplaceable early training of the bastard and a latent and long denied love of money. He ends up rich himself, having moved one dollar's width to the right with every dollar that he made. . . . The rich came led by the pilot fish. A year before they would never have come. There was no certainty then. . . . They never wasted their time nor their charm on something that was not sure. Why should they? Picasso was sure and of course had been before they had ever heard of painting.⁶

Cocteau was a pilot fish, but a pilot fish of genius. Jack-of-all artistic trades and a filmmaker and writer of genuine distinction, Cocteau loved attention and the company of his artistic betters. An indefatigable ambassador who debuted on the fringes of Marcel Proust's world and skirted the edges of André Breton's, Cocteau had no need to line his pockets but concentrated instead on building his reputation, starting on the aesthetic Right and moving to the Left with each creative conquest. In his own mind, he offered a third way. Recalling his years as editor of *Le Mot*, the little wartime magazine that articulated his position, Cocteau wrote:

There were two fronts: the war front and then in Paris there was what might be called the Montparnasse front . . . which is where I met all the men who helped me emerge from the famous Right in which I had been living . . . I was on the way to what seemed to me the intense life—toward Picasso, toward Modigliani, toward Satie. . . . All those men

who had given proof of their Leftism, and I had to do the same. I was . . . suspect on the Right, which I was leaving, and suspect on the Left, where I was arriving. . . . The man who made it possible for me to stick at the controls was Picasso.⁷

Cocteau was a natural in the politics of acquaintance, and, like Hemingway's archetype, a strategic introducer. In 1915, the composer Edgard Varèse put Cocteau in contact with Picasso. Within a matter of months, Cocteau brought the painter to Sergei Diaghilev, impresario of the Ballets Russes. By August of the next year, all three had embarked on the production of *Parade*, for which Cocteau wrote the book, Picasso designed sets and costumes, Erik Satie wrote the score, and Léonide Massine, Diaghilev's star and lover of the moment, provided the choreography. Satie and Picasso belonged to bohemia, Diaghilev and his company to the beau monde, or beautiful people. In the midst of war, Cocteau's coup was to have created a "united front" between them.

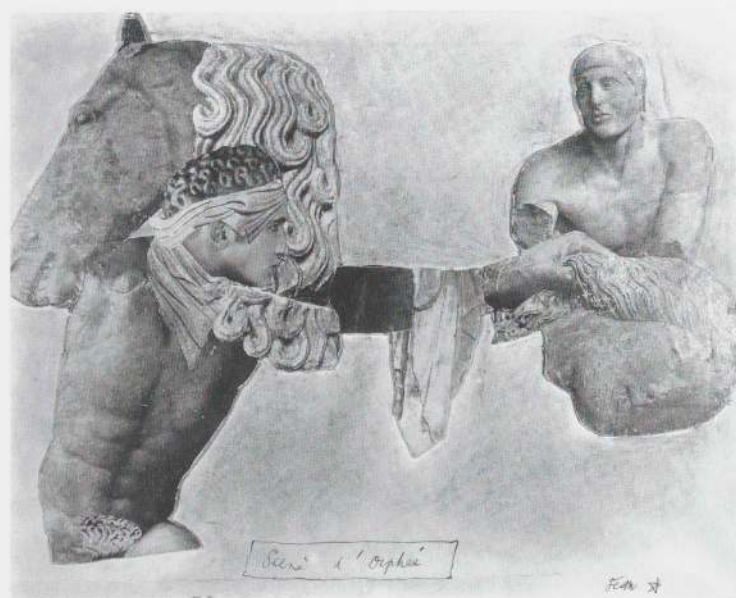
Signs of Picasso's readiness to make such an alliance had been evident in his work for several years prior to the event. Sly quotations of neoclassical or baroque decorative motifs were fairly common in all but the most stripped down of Picasso's Cubist pictures—illusionistic frames, carved musical instruments, wallpaper patterns, and glassware were the pretexts—but his *Woman in an Armchair* (1913) was the first major work to combine a fragmented Cubist body with a classical-drapery study. By 1914, Picasso had begun to sketch nudes and seated figures in a style that, like Derain's, looked back to

Cézanne and still further to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century naturalism. *The Painter and His Model* (1914) was the first painting to be conceived in this mode, although, as always, Picasso permitted himself distortions of perspective and proportion.

The shift in orientation was most pronounced in his drawings. They show what may be called the "Ingres effect," a return to academic contour drawing and a rendering of volumes inspired by J. A. D. Ingres, the supreme exponent of nineteenth-century neoclassicism. As was typical of his boldness, Picasso did not work his way backward as Derain did, but, in the course of a handful of pictures, jumped headlong into the arena with an old master, simultaneously defying expectations and demonstrating his willingness to take on the best of the past. Cocteau believed that "taste and vulgarity" were "both unpleasant"; the alternative was élan and "the tact of understanding just how far you can go too far."⁸ When these words were published in 1915, Cocteau was just learning how to astonish the bourgeoisie. Picasso, a veteran of shock tactics directed at such an audience, was determined to attempt the opposite and astonish the avant-garde. Picasso's Ingresque portraits did just that. His subjects included not only well-heeled dealers like Léonce Rosenberg and Ambroise Vollard, theater people such as Diaghilev, and Maecenases like Comte Étienne de Beaumont but also vanguard poets Guillaume Apollinaire and Max Jacob and art publisher Ricciotto Canudo (p. 4). Significantly, Picasso portrayed Apollinaire and Canudo in their army outfits rather than their city clothes, and Jacob, a former dandy, was decked out in a common suit and typical Norman sweater. France was in crisis, and even modern artists reflected the nationalist fashion. Sealing their pact, Picasso drew Cocteau in uniform as well. In keeping with the latter's dandyism, however, Cocteau had had his tailored.

Everything Picasso did was conscious. Far from a return to a straightforward realism suitable for a naive public, Picasso's Ingresque manner was the height of artificiality, combining the use of photographs as sources, subtle anomalies of delineation and shading, and a kind of refined art-historical cartooning.

JEAN COCTEAU.
French, 1889–1963.
*Orpheus, Scene from
the Ballet*. n.d.
Cut-and-pasted
photographs and
crayon on paper,
13¼ x 16½" (33.7 x
41.9 cm). Gift of
John Pratt, 1949





Contemporaries sported period outfits in his portraits: Diaghilev appeared in a top hat and tails; Canudo's dress uniform was that of a nineteenth-century Zouave; Jacob's wool sweater and suit gave him the look of a character actor in a drama about the eternal peasantry. Then there were explicitly theatrical costumes that filled his paintings: the Spanish skirts, blouses, and mantillas that appear on his Russian ballerina wife Olga Khokhlova, the tutus worn by the corps de ballet, and the young men disguised as Harlequins and Pierrots that populate so many canvases of the late 1910s and early 1920s (p. 102).

These borrowings from commedia dell'arte have been written off by some modernist critics as maudlin and retrograde, as if Picasso's images were little more than overly skilled versions of kitschy, sad-clown pictures one finds in thrift shops. They have also been condemned as a lamentable detour into upper-class ennui, as if Picasso were simply painting the masked balls he attended with his ballet-world friends. Forgotten in such narrow interpretations is the fact that this cast of characters was not a relic of the remote past but belonged to an unbroken aesthetic lineage. Pierrots and Harlequins frequently showed up in Cézanne's paintings, and Pierrot and Columbine appeared in the work of Picasso's friend Henri Rousseau, not to mention the ubiquity of these and similar personages in the work of Antoine Watteau and earlier masters. Forgotten too is the role of metaphor,

for these paintings are anything but literal in their meaning. Rather than jaded or resigned, as some critics have claimed, Picasso's Harlequins are pensive and lovelorn, romantics in disguise at a time when romanticism could not travel under its own colors in sophisticated company. Beneath a hard-gloss elegance inspired by Cocteau, Picasso's performers pantomimed the yearnings of Apollinaire's bittersweet lyrics. On the eve of middle age and unhappily paired with Olga, Picasso turned to youthful alter egos and erotic reverie, from which only his encounters with Marie-Thérèse Walter and later with Dora Maar would release him.

This is not to suggest that Picasso's pictures of the period 1914 to 1925 can be fully explained by his emotional biography, but neither are they simply a function of his switch in professional and social milieu or the changes in political climate around him. When Picasso went foraging in art history, he covered a wider field than any of his peers. His allusions to masters of the past include variations on works by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, author of pastel Arcadian tableaux; Georges Seurat, of the silhouetted figures and pointillist technique; Camille Corot, painter of Italian peasant girls with mandolins; the brothers Le Nain, whose stark depictions of seventeenth-century peasant life were much in vogue when the Louvre reopened in 1918 after the war; and Pierre Renoir, the ultimate bourgeois Impressionist who died in 1919 and whose likeness Picasso drew from a photograph around that time. Picasso also mimicked a Greco-Roman monumentalism complete with naked warriors with spears, loin-clothed shepherds with panpipes, and athletic women in white robes.

Picasso, the insurgent, had become an assiduous but promiscuous lover of tradition, mixing, matching, and mismatching styles with such agility, speed, and aplomb that the results caught the breath of even those who objected to his shifting allegiances. Tradition's weight is palpable in the work, however, particularly in the full-blown neoclassical images. Earthy hues, lumbering bodies, and impassive faces are typical of these pictures, whose muscular forms have ossified. While the comic massiveness of *Sleeping Peasants* (1919; p. 103) delights, the stasis of *The Rape* (1920; p. 24) is at odds with its violent subject. *Three Women at the Spring* (1921; p. 104) is even more lifeless. It too is a kind of low relief, or rather a quasi-Cubist assemblage of alternately rounded and flattened body parts, fitted together over a

scumbled ground in chunky wholes, as if pressed-lead sections had been laid onto patched veneers of different woods. Simultaneously sculptural and antisculptural, it is a tour de force of immobility, a masterpiece willed into being at the cost of all that made *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* a truly great painting. Picasso's uneasiness was of a piece with his mastery. The conductor Ernest Ansermet recalled watching him don a top hat, stare into the mirror, and greet himself as "Monsieur Ingres" around this time.⁹ Combining competitiveness, satisfaction in having arrived socially, and self-mockery, the polyvalence of that salute nicely represents the ambiguities of his artistic situation.

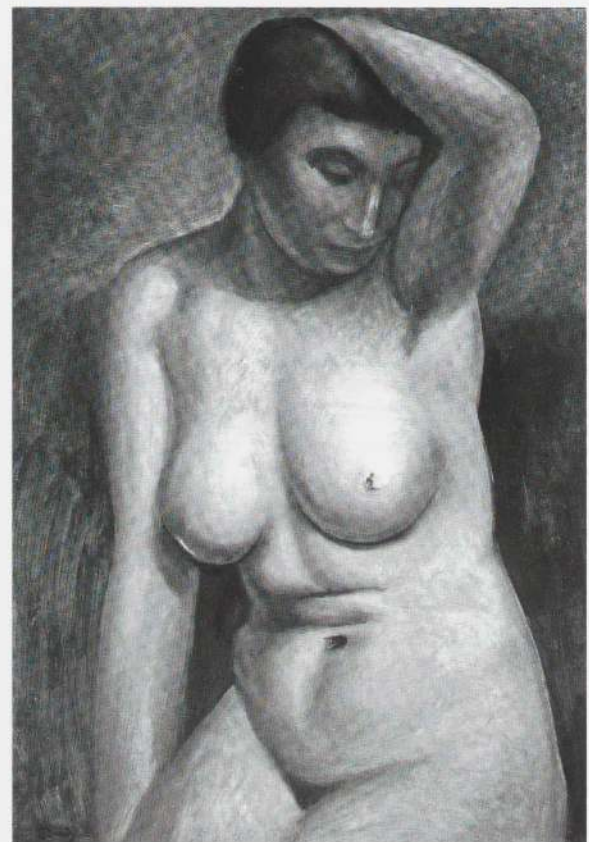
The great triumph of Picasso's neoclassicism came in the mid-1920s, after he had divorced himself from the ballet world and met with the reinvigorating influence of Surrealism. The so-called Vollard Suite, one hundred etchings made from 1930 to 1937, are the most psychologically and formally complex of all Picasso's treatments of antiquity (p. 47), augmented by his 1930 illustrations for Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and those of 1934 for Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*. All these prints have a freshness and invention lacking in most of Picasso's earlier images of this general type, as if his deep classicizing impulses had been stifled by his involvement with circles that failed to appreciate the full irony of his dalliance with academic art. Once the artist was back in the company of the avant-garde, the pall that hung over his renditions of the Greco-Roman ideal evaporated, and what remained was a wondrously discursive evocation of a Golden Age of heroes and goddesses, satyrs and Minotaurs, bacchanalia and sexual paradise. Yet the Vollard Suite and related drawings and prints were as anti-avant-garde as their immediate antecedents. As always, Picasso brushed aside notions of stylistic progress in favor of stylistic simultaneity at its most pronounced.

While reactionary modern art had many champions between the two world wars, without Picasso it would not have had an overarching presence. Derain's landscapes, still lifes, nudes, and masques epitomize the *retour au métier*, or return to craft, that was at the heart of the anti-avant-garde's enterprise. However, despite their popularity—and for a time in the 1920s, Derain bade fair to overtake Picasso as the leading figure in Paris—the truth is Derain's art is frequently labored and often clumsy. In a way, the awkwardness of his pictures paralleled that of the work by naive painters who

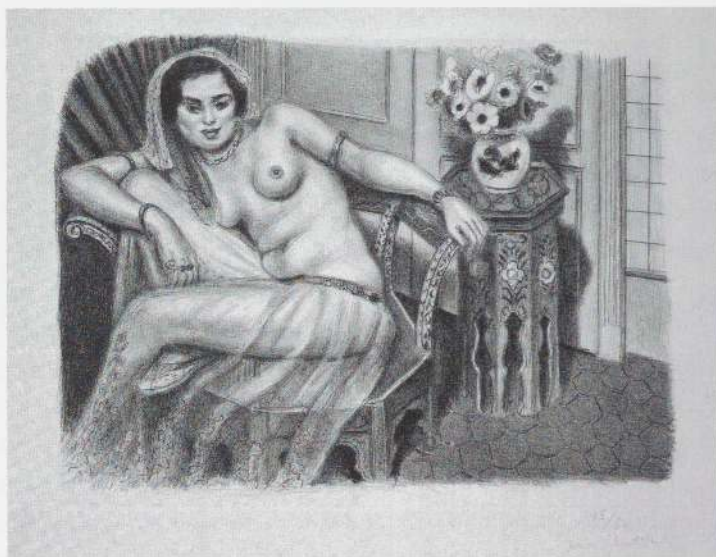
rode the antimodernist currents of the 1920s and 1930s, when things provincial and "authentically French" were much in fashion. Derain painted with a certain force, but Picasso did effortlessly what Derain could barely achieve with great struggle, namely, draw like an academician. Because it was easy for him, Picasso could play; because it was hard for Derain, he could not.

Gris, another convert to Ingres, found the challenge daunting at first, but enjoyed the recreation and joked about his newly discovered mastery. Writing his dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler in 1915, he said, "Nowadays when I have finished working I don't read serial novels but do portraits from life. They are very good likenesses and I shall soon have as much skill as a Prix de Rome winner. It is a perpetual thrill for me to discover how it is done. I can't get over it because I thought it was much more difficult." Gris's 1919 portrait of Jacob (p. 4) in more or less the same outfit he is wearing in Picasso's 1915 drawing is indeed a good, though frozen, likeness. Gris was not always so glib about his desire to reconnect with the premodern heritage of painting, and, no matter how posterity assessed his contribution, he was certain of his ambition. "My work may be bad 'great painting,'" he told Kahnweiler, "but at least it's 'great painting.'" ¹⁰

ANDRÉ DERAIN.
French, 1880–1954.
Torso, c. 1921. Oil on
cardboard, 30 x 21 1/2"
(76.2 x 54.3 cm).
Purchase (by
exchange), 1940



Gris's remark suggests a useful benchmark for judging reactionary modern art, for one may well ask how tradition is served or the old masters honored by poor imitations of "great painting" of the past. That was Derain's unsolved dilemma, as well as the curse of lesser reactionaries who aped him. Gris's modesty was consistent with the charm of his paintings, which, although not "great," were genuine, thoughtful, and well made. Matisse's quiet conservatism of the 1910s and 1920s harmonized with that of Gris, but it reached a much higher level of achievement. Whereas Gris's canvases reorchestrated Cubism in a minor key,



Matisse's chamber works, complete with harem girls and luxurious decors, revived nineteenth-century Orientalism in all its glory, as in *Odalisque with a Tambourine* (1926; p. 105). Meanwhile, the melding of fluent line and rich tonality in his drawings and prints, such as *Hindu in a Voile Skirt* (1929; p. 49), and the visual splendor of his bourgeois interiors, such as *Interior with a Violin Case* (1918–19; p. 106), extended tradition by increments. Matisse was never radical in anything but his art, and his repeated ability to strip painting down to essentials was predicated on his interim cultivation of its historical conventions. Rather than a lapse, Matisse's work of midcareer was a consolidation and a preparation. Its manifest pleasures obviated second-guessing; its decorative aspects were fundamental to the artist's long-term restructuring of painting. How demanding Matisse was of himself when apparently working at his leisure is obvious when the results are compared to the best that his epigones could produce. As *Window at Nice* (c. 1929; p. 107) shows, erstwhile Fauve Raoul Dufy tried vainly to keep pace with his friend, but could not rise above his own weakness for schematic flourishes. Matisse was a feast for the eye; Dufy proffered "petit fours."

Georges Rouault, Matisse's "classmate" in the studio of Gustave Moreau, was a conservative of an altogether different stripe. As dour as Matisse's work is lush, Rouault's images are a testament to Christian faith, inspired by medieval stained glass and Symbolist painting and keyed to the bleakness of World War I and of France's northern industrial landscape. The pathos of these pictures is of a piece with their atemporality. The solemnity with which they are imbued is that of a

period in which many Catholics—the contemporaneous religious philosopher and aesthete Jacques Maritain among them—sought to modernize the still staunchly conservative Church. In sum, Rouault was an enlightened man operating within a community of belief unresponsive to avant-garde practice yet capable of being affected by his contemporary piety. Not all his themes are sacred—acrobats and grotesques frequently intrude upon the scene, as they do in Gothic cathedrals and illuminations—but his finest accomplishments, notably the aquatints that compose his book *Miserere*, are like a prolonged lamentation brushed in dampened ash. (Although the book was published in 1948, the images reproduced in it date from 1916–27.) The grit and somberness of Jean Fautrier's atmospherically similar pictures (p. 115) are—without benefit of clergy—the harbinger of a post-World War II existentialist style most fully realized in the caked impastos and graffiti-like caricatures of Jean Dubuffet, who, as a 1921 study of his mother seated in an ornate armchair attests (p. 11), also served his apprenticeship with Ingres.

At 180 degrees from Rouault's piety is the studied perversity of Balthus, or Count Balthasar Klossowski de Rola, as he has chosen to call himself. Balthus was not an aristocrat by blood, but he became one by design, growing up—or rather stubbornly *not* growing up—in a cultured Polish family that counted many famous painters and writers as its intimates. Among them were Pierre Bonnard, Albert Marquet, Vlaminck (another defector from the Fauves to the anti-avant-garde), André Gide, and Rainer Maria Rilke, his mother's lover, who favored the precocious

HENRI MATISSE.
French, 1869–1954.
Hindu in a Voile Skirt, 1929.
Lithograph, comp.:
11 1/4 x 15" (28.6 x
38.1 cm), sheet:
16 3/4 x 20 3/4" (41.6 x
51.8 cm). Edition: 50.
Gift of M. Knoedler
& Co., Inc., 1957

artist by writing an introduction for the suite of Nabi-like drawings of a boy and his cat that Balthus produced at age thirteen and published in 1921 under the title *Mitsou*. The forever feline Balthus is perhaps one of the last surviving examples of the classic Baudelairean dandy in whom the avidity of childhood is allied to adult perseverance, with both shielded from outside scrutiny by a feigned indifference to the everyday world.

Although a petted prodigy, Balthus took his time finding his mature style, an amalgam of interwar artistic tropes that invokes tradition from every angle but regularly offends propriety. When the artist abstains from such effrontery, he renders a reality so stilted and bizarre that only self-deluded lovers of “good old painting” can ignore the work’s willfulness or find comfort in its affectations. Like many artists of the 1920s and 1930s, Balthus schooled himself in museums, where, during that period, the genealogies of French painting were being rewritten so as to link the *Pietà d’Avignon* to the Le Nains, Nicolas Poussin, Georges de La Tour, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, Jacques-Louis David, Gustave Courbet, and Corot. This revisionist lineup of French old masters went hand in hand with renewed interest in so-called Renaissance primitives like Paolo Uccello and Piero della Francesca—Cubism had opened the eyes of scholars and the public to their geometrizing pictures—and with increased attention to Caravaggio and baroque realism. Of course, this grand painterly processional was imaginary. In fact, the names listed stood for diverse, if not contradictory, ambitions and aesthetic realities, but after World War I nationalist pressures to retrofit art history were part and parcel with the broad enthusiasm for folk imagery and the previously cited fashion for “naive” painters like Picasso’s friend the Douanier Rousseau and many lesser discoveries.¹¹

Balthus’s sources also included the eccentric, literary pictures of Henry Fuseli and the stiff genre paintings of Joseph Reinhardt (who were both Swiss), as well as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century children’s illustrations and the popular *images d’Épinal*, vernacular prints from the Lorraine district in the heart of France, which were also models for Dufy, Picasso, and others. Both formally and metaphorically, Balthus’s work fed on this convergence of conservatisms—but with a twist. Bad boy of the academy, he synthesized old-master painting and period kitsch to produce pictures that were arch

and satirical if not downright obscene. Thus, the mid-fifteenth-century *Pietà d’Avignon* supplied the compositional template for *The Guitar Lesson* (1934), in which a woman bends a girl backward across her lap the better to violate her.¹² Balthus himself was infatuated with young girls, and they appear in various states of dress or undress throughout his oeuvre, but never more seductively or luridly than in his early work of the 1930s. In his claustrophobic, pigment-clotted universe, children are anything but the innocent victims of adult desire or cruelty. Instead, they lounge and lure and play dirty tricks. Their actions or demeanors often make it impossible to tell lurking men from lascivious boys, knowing temptresses from sexually awakening nymphets. Balthus’s abrupt shifts in scale and his habit of attaching big heads to small bodies further confound the viewer, such that one remains perpetually uncertain whether the indeterminately aged couple at the extreme left of *The Street* (1933; pp. 118–19) is engaged in a harmless game of tag or an amorous chase—whether he is molesting her and she is escaping, or she is teasing him and he is snatching at the bait.

Is the arrested motion of these pictures emblematic of the artist’s arrested psychological development, or is his obsession with juvenile sexuality a Sadeian conceit or a Bataille-like defilement of the myth of guiltless youth—or both? After World War II, Balthus’s paintings and drawings increasingly hedged these questions in their emphasis on art-historical precedent. But in the 1930s, his eagerness to shock attracted the avant-garde—including Antonin Artaud (poet, inventor of the Theater of Cruelty, and author of the first serious article on the artist’s work) and the Surrealists (who courted Balthus, but failed to recruit him)—while his strange, painterly erudition recommended him to ardent reactionaries. Like Cocteau, he tantalized the aesthetic Left and Right, ignoring antagonisms while flirting with the antagonists. In his catalogue essay for Balthus’s 1956–57 exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art—an exhibition that coincided with the Museum’s first Jackson Pollock retrospective, thereby demonstrating the institution’s own straddling of extremes—curator James Thrall Soby went so far as to note that “in very recent years, however, his example has meant much to certain French painters of Communist persuasion in their attempt to create recognizable propaganda for their political cause,” although, Soby continued, “the debt

remains unacknowledged. Balthus himself would disclaim it hastily."¹³

This suavely split personality resulted in two of his best paintings. Both are portraits of artist friends; both juxtapose adult men and girls. The first, *André Derain* (1936; p. 116), is dominated by the colossal, elegantly robed painter standing in front of a disheveled blond. The studio setting offers her the alibi of being a model, but the dissipated look on the painter's jowly face, the plumpness of the hand, and the daintiness of its fingers spread across his chest in opposition to his nubile companion's naked breast, hiked-up skirt, and possibly postorgasmic expression hint insistently at a libertine scenario. In *Joan Miró and His Daughter Dolores* (1937-38; p. 117), the tables have been turned: the dominant figure is the girl, and the one lost in thought is the man. Thus, the painter stares out with an amazed, childlike impassiveness, while the child fixes upon the viewer with a protective, even possessive, womanly gaze. He lives in his imagination, and she in the unforgiving reality described by Balthus in dry layers of paint. For literary painters such as Balthus, the literature of the image must be good if a painting is to succeed, or else narrative must be minimal so that plain, yet revealing, appearances can speak. The mystery of *The Street* puts it in the first category. The two portraits exemplify the second.

The basis for Balthus's affinity for Miró is evident in the Spaniard's work of the early 1920s, when, after some experiments with aggressive Fauve color and broad Cubist patterning, Miró tightened his technique and mixed detailed modeling with intricate, abstract armatures and fanciful abbreviations of form. The results were a small group of whimsical pastorals and a few filigreed *bodegones* (still lifes in the sharp, chiaroscuro style of baroque realists Francisco Zurbarán and Luis Meléndez). Inasmuch as the contemporaneous landscapes of French painters like Derain, André Dunoyer de Segonzac, Vlaminck, and others are hymns of praise to *la France profonde*—a bucolic fantasy of unchanging villages and customs in a period of steady urbanization and immigration—then Miró's depictions of farm life project a very different ambience and figure against a distinct background. During the 1930s, the majority of France's population ceased to be rural, and references to agricultural life were correspondingly tinged with nostalgia or tainted by blood-and-soil sentiment. In Spain, however, the peasantry remained a predominant

force throughout the decade, and Miró's comparably naturalistic paintings translated vital folk iconography into a modern idiom. Reserved but charming, his *The Ear of Grain* (1922-23; p. 110) testifies to the simplicity of agrarian existence in a stripped-down, crisply edged, pictorial language that, with variations, shows up everywhere and in all mediums between the wars, from Germany's *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) to American Scene photography. Julio González's *Head of the Montserrat, II* (1942; p. 41) is realism of a different but related kind. A master metalworker who taught Picasso how to weld and went on to create an important body of semi-Cubist, semi-Surrealist assemblages in scrap iron and steel, González symbolized the popular Catalan resistance to Franco's Fascism in this dramatic head. A fragmentary *Guernica* in sculptural prose, it is a conservative work made in a radical cause. A celebration of peasant strength in the face of mechanized legions by a man otherwise dedicated to modernizing sculptural technique, *Head of the Montserrat, II* points to the pitfalls of drawing indiscriminate connections between backward-glancing aesthetics and political reaction.

The use of conservative means for radical purposes is a common denominator of much Surrealist work. Although Miró, André Masson, and Matta contributed greatly to abstraction, illusionism remained an indispensable option among their repertoire of dream-inducing devices. After all, Surrealism began as a literary movement, and it produced a literary, frequently illustrative art. That is chiefly what some American formalists would hold against it in the 1950s. Making make-believe believable required all the skills of the pictorial necromancer. With lapidary precision, places existing only in the mind were rendered as tangible as a view out a Paris or Brussels window, and by means even more old-fashioned and deceptive than those used by the average landscape painter of the interwar years. Furthermore, though the Surrealists conducted themselves as an obstreperous and militant avant-garde, their poetics were saturated with longing for things lost and times past. The cult of the found object was a kind of psychological archaeology that valued the relic quality of the prize as much as its association-priming oddity. And insofar as dreams were situations transposed in subconscious memory, then the ideal setting of the standard Surrealist narrative was a scene tricked out to resemble the world of childhood, the

world antedating adult reality. If the Surrealists wished to lull the ordinary viewer into a more receptive, more vulnerable state, they staged their surprises in nondescript, quotidian environments, since, as Sigmund Freud had taught them, the more *heimlich* (familiar, homey) the context, the more *unheimlich* (disturbing, uncanny) the psychic anomaly's effect.

Thus, for example, Pierre Roy placed a serpent on a landing in a comfortable nineteenth-century apartment building in *Danger on the Stairs* (1927 or 1928; p. 133). By contrast, René Magritte's *The Menaced Assassin* (1926; p. 52) is overtly phantasmagorical, but the scene's props and costumes—gramophone, suitcase, topcoats, and bowlers—are “everyday” modern. The setup of Magritte's still-life *Portrait* (1935; p. 130) is even more consistently banal except for the eye gazing out from the middle of the slice of ham. In *The Empire of Light, II* (1950; p. 131), he described a suburban street at night with a bright-blue midday sky above. Like Roy's, the blandness of Magritte's painterly touch is a decoy for the aggressiveness of his imagery. Paul Delvaux's comic-opera wonderland represents the ornamental side of the same stylistic coin. In *Phases of the Moon* (1939; p. 132), everything from the ironwork on the porch where the nude woman poses, the chair she sits on, and the paneled interior behind her to the waistcoats and glasses worn by the men are redolent of an earlier era than that when the work was painted.

To varying extents, virtually all the Surrealists toyed with disorienting anachronisms, but none played the game longer or more extravagantly than Salvador Dali. And no one took Surrealism's antimodernist implications more to heart or to greater extremes. His is the

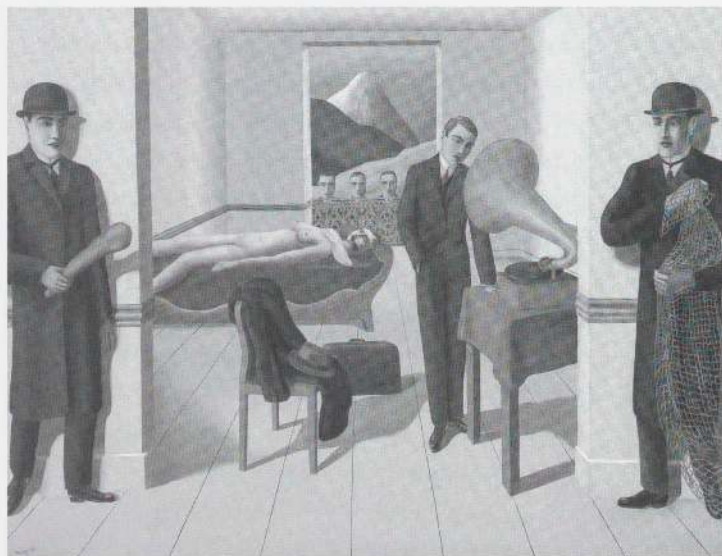
story of an astonishingly facile artist possessed by an ambition equal to that of any of his contemporaries—Picasso, in particular. Dali was too restless, too nakedly self-promoting to sustain an alliance with those to whom he had closest ties, the Surrealists, but at the same time was incapable of crystallizing his own vanguard “ism.” Dali's predicament is nicely summed up by what he called his “paranoiac-critical method.” Cribbed from basic psychoanalysis, Dali's “critical” ideas were too superficial to compete with the witches' brew of Freud, Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, the Marquis de Sade, Symbolism, and occult arcana constantly being stirred by Breton. Dali's untheorized paranoia—or was it narcissism?—fended off followers, even as he spawned myriad imitators. On the rebound, Dali mounted a one-man campaign for a modern art based on a systematic perversion of old-master technique, which, rather than destroying tradition, would save it by making it glamorous and competitive with the novelties of the avant-garde.

Purged from the Surrealists for his grandstanding and greed—an indignant Breton rechristened him with the anagram Avida Dollars—Dali took his cue and became the darling of high bourgeois salons in Europe and America; went to Hollywood, where he collaborated with Alfred Hitchcock; proudly declared his loyalty to the Catholic Church and to the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco; proclaimed his love for academic painters like J. L. E. Meissonier and Jean-François Millet; and generally did anything that would put him squarely at odds with his former comrades-in-arms. It was a strategy of pure but flashy *arrière-garde* negation—and it worked. No major artist of his generation other

than Picasso executed so complete an about-face. The impact of Dali's gesture was lessened by his not having been a painter of note before he fastened onto his version of Surrealism. However, his apostasy proved that Surrealism was neither necessarily of the Left nor in any aesthetically reliable way forward-looking. Dali drove this message home by dint of bravado, industry, and virtuosity to the point that in the popular imagination he ended up personifying the movement from which he had been expelled.

None of this would have mattered—or mattered for long—if Dali's pictures had

RENÉ MAGRITTE.
Belgian, 1898–1967.
*The Menaced
Assassin*. 1926.
Oil on canvas,
59 1/2" x 6'4 7/8"
(150.4 x 195.2 cm).
Kay Sage Tanguy
Fund, 1966



been merely adequate demonstration pieces. Class clown to the academics for whom Balthus was the prodigal son, Dali, like many clowns, was overqualified for the job. *The Persistence of Memory* (1931; p. 129)—his famous landscape with molten watches—is an unforgettable and profoundly subversive image. The 1935 *Portrait of Gala* (*L'Angélu de Gala*; p. 128), his wife, is, like Miró's still lifes of the 1920s, a modern reprise of the Spanish baroque. The unexplained doubling of the sitter references the reflection in the mirror in Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (*The Maids of Honor*; 1656), while the painting within a painting—also quoted from Velázquez, as are the lighting of the figure and the deft brushwork—footnotes his tongue-in-cheek admiration for Millet's masterpiece of saccharine sanctity, *The Angelus* (1857–59). Like Balthus's likenesses of Derain and Miró, *Portrait of Gala* is retrograde painting of a high order.

In 1948, Dali would preface his book *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*, a romping burlesque of the earnest conservatives' call for a *retour au métier*, with this credo:

At the age of six I wanted to be Napoleon—and I wasn't. At the age of fifteen I wanted to be Dali and I have been. At age twenty-five I wanted to become the most sensational painter in the world and I achieved it. At thirty-five I wanted to affirm my life by success and I attained it. Now at forty-five I want to paint a masterpiece and to save Modern Art from chaos and laziness. I will succeed! This book is consecrated to this crusade and I dedicate it to all the young, who have faith in true painting.¹⁴

While this manifesto garnered few converts and left little lasting impression on critical discourse, on his own Dali delivered the goods often enough to merit his notoriety.

From first to last, Dali's seamless joining of skill and vulgarity was a form of visual polemic impossible to ignore and harder still to countenance. George Orwell voiced the feelings of many dissenters when he characterized Dali as a genius from the elbow down. For the rest, Orwell's explanation of the painter's trans-Atlantic popularity speaks to the class tensions within the aesthetic community and social realm in which Dali rose so meteorically:

He grew up in the corrupt world of the nineteenth-twenties, when sophistication was immensely

widespread and every European capital swarmed with aristocrats and rentiers who had given up sport and politics and taken to patronising the arts. If you threw dead donkeys at people, they threw money back. And when that particular world collapsed before the German army, America was waiting.¹⁵

These, however, are the words of a late Victorian moralist who did not much care for modern art of any description. The sticking point is that Dali's revelatory depravity was more vivid—and has remained more vivid—than Orwell's censorious decency. Inverting Gris's apologia, one is obliged to admit that Dali made “bad paintings,” but at least—although only at times—they were “great bad paintings.”

By the mid-1930s, Surrealism had eclipsed Cubism as the dominant style in Paris studios, claiming Picasso as a fellow traveler. Yet permutations of the earlier trend rather than the fantastic researches of the later determined the parameters for the “return to order.” Braque reemerged in the 1920s with a curiously broadened and loosened variant of Synthetic Cubism. The amplitude of his nudes and the sumptuousness of his still lifes were offset by somber tonalities and a heavy drawing-room atmosphere. His new female archetype was the antithesis of the *soubrettes*, long-suffering mistresses and bohemian femmes fatales who populated avant-garde painting before 1914—and who had, so reactionaries believed, distracted France from the serious business of empire. As if molded in clay dug from the battlefield, the new woman—so art historian Romy Golan has shown—was in fact ancient, a fecund earth mother who was French to the core, but recognizably descended from Greek and Roman caryatids. And she showed up everywhere, in Picasso's work, as we have seen, and in Léger's, as we will see. In contrast to these versions, Braque's incarnation of her was massive, soft, and somnolent. Her sister, so to speak, was a country maiden or domestic beauty he reconstituted from the works of Corot, Renoir, and Édouard Vuillard and from eighteenth-century Salon painting. Almost smothered by bourgeois comforts, she picks out a tune on an old-fashioned instrument in *Woman with a Mandolin* (1937; p. 108), oblivious to the world outside.¹⁶

Braque may have been oblivious as well. Certainly he had turned his back on the avant-garde. Even before arriving at his new, decorative adaptation of Cubist juxtaposition and overlay, he had begun to outline his

revised convictions. Thus while recovering from combat wounds in 1917, he published the following aphorisms in the journal *Nord-sud*: "I love the rule which corrects emotion"; "The senses deform, the mind forms"; "In art, progress consists not in extension but in the knowledge of its limits."¹⁷ The paintings express this Cartesian logic with an equally French sensuality. In them, surface is substance. The solid look of things is as thin as a veneer of color-saturated pigment, but magical all the same; space embraces the figure—and the viewer—with womblike, claustrophobic warmth. Cubist fragmentation meets Matissean patterning and arabesques, but Matisse's vivacity has been replaced by Braque's *sagesse*—painterly wisdom and, above all, decorum.

Recently out of uniform like Braque, Léger had a cooler but jazzier take on postwar prospects. Prior to military service, Léger had nearly reached complete abstraction in his *Contrast of Form* paintings of 1913. Just as Gris spoke in 1921 of reversing Cézanne's process of formal reduction ("Cézanne turns a bottle into a cylinder, . . . but I make a bottle—a particular bottle—out of a cylinder"¹⁸), Léger rediscovered the reality implicit in geometry thanks to an epiphany almost literally triggered by guns:

Paris was in a period of pictorial liberation and I was up to my ears in abstraction when I left. Suddenly I found myself on an equal footing with the whole French people. Posted to the sappers, my new comrades were miners, labourers, artisans who worked in wood or metal. I discovered the people of France. And at the same time I was suddenly stunned by the sight of the open breech of a .75 cannon in full sunlight, confronted with the play of light on white metal. It needed nothing more than this for me to forget the abstract art of 1912–13. It came as a total revolution to me, both as a man and as a painter. . . . I made dozens and dozens of drawings. I felt the body of metal in my hands, and allowed my eye to stroll in and around the geometry of its sections. It was in the trenches that I really seized the reality of objects.¹⁹

Rather than losing his faith in modernity during the war, Léger reconfirmed it and retooled his work in preparation for developing a schematic but robust naturalism. Like his Cubist confederates, Léger stuck to traditional formats—figure studies, interiors, still lifes,

and landscapes—and like them, he injected his forms with a classical rigor. Vibrant, good-natured, and vaguely droll, Léger's neoclassicism, however, exhibits very little antiquity and a lot of industrial streamlining. His renditions of the postwar *éternel féminin* are ample, impassive, and unapologetically vulgar. As distinct from the languorous reclining nudes of Matisse or the Sabine women of Picasso, the bumpy odalisques in Léger's *Three Women (Le Grand Déjeuner)*, 1921; pp. 124–25) resemble three Rubensian graces stylishly coiffed, poured into shiny, tubular, steel corsets or body stockings, and posed in an Art Deco apartment. They are big, big city women who thoroughly enjoy their swank surroundings.

They may also be working-class women accustoming themselves to an undreamed of luxury, for, more so than any of the Cubists, Léger was a man of the Left. When he spoke of "discovering the people of France" among the laborers and artisans in his regiment, Léger was not indulging in chauvinism, as so many artists of the interwar years were to do, but rather announcing his eagerness to cast his lot with that of his wartime comrades-in-arms and his peacetime comrades in the streets. Based on a drawing made in 1924–25, *Three Musicians* (1944; p. 123) is a testament to Léger's genuine identification with popular culture. Indeed, its bold lines and high-keyed colors seem precociously Pop—a linkage verified by Roy Lichtenstein's pastiches of Léger's work. The musicians themselves seem more folkloric than fashionably twenties or forties, more nostalgic than up-to-date. In sum, Léger retreated from the frontier of pure, nonobjective art that many of his students would cross into, adapting to his special needs the conservative iconography and formats of his neoclassicist or nationalist contemporaries. In so doing, he abdicated his place in the front ranks of the avant-garde, but he had not abandoned modernism. To the contrary, he hoped to redirect its destructive methodologies toward the reconstruction of painting at the service of an egalitarian society. While Russian and Mexican artists explored parallel paths during the 1920s and 1930s in the midst of great political upheavals, Léger remained in France, a revolutionary democrat without a revolution.

Superficially similar to Léger's paintings are those of Le Corbusier (who was still using his given name, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, when he was most active as a painter) and Amédée Ozenfant. Their ideological

orientation was very different from his, however, and it was the impact of that ideology more than of their paintings that earned them a prominent role in the anti-avant-garde. Cubism, for Le Corbusier and Ozenfant, was a thing of the past, a "troubled art of a troubled epoch." War had imposed discipline on the arts, just as it had on the body politic. Typical of bohemian modernism, free experimentation—with its license to fail—could no longer be afforded. Thus, Le Corbusier would write, "The War was an insatiable 'client,' never satisfied, always demanding better. The orders were to succeed at all costs and death followed a mistake remorselessly. We may then affirm that the airplane mobilized invention, intelligence and daring: *imagination* and *cold reason*. It is the same spirit that built the Parthenon." This correlation of industrial efficiency and primordial classicism is in historical context both exalted and chilling. So too is Le Corbusier's and Ozenfant's elaboration, "If the Greeks triumphed over the barbarians, if Europe, inheritor of Greek thought, dominates the world, . . . it is because . . . the Greeks loved intellectual beauty."²⁰

Had these words been uttered at an Italian Fascist rally or before a congress of German National Socialists, they might well have drawn tumultuous applause. But they were not, appearing instead in the two artists' elegantly designed journals, *Élan* and *L'Esprit nouveau*. There they served to amplify the claims of a stripped-down but geometrically complex style of architecture neither Benito Mussolini nor Adolf Hitler would have tolerated and of a static, so-called Purist mode of painting, which challenged Cubism's use of fractured planes and simultaneous pictorial events with the mandate that all paintings must in the end be wholly resolved. In effect, Ozenfant and Le Corbusier sought to force the classical dramatic unities of time, place, and action onto Braque's and Picasso's inside-out restaging of traditional easel painting. Ozenfant's pictures flirt with commercial Art Deco, while Le Corbusier's range from beautifully nuanced, yet inert, arrangements of form to vigorous, although obvious, variations on Léger. Nevertheless, against the background of Cubism's vibrant simultaneity, the solidity and quietism of their work is arresting, just as anyone standing stock-still in heavy traffic is first noticeable and then mysterious. This stasis has its origins in a widespread shift in attention during the 1920s away from Cézanne, whose sliding planes had given

rise to Cubism, and toward the work of another of the Post-Impressionists, Seurat. In 1920, the former advocate of Cubism André Salmon declared, "Seurat was the first to construct and compose." With nationalist overtones characteristic of the moment, Ozenfant added, "We love in Seurat the dryness of the great French tradition of all times."²¹

Perhaps more Egyptian than Greco-Roman in his silhouettes and profiles, Seurat showed how to suspend time while painting things of one's own era, how to be a "painter of modern life" in the Baudelairean fashion but dispense with naturalism. It was a lesson others learned from him as well. In Purism, the postwar concern with rebuilding, which Léger shared, tilts decisively toward conservatism. As Kenneth E. Silver, the leading art historian on this period, has said, "Purism was in the deepest sense a self-consciously anti-revolutionary theory and was, equally self-consciously, a movement that depended on the maintenance of the social order and believed in that social order."²²

Stillness of another kind settled over Italian art in the 1920s and 1930s. While the Surrealists followed Baudelaire in longing to be "anywhere out of the world,"²³ the artists associated with Pittura Metafisica, or Metaphysical Painting, wanted to stop the world by stopping the clocks, clocks that Dali would later turn to putty. The jolt was all the greater for the fact that much of the Italian avant-garde had previously chosen headlong dynamism as its guiding principle. In his *Founding Manifesto of Futurism* (1909), F. T. Marinetti ridiculed Italy's obsession with the past and her exaltation of "pensive immobility," while glorifying war, "the world's only hygiene"; calling for the destruction of "the museums, libraries, and academies of every kind"; denouncing "moralism, feminism, every opportunistic cowardice"; and heralding the dawn of a technological age.

We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath—a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*. We want to hymn the man at the wheel, who hurls the lance of his spirit across the earth, along the circle of its orbit.²⁴

With its bombast and machismo, Marinetti's apocalyptic rant was, at one level, among the first and most bellicose articulations of the twentieth century's hot-rod sensibility. At another level, it was a foretaste of the Fascism with which he would align himself after Mussolini's triumphant march on Rome in 1922. By then, Severini along with Carlo Carrà, another one of Futurism's chief exponents, had already given up on the movement, and Umberto Boccioni and Antonio Sant'Elia, two more Futurist luminaries, were dead, victims of the "hygienic" decimations of the late war. As Marinetti moved rapidly to the political Right with a rump contingent of followers, Severini, Carrà, and others were drawn into the orbit of Italy's other great visionary of the period, Giorgio de Chirico.

Born in Greece in 1888 and educated in Athens, Florence, and Munich, de Chirico brought together in one person Southern Europe's attraction to Northern European romanticism, and Northern Europe's fascination with Mediterranean antiquity. In Athens, de Chirico studied painting under a German teacher between 1903 and 1905. In Munich, he succumbed to the influence of the Symbolists Max Klinger, whose album of prints *The Glove* (1881) and other graphic work would greatly influence the Surrealists, and Arnold Böcklin, whose fantastic tableaux featured mythological beings and the haunting, cypress-covered islands of the Italian coast and Venetian lagoon. By 1910, de Chirico was in Paris with his younger brother, Alberto Savinio, author of allegorical stories and creator of pictures even more mannered and freakish than those of his sibling.²⁵ In 1912 at the Salon d'Automne, de Chirico for the first time exhibited one of the melancholic cityscapes that made his reputation. Breton, the Surrealist poet and master of ceremonies, was early in his praise: "I believe that a true modern mythology is in the making. It lies with Giorgio de Chirico to give an imperishable shape to its memory. God made man in his own image; man made the statue and the mannequin. The need to consolidate the former . . . and to adapt the latter to its function . . . is the motive of all the concerns of this painter."²⁶ Yet de Chirico used the rhetoric of Surrealism even before the tendency existed or its tropes could be identified. "What I hear is worth nothing to me," he wrote in 1914, "there is only what my eyes see when they are open, and *more often when they are closed*."²⁷

Despite Breton's attempts to draft him into the movement, de Chirico was not a joiner; neither was he sympathetic to Breton's interest in Freud and Marx. Various opaque and transparent, arcane and obvious, liberating and mournful, de Chirico's pictorial poetry had nothing dogmatically psychoanalytic or rebellious about it. It was as if Nietzsche had translated *Alice in Wonderland* into German and the artist had retranslated it into Italian. Setting his scenes in Renaissance piazzas reminiscent of his native Ferrara, de Chirico ornamented those squares with draped goddesses who mingle or exchange places with geometrized mannequins and men in swallowtail coats. *The Song of Love* (1914; p. 136) is a strange, premodern collage in painterly form, in which a Roman head of Apollo is affixed to a wall, beside a rubber glove. Later, in prints charged with a discreet homoeroticism, de Chirico juxtaposed classical male nudes with men in business suits and imagined gladiatorial contests (p. 138). The artist made the first of the series just mentioned, *Mythologie* (1934), to accompany texts by Cocteau, the ubiquitous point man of the anti-avant-garde, and, like Picasso before him, de Chirico also designed sets for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.

By the late 1910s, the classical element in de Chirico's work was pervasive, and in 1924 Breton disowned him as a friend of Surrealism, drawing a line between early and late de Chirico that would be reinscribed by generations of modernist critics.²⁸ De Chirico drew the line himself and then smudged it. Around 1920, he denounced what he felt were the technical inadequacies of his early work and afterward made neoclassical battle scenes, portraits, and equestrian paintings in a baroque style, cartoonish allegories full of lumpy symbols, and heavy-handed reprises of his groundbreaking pictures of the 1910s. Although he lived until 1978, he was widely perceived as an artist who had embarrassingly survived his creativity, that is until the American Abstract Expressionist Philip Guston and the young Italian Transavant-gardist Francesco Clemente, among others, began to look to his example. But more about that later.

De Chirico's impact on the art of the 1920s and 1930s is owed to the brittle, twilight universe he invented, to the race of puppets he spawned, and most of all to the spell he cast over minds still absorbing the shock of World War I. Avowedly reactionary, the artists promoted between 1918 and 1922 by the magazine

Valori plastici—literally, “plastic values”—picked up the thread de Chirico had let dangle and added starch to it. Edited by Mario Broglio, *Valori plastici* championed a stiff neoclassicism that veered on the one hand toward Renaissance pastiche and on the other toward chill, modern chic. Broglio was instrumental in classifying the characteristics of Pittura Metafisica, and was the first to draw a firm critical connection between de Chirico, Carrà, and the modest master of Bologna, Giorgio Morandi.

Morandi, who had tried his hand at Cubism Italian style, painted for only a couple of years in the airless sculptural manner championed by *Valori plastici*. While Morandi created a large body of consistently small works—none of his canvases exceeds one meter in either dimension, and most are a fraction of that—only a handful evidence the hard linearity and schematic volumes that are the hallmark of that reactionary variant of geometric idealism. After this brief association with *Valori plastici*, Morandi cut himself adrift from organized movements and followed his unhurried intuitions, producing a steady stream of muted landscapes and tabletop pictures whose horizon lines are composed of bottles, boxes, and pieces of china (p. 141). In these paintings, luminous and infinitely subtle tonalities gently dominate color, while the soft brushwork mollifies or sends a shiver through essentially severe pictorial architectonics. The superficial prettiness of Morandi’s canvases has caused them to be loved for the wrong reasons by undemanding conservatives, even as they have simultaneously been underrated on the same grounds by impatient modernists. Nevertheless, Morandi’s art has remained a touchstone for other painters seeking to quiet their nerves and slow their racing thoughts to a pace that permits nuanced perception and formal conception to meet on relaxed but exigent terms in a single object or group of objects. Once again, Guston’s name comes to the fore. In any event, though artists kept doubling back to rediscover him, Morandi ignored the march of history, preferring instead to pay exacting attention to the painterly moment.

Morandi’s methodical, yet inspired, understatement is the polar opposite of the Futurists’ noisy vanguardism. Mario Sironi’s lugubrious tableaux are a cross between inertial Morandism gone imperialist and Futurism fossilized. Although he served as a soldier alongside Marinetti, Boccioni, and Sant’Elia and was a friend of Severini and Giacomo Balla, another leading Futurist,

Sironi never enlisted in their aesthetic cause, but instead adopted a dark, heavy palette in paintings of Herculean nudes and angular ghost towns in which solitary cars, trucks, and trains pass monolithic buildings at a dead hum. An ardent Fascist and a regular caricaturist for Right-wing newspapers and journals, Sironi specialized in grim, schematic images of a modernity Italy had not fully achieved but had been promised by Il Duce. Like many artists in this era, Sironi regarded easel painting as outdated even while practicing it, and whenever the opportunity arose he put down his brushes to make propaganda. Among his projects was designing the Italian pavilions for the Cologne and Barcelona International Exhibitions of 1928 and 1929, respectively. Both his admiration for the Constructivist El Lissitzky’s Soviet pavilion in Cologne and his conviction that murals and other forms of public art were the appropriate form for reaching a mass audience in the twentieth century are reminders that the anti-avant-garde was not necessarily blind to new realities nor incapable of grasping the insights of their aesthetic and political adversaries. Moreover, Sironi’s Fascism underscores the fact that the differences separating avowed reactionaries from traditionalists or conservatives are as significant—and sometimes as elusive—as those separating traditionalists or conservatives from self-proclaimed progressives.



“I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking.”²⁹ This declaration by the narrator of Christopher Isherwood’s “Goodbye to Berlin” (1939) reflects an attitude widespread among artists active during a critical moment in German history, although there is an important qualification to be made. That moment or interval was the Weimar Republic, which was established in 1918, when Germany faced certain defeat, and was shaken by revolutionary uprisings and civil war in the winter of 1918–19. The republic felt the brunt of the depression in 1931–32 and came to an end with Hitler’s being named chancellor in 1933. Isherwood’s *The Berlin Stories* (1935–39), and particularly his heroine, the amoral, gamine Sally Bowles, epitomize for English-speaking readers and filmgoers the intoxicatingly anarchic, yet doomed, experiment in freedom Weimar represented. Moreover, Isherwood’s detailed, superficially neutral reporting of jarring situations mirrors the

postwar sensibility that Germans called *Neue Sachlichkeit*, or New Objectivity. But Isherwood was a tourist in—not a citizen of—Hell-in-the-making; nor was he really a frontline member of any of the cultural or political constituencies that fought for Weimar's soul. On the one hand, his passive, unthinking alter ego was an aesthetic stance, a middle-class, mid-1920s reincarnation of the unflappable dandy. On the other hand, Isherwood's role as an observer was enforced by his being an outsider with no irrevocable stake in the outcome of the period's struggles. The German artists who shared his preference for the hard facts, however, were insiders passionately engaged in the transformation of a stolid and authoritarian nation and agonizingly aware of the odds against them. This is why their art runs so hot and so cold.

Expressionism, which preceded *Neue Sachlichkeit*, had been consistently hot. Parallel with the development of Fauvism in France and influenced by Matisse, Expressionism in Germany had pushed the boundaries of representational art to the limit with saturated color, sharply contrasting tonalities, bold drawing, loose contours, generalized forms, and an overall vibrancy that excited the senses and stirred the emotions. By 1910, Vasily Kandinsky had reached the threshold of abstraction, with Paul Klee following closely behind him. Meanwhile, the other principal Expressionists—Erich

Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Oskar Kokoschka, August Macke, Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff—stuck to their signature styles. Expressionism hit its climax before the outbreak of the war. By the war's end, its energies as a movement had been spent, although most of these artists continued to produce forceful pictures for some time. In this context, the sobriety of *Neue Sachlichkeit* bore somewhat the same relationship to Expressionism that neoclassicism did to Cubism. While Cubist painting as such had never really flourished in Germany, its influence on Kandinsky and Klee was considerable, and the syntax of Cubist collage was to have a profound impact on German Dada, from the political work of John Heartfield and George Grosz to the more hermetic appropriations of Hannah Höch and Kurt Schwitters.

As was the case in France when Picasso the premier Cubist became Picasso the master classicist, two former Expressionists played a crucial part in steering modern German art in a formally more conservative direction after 1918. The first to do so was Max Beckmann, the second Otto Dix. Both artists had fought in the war—Beckmann had been a medical orderly, Dix a machine gunner at the front—and both returned to their easels changed men. In keeping with his temperament, Beckmann's reorientation was contradictory and poetic. His aim, he said, was to employ an "objectivity towards inner visions." "It may sound paradoxical," he wrote as late as 1938, "but it is, in fact, reality which forms the mystery of our existence." (As Ernst Thoms, another member of his generation put it, "We have painted inwards from the outside."³⁰)

Dix's response was harsher and more categorical: "War is so bestial: hunger, lice, mud, those insane noises. . . . I had the feeling, on looking at the pictures from my early years that I had completely missed one side of reality so far, namely the ugly aspect." Of the somberness of his new "objective" paintings in comparison to the brighter hues of his early work, Dix noted, "To a certain extent . . . it was a contradiction of the Expressionists' colossal colourfulness. . . . I said to myself: Things actually aren't as colourful as all that. Everything is much darker, the shades of colour much quieter, much simpler. In short, I wanted to show things as they really are." And of his general philosophical turnaround, he concluded, "The Expressionists produced enough art. We wanted to see things totally naked and clear, almost without art."³¹

OTTO DIX. German, 1891–1969. *The Nun*, 1914. Oil on panel, 27 7/8 x 20 3/4" (70.2 x 52.4 cm). Gift of Gertrude W. Dennis, 1988



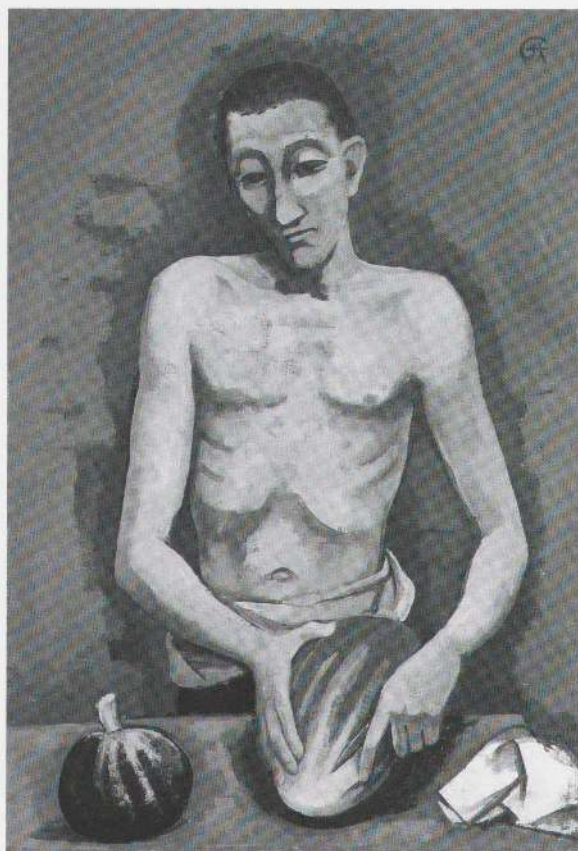
This impatience with the overproduction of "art" resonates sympathetically with the anti-aesthetic pronouncements of the Dadaists, but Dix's answer to the problem was diametrically opposed to theirs. Instead of furthering the breakdown of pictorial conventions initiated by Cubism, Dix opted for a tight realism that gradually banished spontaneous, painterly gesture and reintroduced the polish and compositional complexity of the Northern Renaissance. Whereas the Expressionists had looked to the bold, emblematic qualities of Gothic art, Dix focused on the intricate, precise, and often tortured figuration of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century German masters. Thus, the portrait *Dr. Mayer-Hermann* (1926; p. 146) provides a four-square image of a portly physician in which each detail of his medical equipment is described with the same emotionally detached precision used for the features of his impassive face. The painting is manifestly the creation of an artist with a camera eye, but the hand that records what the eye sees has been to school with Albrecht Altdorfer, Lucas Cranach, Albrecht Dürer, Hans Baldung Grien, and Wolf Huber. The clinical calm of this portrait differs strikingly from the chaotic ferocity of much of the rest of Dix's work; his ghastly depictions of the trenches, his lurid scenes of poverty, sex crimes, and cabaret life, and his angry caricatures of the war wounded begging on the streets of Berlin show Dix's fury at its bluest flame.

Images of the latter kind suggest another reason why "realism" seemed a necessity for artists wishing to document or react to what they had seen during the war. While it is true that some merely sought security in the old artistic ways and others hoped to rebuild what had been destroyed by patching fragments of modernism together with bits of salvaged tradition, those who wanted to depict a damaged world had to address a basic formal problem: for those damages to be visible some semblance of a pictorial whole needed to exist. A tear in the flesh of an already dismembered image was simply a graphic detail. A gash in a recognizably rendered face, on the other hand, registered the violence done. In short, bullets and bayonets had "abstracted" the body in ways that grotesquely mimicked Cubist dismantling of the figure; any confusion between the two threatened to become an intolerable, aesthetic parody of actual suffering.

Born into the working class and stripped of his illusions in battle, Dix protested the inequities and

corruption of modern Germany, but never placed his art in the service of politics. Older and more privileged than Dix yet equally alert to their country's malaise, Beckmann was even less inclined toward social activism. Like Picasso's, his work combines autobiography and allegory, the grand manner and prosaic digressions, great feeling and wild histrionics. And like Picasso, he was steeped in tradition and asserted his rights over anything he found useful. In his triptychs, Beckmann thus revived the German Renaissance altarpiece, a format also used by Dix, filling his reinterpretations with images that conflate neoclassical motifs with carnivalesque antics (sometimes acted out by Harlequins) and Grand Guignol mayhem. *Departure* (1932–33), completed the year Hitler rose to power, is among the finest and most enigmatic of this tragicomic series. *Family Picture* (1920; p. 144) and *Self-Portrait with a Cigarette* (1923; p. 145) are more fully in the spirit of *Neue Sachlichkeit*. In them, an Expressionist boldness is still evident, but the individual painterly effects are subordinated to the general mood of apprehensive self-absorption and implacability. The oppressively crowded scene in *Family Picture* shows the artist surrounded by women in a bourgeois purgatory; *Self-Portrait with a Cigarette* presents him alone in evening attire as an inscrutable man-about-town, calling to mind Picasso hailing himself in the mirror as "Monsieur Ingres." Lovis Corinth's *Self-Portrait* (1924; p. 149) is more agitated than Beckmann's. The output of Corinth's last years—he died in 1925—is less an example of the objectivity of the 1920s than of a congealing of earlier Impressionist and naturalist modes. Corinth did not "return to order" with the Expressionists; instead, he stayed where he was until the exponents of that new sensibility crossed his path. The profusion of dull tints and the bursting white highlights that fill his brushy pictures like tintured oatmeal are in marked contrast to the dense colors and black accents of Beckmann's canvases; in both artists' work, however, a lively painterly vulgarity unbalances their compositions and sends shivers through their bulky forms.

Karl Hofer's subdued, anecdotal paintings, such as *Man with a Melon* (1926; p. 60), are far more restrained than either Beckmann's or Corinth's work. They represent the branch of *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting that looked to the Italian rather than the German Renaissance, finding a link to the past in the artists associated with *Pittura Metafisica* and *Valori plastici*,



whose work was exhibited in Berlin, Hannover, and Marburg as early as 1921. In 1922, when the critic and curator Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub described the characteristics of what he then called New Naturalism—critic Franz Roh used the term Magic Realism—he divided the tendencies into two parts:

I see a right and a left wing. The first, so conservative as to be equal to Classicism, rooted in that which is timeless, is seeking once again to sanctify that which is healthy, corporeal, sculptural, through pure drawing from nature, possibly even exaggerating the earthly, well-rounded element, after so much fantasy and chaos. It regards Michelangelo, Ingres, Genelli, and even the Nazarenes as its main authority. The other wing, incandescently contemporary in its lack of belief in art, born rather from a denial of art, is attempting to expose chaos, the true feeling of our days, by means of a primitive obsession with assessment, a nervous obsession with the exposure of the self.³²

Hofer plainly belonged to the right wing, while Beckmann, according to Hartlaub, belonged to the left, along with Dix.

KARL HOFER.
German, 1878–1955.
Man with a Melon.
1926. Oil on canvas,
42 1/4 x 28 3/4"
(107.3 x 73.3 cm).
Purchase, 1949

In any political sense, however, the Left was dominated by Grosz. A lightning rod of Berlin Dada in the late 1910s, by 1923 when his book of social caricature, *Ecce Homo*, appeared, Grosz had opted for an increasingly stark, naturalistic style of draftsmanship overlaid on a broken, Cubist matrix. "You won't find a Matisse flourishing in Eastern Pomerania or Berlin," he proclaimed. "But so what! The air and everything is hard . . . and good for drawing."³³ Grosz's cast of bestial prostitutes, war profiteers, saber-scarred aristocrats, stage-door Johnnys, military thugs, emaciated workers, and still more prostitutes is a lexicon of stereotypes rendered with such acute animosity that they become "real" in the way that the denizens of Isherwood novels or Kurt Weill's and Bertolt Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* (1928) are judged true to life for those antagonistic times. Avant-garde writer and graphic designer Kurt Tucholsky's 1921 assessment of Grosz stands:

I know of no one who has so successfully captured the modern face of power, down to its last vinous red vein, as has this one man. The secret is that he does not content himself with laughing; he hates. The other secret: he does not merely delineate his figures but exhibits them. . . . And all their atmosphere, the world they live in, is there, intact. They way they look in a Grosz drawing, all these officers, these entrepreneurs, these uniformed nightwatchmen of the social order, is the way they will always look, their whole lives long.³⁴

Occasionally, Grosz's loathing for humanity abated. Then his quick, pitiless fingers could evoke the anxiety and intellectual nobility of a friend or fellow creator, as in the portrait *The Poet Max Herrmann-Neisse* (1927; p. 148). Like Dix's portraits, this is *Neue Sachlichkeit* painting at its unflinching, disquieting best. Veins stand out on the sitter's brow—as they do on the shaven heads of Grosz's businessmen and bullies—but here they pulse with thought.

As is often the case with rigid pessimists and compulsive haters, sentimentality lurks nearby. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, partly due to the influence of Jules Pascin, Grosz's tensile line slackened. (Compare Pascin's *Reclining Model* [c. 1925; p. 115] and Grosz's *Self-Portrait with a Model* [1928; p. 147].) After Grosz left Germany for the United States in 1932, his art went into precipitous decline, with generalized resentment

and humanist bathos replacing his focus and astringency. Yet Grosz never truly betrayed his original misanthropic convictions, nor was his manner truly more conservative than it had been in the mid-1920s. Rather, his once-taut graphic style turned to poisonous whipped cream.

Like Grosz, Georg Scholz had a gift for sinister personification. His rendition of simple German people in *Family* (1920; p. 147) is a cartoon grenade tossed in the laps of artists who celebrated the racial superiority of the *Volk* in kitschy genre pictures made for Nazi patrons. That said, the graphic work of Käthe Kollwitz



gave indelible substance to a quite different vision of the common people. A contemporary of Corinth, Kollwitz lived through the Weimar Republic and died in the last months of World War II. A woman of the Left, she allied fine academic drawing to naturalist subject matter—principally the suffering and rebellion of the working class—and Expressionist emotion (p. 61).

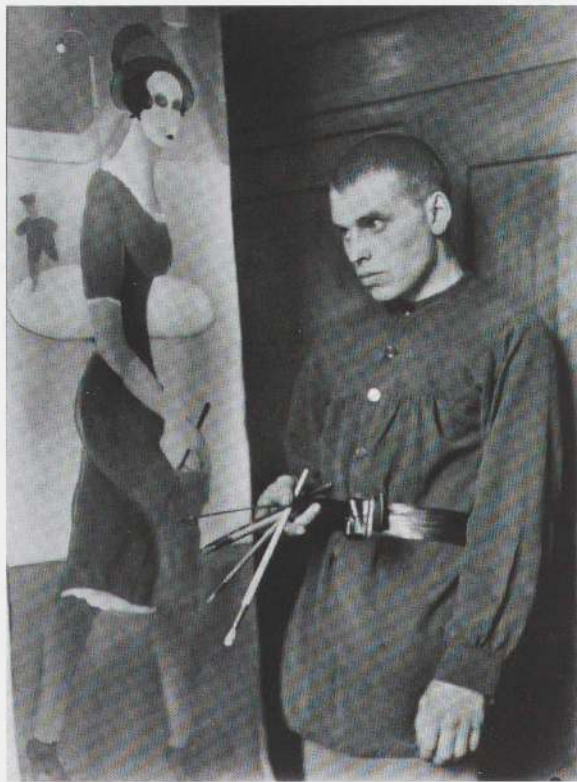
There is no genuine sculptural equivalent to Neue Sachlichkeit painting and drawing. A strong neoclassical influence is visible in the bronzes of Georg Kolbe (p. 151) and Gerhard Marcks (p. 151), and atavistic, neo-Gothic traits appear in the work of Ernst Barlach (pp. 39, 150) and Ewald Mataré (p. 150). No one can say what course Wilhelm Lehmbruck might have taken had he not killed himself in 1919, but the

precedent set by his introspective and attenuated figures coincides in certain respects with the “metaphysical” or right wing of Neue Sachlichkeit. The principal point to be made is that simultaneously with the development of the avant-garde Bauhaus aesthetic a strong current of traditional modeling and carving persisted. This tradition would reassert itself after World War II and fuse with Dada in the person of Joseph Beuys, who studied with Mataré and whose last public lecture was an homage to Lehmbruck. Thus, an anti-avant-garde influence skips generations in nourishing the avant-garde.

A few final words on the Nazis and Neue Sachlichkeit: “It is the task of the contemporary artist to create a link to the old masters and at the same time not to consider themselves too grand to look at simple peasant art, which is the expression of the divine through the blood.”³⁵ Penned by critic Adolf Babel, this mandate summarizes Fascist aesthetics during this period; artistic “health” was guaranteed by regular doses of the classics and folk heritage, with which rough-hewn Gothic figuration was implicitly identified. Until the mid-1930s, the Nazi elite were divided over the status of modern art, with some, like the failed writer Joseph Goebbels, leaning toward an accommodation, or rather co-optation, of the Expressionists similar to Mussolini’s pact with the Futurists. Hitler’s unyielding provincialism and grandiosity won out in the end. Works by all the German artists discussed here, with the exception of Kolbe and Kollwitz, were included in the Nazi’s notorious *Degenerate Art* (*Entartete Kunst*) exhibition of 1937, in which modern art of every description was pilloried before the public. Even an inveterate anti-Semite like Nolde was spurned by the Third Reich and forbidden to paint. In the same unsettled context, a handful of Neue Sachlichkeit artists approached the new regime looking for commissions or professorships. Kolbe, for example, was asked to make public monuments in the prescribed Greco-Roman mode. His collaboration was brief and at arm’s length, however, as was that of most of the other serious artists tempted by Nazi patronage. Meanwhile, virtually all the Neue Sachlichkeit artists who secured academic posts were dismissed soon after obtaining them.

Nevertheless, careless or dogmatic historians of the avant-garde have sometimes spoken of Neue Sachlichkeit as if it were a warm-up exercise for Nazi figuration. The opposite is true. With its emphasis on

KÄTHE KOLLWITZ.
German, 1867–1945.
*Self-Portrait in Profile,
Facing Right*, 1938.
Lithograph, comp.:
18 1/2 x 11 1/2" (47.7 x
28.6 cm), sheet:
25 1/2 x 18 3/8"
(64.5 x 48.2 cm).
Edition: approx. 250.
Purchase, 1947



social contradiction and conflicted psychological states, Neue Sachlichkeit art was, for the most part, intrinsically incompatible with Nazi doctrine—even when it stopped short of offering an overt Leftist challenge to Nazi values. Rather than being stalking horses for reaction, Neue Sachlichkeit artists were at their best unrivaled chroniclers of Germany's tragedy. The spasms of self-indulgence, doubt, and foreboding the work records only prove that they had accurately guessed at the depths that would be reached in their society's long slide into barbarity.



AUGUST SANDER.
German, 1876–1964.
*The Painter Gottfried
Brockmann*, 1924.
Gelatin silver print,
10 x 7³/₈" (25.4 x
18.7 cm). Gift of
Gerd Sander, 1984

Until the advent of Pop art in the 1950s, England was unable to boast of an original, indigenous avant-garde in the visual arts. During World War I, permutations of Cubism and Futurism found their way into the exclusively English tendency named Vorticism by its creator, Wyndham Lewis, and for a few years Lewis, David Bomberg, Jacob Epstein, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, William Roberts, and their cohort went bombing and blasting their way through the London art scene. On the eve of World War II, Surrealism captured the imagination of countless English artists, including Henry Moore, who later returned to the fold of more or less traditional figurative artists, from which he would periodically venture out into the realm of biomorphic abstraction.

England's cultural conservatism between the two world wars provided fertile ground for a number of notable antimodernists. Like Corinth in Germany, Gwen John and Walter Sickert were born into the pre-modernist world and continued to elaborate upon their period-bound vision well into the modernist era. John—whose flamboyant artist brother, Augustus, was the toast of bohemian society in London just after the turn of the century—was an introvert who, nevertheless, went to Paris, where she studied with James McNeill Whistler, modeled for Auguste Rodin, and was close to Rilke, Rodin's secretary and Balthus's mentor. In short, her aesthetic ties were French rather than English, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist rather than Fauve or Cubist. Confining herself for the most part to portraits and interiors, she was an intimist whose work neither grew nor deepened, but possessed great painterly sophistication and psychological nuance, as is evident in *Girl with a Blue Scarf* (c. 1915–20; p. 161). Although she had only one solo exhibition during her lifetime—she died in 1939—John's work was sufficiently well-known to be included in the 1913 Armory Show in New York and to earn her financial support from the collector of avant-garde art John Quinn. While women contemporaries in France, Russia, Germany, and Poland were breaking away from domestic subject matter and pioneering abstraction, John quietly pursued her own path. She was not alone in her generation. One of the prejudicial consequences of ignoring painting of this general type is the exclusion from art history of a significant proportion of the most accomplished women of the period.

Also a student of Whistler, Sickert had befriended Bonnard, Paul Gauguin, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Paul Signac, and Vuillard. Turning his attention to his own environment, around 1905 he produced formally compact paintings of music halls, street scenes, and tatty London interiors with a flat, Impressionist touch from which he leached out all the brilliance of Impressionist color in favor of exquisitely dirtied greens, ochers, browns, pinks, mauves, and blue grays. They are marvelously downbeat pictures, muffled, world-weary, and honest in their appraisal of both English manners and the quality of English light. Not long before his death in 1942, Sickert began to base his work on images from the popular press. That reliance on secondhand sources and the contradictory antinaturalism implicit in such self-evident reprocessing anticipated the methods

of Francis Bacon and the London Pop artists by more than a decade. (R. B. Kitaj's appropriation of photographs and his dry technique bear particular comparison to similar procedures in those late works of Sickert.) A fine example of Sickert's evocative but distancing style—and of his photographic appropriations—is *Sir Thomas Beecham Conducting* (c. 1935; p. 160), in which a theatrical subject freezes and sinks into a haze of fuzzy brushstrokes and rich, yet dulled, hues.

Stanley Spencer was the unapologetic eccentric of the lot. Having studied at the prestigious Slade School from 1908 to 1912, he was a contemporary of the younger Vorticists. Like several of them, he saw action in World War I, serving as a medical orderly just as Beckmann did on the opposing side. Returning home in Spencer's case meant bypassing London to resettle in the small town of Cookham-on-Thames, where he had been born. There, in a stream of paintings that used the picturesque village as a setting, he staged modern-dress Passion plays that included the Crucifixion. The weird, storybook quality of these sometimes panoramic pictures transfigures their often preachy symbolism. Looking at Spencer's startlingly frank portraits of himself and his lover in the nude is another matter altogether; it is as if postcoital lassitude was suddenly glimpsed through the thatched roofs of Hobbitland. Though few in number, these works made a significant impression on the young Lucian Freud. Monstrous and childlike, surreal without being Surrealist, Spencer's *Nursery* (1936; p. 162) is more typical of his back-to-the-heath retreat from modernity into a timeless moral fantasy. Edward Burra's fantasies are of a stranger and more cosmopolitan sort. An occasional traveler attracted to European cabaret society and Harlem nightlife (his drawings have appeared on the covers of novels by Chester Himes, the expatriate African American writer), Burra was strongly influenced both by Grosz and the Surrealists.³⁶ However, these connections alone cannot explain the bizarre monumentalism and distorted perspective of *Dance of the Hanged Ones* (*Bal des pendues*; 1937; p. 163). Its closest parallels of the period are Guston's early murals, which were painted while he was under the spell of de Chirico and David Alfaro Siqueiros.



There were two great revolutions in the first quarter of the twentieth century; one took place in Russia

(1917–18), the other in Mexico (1910–20). Both took place in countries that had endured prolonged, frequently brutal misrule. Both were obliged to build on heavily agrarian economies. Both stirred the enthusiasm and called upon the expertise of its vanguard artists. In Russia, Commissar of Enlightenment Anatolii Lunacharsky was charged by Lenin and the Bolsheviks with organizing the contribution of painters and sculptors sympathetic to the new society. For the most part, those who responded to his appeal were pioneering modernists who, having served an apprenticeship with Parisian Cubism, were on the verge of pushing beyond it toward a more or less pure, geometric abstraction. Among them were Aleksandra Ekster, Kazimir Malevich, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, Vladimir Tatlin, and, before their departure for the West, Marc Chagall and Kandinsky. For almost fifteen years, ending in 1933 with Joseph Stalin's repression of modernism and promotion of Socialist Realism, avant-garde artists experimented with all the means at their disposal to create a new aesthetic language that would speak to the masses. Theirs was a brave, impossible, and bitterly repaid enterprise.

In Mexico, Lunacharsky's counterpart was Minister of Education José Vasconcelos. His scheme, which lasted only from 1923 to 1926, consisted of commissioning artists to decorate the walls of public buildings. The artists who took up his challenge chose a very different tack from their Soviet contemporaries. Of *los tres grandes*, the three greats, in the Mexican mural movement, Diego Rivera had explored Cubism alongside Picasso, Siqueiros had tried his hand at fin-de-siècle Symbolism and a dynamic figuration informed by Italian Futurism, and José Clemente Orozco, ultimately the greatest and most radical of the "greats," had developed his own brand of cataclysmic Expressionism. All were conversant with advanced painting in Europe, but inspired by Vasconcelos's offer and their own desire to reach out to a population in upheaval, all stepped back from modernism to reinterpret the mythical humanism of the Renaissance and to revive a Renaissance medium: true fresco.

Two outwardly similar situations thus gave rise to two diametrically opposed alternatives. Rivera, the most up-to-date stylist of the triumvirate during his decade-long sojourn in Europe, became the most conservative of its members after his return to Mexico in 1921. At both extremes, he kept his eye cocked on one

man in Paris. "I never believed in God," he said, "but I believe in Picasso."³⁷ And so no sooner had Picasso begun to draw in the manner of Ingres than Rivera started to show off an almost equally adaptable facility in his own neoclassical portraits. Some are beautiful. Others, particularly his frog-prince self-portraits, are full of grotesque verve, yet none displays the aesthetic range and daring of Picasso's comparable output. Decoratively pleasing and easy to read, Rivera's paintings have the graphic consistency of first-rate illustrations. Compositional complications are abundant, but nothing is permitted to disrupt the narrative or break the overall illusion. Although politically defiant—after all, the subject of *Agrarian Leader Zapata* (1931; p. 166) was the Che Guevara of his day—Rivera



DIEGO RIVERA.
Mexican, 1886–
1957. Jacques Lipchitz
(*Portrait of a Young
Man*), 1914. Oil on
canvas, 25 3/8 x 21 3/8"
(65.1 x 54.9 cm).
Gift of T. Catesby
Jones, 1941

assiduously avoided artistic risks, preferring instead to seduce the public, even those who recoiled from his Marxism.

By contrast, Orozco's art is in every way disjunctive. In the service of his apocalyptic visions of class warfare and civilization in conflict, forms clash, colors clash, styles clash. Thus, settings and figures from the paintings of Giotto and other Italian masters—as in, for example, the Michelangelesque *Head of Quetzalcoatl* (c. 1932–34; p. 6)—are juxtaposed with Aztec and machine-age motifs. (In one such fresco, an implacable Hernán Cortés, with the aspect of an El Greco knight, dressed in armor made out of bolted-together industrial steel, stands over the body of an Indian

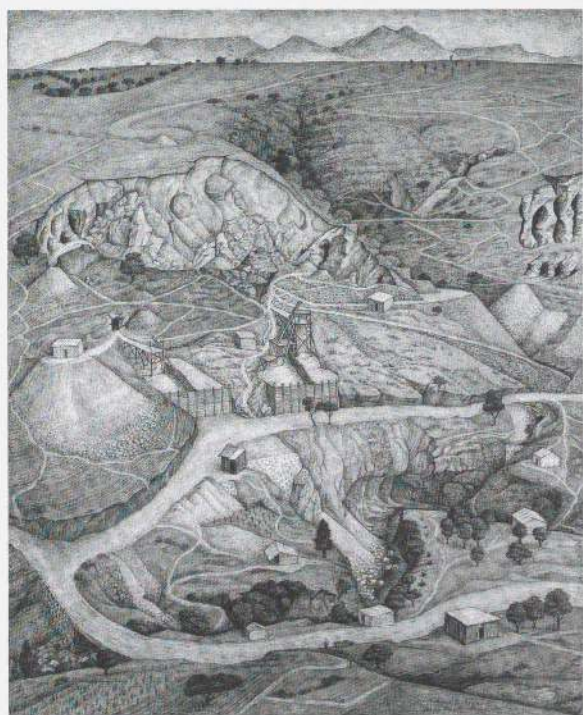
warrior.) For Orozco this violent collaging symbolized the cultural hybridity of the Americas.

The youngest of the leading Mexican muralists, Siqueiros was the closest to being a modernist of the three, but the heightened dynamism of his work has an undeniably baroque dimension. Undulating yet lacquer hard, his forms are muscular, aggressive, and rhetorical. Unlike Rivera and Orozco, Siqueiros was fascinated by new technologies and their potential application to the problems of painting. From the Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, he learned the use of exaggerated photographic angles and cinematic effects for the development of his space-exploding compositions. From the agitprop Dadaist Heartfield, he borrowed techniques of montage. Simultaneously, Siqueiros's research into new pigments and mediums released him from the constraints of traditional oil on canvas and fresco. Yet at the root of his studio innovations, militant theorizing, and painterly melodrama was a strangely tradition-bound sensibility. Like Sironi but far more daring in his response to and competitive appropriation of avant-garde ideas, Siqueiros painted brooding pictures in which—as is common in the work of that ominous period between the two world wars—light cuts into and carves darkness, but cannot fully penetrate or dispel it. Such is the case with *Ethnography* (1939; p. 167). Depicting a possibly confrontational or possibly supplicant peasant, who in any case remains inscrutable behind a Pre-Columbian mask, the painting is a far cry from the proletarian subject matters or inventive formats Siqueiros exhorted his followers to pursue.

The Argentine artist Antonio Berni's *New Chicago Athletic Club* (1937; p. 168) is just such an image—he had briefly worked as Siqueiros's assistant four years before he painted it—but the heroizing naturalism of Berni's treatment is another example of leftist conservatism. The delicate cinquecento aura of Juan O'Gorman's tempera *The Sand Mines of Tételpa* (1942; p. 65) is yet another. One could almost be looking at this crystalline landscape behind the figure of a Giovanni Bellini saint. Although muted in tone and softer in its drawing, the Brazilian José Pancetti's *Self-Portrait* (1941; p. 168) might be mistaken for that missing saint; here there are no politics, only a Morandi-like introspectiveness and reserve.

In her life, as distinct from her art, Frida Kahlo lacked reserve of any kind. "A ribbon wrapped around

a bomb," Breton described her pictures.³⁸ Art-historically speaking, the bomb did not explode until almost a quarter of a century after her death in 1954. No one



could have predicted this; thirty years ago, even in Mexico precious little had been published on Kahlo save a small pamphlet on her house and studio, the Casa Azul, which had yet to become the pilgrimage spot it now is. In the 1970s, feminist criticism and scholarship, the questioning of formalist dogma (in which feminism played so large a part), and the "rediscovery" of Central and Latin America by North Americans, who had spent the 1950s and 1960s enthralled by their new cultural power, all contributed to the reappraisal of Kahlo. However, the cult status she now enjoys tends to obscure the basis, and limits, of her achievement. Anything but naïve—her paintings are without exception carefully constructed and methodically rendered—Kahlo is nevertheless largely responsible for her reputation as an artist governed by emotion. Unlike that of her husband, Rivera, Kahlo's traditionalism was less a matter of rejuvenating an old approach to art making than of continuing an ongoing one while turning it inside out. Thus in her almost exclusive devotion to self-portraiture, she derived her fixed formal vocabulary and corresponding iconic intensity from the idolatry of Mexican folk art and colonial Spanish religious art. *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair* (1940; p. 169) is a challenge to Kahlo's

unfaithful mate, whose rejection of the androgynously dressed and coiffed Kahlo is voiced in the inscription above her head—"Look, if I loved you it was for your hair. Now that you don't have hair, I don't love you." In addition, this small oil is an especially striking example of Kahlo's work because it brings together the spareness of *retablo* painting with the combination of text and pictorial vignette found in José Guadalupe Posada's broadsides, or *corridos*, in which polemical or vernacular lyrics are illuminated by graphic images.

In Uruguay during the 1930s and 1940s, Joaquín Torres-García codified a Latin American version of Constructivism, and in Mexico in the same period, Carlos Mérida developed his own biomorphic abstraction. Brazil and Argentina also fostered experimental movements in those years, but strong figurative tendencies flourished throughout the southern part of the Western Hemisphere. Those tendencies were often as traditional in their aesthetic fundamentals as they were subversive in their political or psychological content. With important exceptions, modern art in Latin America was rarely avant-garde before the 1940s and inconsistently so after that. To ignore everything from the region that fails to meet European or North American criteria of modernism is to write off much of the art made during a fifty-year period across an entire continent, in the process falsifying international modernism's complex social and aesthetic dynamic, while perpetuating cultural colonialism in the name of "progressive" art.



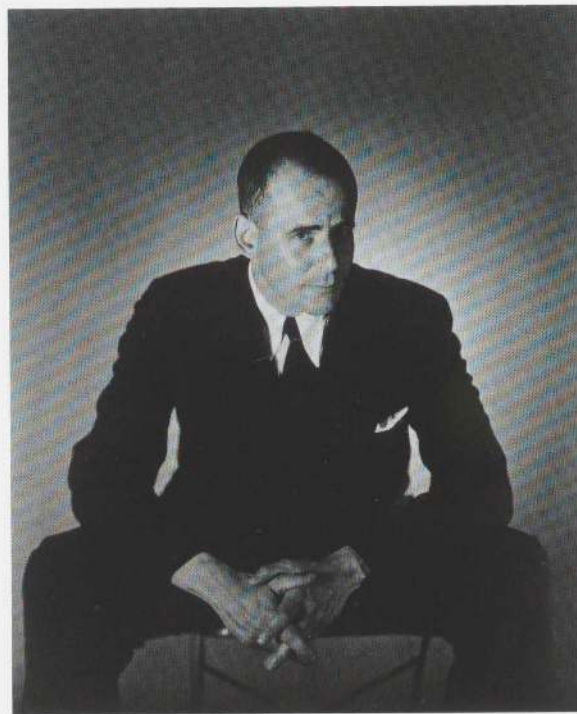
It was not always so. The growth of The Museum of Modern Art's collection and the scope of its exhibition program before World War II make this clear, and speak not only to the history of this institution but to the way in which taste in modern art developed in the United States during that period. In 1933, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the Museum's first director, sketched a diagram of modern art's forward thrust in the shape of a torpedo with three primary components at the front: the French/School of Paris, the Americans, and the "rest of Europe/Mexicans" combined. In 1941, he revised the diagram and its proportions so that the United States and Mexico comprised the whole nose of the torpedo, with the School of Paris and the "rest of Europe" buttressing them from above and below. A metaphoric reflection of impending and then actual

JUAN O'GORMAN.
Mexican, 1905–1982.
The Sand Mines of Tételpa. 1942.
Tempera on composition board, 22¼ x 18" (56.5 x 45.7 cm). Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., 1942

war, Barr's schematic rendering of the Museum's acquisitions goals was informed by a pessimistic view of the probable outcome of the battle for Europe and a prediction that the Americas would, by the late 1940s or early 1950s, be the primary hope for the continued evolution of modern art.³⁹ (For several reasons, not least of which was Barr's openness to new art that did not suit the collecting habits of some of his more cautious trustees, he was fired as director in 1943. After being given a research position, Barr returned in 1947 as director of museum collections.)

The torpedo drawing, like Barr's chart of the origins of modern abstraction drawn for the catalogue of his 1936 exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art*, shows his exceptional catholicity of taste in tension with his systematizing turn of mind. The chart—which traces abstraction from its headwaters in Japanese prints, Cézanne, and Neo-Impressionism down through “negro” (that is, African) sculpture, Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism, Constructivism, and so on to broadly breaking waves of “geometrical” and “non-geometrical abstract art”—encompasses many of the tendencies or influences upon which the Museum concentrated in the first decade and a half of its existence. However, there is one easily overlooked feature of the drawing, namely its top-to-bottom breadth. To be sure, Barr was in no doubt about the primacy of Matisse, Picasso, and other stand-out figures of pioneering modernism, but with the exception of Cézanne, Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Odilon Redon, Rousseau, and Seurat, his account of modernism lists no names, no pantheon, and the zigzag aesthetic course described never funnels into a single channel. Credit for inventing the idea of the modernist mainstream goes instead to the critic Clement Greenberg, who introduced it in 1944 when he wrote, “Abstract art today is the only stream that flows toward an ocean.”⁴⁰ While it also debouches into an ill-defined ocean of possibilities, Barr's overview of abstraction's sources and tributaries resembles a vast delta rather than a coursing river. Waters in such a formation run at differing depths and speeds, widen and narrow, cut unforeseen crisscrossing pathways, and pick up or deposit their loads of nutrients in often unpredictable ways. Although hard, even treacherous, to navigate, a delta is the richest of floodplains. Of the two diagrams Barr devised to represent modern art's unfolding, the map of abstraction remains the more useful prototype, even though Americans—and New

GEORGE PLATT LYNES.
American, 1907–
1955. *Lincoln*
Kirstein, c. 1945.
Gelatin silver print,
9 1/2 x 7 1/4" (24.2 x
19.6 cm). Gift of
Russell Lynes, 1973



Yorkers in particular—favored Greenberg's notion of one mainstream, augmented by torpedo propulsion during the 1950s and 1960s, when the United States enjoyed its greatest cultural hegemony.

Barr was not alone in his eclecticism, although erstwhile allies and patrons would periodically turn against him. For example, late in life the all-around aesthete Lincoln Kirstein talked disparagingly of “Barr, the bird-watcher,” thus characterizing Barr's avidity for art in all its variety as if it were a mere extension of a weekend hobby.⁴¹ Kirstein's critical conflation of the two activities voices the deep disaffection of a former protégé and true believer. Indeed, his efforts as an exhibition organizer, writer, and advocate of modern art in the late 1920s in many ways anticipated those of Barr at The Museum of Modern Art after 1929. Kirstein's vehicle was the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art, which he created from scratch while an undergraduate with the support of two fellow students, John Walker III, later director of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and Edward M. M. Warburg, scion of a powerful banking family and eventually a trustee of The Museum of Modern Art. According to the statement announcing the society's creation, its purpose was to expose the public to contemporary art whose meaning and merits were “frankly debatable.”⁴² Between 1928 and 1932, the society's rapidly changing fare stunningly fulfilled that ambition with exhibitions devoted to artists and designers from Picasso to Ben Shahn,

Alexander Calder to R. Buckminster Fuller, and to movements or groupings from German Expressionism to Surrealism, American realism to the School of Paris, modern Mexican art to the Bauhaus.

A nexus of young men of talent or means or both formed around the society and Kirstein's other major project, the magazine *Hound and Horn*. It included not only Barr, then a professor of art at Wellesley College, but Philip Johnson, soon to be an indefatigable promoter of modern architecture and design; Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Johnson's collaborator on the paradigm-setting Museum of Modern Art exhibition known as "International Style"; Julien Levy, the art dealer; A. Everett "Chick" Austin, Jr., all-around curatorial entrepreneur and director of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford; Rockwell Kent, the painter and printmaker who created the society's logo; and Walker Evans, the photographer whose work Kirstein published and wrote about in his journal. Extending outward from Cambridge and Hartford to New York, Paris, and beyond, the concentric circles around this select and precocious ensemble encompassed a who's who of already accomplished artists, writers, trendsetters, collectors, and patrons, along with promising newcomers like Paul Cadmus, George Platt Lynes, James Thrall Soby, Virgil Thomson, Glenway Wescott, and Monroe Wheeler.

Within this intimate elite, aesthetic convictions differed, but overriding particular passions was a general commitment to the new and an understanding that no real consensus yet existed as to what would last. In this company, aesthetic ideologies that pitted one "ism" against another, one "definitive" claim on modernity against the alternatives, took a backseat to curiosity and to impatience with the hostility toward contemporary art still rampant in America. In the process, Kirstein, Barr, and their crowd fudged or set aside the artistic and political distinctions that were crucial to the individuals and groups originating the art they championed. And so works that would never have commingled, except possibly at a Paris Salon, appeared together at Harvard and later at The Museum of Modern Art as if they represented the same wave of innovation. For example, the most ambitious of the Harvard Society's undertakings in its first year was the 1929 show *Derain, Matisse, Picasso, Despiau*. By this time, Derain had already abandoned the avant-garde, and the suavely reactionary Charles Despiau had never

belonged to it. In addition, the Matisse and Picassos in vogue with the Harvard group tended to be the least radical ones. Indeed, initially at least, the taste of some of these pioneering supporters of modern art was surprisingly sedate.

James Thrall Soby's collecting and writing are indicative of this evolutionary phenomenon. A gentleman scholar from Hartford who fell into the dizzying orbit of Austin in the early 1930s, when the Wadsworth Atheneum played host to unconventional exhibitions, costume balls, and a stage production of Gertrude Stein's and Thomson's opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934), Soby went on to become a Barr loyalist and a curator, assistant director, trustee, and benefactor of The Museum of Modern Art in the 1940s and 1950s. A devotee of and incisive commentator on the work of de Chirico, Soby also acquired important works by Balthus, including *The Street*, as well as by Bacon, Dali, Charles Demuth, Alberto Giacometti, Gris, Lehbruck, Aristide Maillol, Marino Marini, Miró, Moore, Morandi, Picasso, and Shahn, all of which have a decidedly anti-avant-garde cast.⁴³

Soby's endorsement of the Surrealists and especially the Neo-Romantics—Christian Bérard, Eugene Berman, and Pavel Tchelitchew—is especially revealing in this regard. His 1935 monograph *After Picasso* made the case for them in the context of an overall evaluation of the state of post-Cubist art:



JEAN COCTEAU.
French, 1889–1963.
Monroe Wheeler.
1927. Pen and ink
on paper, 10 1/4 x 8 1/2"
(27.3 x 21 cm).
Gift of Monroe
Wheeler, 1969

After thirty years, a reaction against the hypothesis of "painting as architecture," for which Picasso primarily stands, is historically inevitable. It is the purpose of this book to document briefly several aspects of this reaction as it has manifested itself in the work of two groups of artists, the Neo-Romantics and the Surrealists. To my mind, these two groups, in separate ways, have achieved the most tangible and successful reaction to appear thus far against Picasso's Cubism and its later ramifications. . . . As will be seen, however, the reaction against Picasso's kind of abstract art has paradoxically been given impetus by elements in Picasso's own work. For the Surrealists, his *papiers collés*, for the Neo-Romantics, his Blue and Rose periods, have served as starting points in their struggle to overthrow the formula of "painting as architecture" for which Picasso again, following Seurat and Cezanne, has been responsible. The work of the younger painters is thus, in a double sense, "After Picasso."⁴⁴

Quick to point out that both tendencies were literary in nature, Soby also readily conceded that the highly pictorial works they produced were what we might now think of as user-friendly to a fault. Of Surrealism, he remarked: "Whereas Cubism is extremely beautiful to an initiated few, Surrealism does seem able to communicate at least a part of its message to people without special knowledge of art. While few people have penetrated the professional secrecy of Cubism, many are at least strangely excited by Dali's limp watches."⁴⁵ Soby's defense of the Neo-Romantics was even more ambivalent:

The painting of . . . Eugene Berman and Leonide [Berman's brother and one of the movement's lesser lights] is, in fact, so easily enjoyed that people suspect it of being not altogether serious. The public having caught up, out of breath and belligerent, with the cult for the incomprehensible, is indignant at being paid off with graphic art that is understandable, with art that requires merely an eye for rich color and subtle draftsmanship.⁴⁶

In this department, Soby gave Tchelitchev's protean skills high marks: "As a graphic artist, he is most nearly the equivalent for his generation of what Picasso was for his."⁴⁷ Ultimately, however, he pegged Tchelitchev as a calculating stylist more than a natural pictorial poet.

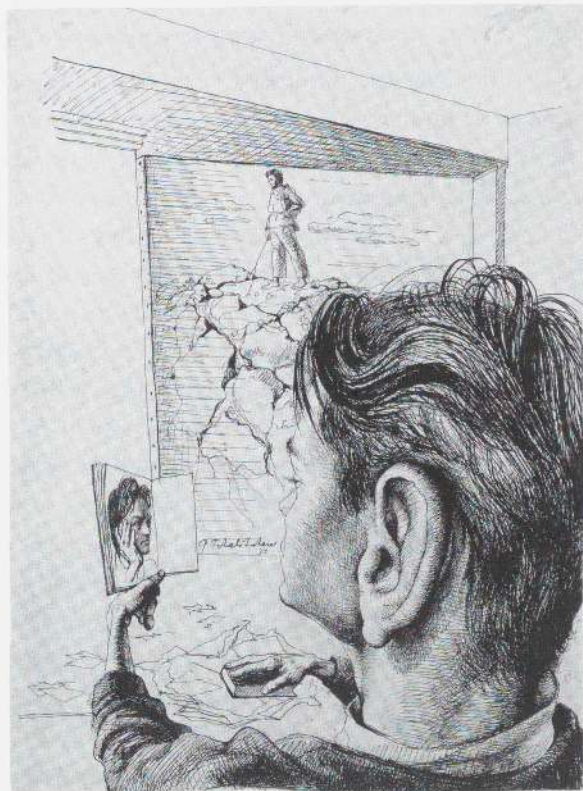
Finally, after apologizing for Bérard's facility and his dalliance with the world of fashion, Soby concluded:

In a painting like *Sur La Plage* [*On the Beach (Double Self-Portrait)*], Bérard escapes for once the charge of being a minor painter, a charge which all the Neo-Romantics are bound to face. But in a period when all painters seem minor, compared to the giants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a consistently high level of quality is what counts. By that standard, Bérard must rank below Eugene Berman, but in his few masterpieces Bérard must, it seems to me, rank above all the painters of his generation.⁴⁸

In truth, the optical tricks and visual mood music of the Neo-Romantics have aged badly, although Berman's Italianate stage designs retain their operetta elegance, and Tchelitchev's perennially popular *Hide-and-Seek* (1940–42; pp. 154–55) continues to tease and to please eyes new to the self-conscious artificiality of modern art. Soby sought to reinforce his claims for the simultaneous development of modern romanticism and modern classicism by mounting with Dorothy C. Miller a historical exhibition entitled *Romantic Painting in America*.⁴⁹ It opened at The Museum of Modern Art in 1943 and included a wide range of work by artists from Ralph Albert Blakelock, Thomas Cole, and Albert Pinkham Ryder to Marsden Hartley, Edward Hopper, and Mark Tobey.⁵⁰ But Soby's praise for the short-lived Neo-Romantic movement was heavily qualified, as if he knew the weaknesses of their work all too well.

What matters more in hindsight was the strength of Soby's attraction to them despite their obvious failings. In effect, his guarded advocacy posed the questions "What artistic indulgences are permissible in the absence of powerful movements and great art?" and, by the middle of the war, "What shall we console ourselves with now that European modernism has been blacked out by Fascism?" Soby's quandary was typical of confirmed aesthetes in this trying period. Indeed, the emergence of the former Russian Constructivist Tchelitchev as the spearhead of the anti-avant-garde push involves a daisy chain of tastemakers, beginning in Paris with the arch-modernist turned celebrity belletrist Stein, who passed him along to her London rival Edith Sitwell, a minor aristocrat and poet of major pretensions who turned snobbery into cultural

crusade. Sitwell, in turn, entrusted her fickle darling to Soby, Austin, and his American protectors. As always in the background, there was Cocteau—who gathered the Neo-Romantics around him as he had other artists on the rise—and the theater—where all the Neo-Romantics found work. In fact, the most lasting achievements of this interim “ism” came after it had died. They are Cocteau’s films *Beauty and the Beast* (1946), for which Bérard made the poster and served as design consultant, and *Orphée* (1950), a mesmerizing fusion of Neo-Romanticism and high-fashion existentialism, along with Michael Powell’s 1948 re-creation



of Diaghilev’s world, *The Red Shoes*. For the rest, Neo-Romanticism was a way of whistling in the dark, a fairy tale told to distract the happy few and the impressionable many from the ongoing horrors of the period. The delight it offered was willed and fleeting, but did no harm.

Kirstein, Barr’s other confidant among patrons of the anti-avant-garde, was made of sterner stuff than Soby. Kirstein was also drawn to the Neo-Romantics (he would complete a book on Tchelitchev in 1994, two years before his own death and thirty-seven after that of Tchelitchev), and he too searched American history for precedents or parallels to the content-laden figuration he favored. Before defecting in the late 1940s from

the ranks of the avant-garde’s occasional supporters to those of its most dedicated adversaries, Kirstein organized several exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art; among them were a 1948 solo show of sculptures, drawings, and prints by Elie Nadelman, who, according to Kirstein, had explored both Cubism and neoclassicism before Picasso did, and a 1943 presentation of Latin American art in the Museum’s collections. That year, he also contributed an essay to the catalogue of a survey entitled *American Realists and Magic Realists*, organized by Miller.⁵¹ An anguished moralist in the body of an art-for-art’s-sake connoisseur, Kirstein attended to painters and sculptors who upheld his belief that art was rule bound, impersonal, and absolute and, wherever possible, used them and their work to attack modernism, which he believed had succumbed to the heresies of originality, improvisation, and mannerism.

Well-informed and sharp-tongued, Kirstein wrote of his favored realists in a way that partially echoed Cocteau’s paradigm-shifting attacks on the Impressionists made during World War I: “The authors of the pictures in this exhibition are not sympathetic to transitory atmospheric effects and hence may be thought of as anti-impressionist. . . . They submit to a rigid discipline of almost anonymous manual dexterity, always controlled and never spontaneous. Hence they are anti-expressionist.”⁵² Among the living artists in the exhibition were Ivan Le Lorraine Albright, Peter Blume, O. Louis Guglielmi, Hopper, Shahn, Charles Sheeler, and Andrew Wyeth. His descriptions of their work are flavorful and tart: “Ben Shahn achieves, not so much by manual dexterity as by photographic arrangement and a delicate *faux-naïve* atmosphere, an almost super-journalistic reality,” and “In Ivan Le Lorraine Albright’s deliberate mortification of the flesh one might recall the negative phosphorescence of Grünewald’s Christ.”⁵³

Northern Renaissance art figures prominently in Kirstein’s other comparisons—in addition to Mathias Grünewald, he mentions Hieronymus Bosch, Dürer, and Jan van Eyck. Exquisitely morbid imagery is ubiquitous in German and Netherlandish painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as it is in the works of twentieth-century artists like Albright. Kirstein drew a direct connection between the Americans and *Neue Sachlichkeit*, citing Dix by name. “This New Objectivity,” he wrote, “was human and concrete though often cruel, exact though frequently fantastic,

PAVEL TCHELITCHEV.
American, born
Russia, 1898–1957.
Charles Henri Ford.
1937. Pen and ink
on paper, 15 7/8 x 11 1/8"
(40.5 x 29.5 cm).
Anonymous
extended loan, 1974

almost always meticulous."⁵⁴ This description nicely sums up the qualities Kirstein prized in the painters with whom he was most closely associated: Cadmus and Jared French, both of whom were in the exhibition, and George Tooker, who later joined their group. All three painted dense, deliberately stilted, figurative works in which contemporary themes are treated in academic compositions; classical idylls alternate with over-the-top satire; and perfect, youthful bodies parade before monstrously deformed ones.

In their work, an unmistakable homoeroticism appears to a degree rare in American art of this period outside of Demuth's watercolors, the drawings and paintings of Hartley, and the poetry of Hart Crane, who was also a member of Kirstein's circle. Thus, Cadmus's riotous *Greenwich Village Cafeteria* (1934; p. 183) introduces into the Social Realism of the day the come-hither glance of the man heading into the bathroom. Although a "type," he is virtually the only person in the picture who is not a flat-out caricature other than the man on the opposite side of the image who is whispering into another's ear. Tooker's paintings are dreamier and more discreet—*Sleepers, II* (1959; p. 184) suggests science fiction's suspension of reality even as it recalls Walt Whitman's ideal of masculine "adhesiveness." The chiseled faces, limbs, and torsos of the men in Kent's prints are similar to those found in Cadmus's and Tooker's art. The recent revival of interest in Kent corresponds to a dramatic shift in attitudes toward the male body, such that *The Pinnacle* (1928; p. 176) now resembles the eroticized languor of a Calvin Klein model of the 1980s or 1990s. The example set by these artists, augmented by that of Tchelitchew, Cocteau, and a host of others, is a reminder that in times when intolerance of homosexuality ran high even among "progressives," the anti-avant-garde was in many instances a haven for gay painters, sculptors, and photographers—male and female—and a context in which a variety of more or less explicitly gay sensibilities could be explored.

It is tempting in retrospect to second-guess the enthusiasms of earlier eras, to explain their eccentricities in shorthand sociological terms, or to dismiss them ad hominem. An in-depth study of the eclecticism of patrician collectors from the 1920s to the 1950s has yet to be written, but the maze of connections that emerges from what we do know describes an art world very different from that usually found in textbook

accounts, neatly organized by movements and decades. That Soby admired artists ranging from Bacon, de Chirico, Miró, Moore, and Picasso to Berman and Shahn—and that Kirstein wrote positively about Nadelman and Siqueiros, but loathed Matisse—is some indication of the unpredictable logic of their patronage and the too easily ignored artistic crossovers they recognized in the work of their time. The liberality of Soby's taste and the quirky exclusivity of Kirstein's do not cover all the bases for the anti-avant-garde from the 1920s through the 1950s, but they highlight important elements of the wide swath it cut.



As was true for their European counterparts, many once-adventurous American artists confronted post-World War I realities with more doubt than certainty of modernity's promise. Among the group associated with Alfred Stieglitz's aggressively modernist galleries in New York, 291, Intimate Gallery, and An American Place, mixed feelings were common. With memories of his German lover, who died in the war, Hartley returned from Europe to the United States in 1915 and then gradually abandoned Cubism for a restrained expressionism that culminated in paintings such as *Boots* (1941; p. 175), with its overtones of early van Gogh. Starting in the mid-1920s, Georgia O'Keeffe's treks to the New Mexico desert correlated with her partial retreat from abstraction and her refinement of a sharp-edged, pattern-oriented realism (p. 178). In still lifes of an almost Shaker austerity (p. 71), Demuth restricted gesture in much the way O'Keeffe did. Sheeler all but obliterated it in *American Landscape* (1930; p. 174). Based on photographs he took at the Ford plant in River Rouge, Michigan, the painting is an instance of what could be called found design or documentary Cubism. It is also a close equivalent to contemporaneous German art, as well as a precursor of Photo-Realism of the 1960s and 1970s. Yet despite its emphatically modern subject matter and photographic source, it is conservative in technique. Sheeler's still life *Of Domestic Utility* (1933; p. 175) is conservative in both ways, although the clean curves of a country pitcher give this drawing the feel of a sculpture by Constantin Brancusi—an impression reinforced by the tree-trunk "base" upon which the pitcher sits. Whereas European evocations of "hearth and home" in this period are often exclusively



anachronistic if not politically suspect, Sheeler's, like Miró's, locate precedents for modernism in the simplicity of the preindustrial age, just as many critics, curators, and collectors of American folk art during this period were alert to correspondences between abstract art and the formal economies of traditional crafts. (Many of Nadelman's sculptures of musicians and dancers synthesize the same elements.) Independent from Stieglitz's circle, Edward Hopper continued to paint as he had since the 1910s, applying a prosaic, Manet-derived touch to the novelties of American life: office buildings and apartment houses with their secrets; movie palaces in which the quintessential twentieth-century medium, film, is reframed by nineteenth-century naturalism; a suburban gas station at dusk (p. 173), its pumps standing sentinel in the emptiness like the statues in a de Chirico cityscape.

While these older artists in varying degrees accommodated themselves to the postwar retrenchment, younger ones rebelled against first-generation modernism. The onset of the Great Depression hardened their resolve. A surge of nationalist sentiment, combined with government patronage under the New Deal, provided them with a mandate to make American art for Americans. Before hard times hit, Thomas Hart Benton had already taken the lead. He remembered his brush with the avant-garde without tenderness:

The story of my life in Paris is the story of all who went there before the Great War. . . . I know that I walked in an ecstatic mist for months after I arrived. . . . Many never got out of that mist. . . . There were others like myself who backed away from traditional training. I saw them around "the Quarter,"

and met them now and then in the Dôme, which was the café most frequented by the internationals. There was George Grosz, Wyndham Lewis, Epstein, Rivera, Marin, Arthur Lee; there were the Steins and others. These people were all known around the Quarter, but I shied away from them for I soon discovered they were all more talented and capable than I. . . . So far as my feelings were concerned, there was no difference between the shrewd, canny lawyers of Missouri and the aesthetes of Paris.⁵⁵

In his opinion, things were not much better in America's Paris:

The life I lived in New York had no significance for my art. . . . We were studio painters. We were essentially Bohemians, adrift from the currents of our land and contemptuous of them. We cultivated romantic and esoteric notions and beliefs. . . . With the dissolution of that old prewar crowd which formed the nucleus of artistic society in New York, somehow or other I began to expand and live. Their cultivated sensibilities had always affected me adversely. When I got among them I felt as if I were down cellar with a lot of toadstools. I always secretly thought they were an intellectually diseased lot but I didn't have enough confidence in myself to break with them and turn my mind out into the real world. After the experiences of the War I got free of them—of all their sickly rationalizations, their inversions, and their God-awful self-cultivations.⁵⁶

Benton's answer to that effete-ness was cracker-barrel or honky-tonk imagery and brawny cartooning inspired by El Greco, Tintoretto, and the Mannerists. For ten years, beginning around 1925, he fought to impose his vision on an unappreciative New York, succeeding primarily by providing Jackson Pollock something strong to push off against. By 1935, Benton had given up on the East in frustration and resettled in his native Missouri. But the "American heartland" in his paintings derived from the reality he scouted on trips around the Midwest as reflected in the warped mirror of his New York studio experience, with its accumulated grudges and aesthetic theories. Benton's content was folksy, his

CHARLES DEMUTH.
American, 1883–1935.
Eggplant and Tomatoes.
1926. Watercolor and
pencil on paper,
14 1/2 x 20" (35.8 x
50.9 cm). The Philip
L. Goodwin
Collection, 1958



forms always art-historically highfalutin. Before they dried, his paintings were period pieces (p. 180).

In comparison to those of the Regionalist movement's most vocal spokesmen, the cultural politics of Benton's colleagues were often quite moderate. Like Benton, John Steuart Curry was a New York artist who found his subjects and much of his audience far from the big city. And, like Benton—or, for that matter, Rivera—he was more of an illustrator than anything else. However, Curry's heroic renderings of the abolitionist John Brown (1939; p. 180), of the manhunts for escaped slaves, and of their eventual emancipation were strong statements for the 1930s and the 1940s, when lynch mobs terrorized blacks in many parts of the country. Curry's way with paint was uneventfully brushy, but not all the stories in his storytelling pictures were paeans to the good old days. Nor were they all the kind that the average man or woman on Main Street wanted to hear.

Grant Wood, perhaps the most famous of the Regionalists, was also a political liberal, a staunch Democrat in a Republican state, who, among other things, served as director of the Public Works of Art Project in Iowa City. As a young man, Wood had worked in a bland, quasi-Impressionist style. A trip to Munich in 1926 to find stained-glass craftsmen to help on a war-memorial commission opened his eyes to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century German painting and introduced him to the work of Dix. *American Gothic* (1930), the painting that made his reputation, shows the confluence of these discoveries: the optical precision of the Northern Renaissance and the unforgiving social observation of Dix. His porcelain-fine ridicule of a dyspeptic couple was overlooked by many who preferred to regard his subjects as reassuringly wholesome

symbols of better times, but Wood cannot be blamed for that. He never stopped trying. His group portrait *Daughters of the Revolution* (1932) aimed to offend the jingoistic ladies who had attacked him for using German glass to commemorate the American dead; his *Shriners' Quartet* (1933; p. 181) is as unkind to Babbitt as *In the Spring* (1939; p. 181) is respectful of those who till the soil.

Although Benton's hatreds ran deep, the antagonism his chief advocate, Thomas Craven, felt toward advanced art was even more chauvinistic than anything his favorite artist ever expressed in words or pictures. A

widely read critic of considerable eloquence but unlimited contempt for things beyond his ken, Craven was the mouthpiece for Depression era isolationism in the arts. His anti-Semitic dismissal of Stieglitz as a "Hoboken Jew" lay down the gauntlet between American Scene painters on the Right and those on the Left. Speaking out for the Left, Moses Soyer countered, "Yes, paint America, but with your eyes open. Do not glorify Main Street. Paint it as it is—mean, dirty, avaricious. Self glorification is artistic suicide. Witness Nazi Germany."⁵⁷ In truth, though, American Social Realists never entirely shed the earnestness that also tainted Regionalism; it simply showed up in other places. Thus, the working man—or out-of-work man, as seen in Raphael Soyer's *The Mission* (1935; p. 72)—became the vessel of humble virtue. Shahn's output had a more crisp, graphic edge than that of the Soyer brothers, but at the core it was just as sweet. Furthermore, despite their political differences, Shahn's aesthetic nostalgia in some respects matched Benton's:

In the middle '20s and again in the late '20s I studied and traveled in Europe. . . . I was interested in exploring the theories of all the modern schools of art but never practised any of them myself. I don't know who influenced me most at that time—I can only quote the critics who said I was influenced by Rouault, so I guess I must have been.⁵⁸

Shahn remembered Matisse's work being "so full of verve in Paris," but seen out of context it seemed "a little illogical here [in New York]. His idiom was without roots in our country and it languished like a hot house plant."⁵⁹ Instead, Shahn dreamed of fabled epochs:

RAPHAEL SOYER.
American, born
Russia, 1899–1987.
The Mission. 1935.
Lithograph, comp.:
12 1/2 x 17 1/2" (30.8 x
44.8 cm), sheet:
14 x 19 1/2" (35.6 x
49.1 cm). Printer:
George Miller, New
York. Edition: 25.
Gift of Mrs. Bertha
M. Slattery, 1954

Ever since I could remember . . . I'd wished that I'd been lucky enough to be alive at a great time—when something big was going on, like the Crucifixion. And suddenly I realized I was. Here I was living through another crucifixion. Here was something to paint.⁶⁰

The crucifixion he meant was the 1927 execution of the anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, and the series of paintings he produced in 1931–32 was shown at the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art. Less topical, *Handball* (1939; p. 179) is Shahn without speeches or tears. The picture's more matter-of-fact humanism is a result of its having been based on a photograph taken by the artist in the documentary mode perfected by Shahn and others who recorded American life for the New Deal Farm Security Administration. Shahn then translated that graphic image into delicate, tempera surfaces featuring strong contrasts between concentrated shapes and virtually uninflected spaces. Yet again, we feel the pull of Northern as well as Southern Renaissance painting, and yet again de Chirico's nearly vacant Italianate piazzas have passed through immigration. Not surprisingly, Shahn was a favorite of de Chirico's greatest American fan, Soby.

Guglielmi's Giottoesque *Wedding in South Street* (1936; p. 184) is more awkward than Shahn's paintings, but more affecting. Recognizing the American Léger, Stuart Davis, as a predecessor, along with Demuth and Edwin Dickinson (p. 177), Guglielmi was one of the Social Realists who infused his work with decidedly Surrealistic elements. Peter Blume was another. His freak-show version of *The Eternal City* (1934–37; p. 185), with its jack-in-the-box Mussolini, gaudy man-of-sorrows niche, and symbolically supercharged theatricality, violates every law of modernism and many of the rules of academic good conduct as well. Nonetheless, sixty years after it was made and sixty years after the anti-Fascist cause it stood for has been won, the painting continues to exude a disturbing energy. While there is no place in mainstream art for such a picture, once seen it remains unforgettable. Reginald Marsh strove for a similar raucousness in his paintings of the big city, but they are technically too well behaved to surprise much less upset us, as Blume's best work does. In spirit the last of the Ashcan School painters, Marsh emulated Peter Paul Rubens and Paolo

Veronese and wanted to be William Hogarth, hating the "new" Europe as much as he loved the old. "Many talents of today are committing artistic suicide on the artificial gas piped commercially into America by the *Ecole de Paris*," he said.⁶¹ However, Marsh had no declared politics, neither Left nor Right. Instead, he took his considerable talent and his thoroughbred avidity and went slumming. Dense crowd scenes such as *In Fourteenth Street* (1934; p. 182) were the product. This painting is Dix without rancor, Berman's rococo atmospherics with bustle and noise, a Joan Blondell or James Cagney movie on canvas.

The flip side of Marsh's varnished New York exuberance is Andrew Wyeth's comfortless New England reserve. Son of the famous illustrator of children's books N. C. Wyeth, Andrew Wyeth grew up in splendid seclusion. "With my sisters and brother I lived the life of a country boy," he wrote in the catalogue for *American Realists and Magic Realists*. "The life of the towns and cities was remote and almost unknown to us." Wyeth said his artistic aim was "to escape from the medium with which I work. To leave no residue of technical mannerisms to stand between my expression and the observer." Wyeth's concentration on "significant form" at the expense of visual pleasure, and his belief that removing "free and accidental brush handling" would collapse the emotional distance between his image and the viewer, is archetypically antimodernist in the conviction that the "what" of the picture takes precedence over the "how." In this case, the "what" is a pathetic anecdote of strength under adversity, beauty amid barrenness; it is straight-faced puritanism, *American Gothic* without self-criticism or humor. Contrary to Wyeth's denial of the medium, the material desiccation of the image is what resonates with emotional truth. Unsociable in spirit and formally austere, his art heads all the way out on a dry limb, sure of itself but with nowhere to go.⁶²

Wood developed one version of American Neue Sachlichkeit, Sheeler another, and Wyeth a third, proving that "isolationist" art in this country was, in every way that matters, the local expression of a truly international style. Albright cultivated a fourth variant, the only one that in sheer gruesomeness rivaled Dix's work or the endless-night pessimism of the German painter Franz Radziwill and the Dutch painters Pyke Koch and Charley Toorop. A medic during World War I, Albright had seen death and decay close up, to which the

brightly hued watercolors of wounds he made while on duty attest. Pure color has been sucked out of his spectral paintings, however, replaced by jaundiced tints, veins of silvery white, and charred blacks. Albright relished rot and found nauseating techniques for describing it. Chosen to paint the portrait of Dorian Gray to be used as a prop in the 1945 film of Oscar Wilde's parable, Albright, to paraphrase Cocteau, went too far in going too far. The result is as garish and absurd as a Halloween mask in the age of Freddy Kruger. Held in partial check in other works by the presence of a sitter whose own threatened personality shows through, the painter's mortician's manner acquires a repellent but irresistible authority. "Remember, O my soul, that thing we saw on that fine summer's morning, so mild, there where the path turned, a disgusting corpse on a bed of shingle, with its legs in the air like a lewd woman, burning and oozing poisons"; so begins Baudelaire's love poem "The Carrion."⁶³ With all its technical subtleties and attention to unpleasant detail, Albright's *Woman* (1928; p. 189) is Baudelaire in paint.

"Poor art for poor people," Arshile Gorky said of the Social Realist paintings made under the auspices of the New Deal's various public-art programs. (*Workers and Paintings* [1943; p. 42], Honoré Sharrer's strange tableau of gray slum dwellers in possession of brightly colored modern masterpieces—note that Picasso's *Girl before a Mirror* [1932] has been drastically shrunk in scale to suit the composition—is a poignantly improbable solution to the problem of providing great art to the impoverished.) Although he was a friend of the Soyers and painted murals for Newark Airport in New Jersey as a part of the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project, Gorky represented one of the strongest challenges to the aesthetic conservatism of the 1930s and 1940s. Yet what he proposed was not in fact avant-garde, although his paintings mimicked advanced art. Gorky, a refugee from Armenia, took the last name of a Russian revolutionary novelist, Maksim Gorky, for his own, and in his work impersonated first Cézanne, then Miró, Picasso, and Matta. A mass of fertile contradictions, Gorky was prematurely postmodern in his wholesale appropriations and in his suspicion of originality. "Aha," Gorky once said to the young Willem de Kooning, on whom he had a lasting influence, "So you have ideas of your own." As de Kooning remembered it, "that didn't seem so good." To his student Ethel

Schwabacher, Gorky remarked, "I am in entire sympathy with the modern European movement to the exclusion always of those moderns who belong to the other class, those who invent things instead of translating them." The perversity of his qualification brackets Gorky's astonishing, painterly command of the latest styles with quotation marks and attaches it to a cult of the old masters, which in Gorky's case meant Uccello and Ingres above all.⁶⁴

Another chronic mythomaniac, John Graham also played the part of New York interpreter for School of Paris art while sharing Gorky's reverence for the past. Picasso, in particular the Picasso of the 1910s and 1920s, was the touchstone for both Gorky and Graham—and, thanks to them, the "man to beat" for de Kooning.⁶⁵ In the end, these three immigrants did what American academic painters had never succeeded in doing—they remade neoclassicism in the American grain. Gorky's sinuous line is on display in *Composition: Horse and Figures* (1928; p. 186) and *Leonora Portnoff* (1935; p. 14), while Graham's delineates the entranced, cross-eyed beauties of *Two Sisters (Les Mamelles d'outre-mer)* (1944; p. 187) and *Study after Celia* (1944–45; p. 14). Work by such artists defies easy categorization in part because, as self-taught painters, they were not so much paying homage to tradition as absconding with it. Once back in their lofts, they bent its disciplines to their idiosyncratic requirements. In that respect, de Kooning was the greatest beneficiary and the most ruthless of the three. His grimacing Abstract Expressionist *Women* of the 1940s and 1950s have the same DNA as Graham's weird twins and Gorky's family portraits. They are, by way of his two mentors and Picasso, Ingres shredded, remade, torn again, and again remade.



Starting in 1922, Fascism co-opted the Italian avant-garde and pushed the few remaining free spirits into the shadows. Starting in 1932, Stalinism drove the Russian avant-garde into exile, into hiding, or into the gulag. Starting in 1933, National Socialism dispersed, persecuted, imprisoned, and in some cases simply killed off members of the German avant-garde. The drumbeat signaling disaster was relentless. The effects of repression were devastating. Yet, with a handful of exceptions, it was not the avant-garde's most intimate art-world adversaries who filled the void. Authoritarians fear the imagination—and sooner or later they move

to destroy it in whatever forms it takes, including conservative ones that they might be expected to favor. The artists of note who participated in their own destruction by trying to negotiate a future with dictatorships—Red, Brown, and Black—are, on the whole, to be pitied as much as condemned. The rest, if they were lucky, took cover and, despite their former differences, found common cause.

The outbreak of World War II smashed all that remained of what W. H. Auden famously termed “the clever hopes . . . of a low dishonest decade.”⁶⁶ Those hopes included utopian projects of every description, and most had their origins in the decade after the previous world war. Auden, an English modernist on the verge of renouncing his former radicalism, was in New York when he wrote the poem “September 1, 1939,” in which the line appears. His disillusionment was compounded by the Hitler-Stalin Pact, which erased—or should have erased—any confusion about whether there were basic ideological distinctions between the Nazis and the Soviets when it came to the imperatives of power. From that point onward, the presumed sympathy between political avant-gardes and aesthetic ones was a dead letter. Shortly, Auden was joined in the United States by a host of modernists from across the Continent. This exodus set the stage for unprecedented cross-fertilizations, dramatic changes in American culture, and a shift in the balance of forces between Europe and this country.

In the meantime, many of the Europeans who stayed home and managed to survive undertook a kind of inner emigration, retreating from the horrors of war and oppression into the recesses of their private sensibilities. Even those who attempted against terrible odds to keep a sharp eye on the world around them were hard-pressed to think in open-ended ways about the prospects for society or for art. Instead, they tended to interpret the reality around them in mythical or existential ways that emphasized the essentials of the human condition as it had been revealed to them by painful experience. “History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake,” James Joyce wrote in *Ulysses*. The nightmares unleashed by the war made the Surrealist dream seem less and less promising, and, though New Yorkers newly exposed to the Surrealists were briefly enthralled by them, in France and elsewhere an angst-ridden fundamentalism took over. Rather than being abstract as it had been during the

1920s and early 1930s, this fundamentalism was figurative and descriptive.

On opposite sides of the English Channel, two artists previously associated with Surrealism shaped this new humanism. The first to strike out in this direction was the Swiss born Alberto Giacometti, working in Paris. Born in 1901 into a family of artists—his father, Giovanni, for one, painted Post-Impressionist landscapes—Giacometti had come of age with modernism. After an academic education that included studying with the sculptor of monuments Antoine Bourdelle and copying from the old masters in Italy, Giacometti developed his own mix of Cubist elements and motifs borrowed from African art. By the late 1920s, his work had acquired a fantastic quality that recommended him to the Surrealists, and it was as a leading light of that group that he had visited Balthus and formed a friendship with him. In 1935, however, he broke with Breton and rejected poetic reverie for an austere realism anchored in the scrutiny of isolated individuals. Set in the boxy confines of his studio or the desolate streets of Paris, his paintings reconstitute the Renaissance geometries exploded by Cubism in brittle linear structures. The flickering tonal clusters of his brushwork are like a vestigial Impressionism from which color has been drained away. The slender, eroded figurines of Giacometti’s sculpture are barely three-dimensional incarnations of his simultaneously tentative and irreducibly iconic paintings.

In both mediums, Giacometti’s lonely enterprise was a return to basics and a return to his roots. The test was to represent the world with a willed innocence, which demanded remembering and forgetting, relearning and unlearning in equal parts. Thus, each painterly mark or cancellation and each sculptural addition or subtraction required the artist to repeatedly confirm the truth of what he saw directly before him while resisting the temptation to speed up that painstaking and interminable process or slide back into familiar stylistic solutions. Nevertheless, signs of Giacometti’s art-historical self-consciousness are everywhere; only someone who had drawn Etruscan bronzes in Rome could have achieved the marvelous abbreviation of man and vehicle, stasis and implied motion found in *Chariot* (1950; p. 192). The skeletal race Giacometti created and the ordeal of its making invited critics and the public to read his art as an existentialist narrative, a compound metaphor for alienation and

solitary tenacity in the Holocaust-haunted, post-Hiroshima world. Viewed as literature, Giacometti's images do lend themselves to such interpretations, but the new beginning he strove for had less to do with generalizations about mankind than a struggle to render the specifics of sensation—that which is by its very nature fleeting and impermanent—through old-fashioned means. Transfixed by a mirage he could never reach, though it hovered only inches beyond his grasp, Giacometti was an extremist in pursuit of profoundly traditional ends. “It may sound paradoxical but it is in fact reality that forms the mystery of our existence,” Beckmann had remarked in 1938. Around the same time, Giacometti had arrived at much the same conclusion. For the next two and a half decades, initially in painting and only gradually in the sculpture of the kind that made him famous after the war, he dedicated himself to addressing that mystery, in the firm belief that “for me, reality remains exactly as untouched and unknown as the first time anyone tried to depict it.”⁶⁷

Only three years older than Giacometti, Moore likewise arrived at his first mature work by synthesizing Cubism and forms from so-called primitive cultures, principally Egyptian, Sumerian, Etruscan, Pre-Columbian, and Greek and Roman sculptures that he saw at the British Museum. “Picasso and the B. M. were the only sources I ever really needed,” he once claimed.⁶⁸ Filtered through Picasso, Surrealism also made an impact on him. As Moore's biomorphic bronzes of the mid-to-late 1930s show, this affinity, in unlikely combination with his attraction to Constructivism, resulted in a hybrid abstraction that is the hallmark of prewar English modernism. Moore's penchant for the monumental is apparent even in these strange objects, many of which are pierced or strung with filament. In 1940, the Battle of Britain literally drove him underground, where he sketched people huddled in London's tube stations turned bomb shelters. This crisis was his impetus to reverse course, finding the basic iconography of seated or lying figures that would preoccupy him for the rest of his life, with time-outs periodically taken to model massive forms based on bones or other organic objects. *Seated Figures, II* (1942; p. 15) is a reprise of his shelter drawings with a nod, similar to Giacometti's, to ancient art, although Moore smoothed out the archetypes that Giacometti roughened up. The sculptural antithesis of Giacometti's insular, emaciated men and women, *Family Group*

(1948–49; p. 196) is—much like the images of fecundity that Severini, Braque, and others created after World War I—a robust nativity scene announcing the arrival of a new, postwar generation.

Reg Butler, whose first solo show took place in London in 1949, is among those artists who learned from Moore but chose to accentuate the tensions between modeled and constructed form resolved by the older artist. Butler also learned much from Giacometti, but whereas Giacometti was formally reticent about the anguish his subjects endured, Butler was overtly expressionist, as in his *Girl* (1953–54; p. 196). Giacometti's contemporary Marini represents the extension of Italian neoclassicism of the Fascist era—although not of the Fascist persuasion—into the 1950s. A cosmopolitan man, he befriended Picasso, González, and Maillol before the war and Giacometti, Germaine Richier, and Fritz Wotruba after the war. The imagery and articulation of his own sculpture was consistent throughout his career, and Etruscan bronzes and terracottas supplied many of his motifs. The most frequently used, and the most obviously anachronistic, was that of horse and rider, of which *Miracle* (1953–54; p. 197) is an upended version. As its title implies, it is based on a biblical theme: the epiphany of Saint Paul on the road to Damascus.

Richier—like Giacometti a student of Bourdelle—is another artist who attempted to revive figurative modeling in a modern but scarcely modernist mode. Curator Peter Selz, writing in the catalogue for his 1959 exhibition *New Images of Man* at The Museum of Modern Art, summarized her ambition in these terms:

Germaine Richier's sculpture, in contrast to that of her constructivist contemporaries, makes no reference to science. Yet hers is still a world of growth, change and decay. Like that of so many artists of this time, her work is concerned with transmutation, metamorphosis and organic interaction relating to the pattern unraveled by the physical scientists in their discovery of a continuous process in which the absolutes of time, space and matter have been abolished.⁶⁹

In short, Selz saw Richier as typical of the humanist in the atomic age, but, by opposing her work to that of the constructivists, he placed her on the “wrong side” of history at a time when the options explored by González and Picasso in the 1920s and 1930s were fast

becoming the central focus of avant-garde sculpture, a process beginning with David Smith's work and running through Minimalism. Despite Selz's interpretation, Richier, like Butler, used exposed armatures as a constructivist exoskeleton. Appearing in a period when everything that had not already come apart during the "hot" wars past threatened to do so in the rapidly escalating Cold War, the sculptural language to which Giacometti, Moore, Butler, Marini, Richier, and others contributed in varying degrees was aimed at consolidation. Giacometti, and to a lesser extent Moore, surpassed this implicit mandate, but the undeniable popularity of their work—and the prominent places accorded them at The Museum of Modern Art in the important exhibitions *The New Decade: 22 European Painters and Sculptors* (1955) and *New Images of Man* as well as in the permanent collection—cannot be fairly evaluated or usefully critiqued without taking into account the memories and fears it incarnated. In purely formal terms, Moore was an important synthesizer and a great traditional carver and modeler, while the less eclectic Giacometti "corrected" postwar sculpture's course and took it back to its rudiments.

A standout in both *The New Decade* and *New Images of Man*, Bacon was the object of intense press scrutiny from almost the moment his tortured tableaux were shown to the general public in his native England, the United States, and elsewhere around the world. The two poles of Bacon's aesthetic are defined on the one end by his explicit borrowings from or allusions to art history—his metamorphic, montagelike paintings directly quote works by Cimabue, van Gogh, and Velázquez, whose portrait *Innocent X* (c. 1650) was the basic model for Bacon's *Number VII from Eight Studies for a Portrait* (1953; p. 195)—and on the other by his piratical raids on photography and the movies, from which he snatched the stop-action pictures of Eadweard Muybridge, the snapshots and portraits of John Deakin, and the cinematic details of the films of Eisenstein, whose film *Potemkin* (1925) provided Bacon with the image of a screaming woman used for the face in *Number VII from Eight Studies for a Portrait*. Long before postmodernism had a name, and even farther from the time its 1980s practitioners were in graduate school, Bacon was appropriating images from museums and the media. He had no intention, however, of subjecting these fragments to formal or ideological analysis. Rather, he took possession of them in the same way

that a poor artist may wind up shoplifting art supplies—simply in order to make paintings.

Eye-catching, gut twisting, and arch, those paintings were rituals of eroticized violence in which no real damage was ever done to the fastidiously maintained integrity of Bacon's pictorial conception. Like the sadomasochist relations they frequently portray, his art was predicated on an unspoken contract, a pact between the painter and tradition that precluded irrevocably destructive acts, even as Bacon transgressed the rules governing the kind of plush, gilt-framed Salon pictures his output superficially and subversively resembled. Although elegantly morbid, Bacon's work is a hex against the death of painting at the hands of the avant-garde. As much as Bacon enjoyed the role of social outcast—gambler, drunkard, homosexual outlaw—he enjoyed playing bad-boy antimodernist even more. Adapting to his needs Surrealist manipulations of shape, Giacometti's open-cube or cagelike spatial frame, and Picasso's contouring, Bacon was at heart a literary expressionist. "You see," he told David Sylvester, "I believe that art is recording; I think it's reporting. And I think that in abstract art, as there's no report, there's nothing other than the aesthetic of the painter and his few sensations. There's never any tension in it."⁷⁰ In referring to the abstract painter and "his few sensations," Bacon was too well read not to know that Cézanne's entire quest had been for what the French painter had called his "little sensation." Bacon's adroit put-down of Cézanne was a slap at his followers as well, a precisely targeted blow inflicted by someone who could paint and speak forcefully enough to deflect most counterattacks, though the formal repetitiousness and shrieking emotional monotony of his work leave him vulnerable to more sophisticated challenges.

Lucian Freud—grandson of Sigmund Freud and the Balthus-like prodigy of the English art world of the 1940s and 1950s—was, if anything, more of a contrarian than Bacon. Now an ascetic dandy, Freud began as a worldly wunderkind making faux-naïf miniatures that beguiled London's artistic elites. He soon matured into an agile draftsman whose intense psychosexual portraiture had the temperature of a cold-water flat. His likenesses of a dissipated Bérard and of Kirstein, possessing the air of a Roman consul, place the young artist in a charmed cultural milieu, while his precise depictions align him stylistically with

Neue Sachlichkeit. *Portrait of a Woman* (1949; p. 194) exemplifies this antipainterly manner, while *Girl with Leaves* (1948; p. 235) exhibits the same characteristic in drawing form. Freud's later work, by contrast, is distinguished by a kneaded and pummeled meatiness that exceeds even Bacon's. The settings Freud chooses are essentially variants on the archetypal artist's garret, and are as impenetrable to the sounds of London's swinging sixties or the punked-out eighties and nineties as his sitters are indifferent to changing fashion in their dress and haircuts. His world is an eternal bohemia of the immediate postwar vintage, and a laboratory for resuscitating traditional techniques and a studio mystique that ordinary academics were unable to breathe life into and modernists shrugged off as quaint.

Widely known despite his reclusiveness, Freud stands with the late Bacon at the head of the so-called School of London. Credit for the label goes to R. B. Kitaj, an American-born painter who spent most of his working life in England. His aim was to claim for Frank Auerbach, Bacon, Freud, David Hockney, and the other artists in his circle, a distinction equivalent to that of the School of Paris and the New York School. As a group bound by friendship and a museological obsession more than by any common "look" to their paintings, the School of London is notable for its resistance to abstraction, especially to the gestural painting that dominated mainstream modernism from the late 1940s to the late 1950s under the rubrics Art Informel, *tachisme*, Action Painting, and Abstract Expressionism. Oddly, it is traditionalism of that sort—paired with the even greater formal radicalism of conceptual-oriented artists such as Joseph Beuys, Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, and Piero Manzoni—that has in hindsight overshadowed the former stars of the *tachist* and Informel avant-garde.



The aesthetic counterrevolution of which the School of London is still the most coherent and accomplished embodiment was based on the primacy of drawing. "Drawing," Ingres said, "is the probity of art."⁷¹ The explicit bias in this statement against the seductive felicity of the brush reflects the moralistic reaction instigated by Jacques-Louis David and his colleagues at the end of the eighteenth century against unfettered painterliness. It was a Republican strike at the root of the aristocratic pleasure principle. Yet over time and under Ingres's tutelage, drawing became the most

refined expression of that principle. Picasso's neoclassicism was an ironic twist on that slip-sliding duality; Neue Sachlichkeit artists restored political fervor to the antipainterly impulse; the Neo-Romantics softened it in order to give it back to the aristocracy; Balthus lent retrograde depiction a sulfurous quality; his friend Giacometti turned time-honored studio disciplines into a crucible of identity; and so on, back and forth, down to our day.

Thus, nearly a century after abstraction was born and the old academies lost their original *raison d'être*, drawing from models continues to attract major talents, whose attitudes toward that task divide one from another into sparring factions. There have, of course, been great draftsmen in the avant-garde; the academically gifted Piet Mondrian was one, the academically inept Pollock another. But the artists for whom drawing from life remains a regular routine, if not a main objective, constitute the core of the anti-avant-garde in any given period. The diversity of practitioners and practices gathered under that criterion demonstrates the vitality of, and lack of uniformity in, modern art made in spite of modernist imperatives. The two sections of this catalogue entitled Drawing Lessons present a brief survey of works on paper by artists fitting this very general description. The first of the two includes Natalia Gontcharova (p. 11), the pioneering Russian abstractionist who ended her life depicting Spanish dancers in a decorative, representational style, and Jean Dubuffet, who started out as a cautious neoclassicist and wound up the grand old man of high-style faux-naïf painting.

Surprising correspondences in the second of the two Drawing Lessons point out the ways in which Pop art, and English Pop in particular, allowed for the continuation of traditional drawing from life in the context of a sprightly assault on aesthetic high seriousness. Thus, Peter Blake, in a drawing of the writer Colin MacInnes (p. 236), Patrick Proctor, in a watercolor of the ever à la mode anti-avant-gardist Cecil Beaton (p. 236), and Hockney, in a drawing of Proctor (p. 237), all strove for the same crisp contour, subtle luminosity, and deft realism. For his part, Kitaj, with a look to Edgar Degas, Ingres's student, kick-turned Pop sensibility toward the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, Andy Warhol's *Untitled (Unknown Male)* (c. 1957; p. 238) is fashion-plate filigree, early Shahn mutating into a contemporary Aubrey Beardsley; Larry Rivers's *Edwin Denby* (1953;



p. 239) is Ingres tempered by de Kooning along with Giacometti's smudges and reiterations; and Alex Katz's *Boy with a Hat* (1974; p. 239) takes neoclassicism to the beach much as Seurat took Post-Impressionism to the banks of the Seine at Asnières. Finally, the stasis and formal reserve of Walter Murch's *Clock* (1965; p. 241) show some affinities to Italian and German art of the 1920s and 1930s. And while Jasper Johns does not draw like Murch, the fact that he owns another work by him indirectly links Johns's work to the poetry of uncanny objects in *Pittura Metafisica* and *Neue Sachlichkeit*, of which Murch is an American extension.⁷²



It is unnecessary to recapitulate the rise of Abstract Expressionism here. Suffice it to say that de Kooning, Barnett Newman, Pollock, Mark Rothko, and the tendency's other major exponents revolutionized painting in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. For a while, their example guided avant-garde art in Europe, providing an alternative to late School of Paris styles. This so-called triumph of American painting⁷³ was less complete than synoptic versions of events generally suggest—a thorough critical account of postwar European vanguard art has yet to be written—and “American painting” was less of a monolith than it is usually portrayed in these shorthand histories. As is well-known, for instance, both Pollock and de Kooning returned to figuration after they had created their breakthrough action paintings, much to the consternation of observers who thought art was on a one-way street to abstraction. In the meantime, as some younger painters sought to refine all-over painting, others, respecting the magnitude of the

first-generation Abstract Expressionists' achievement, set that option aside and started over as Baudelairean “painters of modern life.”

Among the eldest of the second-generation New York School wrong-way Corrigan was Fairfield Porter. A friend, admirer, and critical advocate of de Kooning, Porter was wide open to new ideas, as is shown by his prescient support of Johns's work and by the never-ending

house party he hosted at his home in Southampton, New York, where scores of young artists and writers were welcomed. (One, the poet James Schuyler, stayed as a guest for over a decade.) However, Porter's own pictures were predicated on the quirky notion that the road not taken in modernism, as it followed in Cézanne's footsteps, was the fork indicated by Vuillard. Lusciously painted and enlivened by de Kooning-inspired brushwork, Porter's still lifes, portraits, and landscapes rely upon a naturalized French intimism (p. 202). Although the pleasantness of Porter's subject matter, the relative modesty of his formats, and the winning maladroitness of his draftsmanship may make his pictures seem more congenial than exigent, Porter had ambition. His art reviews and essays spell out his vision of a new American realism in which materials and processes are as visible as the images depicted. The unassuming but enduring freshness of his works and the influence they have had upon other painterly realists vindicate his effort.

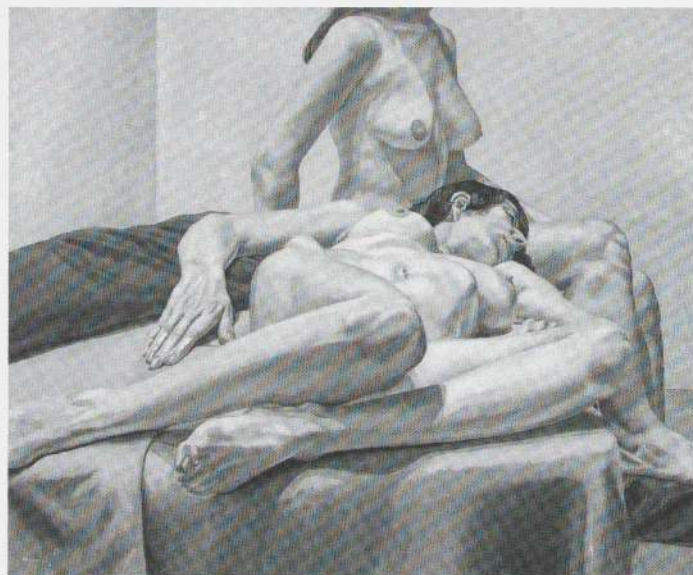
The art of Rivers, by comparison, is all flash and dazzle. Part of the same coterie as Porter, Rivers also looked to de Kooning, glossing his flaring line, tonal elisions, dexterous formal abbreviations, and undulating spaces with an offhand hipness all his own. A precursor of Pop art as well as a synthesizer of Abstract Expressionism and Porter's kind of genre painting, Rivers was simultaneously a bridge builder and boat rocker. In the latter vein, Rivers's 1953 pastiche of Emanuel Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (1851) is the height of mischievous retro-chic. Too perverse to be ignored, it is likewise too intelligent in its stylistic play and too skillful in its all-over execution to be dismissed as a superficial gag. Applying Abstract Expressionism's lessons to academic painting at

LARRY RIVERS.
American, born
1923. *Double Portrait
of Frank O'Hara*.
1955. Oil on canvas,
15 1/2 x 25 1/2" (38.4 x
63.6 cm). Gift of
Stuart Preston, 1976

the time when gestural abstraction was itself becoming academic, Rivers slyly commented on the institutionalization of artistic mannerisms even as he demonstrated how “good” drawing and painting could be reclaimed from studio hacks by imaginative improvisors.

Katz, also from the second-generation New York School, scaled up intimist painting and gave it glamour. Katz drew from plaster casts as a student, and as a mature painter he has continued to work from life studies, which he enlarges and reworks in the same way that Raphael prepared his tapestry cartoons. Early on, Katz recognized that traditional procedures did not dictate a traditional result. With one eye on modern billboards and the other on wide-screen movie close-ups, he applied himself to the task of making a new kind of big-format “American-type painting,”⁷⁴ which would meet its Abstract Expressionist counterpart head-on. Matisse was in the back of his mind too, along with Antonio Canova. Furthermore, the already noted Seurat connection links Katz to the 1920s revival of interest in his work and, mostly by opposition, to Balthus, whose sense of painterly decorum sometimes matches Katz’s, but whose airless pictures and aristocratic pretensions are the antithesis of the New Yorker’s airy tableaux and middle-class demeanor. Although a comparatively small painting for Katz, *Upside Down Ada* (1965; p. 203), with its dramatically inverted starlet pose and simplified features, reads like a picture twice its size, as if one were watching a CinemaScope classic in a tight multiplex theater. That Katz’s full-blown images do not go slack any more than his condensed ones bind is due to his total control of traditional technique and composition.

More traditional even than Katz is Philip Pearlstein, or so it superficially seems from his straightforward studio poses and setups. But, of course, by the time Pearlstein stopped making gestural, quasi-abstract landscapes in the late 1950s, painting the nude was the least likely activity for an up-and-coming New York artist. Pearlstein was not alone in wanting to draw from life, however. While Guston, Jack Tworkov, and other Abstract Expressionists shared the expense of hiring models with him, Pearlstein was the only one in the group who painted the same way he drew and the only one to approach the problem from a strictly perceptual



angle. With a background in art history including course work under H.W. Janson and thesis research on the Dadaist Francis Picabia, Pearlstein wrote a polemic on behalf of a new, hard-focused figuration that challenged the changing vantage points, perspectival distortions, and formal fragmentation of Cézannesque modernism. His alternative was an unblinking “eyeball” realism devoid of flourishes, psychological symbolism, and storytelling.⁷⁵

The results of Pearlstein’s empiricism are deadpan pictures of somnolent, physically unremarkable men and women seen under ordinary electric lighting and rendered in dry, uninflected strokes. No work of the 1960s could have seemed more antiquated in its pretext nor as emphatically contemporary in its actual appearance. Pearlstein’s radicalism consists of the trust he places in the facts of observation and of his refusal to interpret or rearrange them. This is not to say that his paintings lack emotional or conceptual depth. Quite the opposite, like *Neue Sachlichkeit* but without its narrative dimension, Pearlstein’s art is charged by its severities and disturbing in its uncompromising descriptiveness. In recent years, his work has taken an unexpected tack with his introduction of an odd assortment of visually aggressive objects into the background, and often into the foreground, of his compositions. At times, his human subjects seem beset by disquieting surrogates and creatures. In *Male Model*, *Minstrel Marionettes*, and *Unfinished Painting* (1994; p. 219), he played with systems of representation by painting a painting being painted, in which a fully rendered model confronts his partially completed

PHILIP PEARLSTEIN.
American, born
1924. *Two Female
Models in the Studio*.
1967. Oil on canvas,
50 1/2 x 60 1/2"
(127.3 x 153.1 cm).
Gift of Mr. and
Mrs. Stephen B.
Booke, 1973

likeness. The canvas also incorporates racially stereotyped marionettes—the folk-art dolls depicted were made by an African American craftsman—juxtaposed to the white male in a tense, confrontational guessing game of cultural assumptions. With its sardonic puppets and socially loaded ambiguities, this complicated *mise-en-scène* is part de Chirico, part Picabia, part postmodern, and all anti-avant-garde.

Neither Porter, Rivers, Katz, nor Pearlstein has had much use for the camera image on its own terms. Nor does Rackstraw Downes, whose seemingly fish-eye lens panoramas are painted on-site rather than from photographs (pp. 218–19). The curvature of his pictures derives instead from the natural rise and fall of the land as it is registered by the bowed arc of binocular vision. Topological art has a long history established by painter-explorers, painter-soldiers, and traveling landscape artists who scoured the globe capturing previously undocumented vistas. But Downes has little interest in the conventionally picturesque; a certain seasonal light on oil tanks, railroad bridges, or unprepossessing houses is sufficient to prompt the months of assiduous labor that Downes devotes to his crystalline views of America “as is.” Richard Estes does use photographs. At the center of *Double Self-Portrait* (1976; p. 202), he can be seen standing next to the tripod used to make the snapshot on which the canvas is based. Like Pearlstein’s complex painting of a painting, the image-fracturing plate-glass window that dominates the midsection of Estes’s work as well as the layered transparencies and mirrorings it concentrates toy with conflated forms of representation, reminding us that the “reality” on which Photo-Realism is ultimately based is the reality of the photograph itself as much as the reality it records.

Richard Lindner’s work is hard-edged but realist only in the sense that the most allegorical of the Neue

Sachlichkeit painters were realist. In fact, Lindner came of age in Weimar Germany, went into exile the day Hitler acceded to power, and did not fulfill his dream of being a painter until he settled in America in the 1940s. His close-packed, symbolist version of Pop art is saturated by these experiences. Ludwig of Bavaria, the mad aesthete and Richard Wagner patron, makes an appearance in *The Meeting* (1953; p. 204) opposite Saul Steinberg, Lindner’s fellow refugee and, like him, a magazine illustrator turned fine artist. Less a symbolist than a satirist is Fernando Botero, of the pneumatic majas and Pillsbury Doughboy caudillos. Like many Latin Americans, Botero was originally drawn to the Spanish baroque traditions of Francisco Goya and Velázquez, whose *Las Meninas* he pastiched with monstrously inflated bodies, but in the mid-1950s the Colombian born artist’s eyes were opened by the Mexican muralists of the 1930s. Botero’s quasi-Pop efforts at using Renaissance models for contemporary purposes are comic-opera Rivera. However, at their best his paintings mock those in power in ways that anyone who has lived under oligarchy cannot miss (p. 205).

In the work of Porter, Rivers, Katz, Pearlstein, and the painterly realists in general a perennial tendency blossomed with unanticipated vitality. Thus, even during the flood tide of mainstream modernism in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, the continuity of divergent, if not dissenting, artistic practices was plainly visible. In the 1980s, however, this unequal balance altered dramatically, reverting to something more closely approximating the original “return to order” between the world wars. The ironies of this situation have kept artists and critics busy in the two decades since “neo” and “post” became the necessary prefixes for describing contemporary art with an uncomfortable past and a compromised future.

Notes

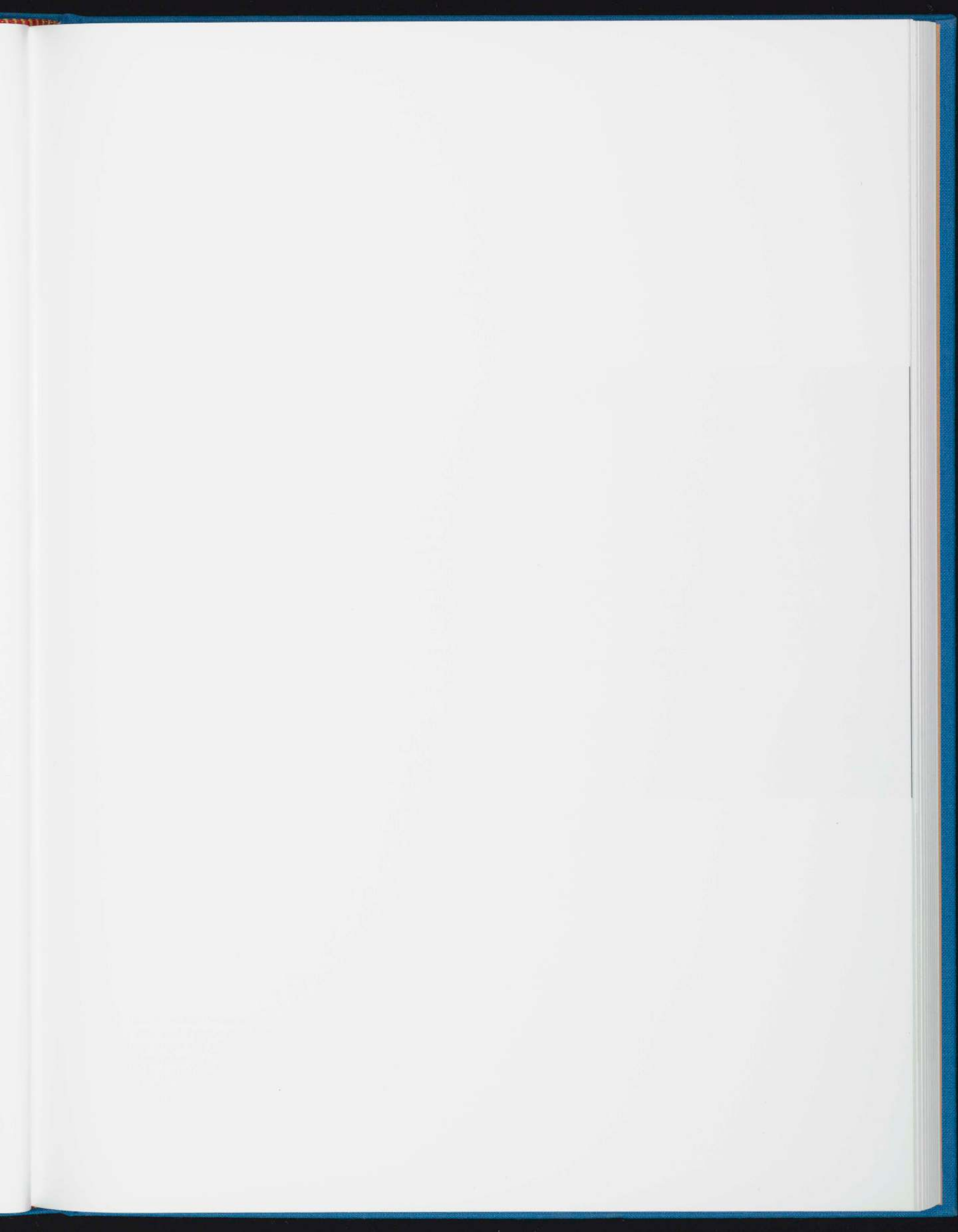
In writing this section, I have relied heavily on Kenneth E. Silver's groundbreaking study *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), as well as on Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

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1. Quoted in Silver, p. 3.
2. John Rewald, *Paul Cézanne* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1939), p. 135.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Both Henri Matisse quotes in this paragraph are from Silver, p. 30.
5. Recalling the camaraderie of the trenches, Fernand Léger wrote, "Around me were men of such humour, such richness. Varied types of men who were so exemplary in every way that it gave them the exact sense of the meaning of practical reality, of its timely use in the midst of this drama, this life and death struggle into which we were plunged. More than that: they were poets, inventors of everyday poetic imagery—I am speaking of the mobile coloured language of slang. Once I'd bitten into that reality the essence and meaning of objects never left me." Quoted in Peter de Francia, *Fernand Léger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 31.
6. Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), pp. 207–08.
7. Quoted in Silver, p. 108.
8. Quotes, originally published in *Le Mot*, no. 5 (Jan. 9, 1915), are from Silver, p. 46.
9. Silver, p. 144.
10. Both Juan Gris quotes are from Silver, pp. 156–57 and 164–65.
11. For detailed discussions of the post-World War I movement to realign and reaffirm French artistic traditions—both "naive" and sophisticated—see Silver and Golan.
12. James Thrall Soby bought *The Guitar Lesson* in the late 1930s, trading it to the artist Matta in the 1940s. Many years later, in the late 1970s, it was offered to The Museum of Modern Art as a gift, which was eventually refused because the work was at that time deemed inappropriate for public display. See Nicholas Fox Weber, "The Balthus Enigma," *The New Yorker* 75, no. 25 (Sept. 6, 1999), p. 40.
13. James Thrall Soby, *Balthus*, *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* 24, no. 3 (1956–57), p. 7.
14. Salvador Dalí, *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*, trans. Haakon M. Chevalier (New York: The Dial Press, 1948), p. 5.
15. George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, vol. 3, *As I Please, 1943–1945* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, [1968]), p. 164.
16. For an in-depth discussion of postwar representations of "woman" in School of Paris art, see Golan.
17. Quoted in Silver, pp. 105–06.
18. Quoted in Herschel B. Chipp, comp., with contributions by Peter Selz and Joshua C. Taylor, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 274.
19. Quoted in de Francia, p. 31.
20. In this paragraph, the first Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant quote is from Silver, p. 228; the Le Corbusier quote from p. 375; and the second Le Corbusier and Ozenfant quote from p. 375.
21. The André Salmon quote is from Silver, p. 336; and the Ozenfant quote from p. 337.
22. Silver, p. 388.
23. Charles Baudelaire, "Any Where Out of the World," in *Oeuvres complètes: Baudelaire*, Claude Pichois, ed., new ed., vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1975), p. 356.
24. Quotes are from the translation of the manifesto in Umbro Apollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos*, trans. Robert Brain et al., *The Documents of 20th Century Art* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), pp. 21–22.
25. In 1986, a version of Alberto Savinio's *The Departure of the Argonaut* was published by Petersburg Press with original photolithographs by Francesco Clemente.
26. Quoted in Marcel Jean, ed., *The Autobiography of Surrealism*, *The Documents of 20th Century Art* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), p. 58.
27. Quoted in James Thrall Soby, *After Picasso* (Hartford: Edwin Valentine Mitchell; New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935), p. 84.
28. For a discussion of this dividing line, see William Rubin, "De Chirico and Modernism," in Rubin, ed., *De Chirico* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1982), pp. 55–79.
29. Christopher Isherwood, "Goodbye to Berlin," in *The Berlin Stories* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1963), p. 1.
30. The Max Beckmann quote is from Wieland Schmied, *Neue Sachlichkeit and German Realism of the Twenties* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), p. 25; the Ernst Thoms quote from p. 15. The exhibition, at the Hayward Gallery, London, was organized by Catherine Lampert, who has also championed the work of Lucian Freud.
31. The Otto Dix quotes are from Sergiusz Michalski, *New Objectivity: Painting, Graphic Art and Photography in Weimar Germany 1919–1933* (Cologne: Benedikt Taschen Verlag, 1994), pp. 53–54, 56, and 61.
32. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 18.
33. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 23.
34. Quoted in Schmied, p. 30.
35. Quoted in Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), p. 61.
36. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., included Edward Burra's work in the important 1936 exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* at The Museum of Modern Art.
37. Quoted in Bertram David Wolfe, *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera* (New York: Stein and Day, 1963), p. 107.
38. André Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture, suivi de genèse et perspective artistiques du surréalisme et de fragments inédits* (New York: Brentano's, 1945), p. 143.

39. For more information and reproductions of the torpedo diagram, see Kirk Varnedoe, "The Evolving Torpedo: Changing Ideas of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture of The Museum of Modern Art," in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: Continuity and Change*, Studies in Modern Art 5 (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1995), pp. 12–73.
40. Clement Greenberg, "Review of the Whitney Annual and the Exhibition *Romantic Painting in America*," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian, vol. 1, *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939–1944* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 171.
41. Lincoln Kirstein, conversation with the author, spring 1995.
42. Quoted in Nicholas Fox Weber, *Patron Saints: Five Rebels Who Opened America to a New Art, 1928–1943* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), p. 8.
43. Works included in Soby's gift to the Museum of paintings, sculptures, and drawings from his collection compose a significant portion of the current exhibition. When Soby donated *The Street* to the Museum, he independently requested that the adolescent couple on the left side of the picture be reworked, so that the boy's hand, which hovered over the girl's crotch, would be moved. Surprisingly, and regrettably, Balthus agreed, saying, "When I was young, I wanted to shock. Now it bores me." From Weber, *Patron Saints*, p. 311.
44. Soby, *After Picasso*, pp. xi–xii.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23.
49. In his review of Dorothy C. Miller's and Soby's exhibition, Greenberg joined a battle that would be fought for the next decade over the Museum's involvement with conservative modern art at the expense of the avant-garde. Greenberg's attack is in some ways on target, but his uptown-bashing tone is as much a period piece as some of the art he ridiculed, and he stuck to it long after he and the art he championed had moved into the better addresses of mid-Manhattan. More interesting still is the explicit, puritanical, sexual politics of Greenberg's position: "The show of *Romantic Painting in America* now at the Museum of Modern Art harmonizes beautifully with last year's *American Realists and Magic Realists* exhibited at the same place. One sings alto to the other's bass, but the tune is the same. Both are phases of that campaign against modern art which began ambiguously among the surrealists twenty years ago, affirmed itself in the neo-romanticism of Christian Bérard, Tchelitchev, and the Bermans, and is now beginning to celebrate a triumph, such as it is, in New York and California during a period in which dry bones are being reclad with flesh, corpses resuscitated, and illusions revived by our failing nerves in every field of endeavor. . . . Cubism, or abstract art, gives the artist no room to express his *immediate* feelings about sex, for instance. They must first be transposed. . . . The latest 'romantic' revival in paintings . . . stands historical romanticism on its head. For its does not revolt against authority and constraints, but tries to establish a new version of security and order. The 'imagination' it favors seems conservative and constant as against the 'reason' it opposes, which is restless, disturbing, ever locked in struggles with the problematical. 'Reason' leads to convictions, activity, politics, adventure; 'imagination' to sentiment, pleasure, and certainties. . . . A nostalgia is felt for a harmony which can be found only in the past—and which the very technical achievements of past art seem to assure. . . . The result is art of a decadent flavor. Only the relinquishing of the effort to conquer new experience makes possible these seductive harmonies of paint and sentiment. . . . There are thrills, of course—but never upsetting ones. . . . The diabetical colors are sex; the careful handling is anal, represents money and the unwillingness to spend it on anything but pleasure. Sex and money are the two indisputable and perhaps the only exciting facts we have left. Yet this painting is not altogether to be despised; for it has inherent interest as phenomena, and in some cases its creators are extremely gifted. . . . And I say they know what they are doing. They have renounced the adventures and gambles of modern art. They want to be loved in a hurry. And they are. They sell well." From Greenberg, "Review of the Whitney Annual," pp. 172–74.
50. The importance Barr accorded the exhibition *Romantic Painting in America* at the time can be measured by his preface to the catalogue, in which he explicitly connected the show to his paradigmatic treatments of Cubism and Surrealism. His words also cast revealing light on his pluralist outlook and on his views regarding modern art's relationship to history: "*Romantic Painting in America* is the fifth of a series of books and accompanying exhibitions designed to present the movements, trends or divisions of modern art. The series began in 1936 with *Cubism and Abstract Art*, followed by *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism* [sic], which included a large section devoted to related art of the previous five centuries. In 1938 paintings by modern 'primitives' or self-taught artists of Europe, the United States and Canada were exhibited and published under the title *Masters of Popular Painting*. In the spring of 1943 *American Realists and Magic Realists* brought together the pictures of some of the increasing number of living artists who use a comparatively precise, 'sharp focus' realism of technique whether their subject matter is actual or imaginary. Their work was introduced by a 'preface' of a dozen American paintings chosen from the past one hundred years. *Romantic Painting in America*, however, includes the past not as a preface but as an extended 'historical' retrospective. 'Historical' is here placed in quotation marks because, for the Museum, the history of art ends only with yesterday; the living art of the more remote past is second in interest only to the art of the recent past which we call the present." From Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Preface," in James Thrall Soby and Dorothy C. Miller, *Romantic Painting in America* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1943), p. 5. Shortly before the exhibition opened, Barr was dismissed as director of the Museum.
51. Over the years, Miller's curatorial projects bridged the gap between antimodernist art, such as that in *American Realists and Magic Realists*, and the most advanced modernist work shown at the Museum in the postwar era. In that respect, her eye was even more adventurous than Barr's. Thus in her famous series of exhibitions of emerging American artists, she exhibited not only conservatives, like Hyman Bloom, Richard Lindner, Alton Pickens, and Honoré Sharrer, but most of the major avant-garde figures of the 1940s through the early 1960s, including Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, Jackson Pollock, and Frank Stella. In the mid-1930s, her husband, Holger Cahill, was a crucial link between the Museum and artists associated with American Scene and Social Realist tendencies. From 1935 until 1943, he directed the New Deal's Federal Art Project Number One for the visual arts. He was also a connoisseur of American folk art and wrote an essay for the catalogue to the Museum's 1938 exhibition *Masters of Popular Painting: Modern Primitives of Europe and America*, which was organized in part by Miller.
52. Lincoln Kirstein, "Introduction," in Dorothy C. Miller and

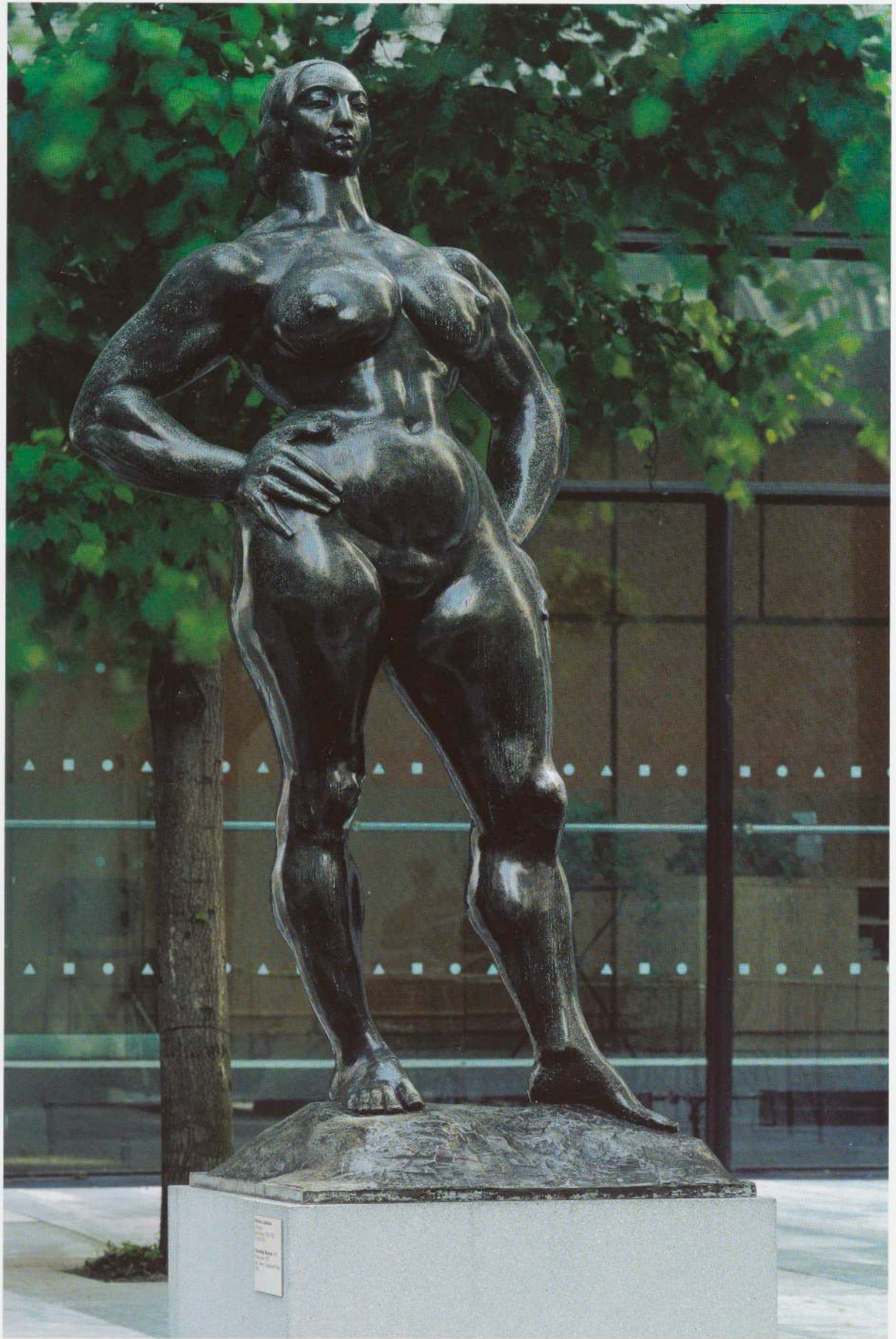
- Alfred H. Barr, Jr., eds., *American Realists and Magic Realists* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1943), p. 7.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Thomas Hart Benton, *An Artist in America* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Company, 1937), pp. 33–35.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 48.
57. Quoted in Matthew Baigell, *The American Scene: American Painting of the 1930's* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 61. Baigell's several books on American painting and the politics of art in the 1920s and 1930s are invaluable resources in an area passed over by many scholars eager to jump from early American modernism to the "main event" of Abstract Expressionism. While little of American Scene or Social Realist painting retains vital aesthetic interest, the reasons for its creation—and the reasons for its failures—remain subjects of art-historical consequence.
58. Ben Shahn, statement in Miller and Barr, eds., p. 52.
59. Quoted in Baigell, p. 175.
60. Quoted in *ibid.*
61. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 148.
62. Quotes in this paragraph are from Andrew Wyeth, statement in Miller and Barr, eds., p. 58.
63. Charles Baudelaire, *Baudelaire: Selected Verse*, trans. Francis Scarfe (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), pp. 47–48.
64. In this paragraph, the first Arshile Gorky quote is from Diane Waldman, *Arshile Gorky, 1904–1948: A Retrospective* (New York: Harry N. Abrams and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1981), p. 41; the Gorky and Willem de Kooning conversation is from Harold Rosenberg, *Arshile Gorky: The Man, The Time, The Idea* (New York: Horizon Press, 1962), p. 66; and the last Gorky quote is from Ethel Schwabacher, *Arshile Gorky* (New York: Macmillan Company for the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1957), p. 110.
65. Harry F. Gaugh, "De Kooning in Retrospect," *Artnews* 83, no. 3 (March 1984), p. 94.
66. W. H. Auden, "September 1, 1939," in *The English Auden: Poems, Essays, and Dramatic Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 245.
67. The Beckmann quote is from Schmied, p. 25; the Alberto Giacometti quote is from James Lord, "Alberto Giacometti and His Drawings," in *Alberto Giacometti: Drawings* (New York: Pierre Matisse Gallery, 1964), p. 8.
68. Quoted in Susan Compton, ed., *British Art in the 20th Century: The Modern Movement* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag; London: Royal Academy of Arts, [1986]), p. 439.
69. Peter Selz, *New Images of Man* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1959), p. 131.
70. Quoted in David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 3rd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p. 60.
71. Quoted in Robert Goldwater and Marco Treves, comps. and eds., *Artists on Art, from the XIV to the XX Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), p. 217.
72. Johns's most recent paintings have also incorporated an abstract diamond pattern that harks back to Picasso's Harlequins. These examples and others are indicative of how Johns has increasingly employed motifs and metaphors associated with earlier phases of the anti-avant-garde, offering yet another instance of a modernist artist moving in and out of antimodernist territory.
73. The phrase, which derives from the title of a book on Abstract Expressionism by the art historian Irving Sandler, has widely been criticized for its chauvinistic tone. According to Sandler, and in fairness to him, it must be said that the title *The Triumph of American Painting* was imposed on him by an editor who thought it would attract more attention than the less bombastic title the author had proposed.
74. The phrase was coined by Greenberg in the 1955 article "'American-Type' Painting," published in *Partisan Review*. See Clement Greenberg, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian, vol. 3, *Affirmations and Refusals, 1950–1956* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 217–36.
75. See Philip Pearlstein, "Figure Paintings Today Are Not Made in Heaven," *Artnews* 61, no. 4 (summer 1962), pp. 39, 51–52; and Pearlstein, "Whose Painting Is It Anyway?" *Arts Yearbook* 7 (1964), pp. 129–32.



Femmes Fatales

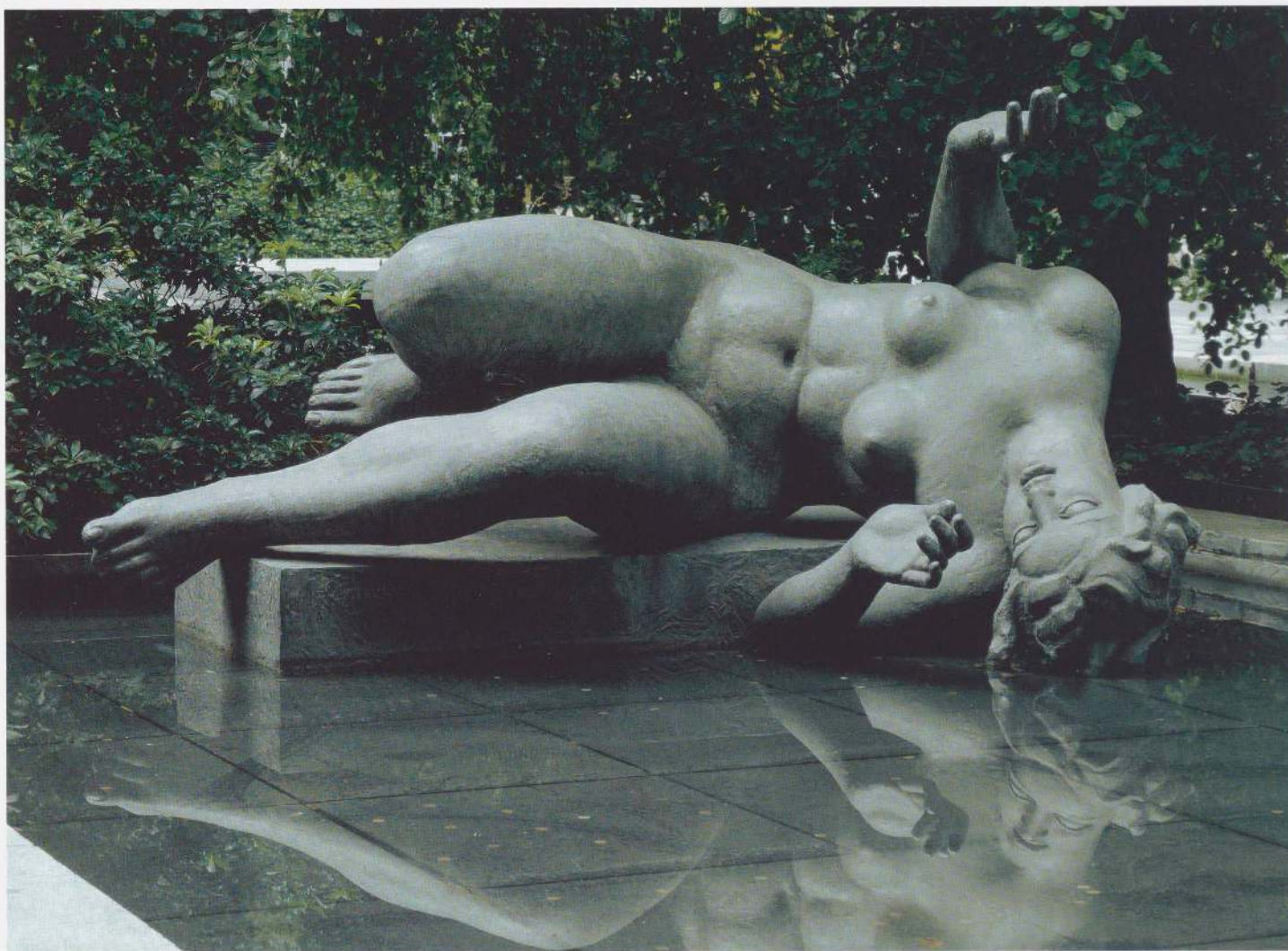


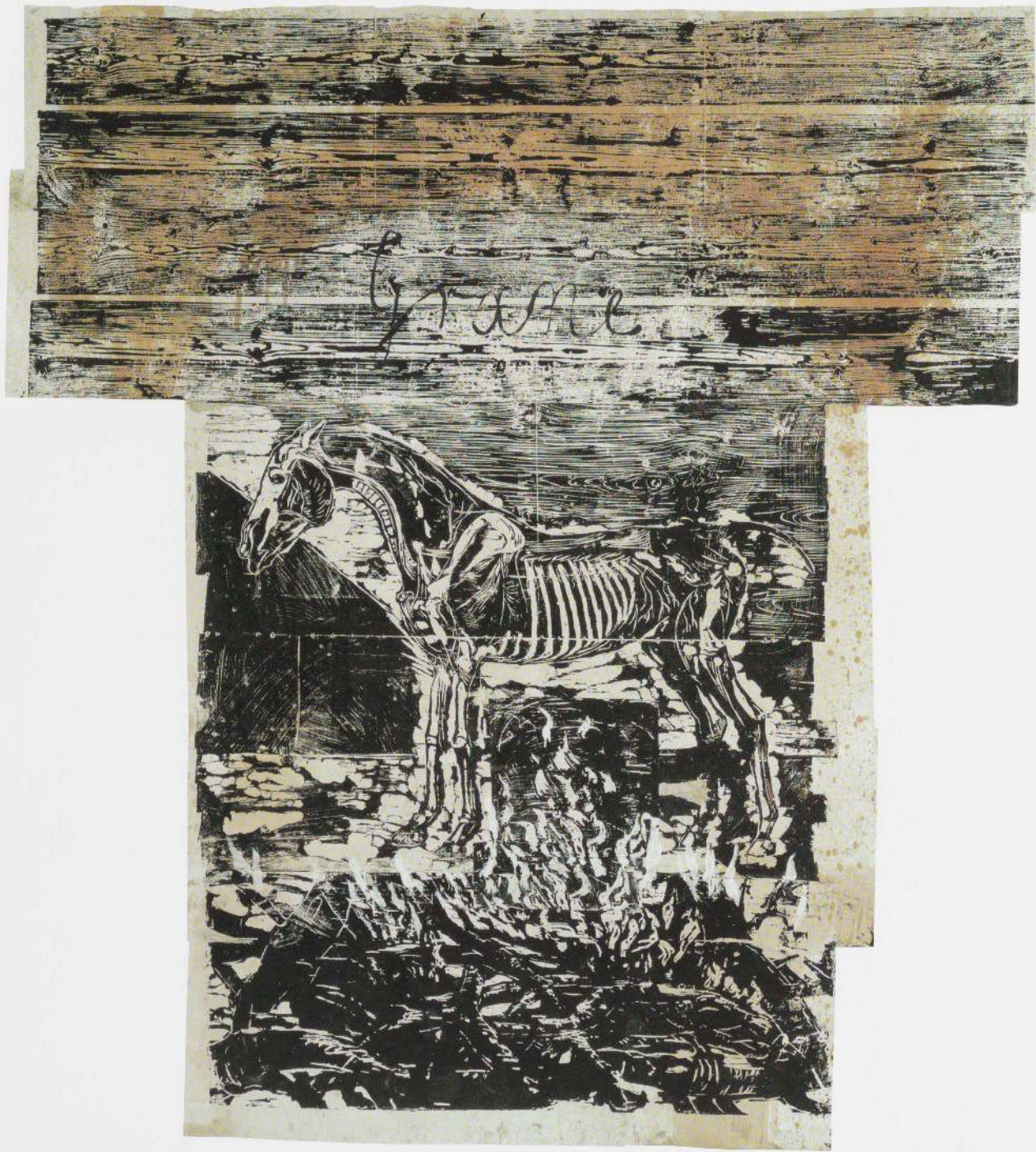
ELIE NADELMAN. American, born Poland,
1882–1946. *Figure*. c. 1945. Plaster, 11 x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x
3 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (27.9 x 16.8 x 8.6 cm). Aristide Maillol
Fund, 1948



Opposite: GASTON LACHAISE. American, born France, 1882–1935. *Standing Woman*. 1932, cast 1932. Bronze, 7'4" x 41 1/8" x 19 3/8" (223.6 x 104.3 x 48.4 cm). Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1948

Below: ARISTIDE MAILLOI. French, 1861–1944. *The River*. 1938–43, cast 1948. Lead, 53 1/2" x 7'6" x 66" (136.5 x 228.6 x 167.7 cm), on lead base, 9 1/4" x 67 x 27 1/2" (24.8 x 170.1 x 70.4 cm). Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1949





ANSELM KIEFER. German, born 1945. *Grane*. 1980-93. Woodcut with paint additions, comp. and sheet: 9' 1 1/8" x 8' 2 1/2" (277.1 x 250.2 cm; irreg.). Printer: the artist. Edition: unique. Purchased with funds given in honor of Riva Castleman by The Committee on Painting and Sculpture, The Associates of the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, Molly and Walter Bareiss, Nelson Blitz, Jr. with Catherine Woodard and Perri and Allie Blitz, Agnes Gund, The Philip and Lynn Straus Foundation, Howard B. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert D. Schimmel, and the Riva Castleman Endowment Fund, 1995

Fences Down

The big surprise in the late 1970s and early 1980s was the widespread resurgence of figurative painting and sculpture both in the United States and in Europe. Among the first signs of the impending aesthetic realignment in this country was the Whitney Museum of American Art's 1978–79 exhibition *New Image Painting*, which featured the work of Jennifer Bartlett, Michael Hurson, Neil Jenney, Robert Moskowitz, and Susan Rothenberg, among others. Many of them were veterans of the 1970s avant-gardes, and most painted in a detached, somewhat diagrammatic manner. London's Royal Academy of Arts launched the next barrage in 1981 with *A New Spirit in Painting*, which included not only newly prominent contemporaries Anselm Kiefer, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter, and Julian Schnabel but also more established figures like Francis Bacon, Balthus, Lucian Freud, David Hockney, and R. B. Kitaj, as well as the late Philip Guston and Pablo Picasso. The work of many of these artists displayed traits that might broadly be described expressionist. A year later in Berlin, Norman Rosenthal and Christos Joachimides, the team that had organized the Royal Academy exhibition, mounted *Zeitgeist*, an omnium-gatherum that mixed Joseph Beuys with David Salle, Francesco Clemente with Gilbert and George, Kiefer with Christopher Le Brun. Also in 1982, critic and curator Achille Bonito Oliva published a manifesto/survey of pictures and texts, *Trans Avant Garde International (Transavanguardia internazionale)*,¹ that focused on many of the same artists represented in *Zeitgeist*, but placed special emphasis on the Italians Sandro Chia, Clemente, and Enzo Cucchi, the so-called three Cs, all of whom, despite their "trans-avant-garde" status, looked back to the anti-avant-garde art of Pittura Metafisica of the 1920s and 1930s.

Suddenly, the old was new again, or, as Charles Jencks put it, "All the wasms are isms."² Whether for or against the new trends, most observers agreed that this pluralist onslaught announced the return of the repressed and a new round of antimodernism. Predictably, members of the avant-gardes of the 1960s and 1970s greeted these developments with a shudder. Once the shock had worn off, they subjected what they viewed as a backlash against their ideals and long-standing art-world hegemony to sharp criticism.

"The quality of new art has been declining for 15 years," Minimalist sculptor Donald Judd wrote in a two-part screed, "A Long Discussion Not about Master-pieces but Why There Are So Few of Them."³ The beginning of that slide would be 1969, if, as Judd seemed to say, art had hit bottom by 1984, the year his article appeared in *Art in America*. Always methodical, Judd ticked off the various influences explaining the aesthetic deterioration he saw all around him. His catalogue of contributing factors included the art-education system and the academicism it fostered, fashion-mongering museums, ambulance-chasing art criticism (though, as a former reviewer, he had the decency to point out that most art writers barely made a living at their profession), the lack of shared "issues" in high-level aesthetic discourse, the tendency of contemporary artists and critics to treat history as a "toy store," and, in architecture in particular, the rise of neo-classicism, which, Judd reminded readers, had been the paradigm of choice for Fascist governments in the 1920s and 1930s. Speaking as a modernist of the 1960s, he looked upon the rising art stars of the 1980s with undisguised contempt but also apprehension: "There is no reason to run down Anonymous the Mediocre when everyone knows that he is, but every reason

when Anonymous is thought to be the new earthquake of the century. At the present such tolerance is destructive. Talent may strike Baselitz, Kiefer, Salle or Chia, and Clemente and Schnabel may grow up, but for now it's necessary to say that they rate from zero to one on the Richter scale."⁴

At one level, of course, this is a purely oedipal rebellion of the father against the sons, rendered all the more inevitable by the fact that the sons had made it plain by their rejection of pure abstraction and their embrace of hybrid, figurative styles that they no longer felt bound by the father's law. At another level, it bespeaks a generational shift that marks the waning of mid-century American formalism. Although there was no love lost between Conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth and Judd, their responses to the advent of 1980s art were in many ways similar. Debunking the painting revival in his 1982 article "Necrophilia Mon Amour," Kosuth nevertheless took thoughtful account of America's self-absorption and of the growing reaction to it:

In America we tend to see cultural events in international terms: we can have no "national" character yet, not in the profound sense, and so we made Modernism itself our culture. By exporting our provincialism we reformed other cultures and made the mess look "universal." Our conception of modernism spread with our economic and political power. Because our culture didn't evolve from one place on the globe, we increasingly saw our location as a place in time—this century—rather than as a place on Earth. We exported synthetic culture without history—McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Hilton Hotel environments, and so on. To the extent that local cultures gave up their culture for ours, they of course lost control over the meaning making mechanisms within their lives, and became politically and economically dependent on us. But both here and abroad something happened in the late '60s—maybe the Vietnam war broke the bubble of our sales pitch. More and more, I think, artists in other countries began to reexamine the context of their life and art . . . and they began to look less and less to America for "guidance."⁵

The rise of 1980s Neo-Expressionism and postmodernism was not, therefore, a simple matter of a cyclical rotation of styles from abstraction to figuration, from a removed, cerebral art to an emotionally and physically

aggressive one. Rather, it signaled a sea change in the balance of cultural power. As Kosuth noted, Europeans eager to wean themselves from imported Pop culture could tap into their past; Americans anxious to do the same, but blessed or cursed with a more tenuous sense of a common heritage, had to start from scratch. If history had become, so Judd claimed, a toy store in which contemporary artists went shopping, then for Americans every trinket had a built-in alarm reminding them of their unresolved relation to history, and for Europeans every historical plaything was potentially booby-trapped with unwelcome memories and associations.

Bridging this Atlantic divide, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, the German-born, New York-based critic, was quick to fix his attention on this "dark side" of 1980s art. His 1981 jeremiad "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting" is a stern ideological warning.⁶ Couching his thesis in correspondences between the "return to order" of the 1910s and 1920s and contemporary Neo-Expressionist, neo-Symbolist, and allegorical realist art, he also drew parallels between the oppressive regimes of Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini and the rightward turn of politics and culture in Europe and the United States at the beginning of the 1980s. It is unnecessary to go into the inconsistencies of Buchloh's political analogy here, except to say that, no matter how conservative the governments of Europe and North America were in the 1980s, none rode a wave of popular enthusiasm for dictatorship of the kind that had risen in the 1920s or 1930s, and none was faced with economic or political crises of the type or magnitude prevalent between the two world wars.

The appeal of Buchloh's argument was its neat but tendentious symmetry and its apocalyptic tone. In essence, he admonished his readers, the new figurative painting augured the end of modernism as we had come to know it and foreshadowed even grimmer, although unspecified, consequences for culture as a whole. What else could his invocation of worldwide Fascism mean? In detail, his hyperbolic critique of German Neo-Expressionism and the backward-looking Italian Transavanguardia of the 1980s centered on what Buchloh perceived as their defeatism, exemplified for him by the image of the artist as clown in Chia's *The Idleness of Sisyphus* (1981; pp. 208–09). Such images, he maintained, were ghosts from the past:

The Harlequins, Pierrots, Bajazzos, and Pulcinelles invading the work of Picasso, Beckmann, Severini, Derain, and others in the early twenties (and, in the mid-thirties, even the work of the former constructivist/productivist Rodchenko in Russia) can be identified as ciphers of an enforced regression. They serve as emblems for the melancholic infantilism of the avant-garde artist who has come to realize his historical failure. The clown functions as a social archetype of the artist as an essentially powerless, docile, and entertaining figure performing his acts of subversion and mockery from an undialectical fixation on utopian thought.⁷

Adding to his strenuous objections to such motifs, Buchloh also rejected the reconstitution of a unified pictorial space for painting—from his perspective, an impermissible reordering of the fragmentary modernist space created by Cubist collage—and the recrudescence of bravura painting—which, according to him, the work of abstract painters Frank Stella and Robert Ryman had rendered obsolete once and for all. Beyond this, Buchloh condemned the melancholy and pessimism that he divined in so much of the new work as indicators of contemporary art's loss of nerve and its willingness to collaborate with the forces of reaction.

The purpose of lingering over this dire but influential diagnosis is to recall the tenor of the controversies over contemporary art in the early 1980s. Judd was wrong. There were shared issues, which were being framed by the battle between the "restoration" painters and the "deconstructive" appropriationists and conceptualists. Of further interest is the way in which, despite Buchloh's position on the left and his ardent defense of the old avant-garde, his rhetoric sometimes echoes the traditional right's attacks on the purported morbidity of modern art. Once again, the chimera of decadence was summoned. Once again, art's failure to live up to its former glories and its susceptibility to former corruptions were read as signs of a society in terminal crisis. Also noteworthy is the degree to which Buchloh's hostile assessment of post-modernist "historicism" depended upon what were in effect historicist assumptions about the apparent correlations between two different eras and societies. He invoked a negative variant of the eternal return to mobilize the forces of progress in the belief that what was not progress was woeful and inevitable relapse.

Finally, there is the question of pseudomorphism, which in the formal analysis of works of art consists of mistakenly supposing that things that superficially look alike are alike or mean the same thing. Buchloh's approach compounded this fallacy by placing formal pseudomorphism at the service of ideological pseudomorphism—the presumption that all retrospective aesthetics are by definition either actively or passively retrogressive in a social and political sense.⁸

Although the worries of 1960s-style avant-gardists faced with the new realities of the 1980s may have been exaggerated, they were not frivolous. Not everything had been stood on its head, but much had. The opening up of the art scene in the 1970s had brought with it a host of challenges to mainstream modernism. One feature of this upheaval was the strange spectacle of ostensibly progressive critics denouncing pluralism, even though the pluralist surge encompassed, and in many respects resulted from, the efforts of women, gay, minority, and activist artists, who had long been shunned or at best been regarded as interesting exceptions.⁹ Once marginalized on the grounds that their art was narrative, decorative, or grotesque, or in some other way ignored the axioms of American formalism, representatives of these various groups as well as other individuals came forward with work that could not be ignored despite its refusal to play by the rules.

Among the most successful painters of his generation from the mid-1940s through the mid-1960s, Guston cannot be considered a true outsider in this sense, although the abrupt reorientation of his art toward storytelling and caricature during the last ten years of his life offended many of his contemporaries and erstwhile supporters. Nor does he really belong to the 1980s—he died in 1980, during the run of a retrospective of his work that confirmed his importance for younger artists. However, at least in the United States, 1980s art would have turned out very differently without his abiding presence. A veteran Abstract Expressionist, Guston had served a long artistic apprenticeship that included a stint as a mural painter in Mexico under the patronage of David Alfaro Siqueiros, a protracted involvement with the work of Giorgio de Chirico and Giorgio Morandi, and an equally complex engagement with that of Max Beckmann. Guston's development was thus to some extent a summary and synthesis of the anti-avant-garde's early development, yet it culminated in his becoming an unequivocal

modernist. As Kosuth observed, the Vietnam War broke the momentum of mainstream American art. Guston, who during the 1950s was regarded as the most poetic of the gestural abstract painters, heard in the tumult of the 1960s the distant clamor of the social and cultural conflicts of his youth. Caught between an art-for-art's sake practice and strong political convictions, Guston was forced to start over.

So when the 1960's came along I was feeling split, schizophrenic. The war, what was happening to America, the brutality of the world. What kind of man am I, sitting at home, reading magazines, going into a frustrated fury about everything—and then going into my studio to *adjust a red to a blue*. I thought there must be some way I could do something about it. I knew ahead of me a road was laying. A very crude, inchoate road. I wanted to be complete again, as I was when I was a kid.¹⁰

The dividedness Guston experienced and the child-like completeness he longed for took the form of huge, painterly burlesques that recycle images from his early murals and allegorical pictures, along with the lush, improvisatory mark making of his Abstract Expressionist canvases. Thus, in *City Limits* (1969; pp. 226–27) Ku Klux Klansmen from the 1930s become thuggish everymen of the 1960s and 1970s. For Guston, the experience of America being simultaneously at war abroad and at war with itself politically came as a rude reawakening. His absurd, menacing Klansmen are a pictorial synonym for the catchphrase of the contemporaneous cartoon character Pogo: “We have met the enemy and he is us.” The grotesquerie of Guston’s late work was in perfect accord with this tragicomic realization and with the schizophrenia about which he spoke.¹¹ Guston’s willingness to gamble an established reputation as a vanguard innovator on a return to narrative picture making was unprecedented in his generation. His was not a capricious attempt to catch up with Pop sensibility, as some of his critics claimed, much less a caving in to retro-fashion. Rather, it was a brave and robust confrontation with contradictions that had dogged him all his life. The reluctance of old-school modernists to acknowledge Guston’s late paintings is indirect proof that the unfinished aesthetic and political business he had addressed was still a problem for others of his generation, despite their denials. On that score, Guston was defiant:

I think there's some law at work—an invisible law—that means you can only accept certain things at a certain time—so that if you're working to please yourself or catering to yourself, why should you cater to a looker or art critic? . . . If I destroy my own expectations, why should I worry about others' expectations?¹²

The paintings of the younger Americans Eric Fischl and Salle also bespeak split personalities, but of very different kinds. Fischl's paintings are psychological self-projections presented as social realism, images of the bad behavior and bad conscience of privileged middle-class Americans writ large. In *Portrait of a Dog* (1987; p. 222), he spread shards of a life over the broken picture planes of four overlapping and off-plumb canvases such that a naturalist image partially fuses a fractured Cubist space, while that same fractured Cubist space calls into question the integrity of a naturalist vision. Paradigmatically postmodern in its forcing together of dissonant images and styles—and obviously indebted to the overlaying technique of the renegade modernist Francis Picabia—Salle's triptych *Muscular Paper* (1985; pp. 220–21) superimposes a stencil-like copy of a Beckmann painting over cheap plaid fabric, affixes a Batmanesque cartoon of the head from Jusepe de Ribera's *Boy with a Clubfoot* (1642) onto the buttocks of two rope-skipping nudes, and turns a painted photograph of a Picasso sculpture into a peg-board. Salle is neither celebrating tradition nor mocking it, but rather putting his alienation from the legacy of his medium on public display. As Salle said of his work overall, “The paintings are dead,” because the “viewer's will to make sense . . . brings the paintings down (as the hunter brings down the bird). This is similar to the mechanism of man's inquiry into his own nature which brings about his undoing in Greek tragedy.”¹³

Two other Americans, Troy Brauntuch and Robert Longo, do play on nostalgia. However, Brauntuch's sepulchral renderings of 1920s and 1930s motifs in an untitled work of 1981 (p. 215), in which a Roman style bust is juxtaposed to Brancusi's *Cup* (1914–16), and Longo's bas-relief amalgam of vintage modernist buildings butted up against a drawing of a clown or commedia dell'arte face in *Pressure* (1982–83; p. 214) are comfortless evocations of the past. In addition, the figure in the Longo recalls the diabolical protagonist of Stanley Kubrick's film *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) and



thereby evokes the dystopian specter of “mod” fascism. Tom Otterness’s *Head* (1988–89; p. 213) is also reminiscent of 1920s and 1930s neoclassicism at its most brutal. Is this profile that of a fallen worker, a fallen soldier, or a fallen tyrant? Knowing the power of the conventions he appropriates, and the greater power that ambiguity has over them, Otterness does not reveal his answer. Gino de Dominicis’s *No!* (1981–82; p. 212) summons other phantoms. Initially inspired by an ancient Sumerian sculpture of a woman, this three-quarter view of a woman’s head drawn many times larger than life, in a sleek and impersonal Art Deco style, resembles a propaganda poster of the 1930s. Yet while such associations are almost inevitable, they are not conclusive. Like Otterness, de Dominicis exploits the rhetoric of modernist monumentality without pinning down his referents—is the hero worship of the Left or the Right being invoked? One is left to wonder at the image’s double-edged potency.

Chia’s *The Idleness of Sisyphus* is unapologetically dandified postmodernism, despite Buchloh’s condemnation, as is Clemente’s *Conversion to Her* (1983; p. 216). Both explicitly recall *Pittura Metafisica*, Chia’s through a tidily dressed Sisyphus that recasts in a slapstick guise de Chirico’s seemingly mesmerized men in suits, and Clemente’s through the phantasmagorical warmth and stillness of his *mise-en-scène*. Of these two artists, Clemente—once the protégé of vanguard Arte Povera

artist Alighiero e Boetti—is the most insistently anti-modernist. His choice of fresco as a medium, his frequent allusions to Eastern as well as Western antiquity, and his firm belief that, although things undergo constant metamorphosis, the world itself and humanity’s place in it neither change nor improve are all connected to the hypersensory stasis of an imaginary universe in which optimism and pessimism dissolve into an acceptance of unpredictable flux. This alternatively erotic and ascetic fatalism is an affront to positivist thinking, but it explains why Clemente was Allen Ginsberg’s favorite artist, and Ginsberg one of Clemente’s favorite poets.

While Clemente’s *Conversion to Her* is a montage of enigmatic sexual self-portraits, Matthew Barney’s *DRAWING RESTRAINT 7* (1993; p. 217) is a claustrophobic video odyssey of sexual uncertainty—or rather of hopeful androgyny. Shot inside a car speeding around Manhattan and in a barren soundstage, Barney’s athletic drama of perfection-in-the-making uses satyrs in a way Jean Cocteau would have approved of. It is a convergence of varsity-wrestling agon and performance art, in which the inquiries into gender identity and gender politics undertaken by women in the 1960s and 1970s have become a man’s problem. A latter-day example of just such a critical study into female stereotypes is Ellen Phelan’s *Neighborhood* (1990; p. 243). In this watercolor, antique dolls, linear descendants of de Chirico’s mannequins, are rendered in a deliberately “period” atmospheric style. Other artists, like Robert Gober, have embarked on projects similar to Barney’s; with his Magritte-like realism, Gober might well be counted with him among the borderline antimodernists.

Gilbert and George also belong in that group. Intoning their plea *To Be with Art Is All We Ask . . .* (1970; pp. 224–25) with Edwardian accents and portraying themselves in picturesque nature in the manner of amateur landscape artists, Gilbert and George used the techniques and format of conceptualism to pine for simpler times. However, their deadpan irony revokes the possibility of that return, while an aura of genteel aestheticism still hovers after their parody of nineteenth-century idealism has lost its sting. Mark Tansey also made recourse to dated illustrational styles in *Robbe-Grillet Cleansing Every Object in Sight* (1981; p. 210), using debased realism to satirize a myth. Tansey’s myth is the modernist notion of “purifying



GERHARD RICHTER.
German, born 1932.
*Untitled (Portrait of
Henry de Montherlant)*,
1971. Oil on canvas,
27 1/2 x 21 3/4" (70.2 x
55.5 cm). Gift of
Ronald S.
Lauder, 1991

the language of the tribe"—that is to say, reducing the terms and structures of common parlance to their most basic, often cryptic form—which was begun by the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé and has been elaborated by his countryman the novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet. Similarly, in Vitaly Komar's and Aleksandr Melamid's *I Saw Stalin Once When I Was a Child* (1981–82; p. 211) the artists' myth is that of a paternalistic State, personified by an omnipotent and omniscient leader. Komar and Melamid capitalize on the disconcerting appeal of authoritarian art—vintage Socialist Realism in this case—just as to varying degrees Brauntuch, Otterness, and de Dominicis do—but none of them serves that art's original masters or their heirs.¹⁴

By contrast, Le Brun's *Prow* (1983; p. 223) is full-blown, redux romanticism, complete with a Pegasus-like apparition, Redonesque bursts of saturated color, and flurries of tinted pigments that recall the paintings of J. M. W. Turner. No explanation for its anachronism is offered, nor any apologies. Self-consciously anti-modern, Le Brun has gambled on his ability to keep a pictorial symbol freighted with history aloft by sheer dint of painterly will. Iconographically speaking, *Prow's* stablemate is Kiefer's *Grane* (1980–93; p. 90), which is as explicitly Wagnerian in its imagery as it is neo-Gothic and Neo-Expressionist in its use of traditional woodcut techniques, techniques equivalent in their formal connotations to the fresco of Clemente. Whereas

Clemente attempts to transcend cultural and historical differences and Le Brun tries, almost literally, to override the present with the past, Kiefer exploits the aesthetic contradictions and temporal discrepancies embedded in his work. Thus, much of Kiefer's work is annotated with texts and commentaries or otherwise transformed by means borrowed from contemporary deconstructionists. Straight out of Norse legend, *Grane* is, on the other hand, more altarpiece than conversation piece, although the implicit foil for this woodblock print—the background against which it stands out and from which it draws part of its meaning—is its mediasaturated environment. Jim Nutt's *Whisk* (1999; p. 229) is a backward-looking painting of another, more quietly disruptive order. It too tips its head in the direction of the Northern Renaissance, quoting German and Netherlandish portraiture in a way not that dissimilar from Grant Wood's American Scene paintings, even as it incorporates a suavely perverse modification of the biomorphic arabesques of John Graham's and Arshile Gorky's neoclassical heads of the 1930s and 1940s. It is as if Nutt were redoing the old masters in mercury marbled with liquified enamel; just when the image seems to have coalesced, something slips and pools and the whole wobbles. In their pictorial erudition and weird invention, Nutt's recent paintings resemble Guston's late work. In both, traditions are cross-referenced and melded in ways that no ordinary traditionalist could conceivably arrive at.

Conservative art of the kinds made by Kiefer, Clemente, and others who came to prominence in the 1980s was championed by some who wanted to say good riddance to experimental art of the previous decades. The art itself was as much informed by those experiments—both their successes and failures—as it was by premodern precedents. At their best, Kiefer's grand, eloquent reenactments of German history, like Clemente's sleight-of-hand tricks with dichotomous sexual and cultural symbols, taxed visual pleasure with intellectual effort. The artists themselves are not necessarily at fault if many people reveled in the return to painting, while refusing to pay the full price. In this respect, the mediocrity of viewers' aesthetic ambitions does not reflect on the ambitions of the artists.

As Kosuth noted, European artists sated by America's culture turned back to their own. The hybridity of Clemente's work is therefore not an aberration but rather a marvelous welling-up of heterogeneous

images, analogous to the way that the ruins of ancient, cosmopolitan Rome break through the surface of modern Italy. Kiefer's work is comparably archaeological, but the past he excavates is relatively recent, horror-laden, guilty, and taboo. In both cases, as with the production of most literary or history-minded artists, to experience the work, much less judge it, one must have detailed familiarity with the texts and events upon which it is based. Pure formalists would have us read art only for its structure and facture—what the eye can see. Yet one can no more grasp the meaning of a Renaissance allegory or an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century history painting without specific knowledge of the Bible, Greek mythology, or the events of the period than one can understand contemporary narrative art without close attention to its iconography and the ways in which its images match or alter their prototypes. Art-historically speaking, it is the reassertion of iconography's importance in relation to significant form that antimodernist art advances as a challenge to modernist habits of interpretation.

If critics and the public have not always known how seriously to take the expressionism and symbolism of painters like Kiefer and Clemente, neither have they been sure of how to deal with the protean skepticism of Richter. In many respects, Richter would seem to be the ultimate postmodern painter. Pitting an entire career of style, format, and image changes against the modernist ideal of a single-minded pursuit of art's essential characteristics, Richter has been variously viewed as both an aesthetic chameleon and a deconstructionist saboteur. In the former capacity, he is the skillful professional who applies his talent to a variety of pictorial problems in a variety of styles. In the latter, he lays mines around the already unstable foundations of painting by showing how convincing approximations of "the real thing" can be. This second interpretation sits squarely with the belief that painting is all but dead; the only thing needed to persuade those still enthralled by its aura that they are victims of their own delusions and those of the culture that continues to hold painting on high is to show the complete and naked conventionality of an art form long valued for the originality it fostered. From this perspective, Richter's gradual inventory of painterly modes—realism, Minimalism, Systemic painting, Color Field painting, Expressionism, history painting, and back to realism—is a programmatically inauthentic mimicry

aimed at devaluing anything that might be construed as a sincere picture. In comparing average Expressionism, Neo- or old style, to Richter's richly equivocal abstractions, we would seem to come back in a round-about way to Stravinsky's observation that "Most artists are sincere and most art is bad, though some insincere (sincerely insincere) works can be quite good."¹⁵

But if we accept this inverted reading of Richter's work in its narrowest, most polemical sense, a landscape like *Wiesental* (1985; p. 231) is, despite its shimmering lights, not a landscape at all but a sign erected to block our view of other landscapes, a warning against the temptations of romantic vistas such as those painted by Caspar David Friedrich and his many imitators. Moreover, in these terms, Richter's *Self-Portrait* (1996; p. 230) is, despite its haunting directness, not an image of a contingent being but an emblem that says this is not a portrait, this is representation's cul-de-sac. Yet while it is true that appearances can deceive—and perfectly reasonable to mistrust naive versions of the picturesque or to maintain, as Alberto Giacometti did, that no mimetic device can capture the likeness of a sitter—Richter's images are too compelling, too vivid in their specific ambiguities, to be mere exercises in reflex disbelief.

There is, to be sure, a profoundly destructive element in Richter's sensibility, of which his sequential appropriation and testing of disparate artistic alternatives are an inherent part. Like Willem de Kooning, whose mastery of his medium, bouts of creative desperation, and wry existentialist humor correspond in many ways to Richter's own, the German painter seems to subscribe to the American's maxim that "if you take the attitude that it is not possible to do something, you have to prove it by doing it."¹⁶ What keeps Richter moving, then, is not the drive to exhaust an attitude or procedure but the residue of unforeseen and indestructible experiences or meanings that remain after the artist's processes of painting and doubting are complete. Thus, as its look of perfect naturalness is smeared by Richter as he drags his brush over the first, sharply focused statement of his image, the almost kitsch postcard scene of *Wiesental* reveals an underlying beauty and answers to a genuine craving for such beauty. In a similar fashion, Richter's identity is partially exposed to us in *Self-Portrait* by the incomplete, painterly erasure of his photographic image. Instead of canceling one another out, each of Richter's apparently competing

ways of making a picture follows the same rules, and each, at the point of extinguishing faith in the painter's art, revives it.

A modernist by virtue of his making the techniques and conventions of painting his subject matter, Richter is at the same time an antimodernist in his devotion to a medium his avant-garde admirers have long since written off as outmoded. Asked why he had not changed his methods in accordance with the radical critique of painting explicit in his work, Richter replied: "In this respect I'm extremely conservative. It seems to me like someone saying a language is no longer usable, because it is a bourgeois inheritance, or that we mustn't print texts in books any more but on cups or on chair-legs. I am bourgeois enough to go on eating with a knife and fork, just as I paint in oil on canvas."¹⁷

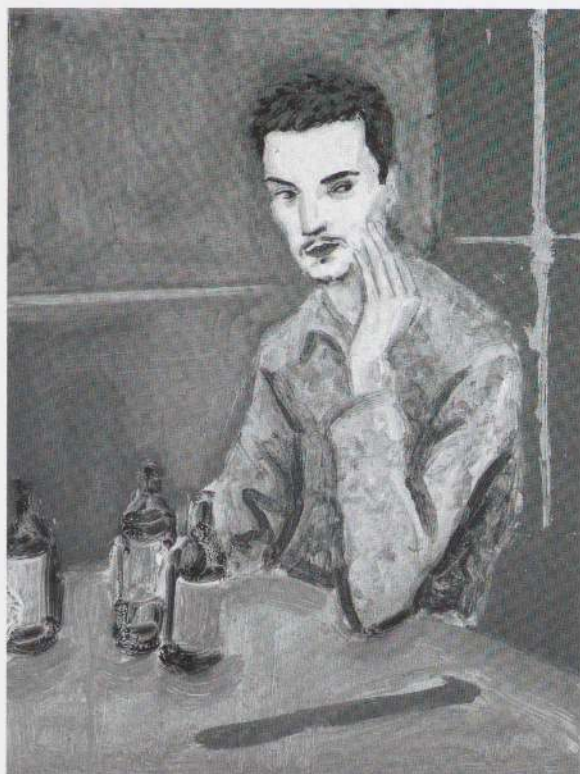
Richter's demurrer—his confession of "bourgeois" conservatism barbed by the offhand send-up of contemporary Neo-Dada art—is indicative of his willingness to concede ground to avant-garde dogma only to reclaim that ground for artistic choice. He is a painter of ideas whose painting defies ideologies of every kind. The twists and turns of his reasoning, and the "forward" and "backward" leaps of his stylistic course, are tactics for evading not only his enemies but also his friends, for keeping his options open when all around him know what history dictates he should do next. Guston's

intransigence in the face of the expectations of others is the stand-and-fight variant of Richter's elusiveness. One hot, one cool, one struggling to harness his contradictory impulses to a single purpose, the other methodically setting forth his contradictions canvas by canvas, together Guston and Richter bracket postmodern painting and forge the links between it and its modernist and antimodernist sources. If their words have a familiar ring and their work at times recalls that of earlier artists, it is not that they are repeating what their predecessors have said or done. Rather, it is because the dialectic of postmodern art is fundamentally no different from that of modern art, and because the tension between the ideal of a teleological modernism and the actual plurality of modern art has always been a constant.

Although theorists long ago consigned some of the art in this book to the dustbin of history, in reality it resides in the dust-free storage spaces of The Museum of Modern Art. Bringing this work to light not only offers us the chance to decide for ourselves whether, in spite of its exile, a given painting, sculpture, drawing, or print retains some measure of its former vitality or has gained unanticipated currency because of art now being made. How, for example, do the miniatures of a young artist such as Elizabeth Peyton (p. 98) alter our perspective on all-but-forgotten stylists of the 1920s and 1930s, like the Neo-Romantics? Or, from a slightly different angle, imagine Christian Bérard's *Jean Cocteau* (1928; p. 44) filtered through Alex Katz's sensibility. Some may flinch at the thought that painting "has come to that" once again, but artists feel no obligation to respect what art lovers desire from habit or art historians foretell. Art does not go where it "should" go; it goes where the most ingenious artists of the moment take it and where the culture's barriers against change are most vulnerable.

At the present, the fences, walls, and glass houses around modernism are down. Wildflowers have invaded its gardens and conservatories; hothouse flowers are trying their luck in the open fields. Hybrids abound. Someday, no doubt, new structures will be erected, and a sorting out will take place. In the meantime, the myriad strains of modern art flourish, cross-pollinate, die back, compost, mutate, and blossom again. If I have taken the risk of employing an organic metaphor for historical processes at this juncture, I have done so in order to extend the usual bell-curve model of rise and

ELIZABETH PEYTON.
American, born
1965. *Jake at the
New Viet Huong*,
1995. Oil on
Masonite, 14 x 11"
(35.6 x 27.9 cm).
Gift of Peter
Norton, 2000



fall into a cosine oscillation more closely resembling the life cycle of most species. A striking difference can be seen between past uses of this basic trope and current circumstances. For in contrast to the sense of decay that characterized the mood of the nineteenth-century fin de siècle, the twentieth century came to an end in an explosion of chaotic fecundity. Sooner or later, our collective fortunes may plummet, but for now the culture as a whole is in riotous bloom. Feeding that fertile growth, of course, is the gradual rot of many of the last hundred years' efforts and accomplishments. But just as Symbolist art and other decadent styles of the nineteenth century nourished, or were plowed under by, the soon-to-be-vanguard artists of the twentieth, such as Picasso, so too the breakdown and reabsorption of our inheritance will inevitably influence those who will bring about the next big aesthetic changes, changes that may indeed herald a truly postmodern age.

For the time being, however, predictions of whom those artists might be and what their contributions will consist of are futile and, worse, distracting. If the history of modern art has taught us anything, it is that, whatever art's temporary form and relative strength, immediacy and vitality matter more than pure or impure origins and probable outcomes. Art's primary value does not reside in where it came from or what it leads to, but in what it is. In this regard, Picasso, arguably the greatest modernist of the twentieth century and incontestably its greatest antimodernist, shall have the final say:

I also often hear the word evolution. Repeatedly I am asked to explain how my painting evolved. To me there is no past or future in art. If a work of art cannot live always in the present it must not be considered at all. The art of the Greeks, of the Egyptians, of the great painters who lived in other times, is not an art of the past; perhaps it is more alive today than it ever was. Art does not evolve by itself, the ideas of people change and with them their mode of expression. . . . Variation does not mean evolution. If an artist varies his mode of expression this only means that he has changed his manner of thinking, and in changing, it might be for the better or it might be for the worse. The several manners I have used in my art must not be considered as an evolution, or as steps toward an unknown ideal of painting. All I have ever made was for the present.¹⁸

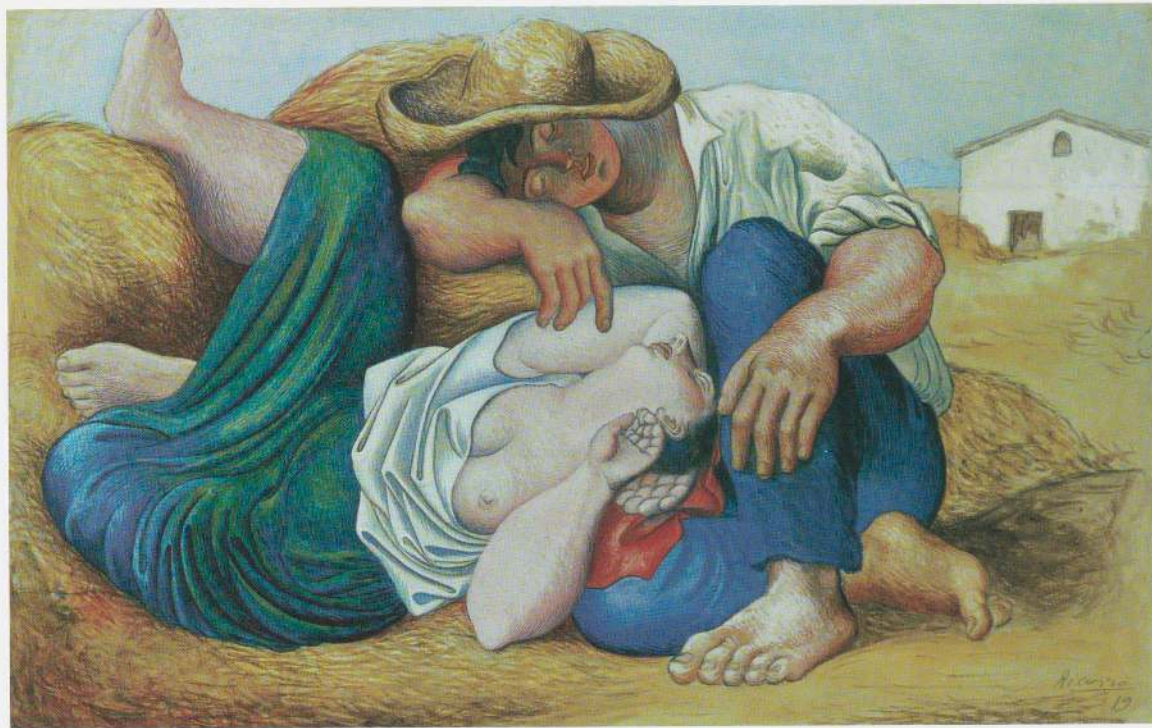
Notes

1. English edition, Achille Bonito Oliva, *Trans Avant Garde International*, trans. Dwight Gast and Gwen Jones (Milan: Giancarlo Politi Editore, 1982).
2. See Charles Jencks, *Post-Modernism: The New Classicism in Art and Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1987).
3. Donald Judd, "A Long Discussion Not about Master-pieces but Why There Are So Few of Them," part 1, in *Donald Judd, Complete Writings, 1975-1986* (Eindhoven: Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 1987), p. 49.
4. *Ibid.*, part 2, p. 77.
5. Joseph Kosuth, "Necrophilia Mon Amour," in Richard Hertz, ed., *Theories of Contemporary Art* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985), p. 97.
6. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting," in Brian Wallis, ed., *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art in association with David R. Godine, Publisher, Boston, 1984), pp. 107-36.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
8. Lest there be misunderstanding, my disagreements with Buchloh are not based on an out-of-hand rejection of Marxist criticism but rather on the polemical shortcuts in his historical arguments and the moral axioms he retrospectively applied to complex social and artistic dilemmas.
9. See Hal Foster, "Against Pluralism," in *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1985), pp. 13-32.
10. Quoted in Robert Storr, *Philip Guston* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), p. 53.
11. The subject of Philip Guston's *East Coker-TSE* (1979; p. 228) is the dying T. S. Eliot, whose "East Coker" is the second of his Four Quartets. See T. S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, n.d.).
12. Quoted in Storr, p. 108.
13. David Salle, "The Paintings Are Dead," in Brian Wallis, ed., *Blasted Allegories: An Anthology of Writings by Contemporary Artists* (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1987), p. 325.
14. The antimodernism of contemporary Russian conceptualists such as Komar and Melamid has a political dimension to it very different from Western antimodernism. See "Talk of the Town," *The New Yorker* 65, no. 10 (April 24, 1989), p. 32.
15. Quoted in W. H. Auden, "Writing," in *The Dyer's Hand* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 17.
16. Willem de Kooning, "A Desperate View," in *Willem de Kooning: The North Atlantic Light, 1960-1983* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1983), p. 67.
17. Gerhard Richter, *The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings and Interviews 1962-1993*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Obrist, trans. David Britt (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press; London: Anthony d'Offay Gallery, 1995), pp. 150, 152.
18. Quoted in Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1946), pp. 270-71.



The School of Paris





Opposite: PABLO PICASSO. Spanish, 1881–1973. *Pierrot*. 1918. Oil on canvas, 36 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (92.7 x 73 cm). Sam A. Lewisohn Bequest, 1952

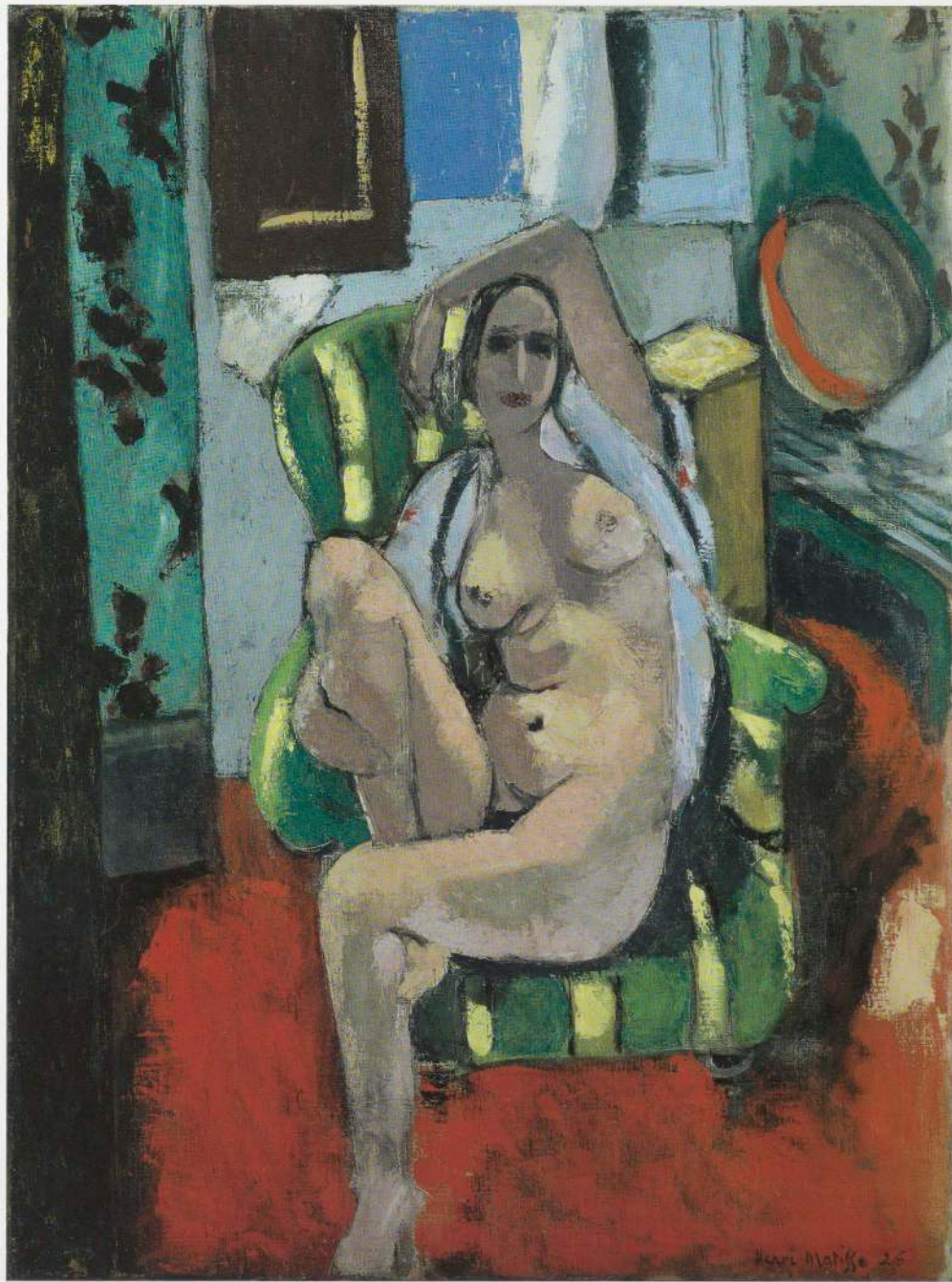
Above: PABLO PICASSO. Spanish, 1881–1973. *Sleeping Peasants*. 1919. Tempera, watercolor, and pencil on paper, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (31.1 x 48.9 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1951

Right: PABLO PICASSO. Spanish, 1881–1973. *Woman with Flowered Hat*. 1921. Pastel on paper, 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (64.1 x 49.5 cm). Gift of Jacqueline Picasso in honor of the Museum's continuous commitment to Pablo Picasso's art, 1986

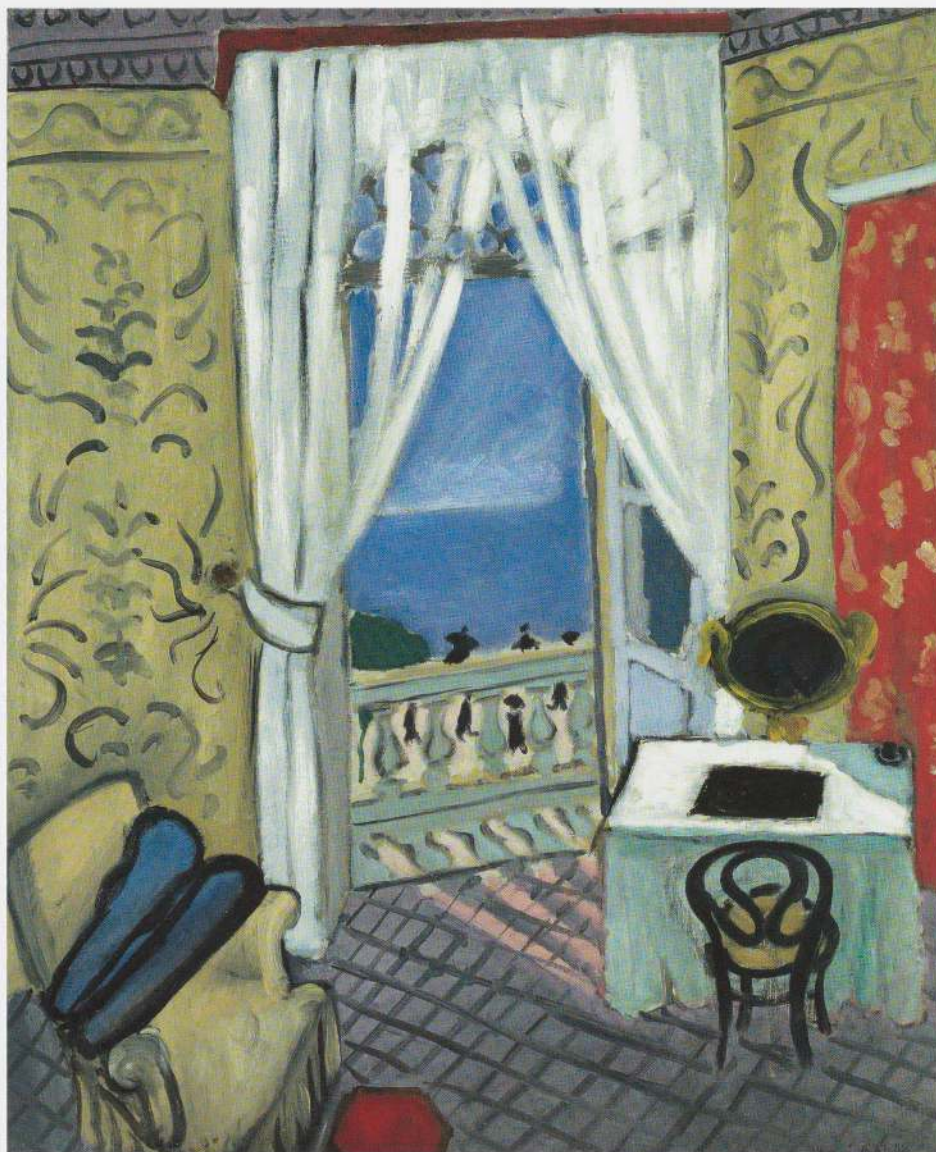




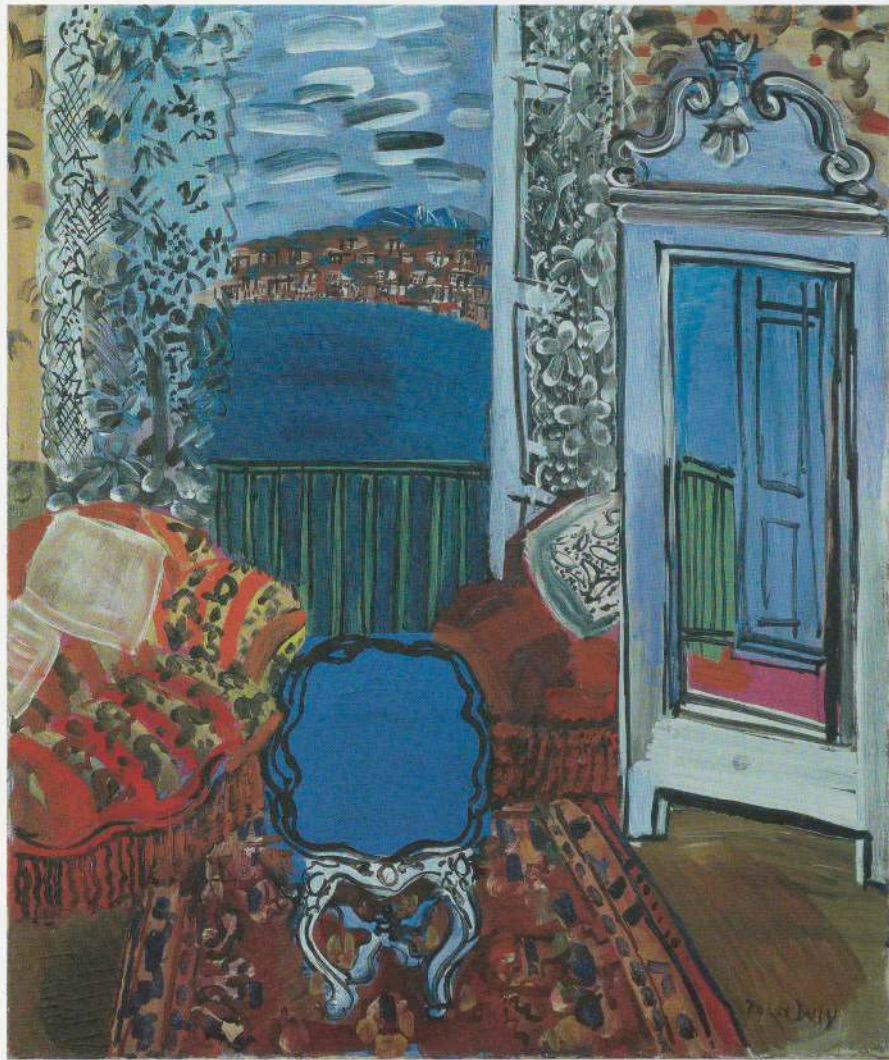
PABLO PICASSO. Spanish, 1881–1973.
Three Women at the Spring. 1921. Oil on canvas, 6' 8 1/4" x 68 1/2" (203.9 x 174 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Allan D. Emil, 1952



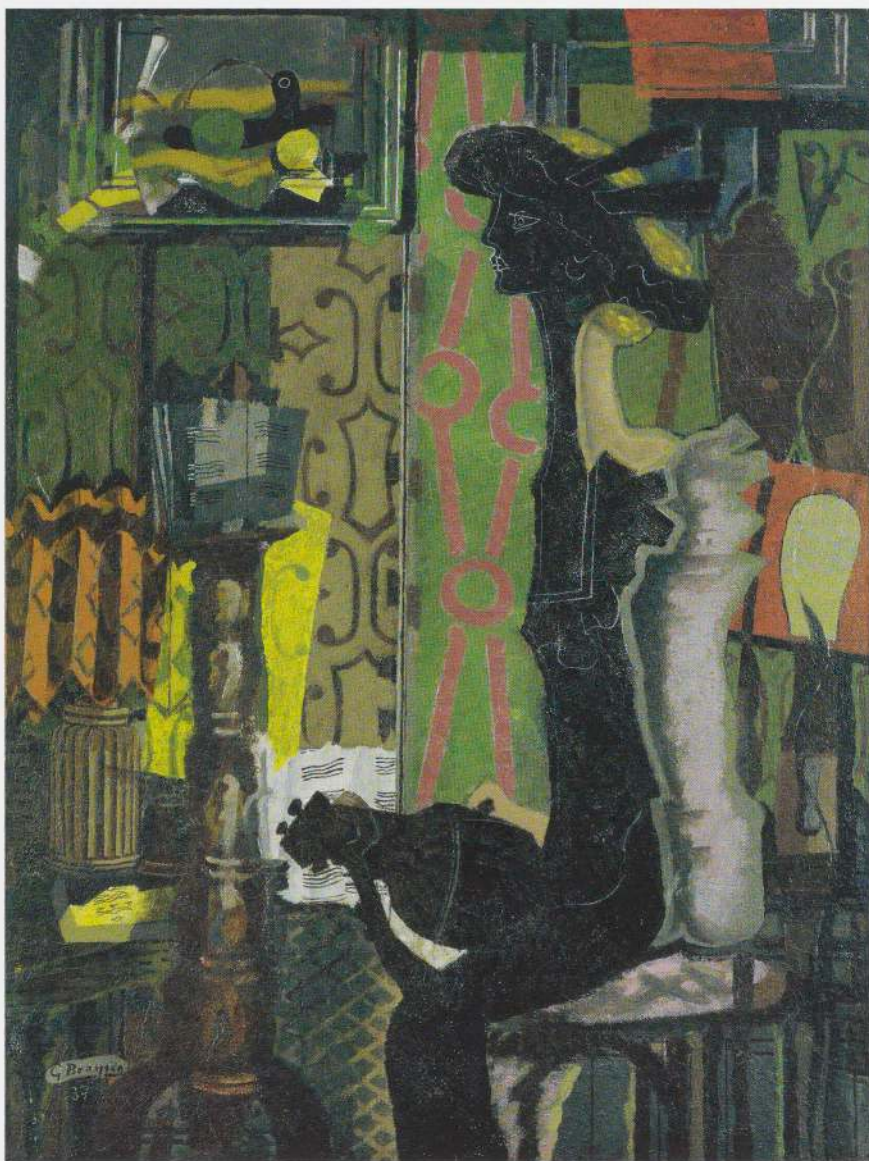
HENRI MATISSE. French, 1869–1954.
Odalisque with a Tambourine, 1926. Oil on canvas, 29 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (74.3 x 55.7 cm). The William S. Paley Collection, 1990



HENRI MATISSE. French, 1869–1954.
Interior with a Violin Case. 1918–19. Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 23 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (73 x 60 cm). Lillie P. Bliss Collection, 1934



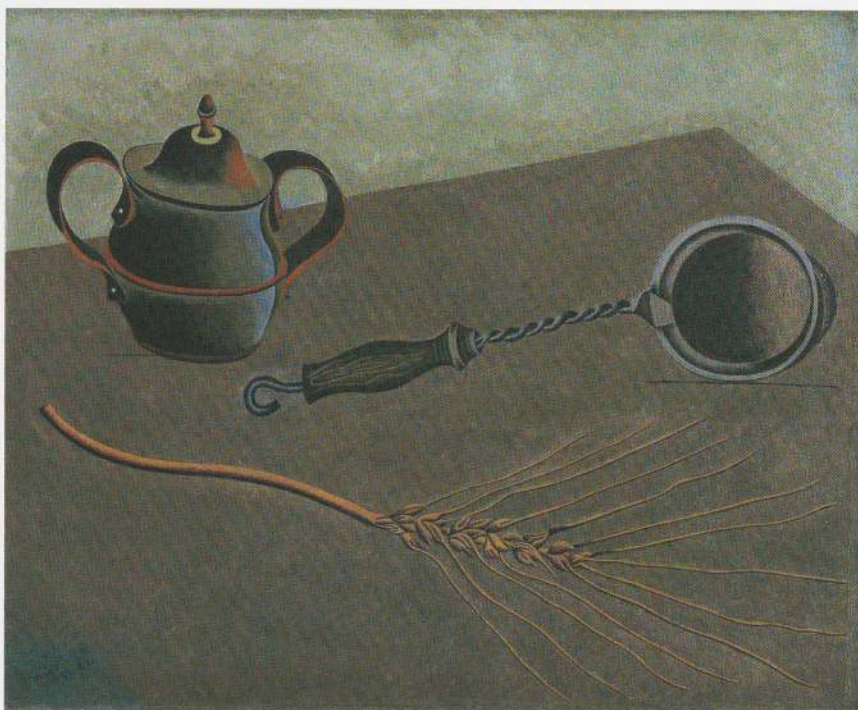
RAOUL DUFY. French, 1877-1953.
Window at Nice. c. 1929. Oil on canvas, 21 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (54.9 x 46 cm). Gift of Mrs. Gilbert W. Chapman, 1954



GEORGES BRAQUE. French, 1882–1963.
Woman with a Mandolin. 1937. Oil on canvas, 51 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 38 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (130.2 x 97.2 cm). Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1948

Opposite: GEORGES BRAQUE. French, 1882–1963.
The Table. 1928. Oil and sand on canvas, 70 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (179.7 x 73 cm). Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1941

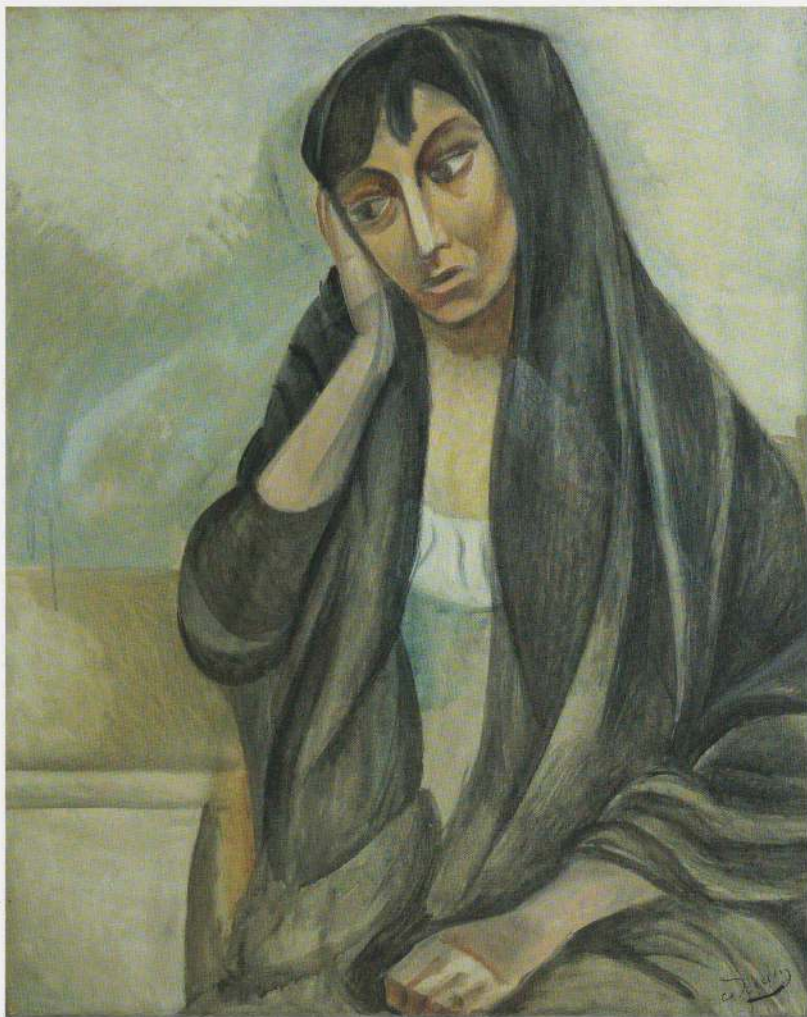




JOAN MIRÓ. Spanish, 1893–1983.
The Ear of Grain. 1922–23. Oil on canvas, 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (37.8 x 46 cm). Purchase, 1939



JOAN MIRÓ. Spanish, 1893–1983.
Table with Glove. 1921. Oil on canvas, 46 x 35 1/2" (116.8 x 89.5 cm). Gift of Armand G. Erpf, 1955



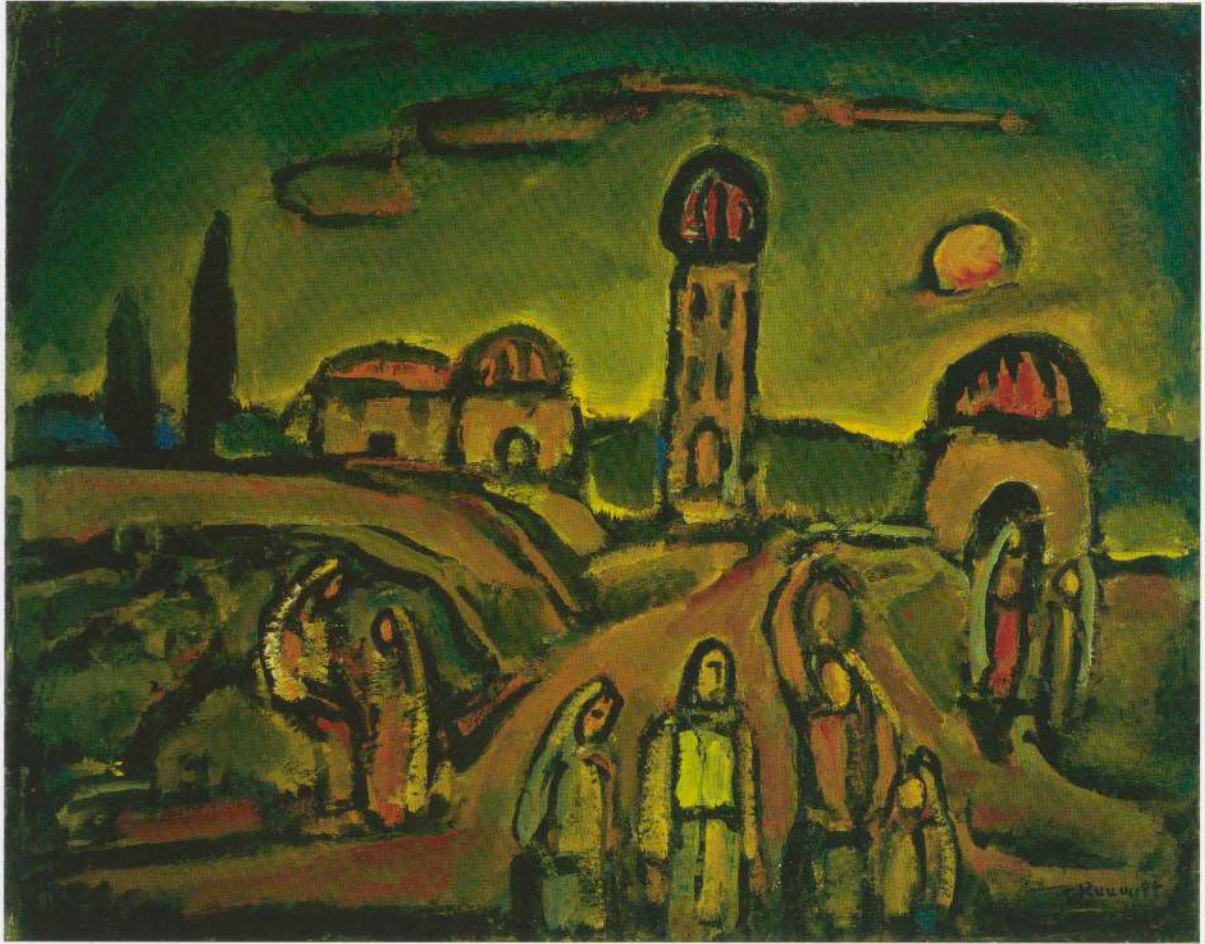
ANDRÉ DERAÏN. French, 1880–1954. *Italian Woman*. 1913. Oil on canvas, 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (91.1 x 73 cm). Gift of Dr. Alfred Gold, 1947

ANDRÉ DERAÏN. French, 1880–1954. *The Rehearsal*. 1933. Oil on canvas, 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (68.4 x 77.2 cm). The William S. Paley Collection, 1990

Opposite: ANDRÉ DERAÏN. French, 1880–1954. *Window at Vers*. 1912. Oil on canvas, 51 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (130.8 x 89.5 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, purchased in memory of Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan, 1939









Opposite: GEORGES ROUAULT. French, 1871–1958. *Landscape with Figures*. c. 1937. Oil on canvas, 21 1/2 x 27 1/2" (54.3 x 69.8 cm). Gift of Sam Salz, 1953

Above: JULES PASCIN. American, born Bulgaria, 1885–1930. *Reclining Model*. c. 1925. Oil on canvas, 28 1/2 x 36 1/2" (73 x 92.1 cm). Gift of A. Conger Goodyear, 1941

Right: JEAN FAUTRIER. French, 1898–1964. *Flowers*. c. 1927. Oil on canvas, 25 1/2 x 21 1/2" (65.1 x 54 cm). Gift of A. Conger Goodyear, 1941





BALTHUS (BALTUSZ KLOSSOWSKI DE ROLA). French, born 1908.
André Derain. 1936. Oil on wood, 44 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (112.7 x 72.4 cm). Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1944



BALTHUS (BALTUSZ KLOSSOWSKI DE ROLA). French, born 1908.
Joan Miró and His Daughter Dolores, 1937–38. Oil on canvas, 51 1/4 x 35" (130.2 x 88.9 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1938



BALTHUS (BALTUSZ KLOSSOWSKI DE ROLA).
French, born 1908. *The Street*, 1933. Oil on
canvas, 6' 4½" x 7' 10½" (195 x 240 cm).
James Thrall Soby Bequest, 1979





AMÉDÉE OZENFANT. French, 1886–1966.
The Vases. 1925. Oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 38 3/8" (130.5 x 97.5 cm). Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1945



LE CORBUSIER (CHARLES-ÉDOUARD JEANNERET). French, born Switzerland, 1887–1965.
Still Life. 1920. Oil on canvas, 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (80.9 x 99.7 cm). Van Gogh Purchase Fund, 1937



FERNAND LÉGER. French, 1881–1955.
Woman with a Book. 1923. Oil on canvas, 45 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (116 x 81.4 cm). Nelson A. Rockefeller Bequest, 1979



FERNAND LÉGER. French, 1881–1955.
Three Musicians. 1944 (date on work 24–44). Oil on canvas, 68 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 57 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (174 x 145.4 cm). Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1955

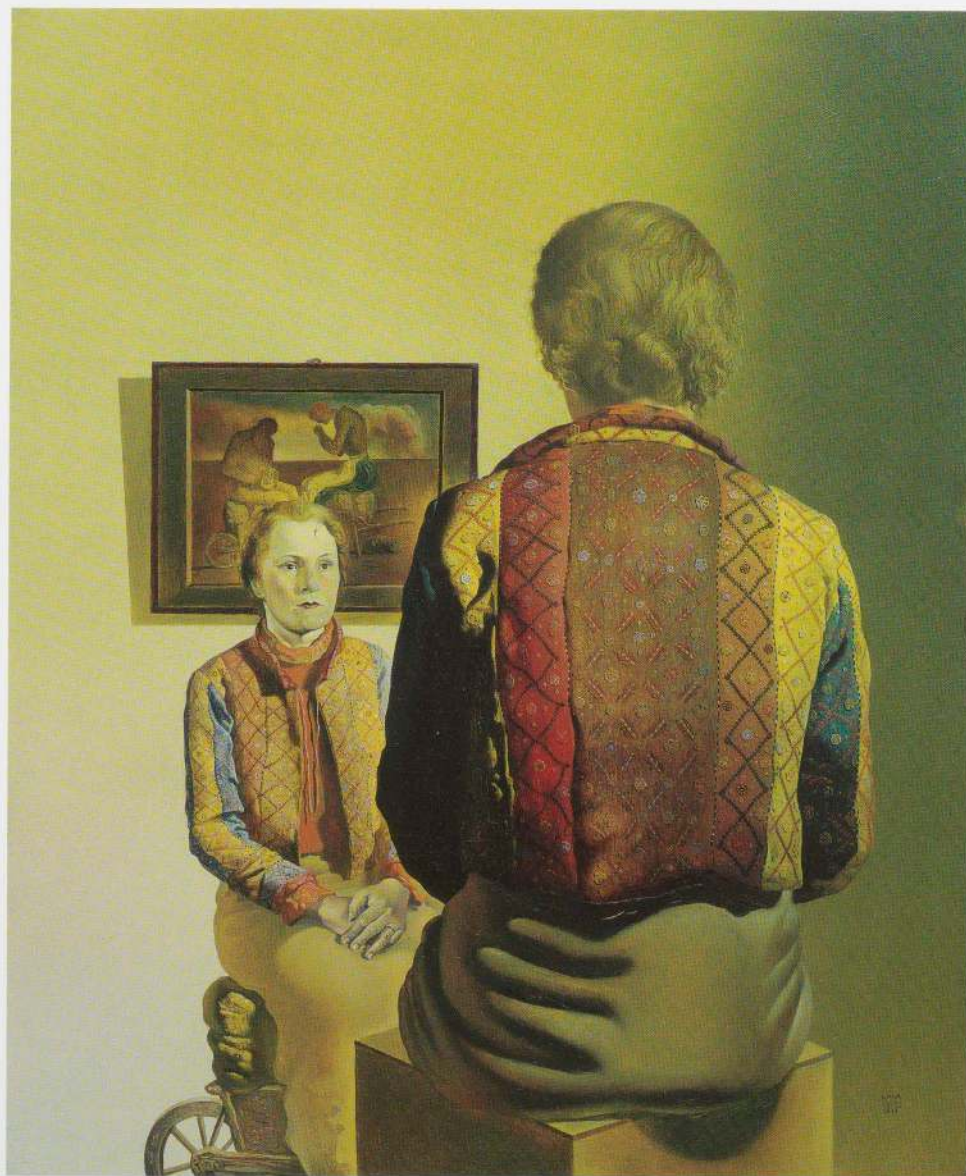


FERNAND LÉGER. French, 1881–1955.
Three Women (Le Grand Déjeuner). 1921.
Oil on canvas, 6' 1/2" x 8' 3" (183.5 x 251.5 cm).
Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1942





Surrealism



SALVADOR DALÍ. Spanish, 1904–1989.
Portrait of Gala (L'Angéus de Gala). 1935. Oil on wood, 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (32.4 x 26.7 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1937



SALVADOR DALÍ. Spanish, 1904–1989.
The Persistence of Memory. 1931. Oil on canvas, 9 1/2 x 13" (24.1 x 33 cm). Given anonymously, 1934



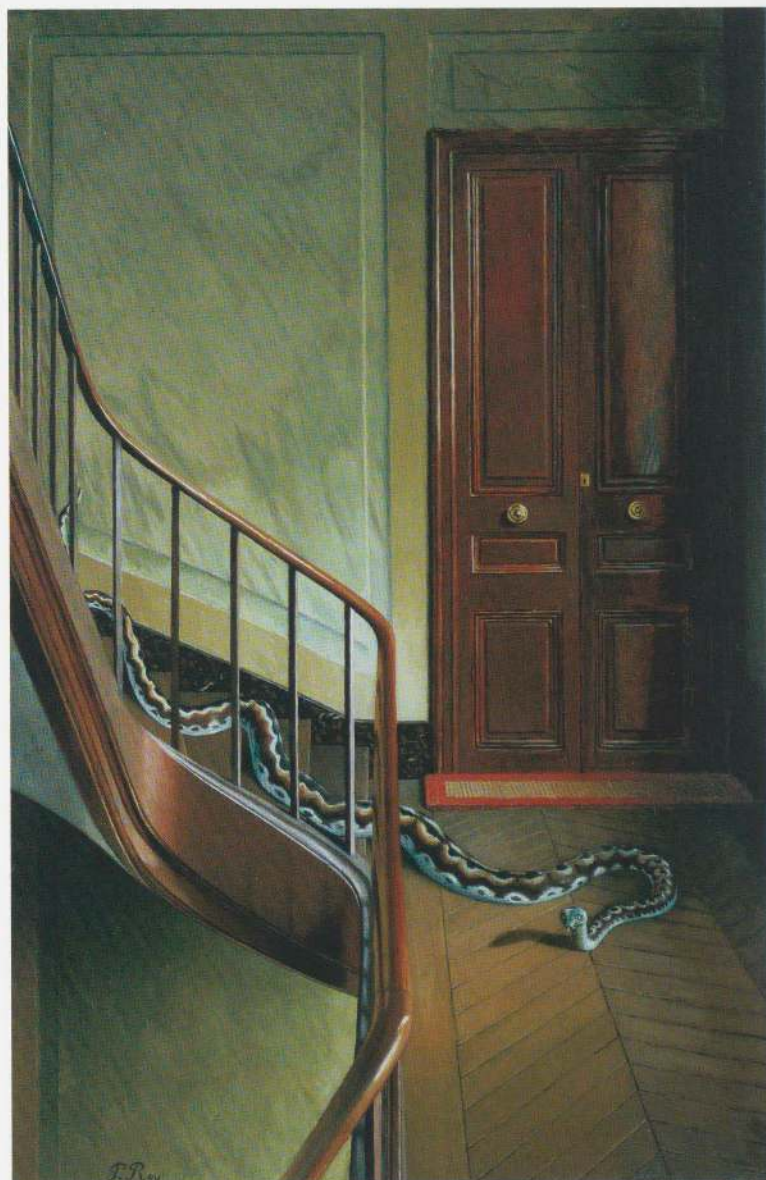
RENÉ MAGRITTE. Belgian, 1898–1967.
Portrait. 1935. Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 19 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (73.3 x 50.2 cm). Gift of Kay Sage Tanguy, 1956



RENÉ MAGRITTE. Belgian, 1898–1967.
The Empire of Light, II. 1950. Oil on canvas, 31 x 39" (78.8 x 99.1 cm). Gift of D. and J. de Menil, 1951



PAUL DELVAUX. Belgian, 1897–1994.
Phases of the Moon. 1939. Oil on canvas, 55 x 63" (139.7 x 160 cm). Purchase, 1951



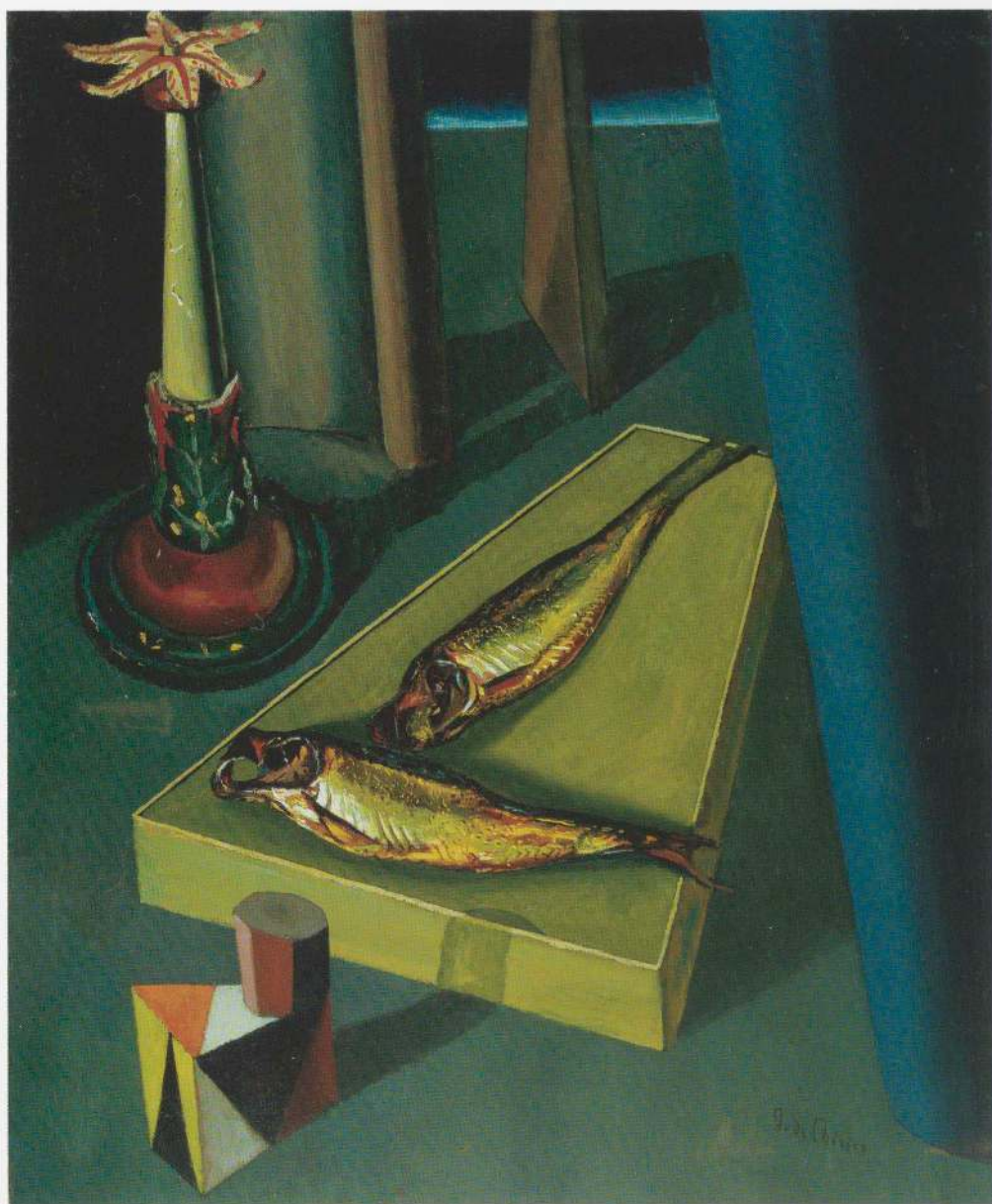
PIERRE ROY. French, 1880–1950.
Danger on the Stairs. 1927 or 1928. Oil on canvas, 36 x 23 1/2" (91.4 x 60 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1935



Metaphysical Painting &
Valori plastici



GIORGIO DE CHIRICO, Italian, born Greece, 1888–1978.
The Song of Love. 1914. Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 23 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (73 x 59.1 cm). Nelson A. Rockefeller Bequest, 1979



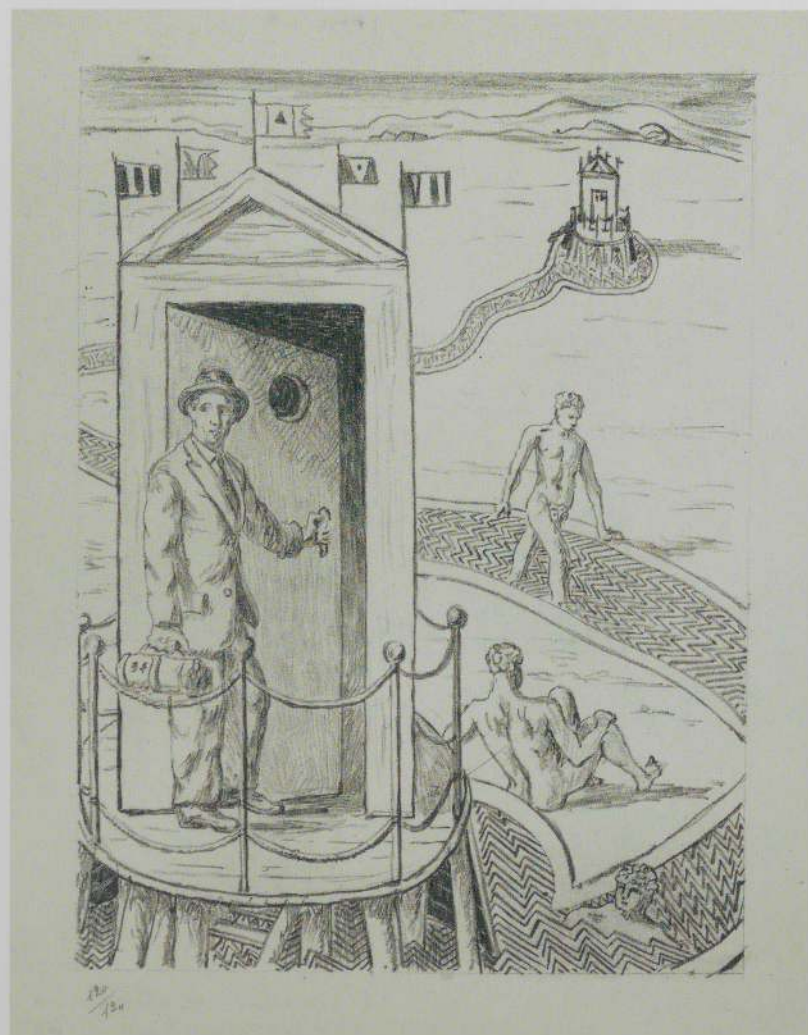
GIORGIO DE CHIRICO. Italian, born Greece, 1888–1978.
The Sacred Fish. 1919. Oil on canvas, 29½ x 24½" (74.9 x 61.9 cm). Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1949

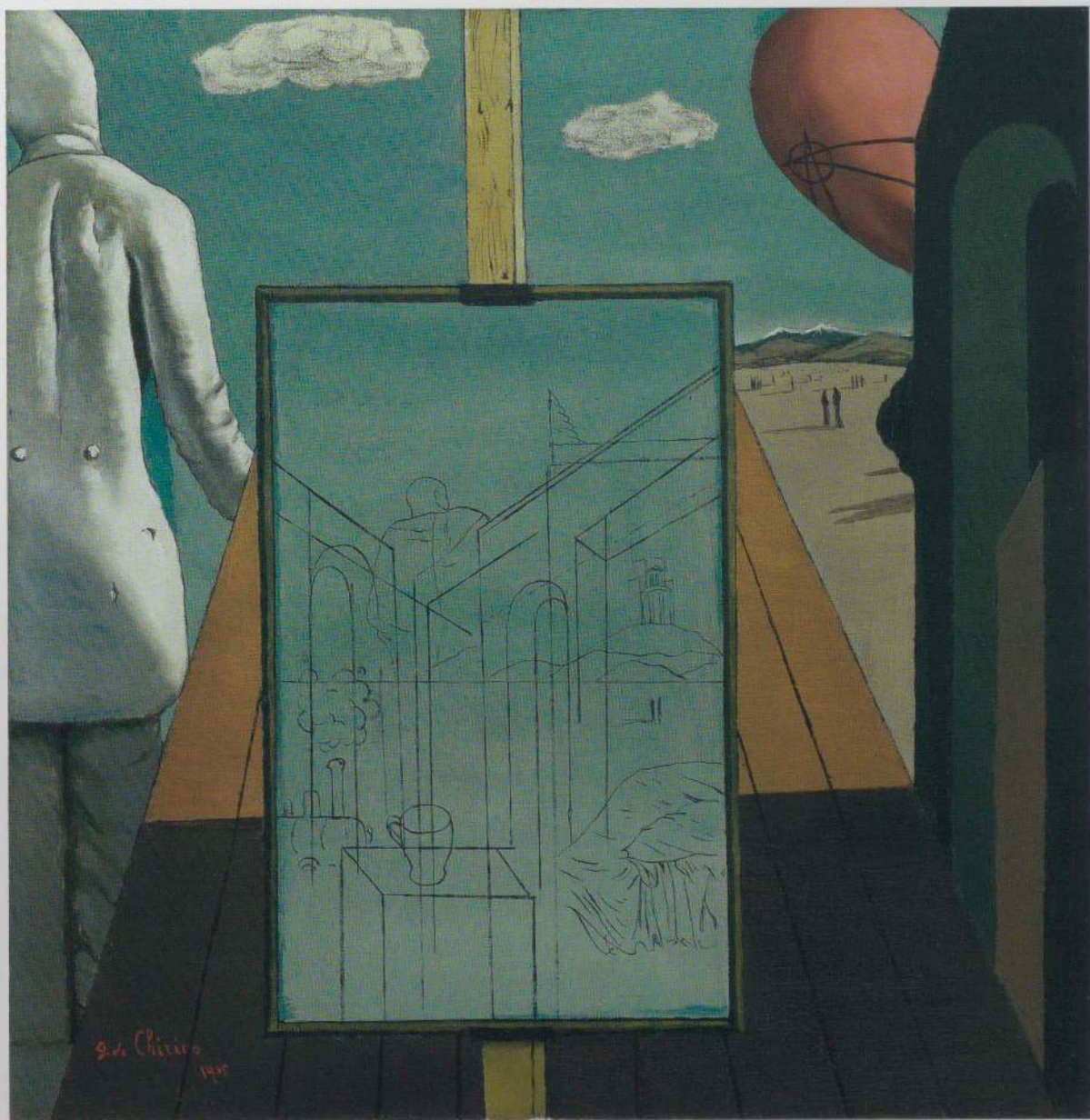


GIORGIO DE CHIRICO. Italian, born Greece, 1888–1978. *School of the Gladiators II*. c. 1929. Lithograph, comp.: $12\frac{1}{4} \times 16\frac{3}{8}$ " (31.2 x 41.5 cm), sheet: $17\frac{3}{8} \times 22\frac{1}{8}$ " (45.2 x 56.4 cm). Publisher: Éditions de Quatre Chemins, Paris. Printer: Jeanne Bucher, Paris. Edition: 100. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1948

GIORGIO DE CHIRICO. Italian, born Greece, 1888–1978. *Mysterious Host*, folio 12 from *Mythologie* by Jean Cocteau. 1934. Lithograph, comp.: $9\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$ " (24.1 x 19.5 cm; irreg.), page: $11\frac{1}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{8}$ " (28.3 x 23 cm). Publisher: Éditions des Quatre Chemins, Paris. Printer: Desjobert, Paris. Edition: 130. The Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

Opposite: GIORGIO DE CHIRICO. Italian, born Greece, 1888–1978. *The Double Dream of Spring*. 1915. Oil on canvas, $22\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{3}{8}$ " (56.2 x 54.3 cm). Gift of James Thrall Soby, 1957









Opposite: MARIO SIRONI. Italian, 1885–1961.
Multiplication. c. 1941. Oil on canvas, 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (56.2 x 80 cm). Gift of Eric Estorick, 1953

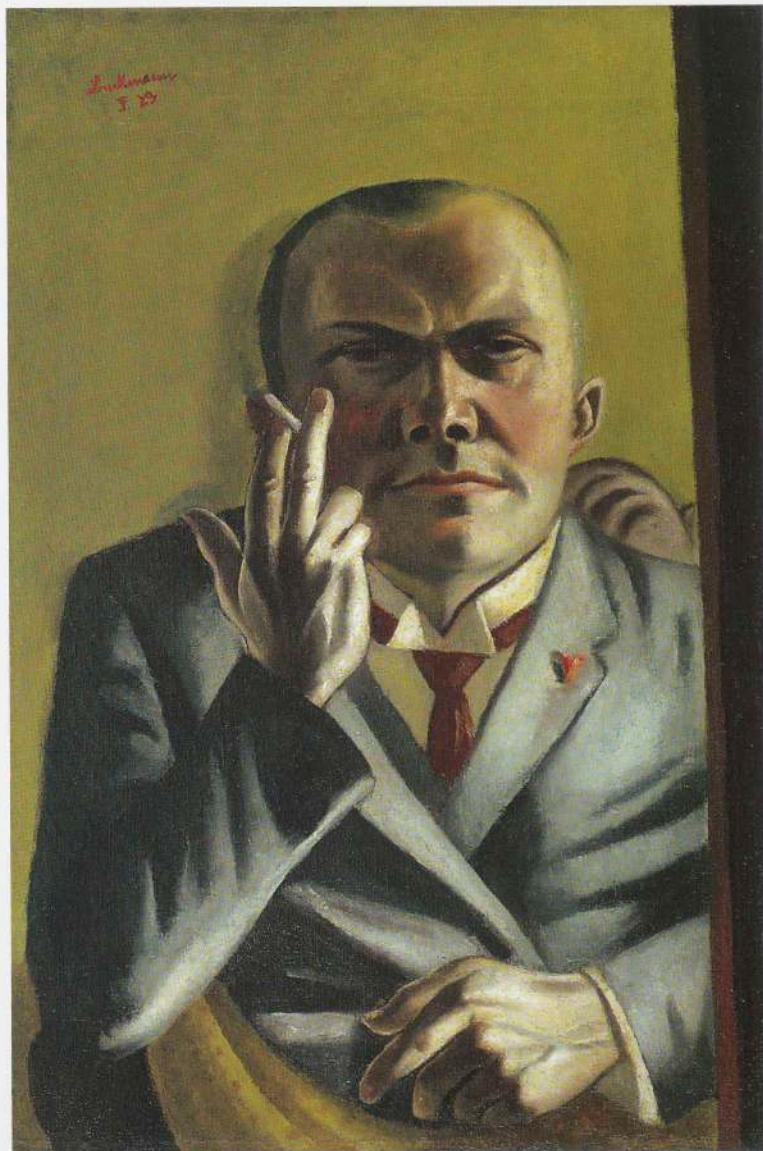
Above: GIORGIO MORANDI. Italian, 1890–1964.
Still Life. 1949. Oil on canvas, 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (36 x 43.7 cm). James Thrall Soby Bequest, 1979



Neue Sachlichkeit &
German Figuration



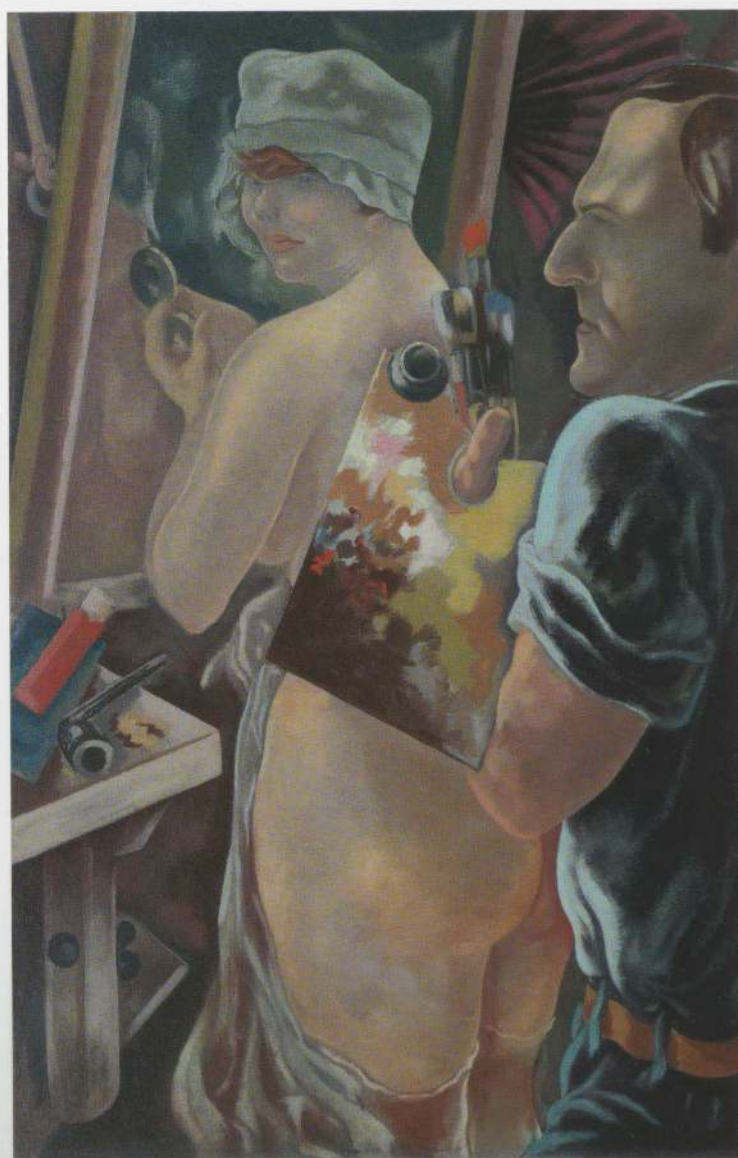
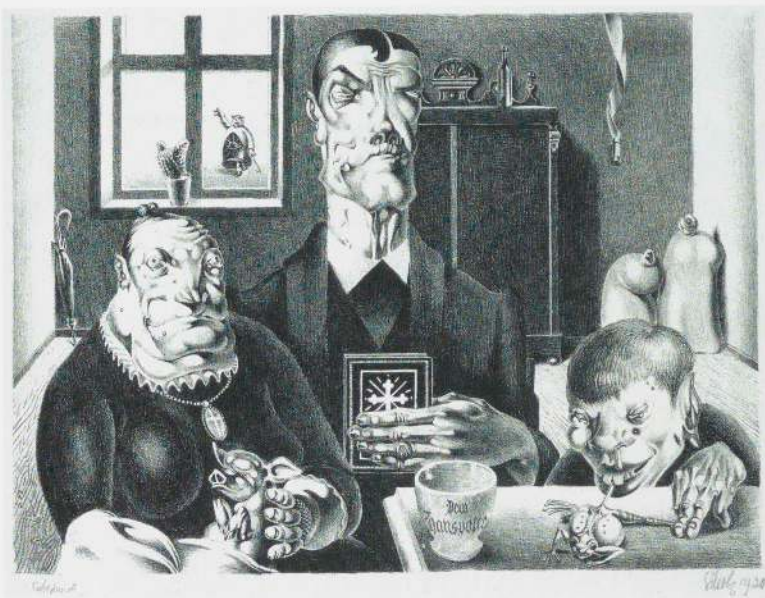
MAX BECKMANN. German, 1884–1950.
Family Picture. 1920. Oil on canvas, 25 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 39 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (65.1 x 100.9 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1935



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MAX BECKMANN. German, 1884–1950.
Self-Portrait with a Cigarette. 1923. Oil on canvas, 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 15 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (60.2 x 40.3 cm). Gift of Dr. and Mrs. E.H. Hirschland, 1956





Opposite: OTTO DIX. German, 1891–1969.
Dr. Mayer-Hermann. 1926. Oil and tempera
on wood, 58 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 39" (149.2 x 99.1 cm).
Gift of Philip Johnson, 1932

Above: GEORG SCHOLZ. German, 1890–1945.
Family. 1920. Lithograph, comp.: 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ x
14 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (26.9 x 35.9 cm), sheet: 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
(42 x 49.9 cm). Gift of Mrs. Bertha M.
Slattery, 1952

Right: GEORGE GROSZ. American, born
Germany, 1893–1959. *Self-Portrait with a
Model*. 1928. Oil on canvas, 45 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
(115.6 x 75.6 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leo
Lionni, 1954



GEORGE GROSZ. American, born Germany, 1893–1959.
The Poet Max Hermann-Neisse. 1927. Oil on canvas, 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (59.4 x 74 cm). Purchase, 1952



LOVIS CORINTH. German, 1858–1925.
Self-Portrait. 1924. Oil on canvas, 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (100 x 80.3 cm). Gift of Curt Valentin, 1950



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EWALD MATARÉ. German, 1887–1965.
Cow. 1924. Bronze, $7\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ "
(18.1 x 33.1 x 14 cm). Gift of Mrs. Heinz
Schultz, 1962

ERNST BARLACH. German, 1870–1938.
Singing Man. 1928. Bronze, $19\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{1}{2} \times$
 $14\frac{1}{2}$ " (49.5 x 55.3 x 35.9 cm). Abby Aldrich
Rockefeller Fund, 1939

Opposite, bottom: GEORG KOLBE. German,
1887–1947. *Grief*. 1921. Bronze, $15\frac{1}{2} \times 22 \times$
 $11\frac{1}{2}$ " (40 x 55.9 x 29.2 cm). Gift of Edward
M. M. Warburg, 1939

Opposite, top: GERHARD MARCKS. German,
1889–1981. *Seated Youth*. 1937. Bronze,
 $17\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$ " (44.7 x 31.1 x 19.7 cm).
Purchase, 1945



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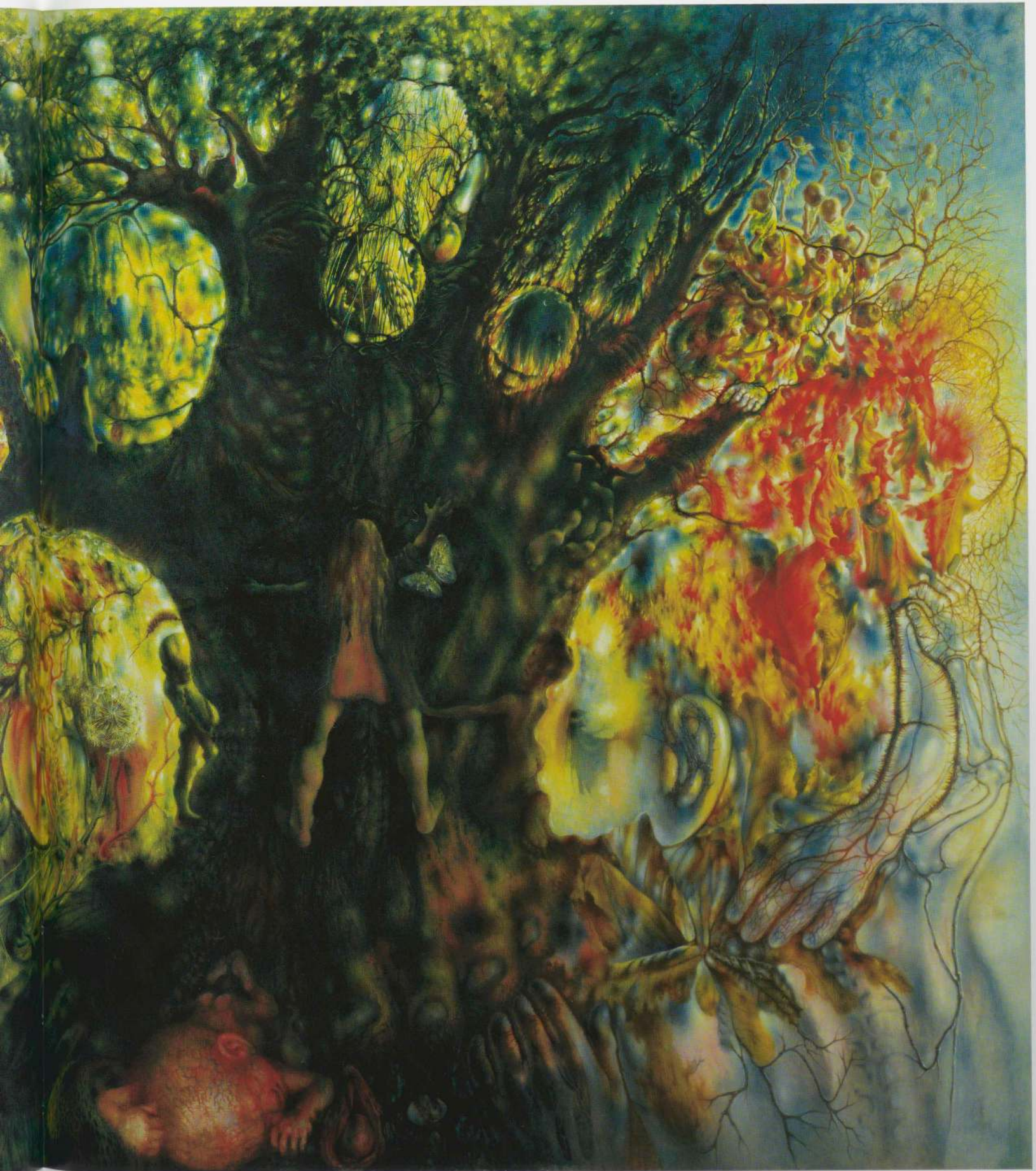


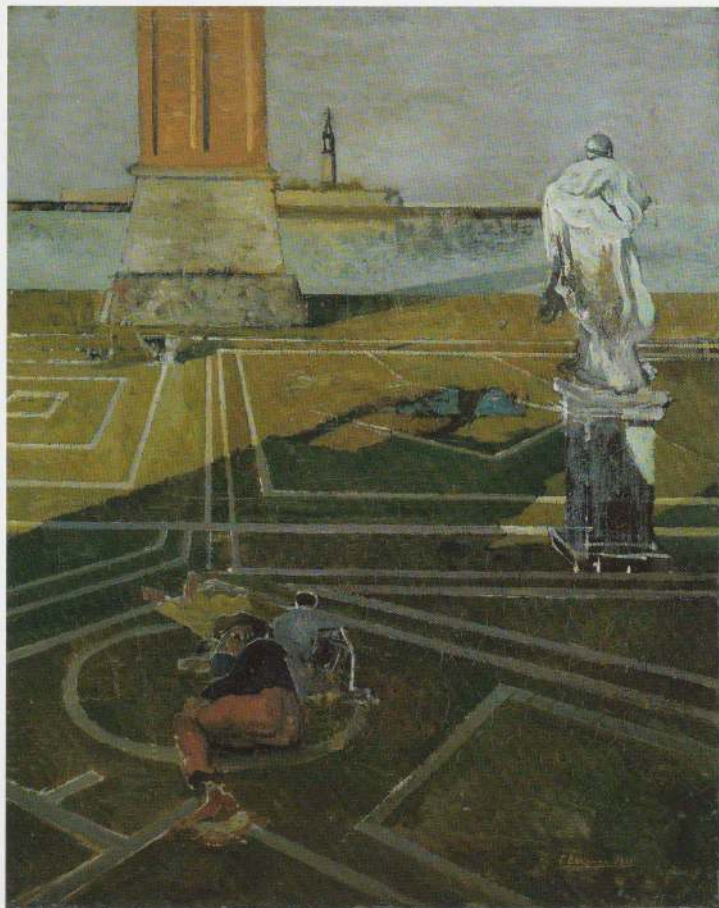


Neo-Romanticism

PAVEL TCHELITCHEW. American, born
Russia, 1898–1957. *Hide-and-Seek*.
1940–42. Oil on canvas, 6' 6½" x 7' ¾"
(199.3 x 215.3 cm). Mrs. Simon Guggenheim
Fund, 1942



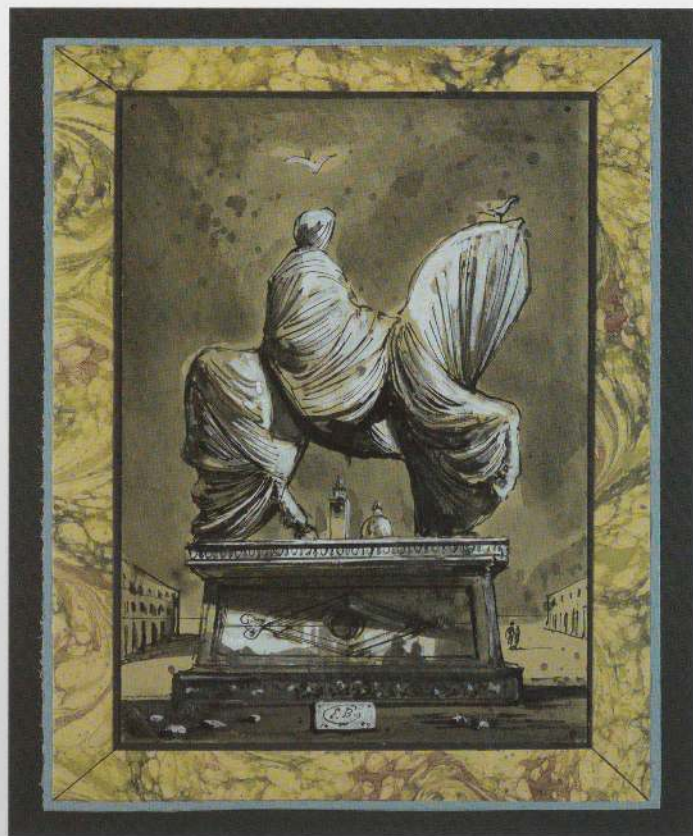




EUGENE BERMAN. American, born Russia, 1899–1972. *Sleeping Figures, Statue, Campanile*. 1932. Oil on canvas, 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (92.1 x 73 cm). Gift of Philip L. Goodwin, 1945

EUGENE BERMAN. American, born Russia, 1899–1972. *The Equestrian Monument: Lady Godiva Veiled*. 1949. Ink and wash with white tempera on cardboard, 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (28.9 x 21 cm). Gift of Mrs. W. Murray Crane, 1954

Opposite: CHRISTIAN BÉRARD. French, 1902–1949. *On the Beach (Double Self-Portrait)*. 1933. Oil on canvas, 31 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 46" (80.8 x 116.7 cm). Gift of James Thrall Soby, 1960







British Figuration





Opposite: WALTER RICHARD SICKERT. British, 1860–1942.

Sir Thomas Beecham Conducting. c. 1935. Oil on burlap, 38 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 41 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (98.5 x 104.5 cm). Bertram F. and Susie Brummer Foundation Fund, 1955

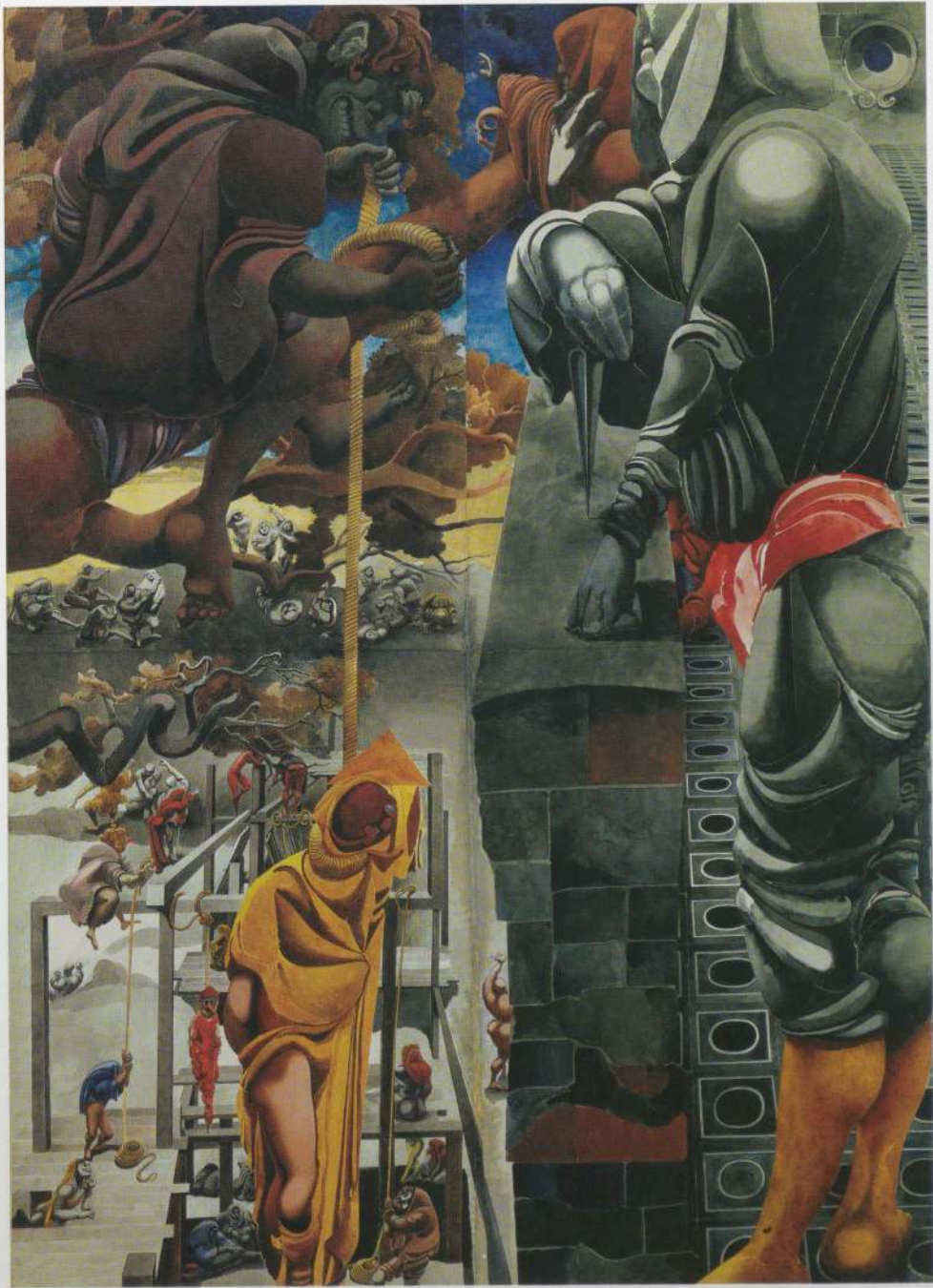
Above: GWEN JOHN. British, 1876–1939.

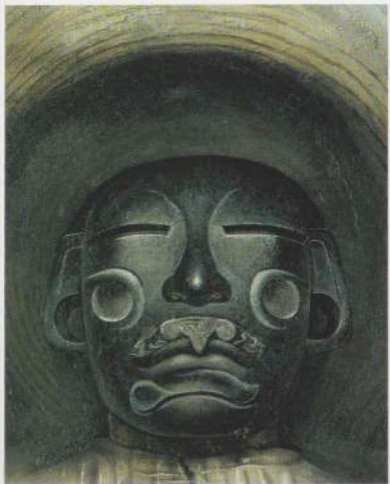
Girl with a Blue Scarf. c. 1915–20. Oil on canvas, 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 13" (41.1 x 33 cm). Gift of Nelson A. Sears in memory of Mrs. Millicent A. Rogers, 1963



STANLEY SPENCER. British, 1891–1959.
Nursery. 1936. Oil on canvas, 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 36 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (76.5 x 91.8 cm). Gift of the Contemporary Art Society, London, 1940

Opposite: EDWARD BURRA. British, 1905–1976.
Dance of the Hanged Ones (Bal des pendues). 1937. Watercolor on paper, 61 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 44 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (155.3 x 114 cm). Purchase, 1948





Latin American Figuration



DIEGO RIVERA. Mexican, 1886–1957.
Agrarian Leader Zapata. 1931. Fresco, 7'9¼" x 6'2" (238.1 x 188 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1940



DAVID ALFARO SIQUEIROS. Mexican, 1896–1974.
Ethnography. 1939. Enamel on composition board, 48 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 32 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (122.2 x 82.2 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1940

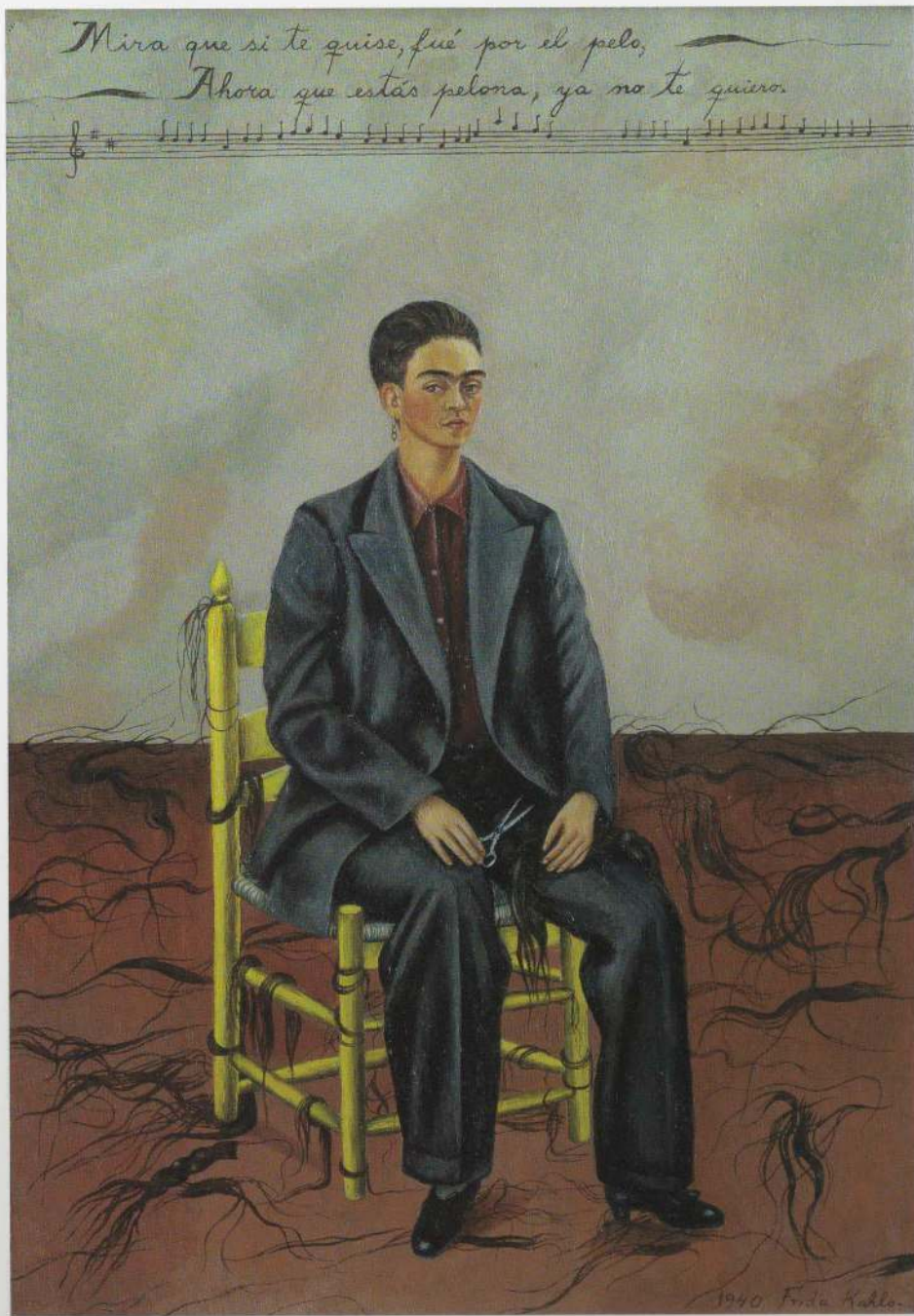


Left: JOSÉ PANCETTI. Brazilian, 1904–1958. *Self-Portrait*. 1941. Oil on canvas, 32 x 24" (81.3 x 60.8 cm). Inter-American Fund, 1942

Below: ANTONIO BERNI. Argentine, 1905–1981. *New Chicago Athletic Club*. 1937. Oil on canvas, 6' 7/8" x 9' 10 1/2" (184.8 x 300.4 cm). Inter-American Fund, 1942

Opposite: FRIDA KAHLO. Mexican, 1907–1954. *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*. 1940. Oil on canvas, 15 1/4 x 11" (40 x 27.9 cm). Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., 1943





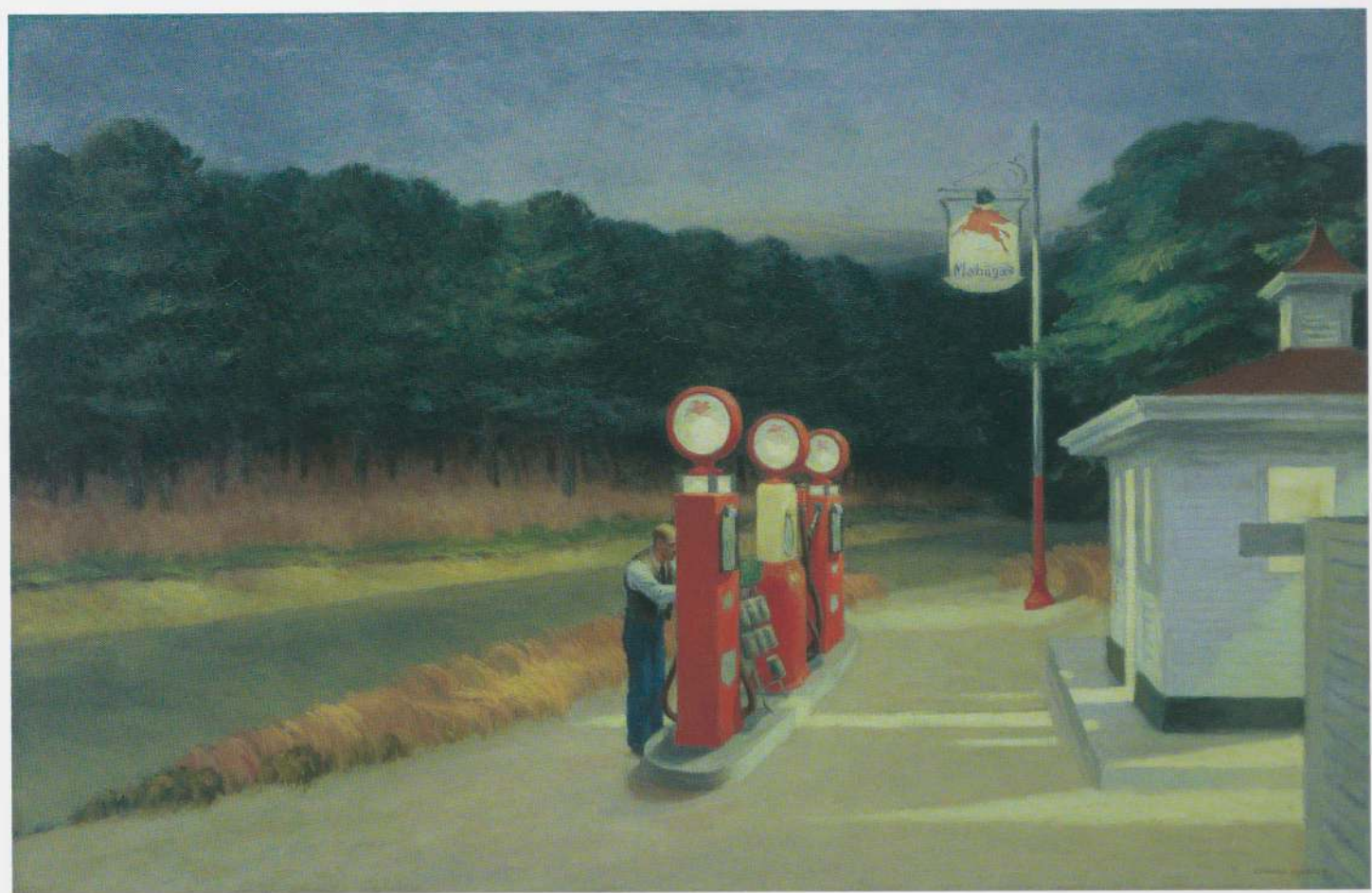


Depression Era Realism &
the American Scene



EDWARD HOPPER. American, 1882–1967.
House by the Railroad. 1925. Oil on canvas, 24 x 29" (61 x 73.7 cm). Given anonymously, 1930

Opposite: EDWARD HOPPER. American, 1882–1967.
Gas. 1940. Oil on canvas, 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 40 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (66.7 x 102.2 cm). Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1943







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Opposite: CHARLES SHEELER, American, 1883–1965. *American Landscape*. 1930. Oil on canvas, 24 x 31" (61 x 78.8 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1934

Left: CHARLES SHEELER, American, 1883–1965. *Of Domestic Utility*. 1933. Conté crayon on paper, 25 x 19½" (63.5 x 49.6 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1935

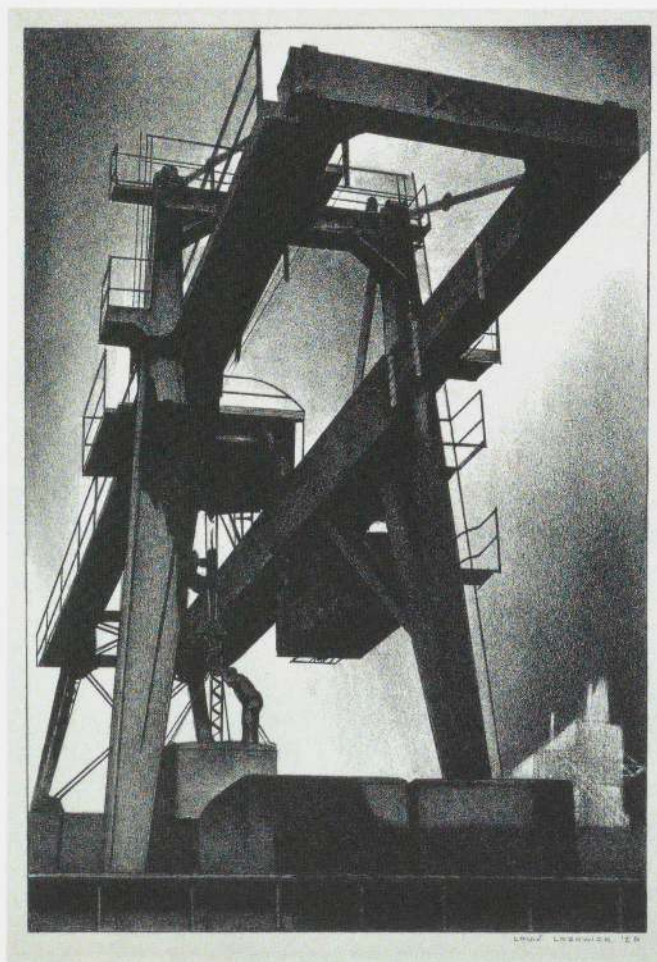
Above: MARSDEN HARTLEY, American, 1877–1943. *Boots*. 1941. Oil on hardboard, 28½ x 22¾" (71.4 x 56.5 cm). Purchase, 1942



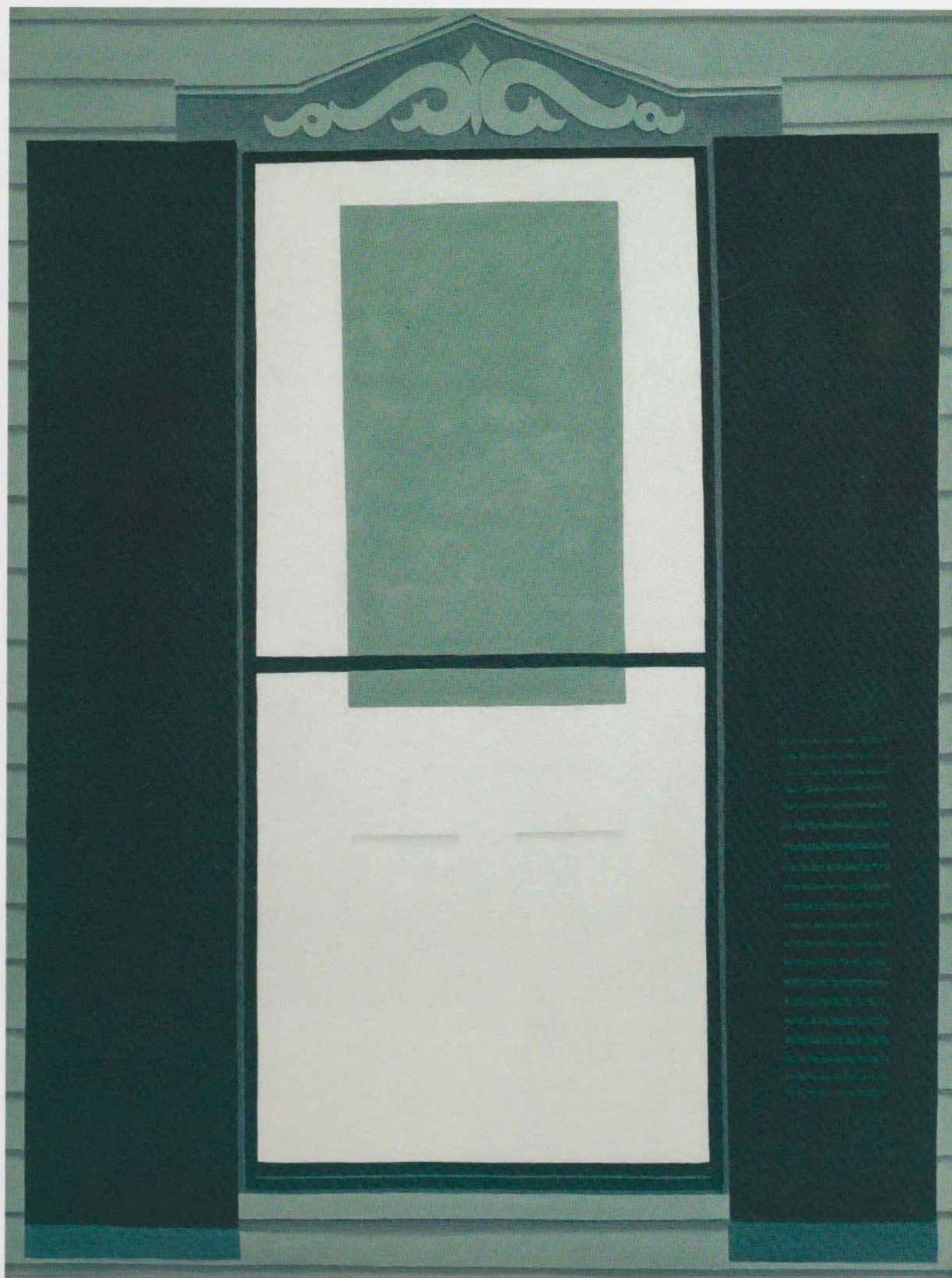
ROCKWELL KENT. American, 1882–1971.
The Pinnacle. 1928. Lithograph, comp.:
 11 ³/₁₆ x 7 ⁷/₁₆" (30.3 x 18.6 cm), sheet: 15 ¹/₂ x
 11 ³/₁₆" (40.2 x 28.7 cm). Publisher: the artist,
 New York. Printer: George Miller, New
 York. Edition: 100. Gift of Abby Aldrich
 Rockefeller, 1940

LOUIS LOZOWICK. American, born Ukraine,
 1892–1973. *Crane*. 1928. Lithograph, comp.:
 12 ³/₁₆ x 8 ⁷/₁₆" (31.3 x 21.4 cm), sheet: 15 ¹/₂ x
 11 ³/₁₆" (40 x 29.1 cm). Edition: 15. Gift of
 Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1940

Opposite: EDWIN DICKINSON. American,
 1891–1978. *Cottage Porch, Peaked Hill*. 1932.
 Oil on canvas, 26 ¹/₂ x 30 ³/₁₆" (66.4 x 76.3 cm).
 Grace Rainey Rogers Fund, 1961







GEORGIA O'KEEFE. American, 1887–1986.
Lake George Window. 1929. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30" (101.6 x 76.2 cm). Acquired through the Richard D. Brixey Bequest, 1945



BEN SHAHN. American, born Lithuania, 1898–1969.
Handball. 1939. Tempera on paper, mounted on composition board, 22 1/4 x 31 1/4" (57.8 x 79.4 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1940



THOMAS HART BENTON. American, 1889–1975.
Homestead. 1934. Tempera and oil on
composition board, 25 x 34" (63.5 x 86.4 cm).
Gift of Marshall Field (by exchange), 1938

JOHN STEUART CURRY. American, 1897–
1946. *John Brown*. 1939, published 1940.
Lithograph, comp.: 14 7/8 x 10 1/8" (36.6 x
25.6 cm), sheet: 21 7/8 x 16 1/8" (55.6 x 40.9 cm).
Publisher: Associated American Artists, New
York. Printer: George Miller, New York.
Edition: 250. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller
Fund (by exchange), 1990

Opposite, top: GRANT WOOD. American,
1892–1942. *Shriners' Quartet*. 1933.
Lithograph, comp.: 8 x 11 7/8" (20.3 x 30.1 cm),
sheet: 11 3/8 x 16 1/8" (30.3 x 40.9 cm).
Publisher: Associated American Artists,
New York. Printer: George Miller,
New York. Edition: 250. Abby Aldrich
Rockefeller Fund, 1949

Opposite, bottom: GRANT WOOD. American,
1892–1942. *In the Spring*. 1939. Lithograph,
comp.: 9 x 11 3/8" (22.9 x 30.4 cm), sheet:
11 3/8 x 16" (30 x 40.6 cm). Publisher:
Associated American Artists, New York.
Printer: George Miller, New York. Edition:
250. Gift of Kathleen L. Westin, 1979





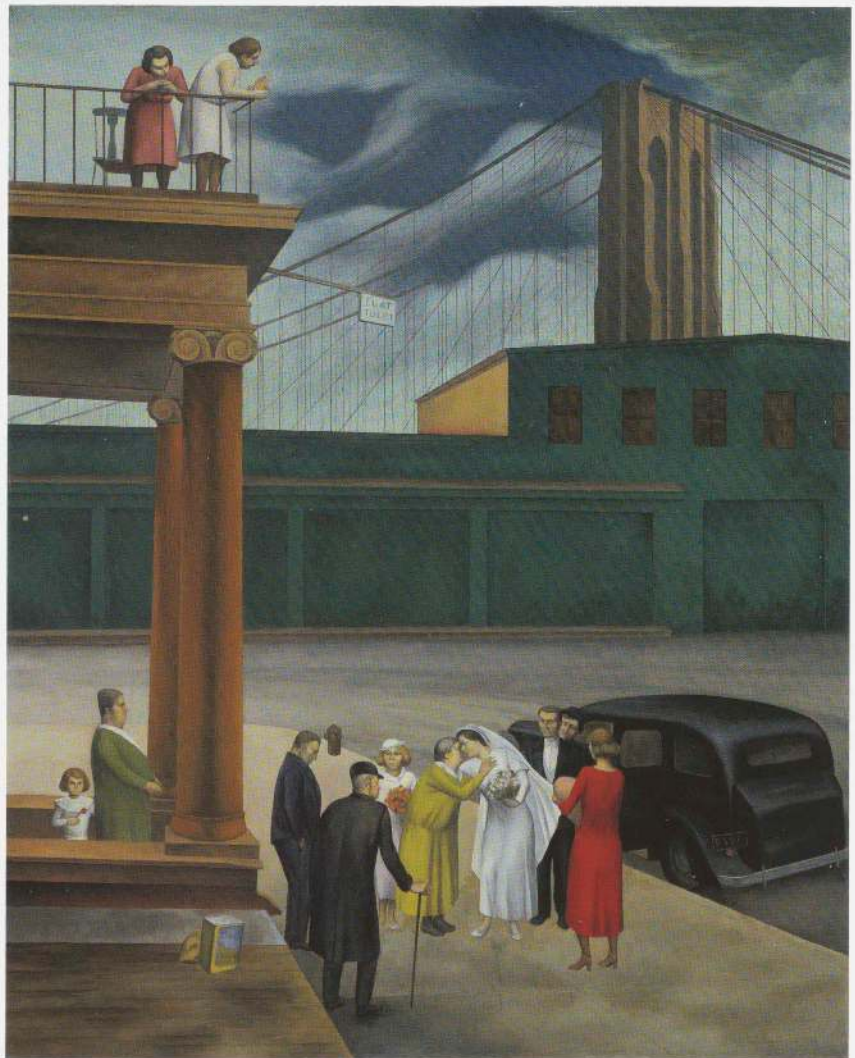


REGINALD MARSH. American, 1898–1954.

In Fourteenth Street. 1934. Egg tempera on composition board, 35 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (91.1 x 101 cm). Gift of Mrs. Reginald Marsh, 1957



PAUL CADMUS. American, 1904–1999.
Greenwich Village Cafeteria. 1934. Oil on canvas, 25 1/2 x 39 1/2" (64.8 x 100.3 cm). Extended loan from United States Public Works of Art Project, 1934





Opposite, top: GEORGE TOOKER. American, born 1920. *Sleepers, II*. 1959. Tempera on wood, 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 28" (41 x 71.1 cm). Larry Aldrich Foundation Fund, 1960

Opposite, bottom: O. LOUIS GUGLIELMI. American, born Egypt, 1906–1956. *Wedding in South Street*. 1936. Oil on canvas, 30 x 24" (76.2 x 61 cm). Extended loan from the United States WPA Art Program, 1938

Above: PETER BLUME. American, born Russia, 1906–1992. *The Eternal City*. 1934–37 (date on work 1937). Oil on composition board, 34 x 47 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (86.4 x 121.6 cm). Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1942



ARSHILE GORKY (VOSDANIG MANOOG ADOIAN). American, born Armenia, 1904–1948.
Composition: Horse and Figures. 1928. Oil on canvas, 34 1/2 x 43 3/4" (87 x 110.2 cm). Gift of Bernard Davis in memory of the artist, 1950



JOHN D. GRAHAM (IVAN DOMBROWSKI). American, born Ukraine, 1881–1961.
Two Sisters (Les Mamelles d'outre-mer). 1944. Oil, enamel, pencil, charcoal, and casein on composition board, 47 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 48" (121.4 x 121.8 cm). Alexander M. Bing Fund, 1968



ANDREW WYETH. American, born 1917.
Christina's World. 1948. Tempera on gessoed panel, 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 47 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (81.9 x 121.3 cm). Purchase, 1949



IVAN LE LORRAINE ALBRIGHT. American, 1897–1983.
Woman. 1928. Oil on canvas, 33 x 22" (83.8 x 55.9 cm). Given anonymously, 1948



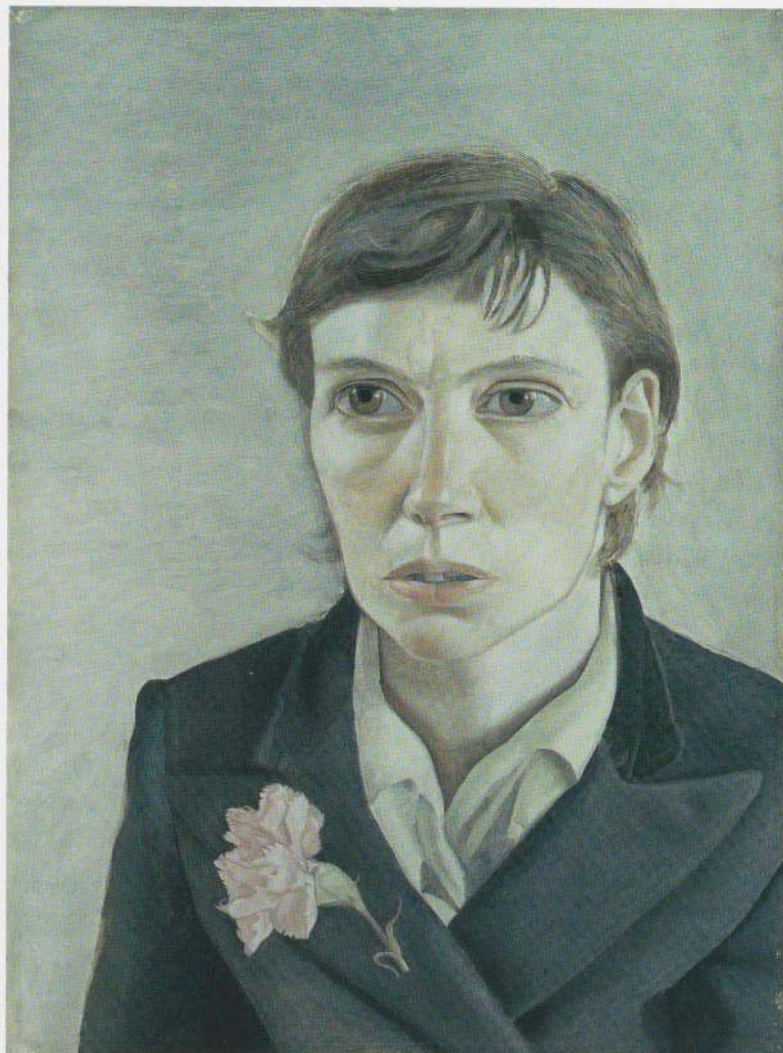
Postwar European Figuration





Opposite: ALBERTO GIACOMETTI. Swiss, 1901–1966.
Chariot. 1950. Bronze, 57 x 26 x 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (144.8 x 66 x 66.4 cm). Cast 1 of 6. Purchase, 1951

Above: ALBERTO GIACOMETTI. Swiss, 1901–1966.
The Artist's Mother. 1950. Oil on canvas, 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 24" (89.9 x 61 cm). Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1953



LUCIAN FREUD, British, born Germany, 1922.
Portrait of a Woman. 1949. Oil on canvas, 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 12" (41 x 30.5 cm). Gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1954



FRANCIS BACON. British, 1909–1992.
Number VII from Eight Studies for a Portrait, 1953. Oil on linen, 60 x 46½" (152.3 x 117 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden, 1956



HENRY MOORE. British, 1898–1986.
Family Group. 1948–49, cast 1950. Bronze,
 59 1/4 x 46 1/2 x 29 3/4" (150.5 x 118 x 75.9 cm),
 including base. Cast 2 of 4. A. Conger
 Goodyear Fund, 1951

REG BUTLER (REGINALD COTTERELL BUTLER).
 British, 1913–1983. *Girl*. 1953–54, cast 1955.
 Cast-shell bronze, 68 1/2 x 13 1/2 x 12 1/4"
 (173.7 x 34.9 x 31 cm), including base.
 A. Conger Goodyear Fund, 1956





GERMAINE RICHIER. French, 1904–1959.
The Devil with Claws (Le Griffu), 1952.
 Bronze, $34\frac{1}{2} \times 37\frac{1}{2} \times 24\frac{1}{4}$ " (87.6 x 94.5 x 62.9 cm), on stone base, $31 \times 33\frac{3}{8} \times 19\frac{1}{8}$ "
 (78.7 x 85.4 x 49.2 cm). Wildenstein
 Foundation Fund, 1957

MARINO MARINI. Italian, 1901–1980.
Miracle, 1953–54. Bronze, $7' 11\frac{1}{2}" \times 6' 1" \times 54\frac{7}{8}"$
 (242.5 x 185.2 x 139.2 cm).
 Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1962

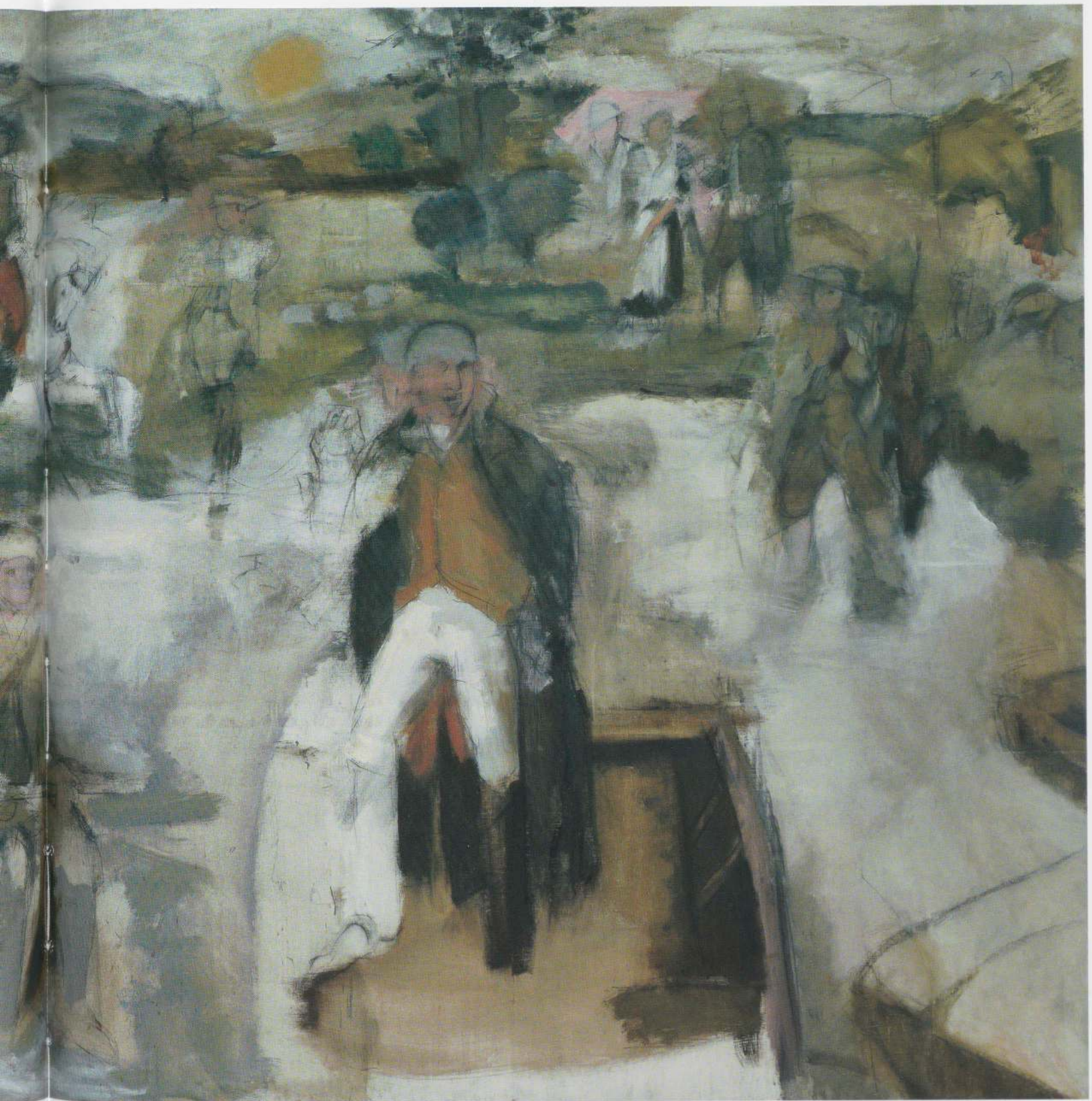




Postwar Figuration
in the Americas



LARRY RIVERS. American, born 1923.
Washington Crossing the Delaware. 1953.
Oil, graphite, and charcoal on linen,
6' 11 3/8" x 9' 3 3/8" (212.4 x 283.5 cm). Given
anonymously, 1955





RICHARD ESTES. American, born 1936.
Double Self-Portrait. 1976. Oil on canvas,
 24 x 36" (60.8 x 91.5 cm). Mr. and Mrs.
 Stuart M. Speiser Fund, 1976

FAIRFIELD PORTER. American, 1907–1975.
Flowers by the Sea. 1965. Oil on composition
 board, 20 x 19½" (50.6 x 49.5 cm). Larry
 Aldrich Foundation Fund, 1966

Opposite: ALEX KATZ. American, born 1927.
Upside Down Ada. 1965. Oil on canvas,
 51½ x 64" (130.6 x 162.6 cm). Fractional
 and promised gift of Agnes Gund, 1998



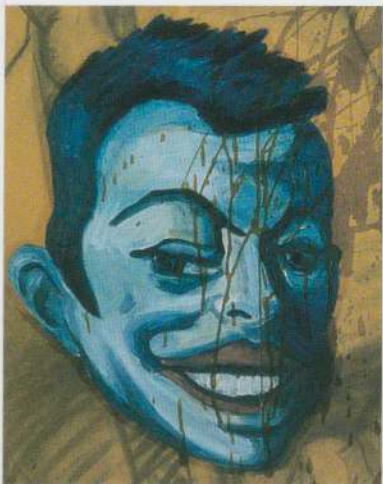




RICHARD LINDNER. American, born Germany, 1901–1978.
The Meeting. 1953. Oil on canvas, 60" x 6' (152.4 x 182.9 cm). Given anonymously, 1962

Opposite: FERNANDO BOTERO. Colombian, born 1932.
The Presidential Family. 1967. Oil on canvas, 6' 8 1/2" x 6' 5 1/2" (203.5 x 196.2 cm). Gift of Warren D. Benedek, 1967





Postmodernism

SANDRO CHIA. Italian, born 1946.
The Idleness of Sisyphus. 1981. Oil on canvas
in two parts, overall 10' 2" x 12' 8 1/2" (309.9 x
386.7 cm). Acquired through the Carter
Burden, Barbara Jakobson, and Saidie A.
May Funds and purchase, 1981



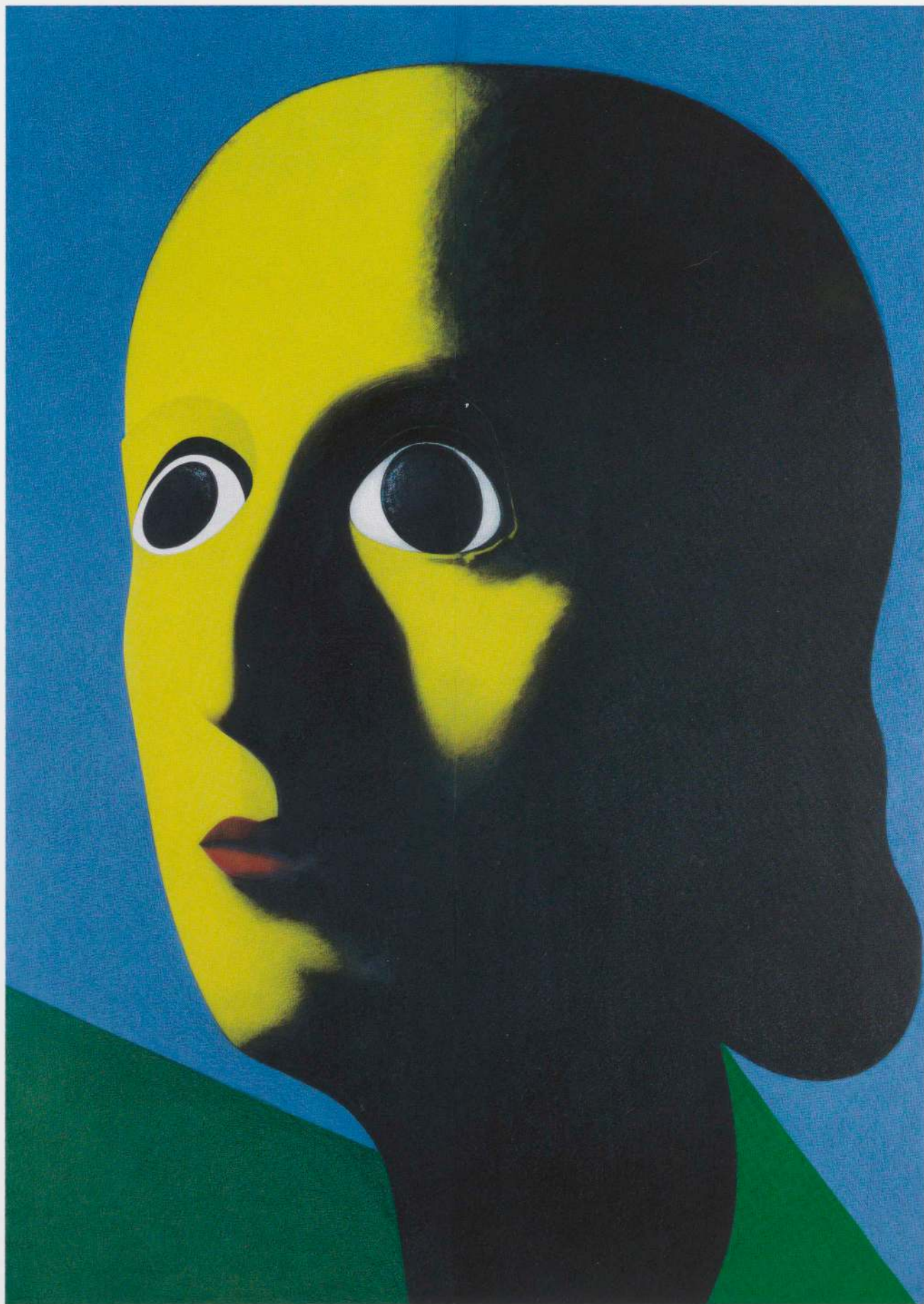




MARK TANSEY, American, born 1949.
Robbe-Grillet Cleansing Every Object in Sight. 1981. Oil and crayon on canvas, 6' x 6'¹/₄" (182.9 x 183.4 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Warren Brandt, 1982



KOMAR AND MELAMID. Vitaly Komar: American, born Russia, 1943; Aleksandr Melamid: American, born Russia, 1945.
I Saw Stalin Once When I Was a Child. 1981–82. Oil on canvas, 6' 3/8" x 54 1/2" (183.3 x 137.6 cm). Helena Rubinstein Fund, 1983



Opposite: GINO DE DOMINICIS. Italian, 1947–1998.

No! 1981–82. Oil stick and pastel on paper, mounted on aluminum panels, in two parts, overall 9' 1" x 6' 5/8" (276.8 x 196 cm). Anne and Sid Bass Fund, 1982

Below: TOM OTTERNESS. American, born 1952.

Head. 1988–89. Bronze, 14 1/4 x 38 1/4 x 46 1/2" (37.3 x 97.2 x 118.8 cm). Cast 1 of 3. Acquired with matching funds from the Louis and Bessie Adler Foundation, Inc. and the National Endowment for the Arts, and purchase, 1989





ROBERT LONGO. American, born 1953.

Pressure. 1982–83. Top: painted wood with lacquer finish; bottom: charcoal, graphite, and ink on paper; overall 8'6 1/2" x 7'6" x 3 1/2" (260 x 228.6 x 92.7 cm).
Gift of the Louis and Bessie Adler Foundation, Inc., Seymour M. Klein, President, 1983

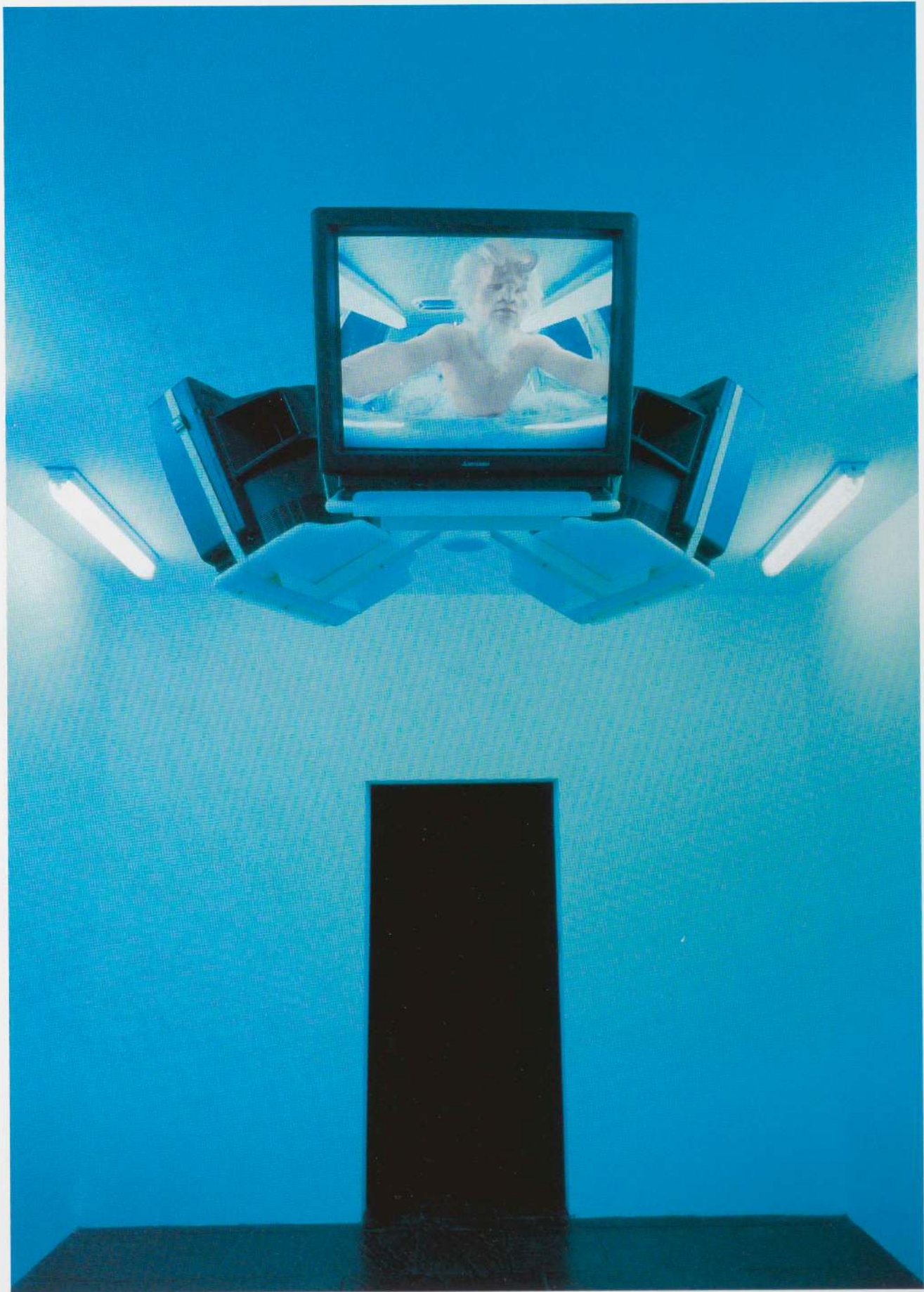


TROY BRAUNTUCH. American, born 1954.
Untitled, 1981. White pencil on black construction paper in three parts; left: $53\frac{1}{2} \times 29$ " (134.9 x 73.7 cm), center: $28\frac{1}{2} \times 8'4"$ (72.8 x 254.1 cm), right: $53\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{1}{2}$ " (134.9 x 72.7 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Schwartz, 1983

FRANCESCO CLEMENTE. Italian, born 1952.
Conversion to Her. 1983. Fresco on three Styrofoam and fiberglass panels, overall 8' x 9'4 1/2" x 2 3/4" (244 x 286.7 x 7 cm; irreg.). Anne and Sid Bass Fund, 1983

Opposite: MATTHEW BARNEY. American, born 1967.
DRAWING RESTRAINT 7. 1993. Three color video monitors, three laser disc players, three laser discs, steel and internally lubricated plastic monitor bracket, and six fluorescent lights and fixtures; dimensions variable, central unit approx. 30" (76.2 cm) high and 44" (111.8 cm) in diam. Edition: 1/3. Gift of the Dannheisser Foundation, 1996





RACKSTRAW DOWNES. American, born Great Britain, 1939.

Canal Homes at Bayou Vista. 1993. Oil on canvas, 11 3/4" x 10 1/2" (28.5 x 306 cm). Gift of Lily Auchincloss, 1994

Opposite: PHILIP PEARLSTEIN. American, born 1924.

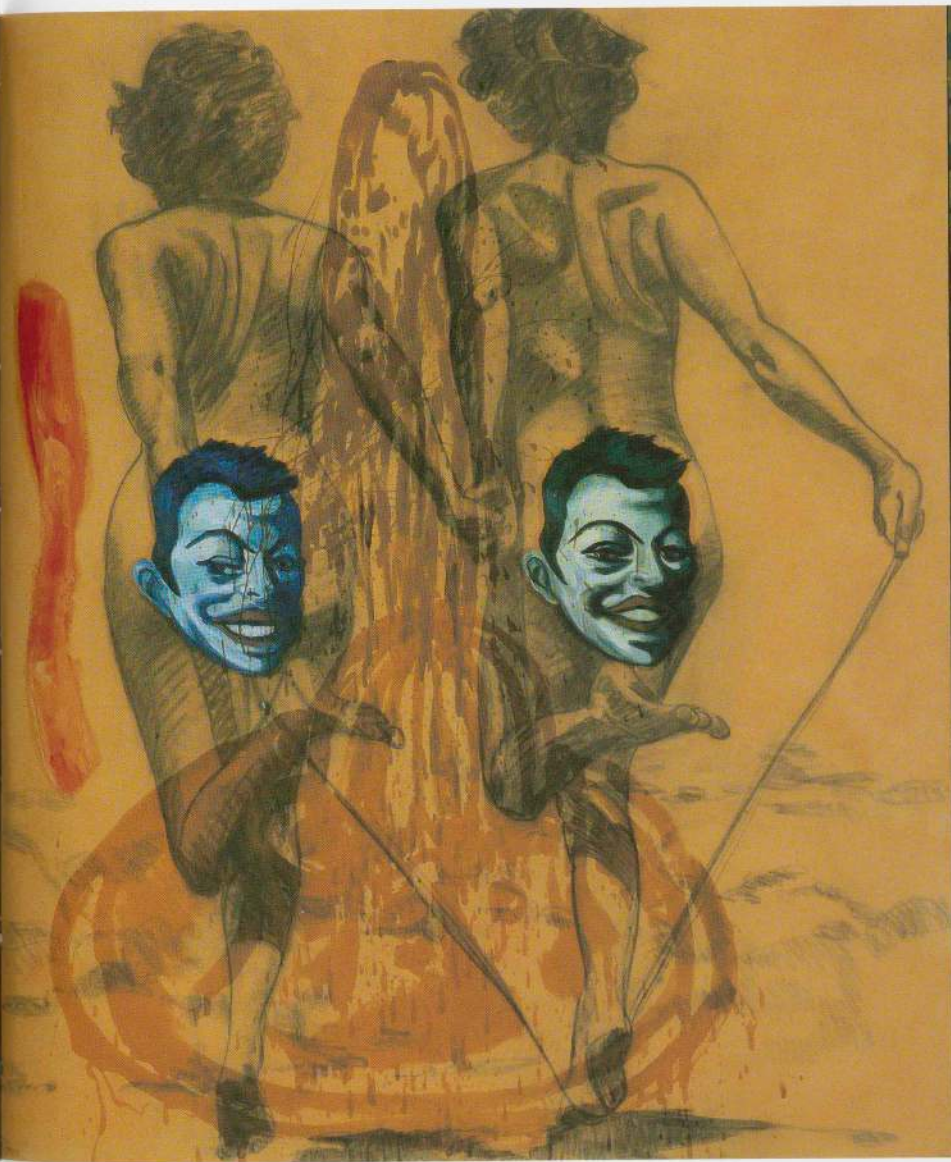
Male Model, Minstrel Marionettes, and Unfinished Painting. 1994. Oil on canvas, 65 1/4" x 8 1/2" (166 x 244.4 cm). Gift of Betsy Wittenborn Miller and Robert Miller and Marcia Riklis Fund, 1998







DAVID SALLE. American, born 1952.
Muscular Paper. 1985. Oil, synthetic polymer
paint, and charcoal on canvas and fabric,
with painted wood, in three parts, overall
8' 2 1/2" x 15' 7 1/2" (249.3 x 475 cm). Gift of
Douglas S. Cramer Foundation, 1991





ERIC FISCHL. American, born 1948.

Portrait of a Dog. 1987. Oil on canvas in four parts, overall 9' 5" x 14' 2 1/4" (287 x 433.7 cm). Gift of the Louis and Bessie Adler Foundation, Inc., Seymour M. Klein, President; Agnes Gund; President's Fund Purchase (1987), Donald B. Marron, President; Jerry I. Speyer; Douglas S. Cramer Foundation; Philip Johnson; Robert and Jane Meyerhoff; Anna Marie and Robert F. Shapiro; Barbara Jakobson; Gerald S. Elliott; and purchase, 1987

Opposite: CHRISTOPHER LE BRUN. British, born 1951.

Prow. 1983. Oil on canvas, 8' 6" x 8' 6" (259.1 x 259.1 cm). Fractional gift of PaineWebber Group Inc., 1990





FROZEN AND A GAZING FOR YOU ART

To be with Art is all we ask

WH ART, what are you? You are so strong and powerful, so beautiful and moving. You make us walk around and around, pacing the city at all hours, in and out of our Art for All room. We really do love you and we really do hate you. Why do you have so many faces and voices? You make us thirst for you and then to run from you escaping completely into a normal life—getting up, having breakfast, going to the work shop and being sure of putting our mind and energy into the making of a door or maybe a simple table and chair. The whole life would surely be so peaceful, so drunk with the normality of work and the simple pleasures of loving and hanging around for our lifetime. Oh Art, where did you come from, who mothered such a strange being, for what kind of people are you—are for the feeble of mind are you for the poor-at-heart are for those with no soul. Are you a branch of nature's fantastic network or are you an invention of some ambitious man? Do you come from a long line of artists? For every artist is born in the usual way and we have never seen a young artist. Is to become an artist to be reborn, or is it a condition of life? Coming slowly over a person like the daybreak, it brings the art-ability to do this funny thing and shows you new possibilities for feeling and scratching at oneself and surroundings: setting standards, making you go into every scene and every contact, every touching nerve and all your senses. And Art we are driven by you at incredible speed, ignorant of the danger you are pushing and dragging us into. And yet

Art, there is no going back, all that is only on and on. We are happy for the good times that you give us and we wait only for these tribits from you. If you only knew how much they mean to us, transporting from the life of tragedy and black despair to a full life of happiness, taking us into the good times are. When this happens we are able to walk again with our heads held high. We artists need only to hold a little light through the trees of the forest to be happy and working and back to gear again. And yet, we don't forget Art, we continue to dedicate our art to you alone, for you and your future, sure, for Art's sake. We would hope it is like to say to you, Art how happy we are to be your sculptors. We think about you all the time and feel very sentimental about you. We do realise that you are what we really crave for and that you are all we meet you in our dreams. We would glimpse you through the abstract and have tasted of your reality. One day we thought we saw you in a crowd on a street, you were dressed in a light suit, white shirt and a curious blue about your dress a curious woman for you looked very smart but there was a dryness. You were walking alone, a company of step and in a very controlled way. We were fascinated by the lightness of your face, your almost colourless and your dusty-blonde hair. We approached you nervously and then we we neared you you went out of sight again. We felt sad and unlucky and at the same time happy and hopeful to have

...e ask

**GILBERT and GEORGE
1970**

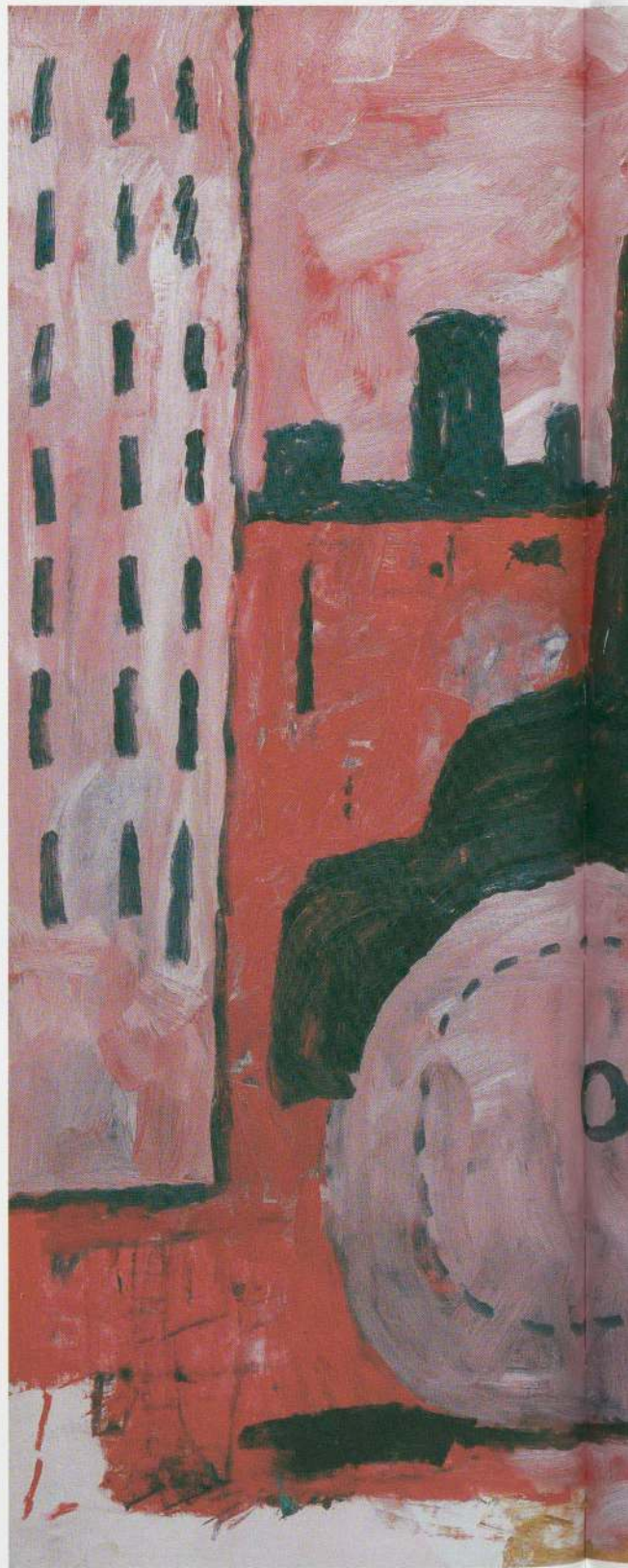
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TO BE WITH ART IS ALL WE ASK.



FROZEN INTO A GLAZING FOR YOU ART

GILBERT AND GEORGE. Gilbert: British, born Italy, 1943; George: British, born 1942.
To Be with Art Is All We Ask . . . 1970.
 Charcoal, ink, and wash on three partially charred folding sheets of paper with cardboard box; triptych overall: 9' 2 3/8" x 26' 8 1/2" (280.3 x 814.6 cm), box, closed: 4 1/2" x 21 1/2" x 15 1/2" (11.4 x 54.4 x 39.4 cm).
 Purchase, 1971



PHILIP GUSTON. American, born Canada,
1913–1980. *City Limits*. 1969. Oil on
canvas, 6' 5" x 8' 7 1/2" (195.6 x 262.2 cm).
Gift of Musa Guston, 1991







Opposite: PHILIP GUSTON. American, born Canada, 1913–1980.
East Coker—TSE. 1979. Oil on canvas, 42 x 48" (106.7 x 122 cm). Gift of Musa Guston, 1991

Above: JIM NUTT. American, born 1938.
Whisk. 1999. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, and oil on fiberboard frame, overall 23 1/8 x 23 1/2" (59.4 x 59.7 cm). Fractional and promised gift of Robert H. Bergman and Marie Krane Bergman, 1999



GERHARD RICHTER. German, born 1932.
Self-Portrait. 1996. Oil on linen, 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (51.1 x 46.4 cm). Fractional and promised gift of Ronald S. Lauder and Committee on Painting and Sculpture Funds, 1996

Opposite: GERHARD RICHTER. German, born 1932.
Wiesental. 1985. Oil on canvas, 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 37 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (90.5 x 94.9 cm). Blanchette Rockefeller, Betsy Babcock, and Mrs. Elizabeth Bliss Parkinson Funds, 1985





Drawing Lesson II



ALBERTO GIACOMETTI. Swiss, 1901–1966.
Portrait of J. R. 1959. Pencil on paper, 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x
 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (47.6 x 31.1 cm). Gift of John Rewald
 in memory of Frances Weitzenhoffer, 1991

BALTHUS (BALTUSZ KLOSSOWSKI DE ROLA).
 French, born 1908. *Study of a Nude.*
 1964. Pencil on paper, 30 x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (76.1 x
 49.5 cm). Gift in memory of Patricia Kane
 Matisse, 1978

Opposite: LUCIAN FREUD. British, born
 Germany, 1922. *Girl with Leaves.* 1948.
 Pastel on gray paper, 18 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (47.9 x
 41.9 cm). Purchase, 1948







PETER BLAKE. British, born 1932. *Colin MacInnes*. 1966. Pencil and colored pencil on paper, 7½ x 6¾" (19.5 x 17 cm). S. Brooks Barron Fund, 1967

PATRICK PROCKTOR. British, born 1936. *Cecil Beaton*. 1967. Watercolor on paper, 11½ x 9" (29.2 x 22.9 cm). The Joan and Lester Avnet Collection, 1978

Opposite: DAVID HOCKNEY. British, born 1937. *Patrick Procktor in New York*. 1966. Pen and ink on paper, 17 x 14" (43.2 x 35.6 cm). S. Brooks Barron Fund, 1967







ANDY WARHOL. American, 1928–1987.
Untitled (Unknown Male). c. 1957. Ballpoint
 pen on paper, 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (42.5 x 35.2 cm).
 Purchased with funds given by the Vincent
 D'Acquila Drawings Fund, 1999

Opposite, top: ALEX KATZ. American,
 born 1927. *Boy with a Hat*. 1974. Pencil on
 paper, 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 22 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (41.7 x 56.8 cm).
 Acquired with matching funds from the
 Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc. and the
 National Endowment for the Arts, 1977

Opposite, bottom: LARRY RIVERS. American,
 born 1923. *Edwin Denby*. 1953. Pencil on
 paper, 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (35 x 41.8 cm). Given
 anonymously, 1954



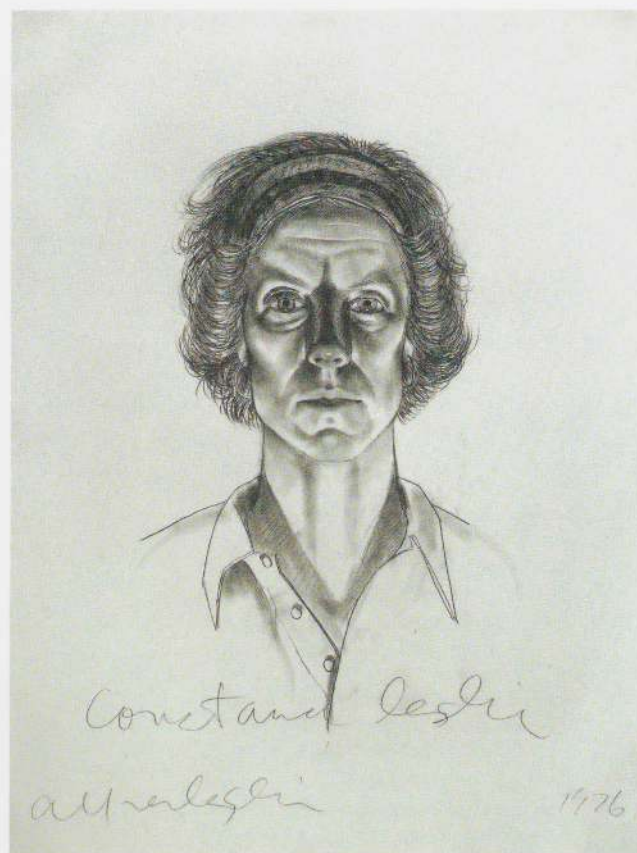
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R. B. KITAJ. American, born 1932.
The Sneeze. 1975. Charcoal and pastel on
 paper, 34 x 27" (86.4 x 68.6 cm; irreg.).
 Gift of Nancy and Jim Dine, 1977

ALFRED LESLIE. American, born 1927.
Constance Leslie. 1976. Pencil on paper,
 40 x 30" (101.6 x 76.2 cm). Gift of
 Charles B. Benenson, 1977





ANTONIO LÓPEZ GARCÍA. Spanish, born 1936.
The Staircase. 1967. Pencil and wax on
paper, mounted on panel, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{8}$ "
(37.8 x 49.5 cm). The Joan and Lester Avnet
Collection, 1978

WALTER MURCH. American, born Canada,
1907–1967. *Clock*. 1965. Oil, pencil, and
crayon on cardboard, 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (71.4 x
56.3 cm). Larry Aldrich Foundation
Fund, 1966





RICHARD DIEBENKORN. American, 1922–1993.
Seated Woman. 1966. Synthetic polymer
 paint and charcoal on cardboard, 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
 (78.2 x 50.4 cm). Gift of the artist, 1990

DAVID PARK. American, 1911–1960.
Richard Diebenkorn. 1960. Watercolor on
 paper, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (37 x 29.6 cm). Larry
 Aldrich Foundation Fund, 1963

Opposite, top: JAMES WYETH. American,
 born 1946. *Andy Warhol*. 1976. Gouache,
 watercolor, and pencil on cardboard, 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ x
 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (34 x 41.1 cm). Acquired with matching
 funds from Mrs. Walter N. Thayer and the
 National Endowment for the Arts, 1977

Opposite, bottom: ELLEN PHELAN.
 American, born 1943. *Neighborhood*. 1990.
 Watercolor on paper, 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (72.9 x
 100.6 cm). Gift of Edward R. Broida, 1993





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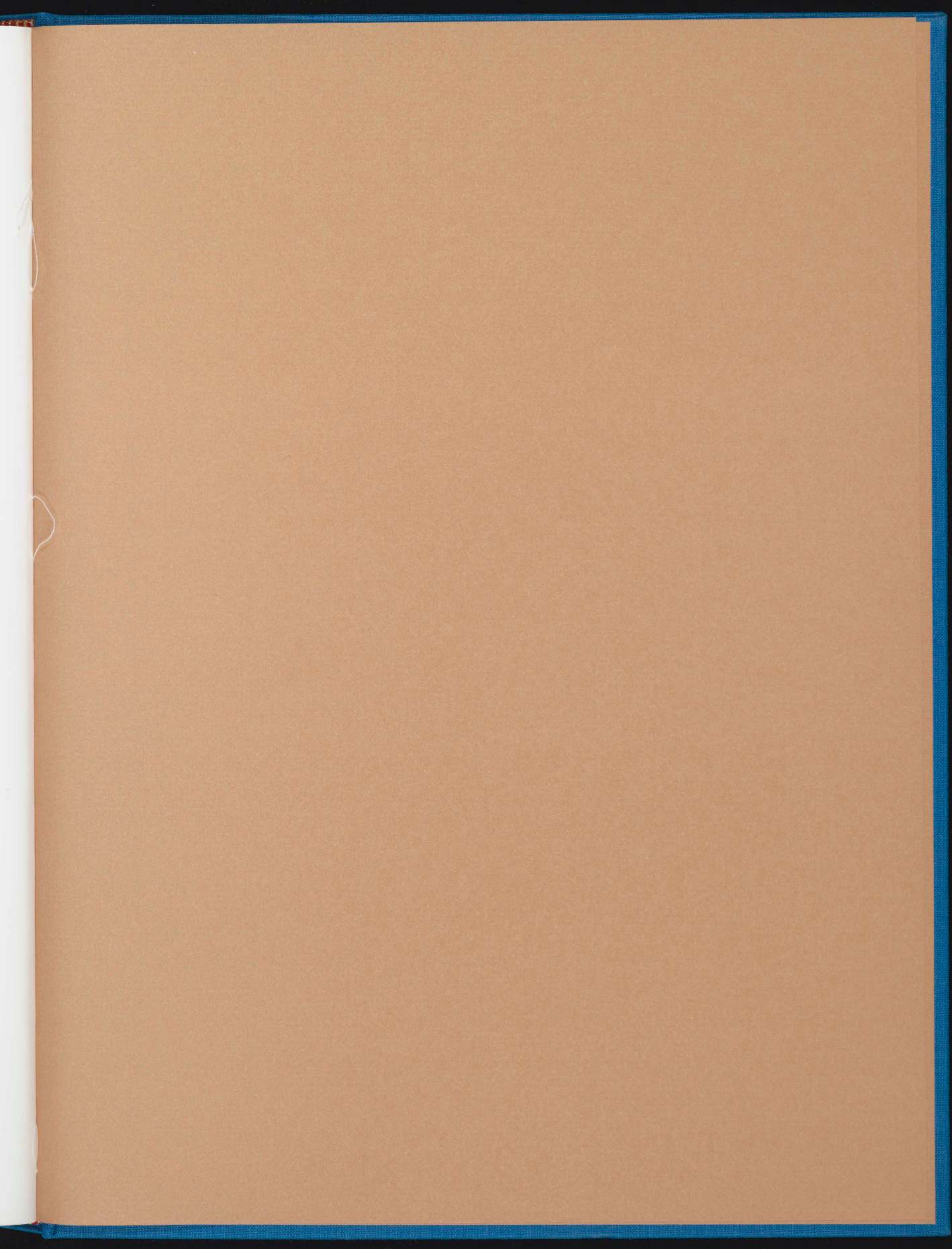
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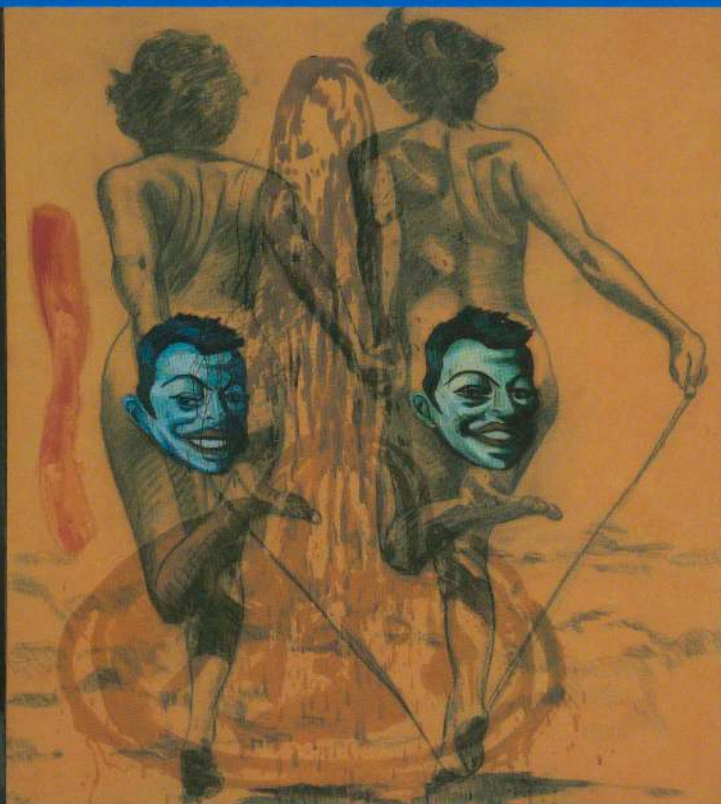
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