

Jean Dubuffet: Soul of the Underground

October 18, 2014—April 5, 2015

The Paul J. Sachs Drawings Galleries, third floor

Jean Dubuffet (French, 1901–1985), whose work was marked by a rebellious attitude toward prevailing notions of high culture, beauty, and good taste, is a significant figure in MoMA’s collection, with holdings numbering over 1,200 works. From the time Dubuffet committed himself to art-making in the early 1940s, he was a relentless innovator. *Jean Dubuffet: Soul of the Underground* illuminates Dubuffet’s radical experimentation with form and material by focusing on the artist’s work at a key span of his career, from the 1940s to the mid-1960s. Dubuffet mixed sand, gravel, and other materials into his pigments, applying them in layers with brushes and palette knives to create a thickened impasto, and then excavated images from them by scratching and scraping away with the pointed handle of his paintbrush. He revolutionized lithography, experimenting with textures by attacking lithographic stones with sandpaper, rags, and chemicals, and creating images with dirt, fruit peels, leaves, and other organic materials. Drawings in ink or gouache mimicked these feats of combination and re-combination, resulting in surfaces of decaying or ever-expanding membranes. Acknowledging the importance of materiality to his process, Dubuffet wrote, “Art must be born from the material and from the tool, and must preserve the trace of the tool or the tool’s battle with the material.”

This exhibition draws on MoMA’s unparalleled collection of Dubuffet’s paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, and illustrated books, charting his move toward near-total abstraction with pictures comprised of all-over compositions unanchored by horizons, topographies of layered sand and dirt, or patterned lithographs of droplets and granules. Central to this presentation is the monumental lithographic project the *Phenomena series* (1958–62), which manifests the artist’s fascination with surfaces of the earth and natural forces, and which became fodder for future works across mediums, as he cut up prints, collaged them, and reconstituted them. *Jean Dubuffet: Soul of the Underground* is the first monographic presentation on the artist at MoMA in over 25 years.

Organized by Jodi Hauptman, Senior Curator, and Sarah Suzuki, Associate Curator, Department of Drawings and Prints.

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For downloadable high-resolution images, register at MoMA.org/press.

Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, MoMA.org.

Hours: Saturday through Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m.

Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Free admission during Uniqlo Free Friday Nights: Fridays, 4:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.

MoMA.org: No service charge for tickets ordered on MoMA.org. Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs).
Film and After Hours Program Admission: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$8 full-time students with current I.D. The price of an After Hours Program Admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or MoMA Membership within 30 days.

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