2-19-2010

Elusive Imprints: Translating the Unseen in the Twentieth Century

Leah Lonsdale Barreras
Dickinson College

Caitlin Barrett
Dickinson College

Anna Amelia Elliott
Dickinson College

Caitlin Henning Faw
Dickinson College

Alexandra Geiger
Dickinson College

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Recommended Citation
Authors
Leah Lonsdale Barreras, Caitlin Barrett, Anna Amelia Elliott, Caitlin Henning Faw, Alexandra Geiger, Margaret Ellen MacAvoy, Courtney Louise Masters, Blair Stewart Thompson, Amanda Margarita van Voorhees, Melinda Schlitt, and Trout Gallery

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Elusive Imprints

Translating the Unseen in the Twentieth Century
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February 19 – April 17, 2010

Curated by:

Leah Barreras
Caitlin Barrett
Anna Elliott
Caitlin Faw
Louise Feder
Alexandra Geiger
Margaret MacAvoy
Courtney Masters
Blair Thompson
Amanda van Voorhees
This publication was produced in part through the generous support of the Helen Trout Memorial Fund and the Ruth Trout Endowment at Dickinson College. Published by The Trout Gallery, Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013

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Design: Kimberley Nichols and Patricia Pohlman, Dickinson College Office of Publications
Printing: Triangle Printing, York, Pennsylvania

ISBN 978-0-9826156-0-7

Cover Image:
Jean Cocteau, Satyr (detail), 1958, lithograph. 1986.4.3.8.

Cover Calligraphy:
Kimberley Nichols
The senior Art Historical Methods Seminar is unique among undergraduate programs in art history in that it offers students the opportunity to become curators for a semester wherein they select, research, write a catalogue for, and organize a public exhibition in The Trout Gallery. In the short three and one-half months of the semester, this process always seems a difficult challenge. The students, however, rose to the occasion and devoted their energy, time, and enthusiasm not only to the course material for the seminar, but also to researching and writing the essays for this catalogue.

This year’s exhibition, *Elusive Imprints: Translating the Unseen in the Twentieth Century*, has been made possible by the donors who have contributed to building The Trout Gallery’s excellent collection of twentieth-century art. The works in this exhibition are the generous gifts of Mrs. Joan L. Tobias, Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin, Philip and Muriel Berman, and Joseph Weniger.

Many colleagues at Dickinson contributed their time and expertise to the seminar and exhibition. The students and I especially thank Professor Phillip Earenfight, Director of The Trout Gallery and Associate Professor of Art History, for his enthusiastic support of the seminar and exhibition despite many other professional commitments. Professor Emeritus Dieter Rollfinke generously and enthusiastically assisted in translating the text by Heinz Ewers that accompanies the engravings by Stefan Eggeler in the exhibition. Professor Wolfgang Müller also contributed his expertise to the translations, and we thank him as well. The students took the initiative to try and contact Paul Wunderlich directly about his work. His wife, photographer Karin Székessy, kindly responded and had two volumes of a beautiful catalogue raisonné of Wunderlich’s prints from 1948–2004 sent from his gallery. We are most appreciative to Karin Székessy, as well as Bettina Wiebel of Edition und Galerie Volker Huber for their gracious assistance. Special thanks goes to James Bowman, The Trout Gallery Registrar and Exhibition Preparator, who made the works available for study by the seminar and on an individual basis for each student when needed. We are also indebted to James for his informed advice and supervision of the installation design and process, which forms an important part of the students’ experience in the seminar. We also thank, in advance, Wendy Pires for making this exhibition accessible to a wider regional audience through educational programs offered through the Gallery’s Educational Outreach Program. Rosalie Lehman, Satsuki Swisher, and Catherine Sacco assist with the Outreach Program and provide essential visitor services for the Gallery.

The students were aided in their research by our Art & Art History library liaison, Chris Bombaro, whose expertise and enthusiasm provided a source of academic and problem-solving support throughout the semester. In the design and publication of this catalogue, we acknowledge the professional expertise of Kimberley Nichols and Patricia Pohlman of the Dickinson College Office of Publications. They met with the students twice, and devoted considerable time to realizing this handsome and most professional publication. We also thank Andy Bale for his precise photographs of the works in this catalogue.

Without the expertise and patience of Stephanie Keifer, senior administrative associate for The Trout Gallery, neither the final editing of the catalogue, invitations, opening reception, and all issues related to the exhibition would happen. The professionalism and clean copy of the catalogue text are largely the result of Stephanie’s hard work, and we owe her our warmest thanks.

Members of the Art Historical Methods Seminar
Melinda Schlitt, Professor of Art History,
William W. Edel Professor of Humanities
Introduction

by Melinda Schlitt, Professor of Art History, William W. Edel Professor of Humanities

This exhibition had its origins in a generous and significant gift of new works to The Trout Gallery by Joan L. Tobias during the spring semester, 2009. Combined with several similar twentieth-century works on paper already in the permanent collection, the majority having been given over the years by Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin, the core of an exciting Art Historical Methods Seminar took shape. The resulting exhibition, *Elusive Imprints: Translating the Unseen in the Twentieth Century*, encompasses the related but diverse stylistic categories of Symbolism, Surrealism, German Expressionism, and Magic Realism. A few words, therefore, might be said about the donors and how their interests in these styles and the artists that represent them evolved.

Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Joan Tobias began collecting art in the 1970s, amassing a collection of twentieth-century modernist European and American works on paper, as well as a substantial holding of art and ethnographic artifacts from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, in addition to contemporary sculpture. Their interest in the works of the Symbolists and the Vienna school of Magic Realism was sparked by their long-term friendship with the artist, Fritz Janschka (b. 1919, Austria), who lived in the Philadelphia area and happened to be a patient of Dr. Tobias. Janschka, who taught painting at Bryn Mawr College, introduced Gordon and Joan to his own works, as well as those of other Magic Realists such as Wolfgang Hutter, Erich Brauer, Paul Wunderlich, Anton Lehmden, Ernst Fuchs, and Dieter Schwertberger. Janschka was also responsible for acquiring Stefan Eggeler’s portfolio of etchings, *Musikalische Miniaturen* (1921), which was subsequently acquired by Gordon and Joan.

Joan and Gordon have donated a number of works to The Trout Gallery, including prints by the above-mentioned Magic Realists and the German Expressionist, Stefan Eggeler, as well as other works by Alberto Giacometti, Georges Rouault, Karl Korab, Man Ray, Fernand Leger, and Joan Miró. Ten of the twenty-four works in this exhibition, represented by Paul Wunderlich and Stefan Eggeler, are part of the recent donation by Joan Tobias.

Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin were well known in the art world for having amassed a fine and extensive collection of American paintings, drawings, prints, and sculpture, many of which are now represented in major galleries and museums throughout the United States. Having been avid collectors for nearly sixty years, their many contributions to The Trout Gallery are clearly evident within the permanent collection, and this exhibition would not have been possible without their judicious collecting and generosity. The Potamkins began their collecting career with little knowledge or experience of art or the art market. Frequent visits to museums and galleries in New York and Philadelphia, however, provided ample opportunities for acquiring not only a refined sense of quality and style, but also a keen sensibility for artistic value. They also benefited from many conversations with a few knowledgeable dealers over the decades from whom they also purchased several important works. As Jay E. Cantor remarked recently in his brief biography of the Potamkins, “Antoinette Kraushaar and Harold Milch were regularly cited by the Potamkins and other early collectors as the main source of important work and as the central force in their ‘artistic’ education. A virtual academy for the promotion of American art was conducted in the rooms of these two dealers who delighted in sharing their wisdom and in educating new collectors’ eyes.”

It was never simply an artist’s name that attracted them to consider purchasing a work, but rather formal and technical quality. In particular, a strong sense of color, well-structured composition, a beautifully rendered surface, and a subtlety of expression drove their decisions. Cantor sums up their aesthetic criteria well: “Objects were, in a word, seen for themselves, and not as examples of a particular style or mode. The overarching concern was to acquire the finest work, whether the artist had a long-established reputation or was a relative newcomer.” Ten works in this exhibition are also part of the Potamkins’ many gifts to The Trout Gallery, represented by Joan Miró, Max Ernst, and Marc Chagall.

When confronted with the challenge of constructing a unifying theme and title for an exhibition composed of twenty-four prints by eight different artists spanning sixty years (1921–1981), the students drew on the knowledge they had gained during the course of the semester about the theory and practice that defined Symbolism, Surrealism, German Expressionism, and Magic Realism—the four stylistic categories with which these artists are most readily identified. The students recognized that while disparate in chronological scope and theoretical foundations, these four stylistic movements and the works in the exhibition could be seen to share a broad, common purpose in representing ideas that lay beyond that which is visible in empirical reality. Attendant to this concept is the notion of ambiguity—both in what is represented by the artist and what the viewer is led to understand. Hence, the students’ formulation of the title, *Elusive Imprints: Translating the Unseen in the Twentieth Century.*
The seminar began by reading Michelle Facos’ newly published book, *Symbolist Art in Context* (2009), during the summer months before classes began. Given that Symbolism served as the springboard for many twentieth-century artists working in a variety of styles, including Expressionism, Surrealism, Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, and non-objective art, this text seemed a good place to start. Facos’ revisionist approach to the topic proved to be inspirational to the students in the quality of her research and interpretation, as well as in the class’s critique of some of the book’s shortcomings. Central to Facos’ treatment of Symbolism, a movement that began in the late 1880s with a published manifesto, is her definition that, “For a work to be considered Symbolist, its purpose must be to suggest something other than what is actually represented. To this end, title, content, technique, and composition figure prominently.” And further, “… Symbolist artists sought to clothe ideas in perceptible forms, while believing that art should direct viewers toward immaterial terrains of the extraordinary in the midst of the ordinary, quotidian world.”

With varying degrees of emphasis, all of the artists in this exhibition represent strains of the ideas articulated in Symbolist and Surrealist theories, and the students have done an admirable job in synthesizing their research and interpretations as curators. Franz Marc shows us how the notions of sleep and the dream state can generate highly suggestive, representational imagery imbued with a sophisticated theory of color. Stefan Eggeler takes on the difficult and often disturbing subject of German cultural despair in the wake of World War I in his highly expressive, small-scale etchings that accompany a text by Hanns Heinz Ewers. Marc Chagall traverses the terrain of his own idiosyncratic imagination in etching and lithography, illustrating Nikolai Gogol’s *Dead Souls* in the first instance and alluding to issues of love and sexuality in the second. Joan Miró and Max Ernst explore new expressive techniques in etching and lithography while seeking to represent poetic and narrative ideas through reference to the figure and abstract visual gestures. Salvador Dalí gives us his inimitable vision of the unconscious mind inspired by both his personal history and the history of art in imagery that challenges the viewer’s ability to understand. Jean Cocteau allows us glimpses into a deeply complex and conflicted state of being in which subconscious and psychologically potent metaphors—often drug-induced—propel highly gestural images. Finally, Paul Wunderlich seeks to give the viewer multiple points of departure for a variety of possible meanings through concrete, representational images that reside in alternative realities.

Above all, this exhibition challenges the viewer to respond to what he or she sees through an active engagement with imagery that is indirect, often personal, and difficult to understand at first glance. The artists represented in *Elusive Imprints: Translating the Unseen in the Twentieth Century*, then, might well fulfill one of Breton’s broad goals in providing us with responses to questions we didn’t know we had.8

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8. The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be—the greater its emotional power and poetic reality…5

After thinking hard about statements like the above, Breton articulated the core of the manifesto: “SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express – the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern…Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought.”6 Mary Ann Caws put it well in her recent study on Surrealism when she stated that, “Surrealism is above all about discovering the terrains of the extraordinary in the midst of the ordinary, quotidian world.”7

Essential reading for the class also included André Breton’s “Manifesto of Surrealism” (1924), a text that had seismic repercussions for decades within the literary and visual arts. As Breton’s argument was largely epistemological in nature, challenging the concept of “knowing” and what constituted “real” knowledge, artists found a tremendous degree of latitude in the possibilities for both content and expression in their work. The recent investigative theories of Sigmund Freud, especially *The Interpretation of Dreams*, had a profound impact on Breton (and the practitioners of Surrealism) and led him to ponder statements like the following, by Pierre Reverdy, in a new light:

The image is a pure creation of the mind. It cannot be born from a comparison, but from a juxtaposition of two more or less distinct realities. The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be—the greater its emotional power and poetic reality…5

After thinking hard about statements like the above, Breton articulated the core of the manifesto: “SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes...”


4 Facos, Symbolist Art in Context, 13.


8 Caws, Surrealism, 94.
Paul Wunderlich, a German artist who practices in a variety of media and still continues to work with painting, etching, lithography, sculpture, and jewelry, was born during a time of political change and turmoil in Eberswalde, Germany on March 10, 1927. Wunderlich’s youth and early career were notably shaped by the anxiety and disorder of the postwar period. Wunderlich was also influenced by the growing sense of disillusionment that resulted from World War I and the rising Nazi party. World War II and Wunderlich’s involvement in the military also shaped the artist’s early career. This tumultuous historical context provides an imperative backdrop for studying and understanding Wunderlich, his art, and other Magic Realists and their works.

Franz Roh, a German art historian, critic, and photographer, was the first to use the term “magic realism,” or “Magischer Realismus,” in his 1925 essay entitled Magical Realism: Post-Expressionism. While this term was initially used to describe an artistic movement that evolved during a postwar setting of instability and angst, “magic realism” was later used to define Latin American writers and texts, such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez and his book, One Hundred Years of Solitude.

In Roh’s Magical Realism: Post-Expressionism, the German art historian describes Magic Realism as a reaction against Expressionism, a movement many artists and scholars considered to be “dead” and “superficial.” Opponents of Expressionism believed that this movement had come dangerously close to abstraction and had slipped away from accurately depicting the natural world. Magic Realism, the “honest” and “truthful” art form, would come to replace the outdated Expressionist movement.

Roh’s essay called for the return to realism and figural representation. His ideas reflected the basic tenets of the new movement and his publication can shed light on Wunderlich’s etchings and lithographs. Roh not only made reference to the movement’s focus on the depiction of the figure, but he also mentioned the new representation of subject matter in which artists depict reality in fundamentally different ways. In other words, artists portray everyday or commonplace scenes that are imbued with mystery and a sense of unheimlichkeit, which Roh defined as “the uncanny.” For example, many Magic Realist works feature alienated and disturbed-looking figures placed in unknown and secluded environments.

Roh also attempted to describe particular aspects of the movement and formulated his own list of characteristics that defines a Magic Realist work. It is revealing to look at these particular attributes when examining Wunderlich’s work.

Roh juxtaposed aspects of Expressionism with characteristics of Magic Realism. While Roh considered Expressionist works as “loud,” “dynamic,” “extravagant,” and focused on “ecstatic subjects,” Magic Realist works were “quiet,” “static,” “severe,” and emphasized “sober subjects.” Wunderlich’s Jutta auf dem Sofa depicts an ambiguous and somber image of a woman who reflects Magic Realism’s emphasis on strangeness and juxtaposition, as well as the emotional, psychological, and spiritual elements of Symbolism. In this etching, an otherwise realistic or “normal” scene of a woman lying on a couch is translated into a dreamlike or fantastic image; Wunderlich has reconstructed “reality.” The lower anamorphic portion of her body appears suspended in space while her head and shoulders are grounded in the object of reality, or the couch. The figure is isolated from any sort of context, which causes the viewer to question the figure’s identity and realism. Who is she? What is on this tormented woman’s mind? Is she even a figure of reality or just a dream image? If so, what does she represent?
This image, although produced more than thirty years after Roh’s 1925 essay, reflects the basic tenets of Magic Realism originally formulated by Roh. Keeping in line with Roh’s criteria, Wunderlich’s *Jutta auf dem Sofa* portrays a representational, static, and sober scene characteristic of Magic Realist works. Wunderlich’s image reflects the move away from pure abstraction and Expressionism’s use of vibrant color and painterly surface. *Jutta* represents a cool, naturalistic, almost photographic scene that epitomizes the ideal, full form of the human figure.

Before analyzing the role of the female figure in Wunderlich’s etching, it is necessary to delve deeper into the world of Paul Wunderlich. Although Wunderlich is often praised as being a most important contemporary artist, he is also “damned as derivative and an artistic degenerate”9 due to his bizarre and often erotic subject matter. Art critic Hanns Flemming stated, “Wunderlich’s works appear as new ‘Fleurs du Mal’ of our time. They are the expressions of a new vital consciousness, in which the hallucinatory is coupled with disillusionment, the surrealist with the aesthetic.”10 Wunderlich’s image of the floating woman not only displays the artist’s use of visual contradictions and his balance of beauty and deformity, or aesthetics and repulsion, but Wunderlich’s *Jutta* also reflects the ambiguity that is a defining characteristic of many of his works. According to Wunderlich, “I am not trying to reveal myself naked in public, submit the darkest recesses of my mind to close scrutiny. In my job it’s wrong to speak too loudly, or to be too shrill. I have no message. Whatever message you find is your own.”11

Although Wunderlich stated that he “refuses to try to explain anything”12 about his images, the human figure stands as the center point of Wunderlich’s art and allows plenty of room for analysis. Wunderlich claimed that his reason for depicting the human body was “because it has great possibilities for interpretation.”13 Wunderlich’s representation of the human figure flourished after he began collaborating with professional photographer Karin Székessy in 1966; the two later married in 1971. His wife’s photographs of fashions and nudes inspired Wunderlich. Székessy’s highly manipulated scenes, her use of black-and-white tonalities, and her experiments with exposures heavily influenced Wunderlich’s artwork.12

Székessy’s photographs allowed Wunderlich access to a world of the “perfect” human form. Her photographs display corpulent and sensual females that Wunderlich wished to depict in his own images. The unity and clarity of form, as well as the depiction of weighty and fleshy figures, can be seen in many of Wunderlich’s images, including *Jutta*.

Wunderlich’s “designer slickness” can also be attributed to Székessy’s influence. Similar to Székessy’s highly manipulated photographs, Wunderlich’s scenes are also highly controlled and choreographed. According to a 1987 art review, Wunderlich “plans out his Surrealist sexual fantasies as an engineer would a blueprint, dissecting and reassembling the female nude in strange, chilling yet somehow beautiful combinations.”13

How does Wunderlich create images that are both strange and beautiful? How does he effectively portray this juxtaposition? His artistic style cannot be ignored when answering this question. Wunderlich spent years experimenting with line and color and even created a new kind of translucent ink that dissolved easily and allowed him to emphasize the outline of the human form.14 Wunderlich’s image of a woman being magically pulled away from the couch depicts this murky translucent ink; the monochromatic color gives the work an ominous tone. The human form is much lighter than the rest of the work and the difference in tonalities leads the viewer right to the focal point of Wunderlich’s works—the representation of the pure human figure. Yet, this image, like many of Wunderlich’s etchings and lithographs, “forces us out of our normal order”15 because of the woman’s strange form and position, her distorted facial expression, and her unknown status in the work.

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8 Foster, *Lithographs...*, 1.
Throughout the decades that followed the fall of Nazi Germany, German artists struggled to emerge from the political dictatorship and the devastating war that ravaged their country with clear stylistic creativity. Through the late 1940s, Paul Wunderlich expressed the human emotions of war as a world in which opposites would be harmonized through the media of lithography, painting, and etching. His ability to manipulate and distort the human body gained the attention of art historians and critics around the world. However, for Wunderlich, he used his art as an expression of his inner ideas.

In Jensen's book, *Paul Wunderlich*, the author suggested that Wunderlich attempted to bring himself to an unprotected place where desire and lust, wanting and not wanting, unite in harmony. Jensen described this unprotected place as beyond the war-torn world of depression and lost identity, but where randomness had order, force had freedom, and cynicism had belief. In the post World War II era, German people were stranded between lost patriotism and new-found freedom, which Wunderlich attempted to depict.

Wunderlich did not believe that each of his works had one inherent message, but rather that the viewer's interpretation was his/her own reaction derived from personal experiences. He stated: “To stimulate is in any case a form of communication and it is an enormous achievement. But every feeling, every interpretation is equally valid. Interpretation is not my job.” He did not expect people to experience identical reactions to the same image, but he did hope the viewer would have individual reactions that were personal to him/her. He said, “I am not trying to reveal myself naked in public, submit the darkest recesses of my mind to close scrutiny… I have no message. Whatever message you find is your own.” In essence, the viewer was to appreciate Wunderlich's creativity as a complicated image of the artist himself because the images were a manifestation of his inner emotions.

Wunderlich's abilities as an artist were not fully recognized until 1947 when he attended Hamburg University. During his studies, he worked in various media so that he could explore his talent. In 1949, he joined other artists in a collaborative exhibition in Lübeck, which was comprised of paintings he completed during school. Wunderlich could have graduated in 1950 with all of his classmates, but he instead chose to stay and work intensively on lithography for the next year where he developed many new techniques. After completing the year, Hamburg University asked him to stay and teach lithography. During his teaching years at Hamburg, he met a photographer named Karin Székessy whom he later married. She had a significant impact on his work.

Székessy would photograph nude women for Wunderlich, which he would then incorporate into his images using a spray gun. He was intrigued by the camera's ability to capture unbroken plains and surfaces of the human body. From the time Wunderlich met Székessy to the present day, her photographs have influenced his style.

Wunderlich's work continues to be exhibited all over the world. He has won more than fifteen national and international awards for his work in lithography, graphic art, and painting. He has had three retrospective exhibitions and in 2007, the Paul Wunderlich Museum was opened to the public. With all of Wunderlich's accomplishments, he continues to produce art that surprises critics with his increasingly shocking subject matter. His work includes a wide range of styles and subject matter, such that scholars have a difficult time placing it into a single stylistic category.

Wunderlich's expression of self was illustrated through his focus on the human figure. His manipulation of the human figure has led many art historians to classify his style as "Magic Realism." Due to the abstract nature of his work, there has been debate among European and American scholars as to whether his style should be classified as "Magic Realist" or "Surrealist." The majority of scholarship on Wunderlich from European scholars explicitly considers his...
work as Magic Realist based on characteristics laid out by Franz Roh’s “Magic Realist” manifesto.

Magic Realism began as a literary movement in the 1920s, but soon emerged within the visual arts. Franz Roh coined the term in 1925 in the book, *Magischer Realismus-Probleme der Europaischen Malerei*, which offered the first coherent definition of the term. The book included a list of twenty-two identifying qualities that constitute Magic Realist work. Roh’s defining characteristics that separated images of Magic Realism from other styles were mundane subject matter explored in a new setting, objects within the image clearly defined by crisp lines and colors, and a juxtaposition of setting and subject matter.

Magic Realism defines an artistic style that includes magical or illogical elements in scenarios that exist in realistic or “normal” settings. “Magic Realists try to convince us that extraordinary things are possible by simply painting them as if they exist…painters try to convince us that ordinary things are strange and that these things are painted because they are possible.” Franz Roh made a clear distinction between the term “magic” and “mystical” because of connotations attached to each word and the importance of magic to the stylistic movement. Magic was defined as describing something extraordinary beyond the earthly realm.

Qualities of Magic Realism are apparent in Wunderlich’s lithograph, *Paul, Halts Maul*. Wunderlich created this lithograph in 1967 when he was also working on a series of three paintings called *Angel with a Pointer Finger I, II, III*. After examining the series of paintings, it is evident that *Paul, Halts Maul* was taken directly from the third painting, *Angel with a Pointer Finger III*. The lithograph is clearly linked to the painting because it contains the same elongated, floating head. A finger breaks through the frame and pushes through the colored bands into the mouth of the floating head. The face does not react to penetration of the figure, but rather it stares straight ahead with minimal expression.

Although *Paul, Halts Maul* was only one detail of the larger painted image, the viewer can understand it as a multi-figured image because it was clear that the hand belongs to a body. Jensen notes that Wunderlich’s series was a departure from the single figure paintings of his previous work. If considering that the lithograph was directly linked to the painting, *Angel with a Pointer Finger III*, the hand is then, that of another figure. The connection between the two figures becomes more complex and dynamic in meaning. The hand can be understood as part of another body because of its color and the angle at which the hand enters the composition. Therefore, the characters in Wunderlich’s image make a physical connection of touch as the finger penetrates through the colored bands protecting the head.

Jensen suggests that Wunderlich’s lines surrounding the head were a type of aura that protects the head. Wunderlich placed the aura around the head to protect it from the penetrating finger. Once the finger passes through the aura, the head is no longer protected from external elements. Wunderlich pushes the finger through the frame and into the aura, but does not represent a reaction from the head. Interestingly, he does not continue the aura around the head in a full circle. The notion of the lines symbolizing a connection follows the concept in the original painting as the finger connects to the figure of an angel. Jensen argues that there is a double figural interaction, and reinforces Wunderlich’s new concept of double figure imagery. Their interaction is dynamic rather than static because Wunderlich intended for the viewer to see the physical connection between the two and construct a meaning through that relationship.

The relationship and connection of multiple figures never evolved through Wunderlich’s career. Instead, he recycled the oblong shape of the head for both males and females. This distinguished shape became a staple for many other series he created, as he dressed the profile in different costumes and various poses to evoke new meaning from the same shape. He also exaggerated the distances between facial features found in anatomically accurate human heads. The ear is set farther back, the eye and eyebrow almost touch, the nose and mouth are disproportionally close, and the chin is elongated. Similarly, the hand is exaggerated in that it is disproportionate to the size of the head and the wrist is too slender to support the bulkiness of the knuckle, while the finger is too thin compared to the size of the hand.

This type of figural distortion is a staple in Wunderlich’s work, and it allowed him to manipulate subject matter in a relationship with its setting. *Paul, Halts Maul* demonstrates Wunderlich’s ability to create images with the characteristics that Franz Roh addressed in his manifesto.

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Marc Chagall (1887–1985),
Russian-French
Chichikov and Sobakevich Discussing Business, Les Âmes Mortes (Nicolas Gogol), 1948
Etching on paper
(paper size) 14 7/8 x 11 1/8 in.
Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin
1969.1.12.38

Marc Chagall (1887–1985),
Russian-French
In the Church, Les Âmes Mortes (Nicolas Gogol), 1948
Etching on paper
(paper size) 14 3/4 x 11 3/8 in.
Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin
1969.1.12.90


18 Wechsler, “Magic Realism: Defining the Indefinite,” 293.

19 Wechsler, “Magic Realism: Defining the Indefinite,” 293.


24 Jensen, *Paul Wunderlich*, 63-64.


26 Jensen, *Paul Wunderlich*, 63.
For many Magic Realists, there was not just one meaning behind their work that they wished viewers to see, but instead the viewers had the freedom to interpret the imagery however they wanted. Paul Wunderlich said that, “to stimulate is, in any case, a form of communication, and it is an enormous achievement. But every feeling, every interpretation is equally valid. Interpretation is not my job.”

Even though Wunderlich may allude to particular themes in his work, the meaning is still vague enough to allow room for the viewer to draw his or her own conclusions.

Wunderlich uses objects from reality as guidelines within his work, but depicts them in his own personal style. As seen in his lithograph, Joanna Dreaming of Bismarck, Wunderlich took objects from reality and manipulated them into an ambiguous composition. The scene is minimalistic in its content and detail, which does not give a clear indication of place or time, although the presence of furniture and design imply that the scene takes place indoors. A majority of the print consists of non-occupied space in the upper left area, therefore the viewer’s eye is drawn elsewhere, first focusing on Joanna’s head to the right. It appears that there is a wall decoration hanging directly behind her head. The focus on her head is accentuated by the diagonal crisscrossing lines that intersect right where her head is placed. In the lower right section of the lithograph, there is a woman lying in a large chair, but all that we can see of the figure is her head, arm, and feet because the rest of her body is hidden behind the arm rest. The chair in which she lies, is the most dominating object within the lithograph while the subject, Joanna, is secondary when it comes to the chair. On the floor there is a zebra-skinned rug that appears to continue underneath the chair and runs off the edge of the frame to the left.

All of the objects depicted in Joanna Dreaming of Bismarck are examples of some of the motifs Wunderlich uses in his art. After 1964, especially, when he started to model his work after the photographs done by his future wife, Karin Székessy, we start to see his use of these particular objects as motifs, such as zebra-skins, the female nude, and chairs, all of which have been altered and stylized. The only realistic depiction of an object from the photos is the wall paneling in the background. The design on the wall consists of lines repeated with crisp accuracy, which contrasts with the exaggerated portrayal of the other objects. This distinctive difference is continuous throughout his work, where ambiguous subject matter is placed within an enclosed setting. After seeing photographs and prints side by side, it becomes evident that there is a direct correlation between Székessy’s photographs and his work.

The viewer can see Wunderlich toying with reality in Joanna Dreaming of Bismarck. By blending one object into another, it appears as if they are united to create one larger entity. It looks as if the floor has been tilted upright to flatten the space by putting the rug, chair, and woman all on the same plane. This type of artistic freedom is the reason for Wunderlich’s vague imagery and it is the reason why the viewer questions what he or she is looking at because it is visually unclear. Without ever seeing Wunderlich’s other works, one might think that the chair is a large dress, but after examining his other works where this chair is repeatedly used, it becomes evident what he intended it to be. Similarly, the zebra-skinned rug, at first glance, looks like an ambiguous design, but we know it is a zebra skin because Székessy used it as a prop in much of her own work, as a study of her photographs readily reveals.

It is also known that Wunderlich repeatedly used the same names within his titles, such as ‘Karin,’ ‘Joanna,’ and ‘Ursula.’ Knowing that Wunderlich was not only highly influenced by Karin Székessy’s work, but also had married her in 1972, it can be suggested that the repetitive use of the name, ‘Karin,’ within his titles, is in reference to his wife. The majority of his titles are in German but Joanna Dreaming of Bismarck happens to be in English, for reasons unknown. It is not certain, however, whether Joanna was an actual person within Wunderlich’s life, but his title, Joanna Dreaming of Bismarck, suggests that he could be referencing the relationship between the former German Chancellor,
Otto von Bismarck and Bismarck’s wife, Johanna von Puttkamer. One possible reason to suggest otherwise is the fact that he does not spell ‘Joanna’ like Bismarck’s ‘Johanna.’ But, if we were to assume that Wunderlich is referencing the German Chancellor and his wife, Johanna, it is puzzling that Wunderlich chose to depict the less popular of the two. Otto von Bismarck was the first Chancellor of Germany in 1890 after the German Empire had been formed, while his wife, Johanna, who was not famous at all, was his obedient and nurturing wife who stayed at home.4

Looking further into the relationship between Johanna and Bismarck, it is known that he was rarely at home where his wife and family were, but traveled on business frequently. Johanna was a constant in his life who was always there when he needed her, but when he was away, she waited obediently for his return while tending to their children. Johanna Dreaming of Bismarck, in many ways, represents the dynamics of their marriage. Wunderlich’s Joanna is enclosed indoors, and the title says she is “dreaming” of Bismarck as one would imagine her doing during her days at home, during her husband’s absence.

In conclusion, we can suggest that Wunderlich had a fascination with Johanna von Bismarck because of how much the name ‘Joanna’ is repeated throughout his work. But, as he stated, he doesn’t believe in one “correct” or intrinsically linked meaning in his images. Instead, they are open for interpretation.5

Magic Realism characterized the return to realism within art after years of Expressionism’s detachment from the real. Franz Roh described how Post-Expressionist painting of the 1920s returned to a renewed delight in real objects even as it integrated the formal innovations and spiritual thrust of Expressionism, which had shown an exaggerated preference for fantastic, extraterrestrial, remote objects.6 Wunderlich displays an interest in creating a world of ‘fantastic’ and ‘extraterrestrial’ caliber within his work by using his freedom to manipulate reality. By doing so, Wunderlich’s depiction of reality becomes dream-like. We can explore another world through his imagery because Wunderlich’s surreal rendition of reality transports us to another realm of possibilities.7

5 Jensen, Paul Wunderlich, 176.
7 Jensen, Paul Wunderlich, 60.
The style, Magic Realism, in which Paul Wunderlich created Die Stuhl, began in literature. One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez is notably the most famous work of Magical Realist writing. Franz Roh, a German, was the first to name the genre in 1925. The simplest way to understand this style is the presence of illogical or “magical” elements in realistic settings. Magical Realist writers would create very clear, well-defined texts that, because of the intense nature of the writing, would eventually lead to ambiguous situations. Roh stressed that this kind of realism was “magical” and not “mystical” because the mysterious ambiguity present in the writing never entered the representational world; it lay dormant beneath. By grounding a work in reality, the writer keeps mysterious and magical elements from being dismissed as part of a supernatural world. Marquez, for example, used fantastical elements like flying carpets in One Hundred Days of Solitude, but said that he was able to write about magical elements by looking at reality.

Magical Realist artists aim to heighten their senses until they are able to intuit “imperceptible subtleties of the external world.” Magical Realism is not to be confused with Surrealism. Surrealists wanted to change how realities were perceived, because they upheld the belief that everyone suppressed the real, “true” emotions that should create reality. On the other hand, Magical Realists wanted to take hold of the real circumstances that created inherent mysteries within reality. Another way in which Magic Realists departed from Surrealists is that they were not concerned with Freudian psychologies of dreams, memories, and individual experiences, but rather with a sense of “collective relatedness” that can be attributed to the psychologist, Carl Jung.

As a visual artist involved with the Magic Realists, Paul Wunderlich was inspired by these same principles in his own work. The etching, Die Stuhl, is a good example of how realistic and magical elements are combined in the same plane. The setting of the etching is a room in which a floor and wall are depicted in accurate perspective and a realistic environment is created. A chair in the center of the room holds a ghostly human figure. We know that Wunderlich cared about the pure human form and that after he married his wife, Karin Székessy-Wunderlich, who is a photographer, her nude photographs of the female form led him to value the pure, unified human figure.

At first glance, the chair appears ordinary but it then becomes obvious that this chair could hold no real weight as the narrowest part of the chair legs rest on the floor. Die Stuhl, the chair, presents many “magical” issues because it is not clear whether the human figure is sitting in the chair or not. The seat of the chair is unoccupied but the left arm extends across the armrest, and the back of the chair and the figure are aligned.

In this etching, Wunderlich creates an environment that combines the magical and the real. The realistic setting combined with the chair that could never truly exist creates a sense of uncertainty while the mysterious somehow grounds the viewer in reality. It is unclear which realm the figure inhabits; possibly it is both the magical and the real, but it is made clear to the viewer that the human figure is important. The main figure itself is off to the side of Die Stuhl, but its rigid fingers are emphasized by their black color and are centered in the work, suggesting a deeper meaning. Wunderlich takes two simple figures, a chair and a human,
and represents them in such an unusual way that the viewer’s mind can move back and forth between conceptual and fictional space quite fluidly. As “the most immaculate printer in Germany,” Wunderlich has a penchant for the power of the line. Wunderlich’s sense of line is brilliant; valuing the human form, he can create the illusion of real muscle and flesh using only line. The profile of the figure on the chair is all the viewer is given, and while little is known about the figure, the viewer could believe that figure really exists. Both of the figure’s arms cover the arms of the chair and the opaque hands suggest that they possess weight and form. Line is the most significant element of this etching; line makes up every element of Die Stuhl. Combining his etching skills and awareness of the human body, Wunderlich creates a figure that engages the viewer’s mind. These lines create a figure that is fluid and graceful, but also grotesque, with missing body parts, a hunched back, disappearing legs, and gnarled, purposeful hands.

Since Wunderlich is so consciously aware of human anatomy he has the power to rip apart figures and “visually devour” his subjects. The viewer can see the parts of the figure separately and also as parts of a whole. As the subject is examined by the viewer, they are visually stimulated by the juxtaposition of the beautiful human form and grotesque anatomical parts: the figure appears both delicate and threatening. Wunderlich’s use of juxtaposition creates alertness in the viewer’s mind and a balance is formed. The viewer is forced to explore how this figure could exist on this chair, only to find out that it might not. Wunderlich creates a difficult situation for the viewer. Calling himself a “wizard,” a “magician,” a “doctor,” and an “entertainer,” Wunderlich creates complicated situations that contradict ideas about what is real. Magical Realism creates a situation that compares the real and the magical, allowing both realms to exist together and be understood.

Wunderlich said that he creates art because he has passed the point where it is possible for him to stop; Wunderlich’s work makes him feel ill at ease, but he feels forced to continue creating this type of work. The message is that Wunderlich is aware that he constructs uncomfortable situations, but he does so in order for the viewer to be able to draw meaning from the work. In creating works for himself, Wunderlich creates for the viewer as well. By driving images from his own mind, Wunderlich hopes the imagery can take on meaning for the viewer as well.

Wunderlich’s artistic goal is complex. Using juxtapositions of the real and the magical, the graceful and the grotesque, he wishes to create an unprotected place. This is a place where everything can come together: love, hate, desire, rejection…all troubles, social and political, are combined in a singular place. This place is vulnerable, and Wunderlich believes it is something everyone tries to compensate for: it holds all emotions and personal dilemmas. It is a place to hide and forget about one’s self. This intricate idea can be seen as a result of growing up within the context of the Second World War. He was 19 years old when the War ended. The loss of the War ripped apart the German identity as the country itself was physically separated. People were disillusioned; everything had to be reevaluated. And this is exactly what Wunderlich did.

2 Zamora and Faris, Magic Realism, 121.
3 Zamora and Faris, Magic Realism, 120.
4 Zamora and Faris, Magic Realism, 123.
5 Zamora and Faris, Magic Realism, 183.
10 Jensen, Paul Wunderlich, 181.
12 Steele, “Wunderlich Show,” 8.
13 Jensen, Paul Wunderlich, 181.
14 Jensen, Paul Wunderlich, 181.
Salvador Dali’s extensive career spanned seventy years, a variety of media, and several stylistic movements. Born on May 11, 1904 in Figueras in Catalonia, Spain, Dali began his artistic career at age thirteen, enrolling in drawing courses at the local art school. In his early years, Dali experimented with different stylistic movements such as Impressionism and Cubism, but determined that previous artists had exhausted the inventiveness of each movement. Dali wanted to be a part of a new and innovative movement. After his expulsion from multiple academies in Madrid and Barcelona throughout the 1920s, Dali and his wife, Gala, went to Paris where Dali met André Breton. This meeting was life altering for Dali, changing his perspective of art and beginning his distaste for academies and “formal art.”1

His relationship with André Breton, the leader of the Surrealist movement and writer of the Surrealist Manifesto, 1924 became apparent in Dali’s work. Dali soon became a prominent member of the Surrealist movement, claiming that, “[t]he difference between Surrealists and [him] is that [he] is Surrealist.”2 Dali’s personal eccentricities contributed to the creation of much of his work and artistic vision. Strongly influenced by dreams, hallucinations, and the idea of the subconscious, Dali’s work took on an imaginary quality. Drawn to the Surrealist approach of portraying an idea or thought, Dali reproduced his eccentric mind in his art. In the mid-1930s, Dali’s radical political ideas began to appear in his work. Therefore, when he began focusing on depicting “Hitler’s soft, fleshy back, which was always so tightly strapped into uniform,”3 his fascination with form was mistaken for Nazi sympathy. Not wanting Dali’s scandalous work to be associated with the Surrealist movement, Breton and other outraged members drafted a letter for the removal of Dali from the movement, stating “Since Dali has been guilty of counter-revolutionary activity involving the celebration of fascism under Hitler, the undersigned purpose is that he be considered a fascist element and be excluded from the Surrealist and opposed with all possible means.”4 This controversy divided the movement and eventually caused a permanent separation between Dali and the Surrealists in 1934. After this severance, although his style remained Surrealist, Dali referred to himself as a “Paranoiac Mystic.”5 Dali went on to publish his own Mystic Manifesto in 1951 in which he stated, “in order to remain above corruption, ecstasy should be the mould for the vision of matter constantly in the process of dematerialization and disintegration thus revealing the spirituality of all matter.”6

Dali was both saddened and horrified by the social climate of the 1940s and 1950s in the aftermath of World War II and the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan. Dali describes his fascination with atomic science in saying, “The atomic explosion of 6 August [1945] shook me seismically. Thenceforth, the atom was my favourite food for thought.”7 This event began what was later referred to as Dali’s “Atomic Period,” in which he experimented with the breakdown and reconstruction of the image. Dali was attempting to illustrate the components of matter, both by breaking them apart and bringing them back together.”8 According to art historian, Joan Kropf, the images Dali created during this time are representative of the “artist’s multifaceted understanding of a variety of topics and his ability to combine them in innovative ways.”9 Dali’s Atomic period highlights the depiction of energy in much of his work. Dali stated that, “it is energy that comes from the neutrons released during the nuclear chain reaction which are seen bursting out of every possible container, even out of the larynx.”10 This period is roughly

Salvador Dali, Cosmic Madonna, 1981

by Caitie Barrett
dated from 1945-1960, encompassing the end of World War II and the fifteen years of its aftermath.

The 1951 painting, Raphaelesque Head Exploding, reflects the idea of the breakdown of the image. In this image, Dali used a famous Renaissance painting, Madonna of the Goldfinch (1506) by Raphael, in which he reversed the direction of the Madonna's head tilt, and placed the dome of the Pantheon in the top of her head. The Cosmic Madonna is a 1981 lithograph based on this painting. Aside from medium, the only alteration Dali made to the image was changing the tonal variation from a warm, red-based color to a cooler blue-green. The change of title could be explained by a comment that Dali made regarding an oddly colored dream. He explained that his dream was normal except for a change of color from natural to unnatural and he referred to this change as a "cosmic dream" because of the change in palette.11

The imagery in the Cosmic Madonna reflects a combination of Dali's personal experiences, thoughts, and ideas. The image itself is the Madonna created out of small, indecipherable pieces, all placed together but not touching. Without the title, the viewer cannot tell if the pieces are exploding outward or coming together. The most obvious symbol is that of the Madonna, likely representing religion, which Dali struggled with throughout his life. Having an atheist father and a devoutly Catholic mother instilled an internal conflict within Dali that he depicted in his art. Dali believed that, "to believe in nothing led inevitably to non-representational, non-figural painting. Those who believed in nothing would paint nothing—or very nearly nothing."12 Most of Dali's thoughts, feelings, and actions were reproduced in his work, and his main concern, regarding religion in particular, was the toll that atheism would take on his work.

The Madonna has the dome and oculus of the Pantheon in her head. This imagery contrasts with ideas of religion, juxtaposing two of the most recognizable religious symbols: Raphael's Madonna and the ancient Pantheon. The Madonna is clearly a Christian image while the Pantheon could provide the contrast since it was originally a pagan temple. However, in the seventh century, Pope Boniface IV converted the Pantheon to what became a prominent Catholic church, which still provides Christian services.13 In the late 1940s, Dali spent a significant amount of time in Rome where he had an audience with the Pope in 1949. This experience revived his religiosity and fascination with Renaissance art.14

Science and the concept of modernity are also crucial themes in the Cosmic Madonna. Not only does the title suggest his fascination with the cosmos and modernity, but also the imagery hints at this interest. Dali studied chemistry and was interested in the creation of the atom bomb and the breakdown of the atom, which is reflected by the breakdown of the Madonna's head into small, unique rhinoceros horns. These horns are also the product of Dali's scientific study of the Golden Section. The ancient Greek philosopher, Pythagoras, used a quadratic equation to define the geometric relationship of rectangles.15 When calculated, this equation comes to a repeating irrational number rounded to 1.61803397. Many Renaissance artists used this equation in their work because it was considered a perfect, abstract, and divine proportion. Dali took this mathematical equation and translated the irrational number into an image resembling a rhinoceros horn rather than rectangles.16 It is this mathematically-inspired horn that, in hundreds of different variations and sizes, constructs the head and face of the Virgin.

While not all of the distorted forms are rhinoceros horns, only a few others have a recognizable shape. The only obvious shape is a stretched wheelbarrow positioned in the lower left corner. This image is not simply a random wheelbarrow, but is inspired by yet another unrelated interest of Dali. He was especially fascinated with Jean-François Millet's painting, The Angelus, 1857, which portrays a husband and wife with a wheelbarrow in a field. According to Dali this painting was the most "erotic" in the catalog of art history, defining erotic as "that which is divine and provides an opportunity."17 The wheelbarrow is the opportunity of which Dali speaks. It appears not only in Cosmic Madonna, but also in another 1951 painting entitled Wheelbarrows, which is very similar to Raphaelesque Head Exploding. Wheelbarrows also contains a figure in which Dali places the Pantheon dome within the head. This figure, however, is not the recreation of a famous image like the Madonna because it has no face. The distorted forms are all wheelbarrows instead of a combination of shapes, making the distinction of any specific details or facial features difficult to see. Because these images were created in the same year, it is possible that the effect of Dali's stay in Italy in the presence of much of the work by the masters he admired, influenced his own work.

Raphaelesque Head Exploding is probably the best example of what scholars now refer to as "Atomic Dali," in that it codifies Dali's interest in Renaissance art, his new scientific understanding, and reintroduces his paranoiac-critical method which had been absent from several preceding paintings.18 Why Dali waited thirty years to reproduce the Raphaelesque Head Exploding in lithography is unknown.
Born in Barcelona in 1893, Joan Miró grew up in Spain's Catalan province. Miró would often mention that growing up there enabled him to study traditional Catalan art in The Art Museum of Catalonia, which was a great influence in his art. Miró studied at an art school in Barcelona under the painter Francisco Gali. In 1917, he met the Dadaist painter, Francis Picabia, who opened up the influence of avant-garde ideas from Paris for Miró. Through this influence of avant-garde ideas, Miró quickly became convinced that poetry and painting were inseparable.1 By 1919 Miró would move to Paris and join forces with this avant-garde, bringing with him his Catalan roots.2

The Surrealists believed that history was already in us, and that we could tap into ourselves through dreams and the subconscious and come up with the wellsprings of art. André Breton defined the Surrealist movement in his 1924 Surrealist Manifesto as, “Pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, either verbally or in writing, the true function of thought. Thought dictated in the absence of all control exerted by reason, and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations.”3 The aesthetic and moral preoccupations of the traditional art academy were rationalized with scientific formulas such as perspective. Breaking free of these preoccupations, the Surrealists coined the slogan, “assassinate art.” Miró’s etching, Cuivre rayé après tirage (Copper scratch after drawing), exemplifies this Surrealist-influenced slogan.4 Miró speaks of his brief involvement with the Surrealists as, “We read a lot of poems, I was in a realm of pure poetry and that helped me get beyond the purely pictorial issue and get beyond painting.”5 In this reminisce, Miró alludes to the Surrealist emphasis on the unseen that lies beyond the supposed rationality of purely representational painting. For him, “assassinate art,” was not about abolition, but about getting back to the wellsprings of art.

Miró often discussed an exercise he would perform under the guidance of his first art instructor, the Catalan artist Francisco Gali. Miró explains this exercise as a pivotal moment in his artistic development. In this exercise, Gali would blindfold Miró and make him feel an object that he would have Miró draw from this tactile memory.6 This exercise reduced the importance of the visible content in painting by allowing Miró to explore other sensory effects of experience. Following this example, Miró continued to broaden the use of other sensory effects in his art, particularly the effect of touch. Miró achieved this effect through experimenting with a broad variety of media. In the early 1900s, Miró veered into working with media that included sandpaper, cardboard, and other atypical materials. In 1932, Miró expressed the desire to “try my hand at sculpture, ceramics or graphic work, or to have a press. And also try, as far as possible, to go beyond easel painting...”7 It is with this interest in broader media, that Miró moved into different formats, and particularly etchings such as Cuivre rayé après tirage.8

Miró’s etching eliminates perspective and instead places forms in a flat space. His forms are far from straightforward, objective representations and instead, draw from his own vocabulary of conceptual signs.9 His outlined treatment of these forms, or “vocabulary,” is like the alphabet, while still maintaining a subjective roughness with his stitch-like line. Miró used the technique of soft-ground etching to create his “stitched line.”10 With this technique, Miró created a sense of visual touch and texture to his line. This treatment of line is not only a means to the representation of figure, but also is an individual quality in its journey through the etching’s space. This individual quality of his line can be seen especially in the mesh of dotted line farthest to the right in the etching. Miró’s sensitive line creates something dynamic in this etching so that it is not merely black and white, but varies in texture and gradient. His line-like poetry can be seen to work as a metaphor while still carrying out...
biomorphic vocabularies. “Biomorphic” is a free-formed and free-flowing treatment of line suggestive of a living being.

The idea of free-form line is something Miró would have most likely picked up from working with Stanley William Hayter’s print shop, “Atelier 17.” This print shop was famous for its experimental work with prints. Hayter worked with each artist individually.1 Given this environment, it can be assumed that Hayter would have had a great influence on Miró’s technique. Hayter himself used automatic drawing directly in his prints. This revolutionary technique allowed prints to move away from their traditional use as a media manipulated for their reproductive ability alone. Hayter explained that, “Nearly every tool or process we’ve found was already used, some as far back as the 15th century…What’s interesting is not the operation itself but the purpose to which it is put by each artist.”12 Miró’s purpose in etching was also to work with the material directly. The presence of his hand is never questioned. We see the stitched line carved freehand into the copper plate, with the elimination of any hard-edged geometric form. Every element in this etching is biomorphic, or suggestive of life, from the zigzagged creature at its base to the floating figure to the right.

_Cuivre rayé après tirage_ was one of five etchings first executed at Atelier 17 in 1947 and later printed in the art magazine, _Behind the Mirror_.13 The background in this etching was treated with the open biting technique accidentally developed by Max Ernst in Hayter’s studio. Miró’s use of this technique is considered one of the most successful amongst the artists of Hayter’s New York studio. The rough, pebbly surface of the etching is the result of bubbles of gas formed during the chemical reaction of metal and acid. With this technique, Miró created a muted, decaying, and entropic climate for his background. This climate works well against the white areas, such as the main body of the figure to the left, which is treated with an additional protective varnish.14 The way in which Miró worked this material shows a great involvement with the plate. Furthering this involvement, Miró placed the title, _Cuivre rayé après tirage_ on the lower right axis of his etching. Extending from this title is a line that cuts across the lower right corner. This line is the copper scratch found in Miró’s verbal title. Addressing the copper material alongside the objects of this composition relates the technical process of creating the etching to the objects represented in the etching. Here, Miró was very involved with the material, drawing directly onto his prints in the same way Hayter did through his automatic process. In this etching, Miró was sensitive to the workings of his material rather than merely using the material as a means of transcribing an image from a pre-conceived sketch.15

By 1947, Miró was reunited with Hayter in New York. Within this year, Miró would have worked with Hayter at his new Atelier 17 location in the New School of continuing education.16 The New York Atelier was a sort of refuge for European artists and acted as a substitute for the Parisian cafés to which they were accustomed. Miró would have spent afternoons at the New School, while its faculty were emphasizing psychology and psychiatry in their curriculum. Professors such as Ernst Kris taught courses with titles such as, “Problems in the Social Psychology of Art” and “Art and Society: Some Psychological Approaches.”17 The Surrealist emphasis on the “unconscious mind” was ever present at the New School. In line with this emphasis on the unconscious was the theory of “Gestalt” formulated by one faculty member, Max Wertheimer, between 1940 and 1941. In this theory, Wertheimer had ambiguity as his subject. In _Cuivre rayé après tirage_, we see something similar to this ambiguity in Miró’s treatment of the figure. Miró’s sensitivity to line creates varying textures and gradients that unite with his empty spaces, forming a jarring composition. What is jarring about this composition is the ambiguity of forms that could suggest multiple readings. A comparison between the left-most figure with other motifs in this work seems to draw out a pictorial language representative of the female form. In particular, the image of a vulva appears as a split ovular shape inside the left body’s delineated, circular mass. This way of treating the vulva is reminiscent of Paleolithic cult figures of maternal fertility goddesses.18 While the female-like form to the left comes forward through comparison with other works by Miró, the initial focus in the composition is not entirely consistent with this reading. At first glance, the viewer’s eye seems to focus on the large empty body of this form. This body is the brightest and largest empty space in the composition. Again, by treating this area with a protective varnish, Miró was able to control the spread of the open biting in the background. Therefore, with this attention to the body, the space has the potential to form a face-like picture with the two “V-shapes” as eyes, and the vulva-like form as the mouth. As the viewer’s eye relaxes into the rest of the composition, the whole female form comes out through the stitched line extending from the top of this body. Professor Ernst Kris of the New School discusses this aesthetic ambiguity in his 1952 book, _Psychoanalytic Expressions in Art_. In this book Kris explains, “…the primary process exhibits to a striking degree the tendency to focus in a single symbol a multiplicity of references and thereby fulfill at once a number of emotional needs.”19 Miró’s ambiguity in his etching is entirely purposeful. Using this ambiguity, Miró positively challenges our perception.

In the later 1900s, Miró claimed to have wanted to further “immediate expression.”20 He treated subject matter even more aggressively with an almost total elimination of figure into a few, brash lines. His technical approach attacked
the material, thickening his line and defying his earlier precision and detail.\textsuperscript{21} By 1968, Miró was translating the near-relief work of etching into his new material: cement. His work became more automatic as the line entirely took precedence as its own form. In \textit{Cuivre rayé après triage}, we see Miró beginning this process by creating ambiguity. While his image still seems to remain figural, the composition’s multiple references can create a response that is seemingly personal to the viewer. While the viewer at first finds a face in the body of the female figure, this initial perception is reverted back into the subconscious and replaced with a full figural reading of “female.” While still guided by texture and figure, Miró deliberately confuses us with the contradictions of his composition. The internal ambiguity of his figural motifs works like a poetic metaphor. In \textit{Cuivre rayé après triage}, Miró forms his visual poetry through the metaphor inherent in his repeated confusion of motifs.

2 Penrose, \textit{Miró}, 22.
5 Penrose, \textit{Miró}, 73.
6 Rose, \textit{Miró in America}, 12.
9 Rose, \textit{Miró in America}, 12.
11 Moser, \textit{The Significance of Atelier 17…}, 21.
12 Moser, \textit{The Significance of Atelier 17…}, 124.
15 Moser, \textit{The Significance of Atelier 17…}, 15.
16 Moser, \textit{The Significance of Atelier 17…}, 14.
17 Moser, \textit{The Significance of Atelier 17…}, 129.
18 Rose, \textit{Miró in America}, 17.
21 Malet, \textit{Joan Miró}, 22.
In 1952, at the age of sixty-three, Marc Chagall was in Paris at the studio of Fernand Mourlot learning how to produce color lithographs. Throughout Chagall's long career, he frequently used graphic media, especially lithography, but it wasn't until the early 1950s that he learned to perfect this difficult medium. Chagall went to Mourlot to learn how to integrate color into his lithographic images. Christopher Conrad says in his essay on Chagall's lithography, “...[Chagall] could integrate the one element he had previously always missed in his graphic art: color.”

Prior to working with Mourlot, Chagall produced color lithographs, but was not involved in the portion of the process that used color. Instead, he would draw the image on a special kind of transfer paper, and then send it to the printers. Chagall's lithography career began in Berlin in the 1920s. There, he produced images that ranged over a variety of subjects. He made about thirty images and several drawings in lithograph crayon. However, according to Conrad, “Not until...1946 did Chagall turn again to lithography.”

Chagall was in America at this time and when he returned to Paris in 1950, he finally learned the technique of color lithograph printing. *Le Coq Rouge (The Red Rooster)* was created at the end of Chagall's period in Mourlot's studios. The image clearly shows Chagall's beginning experimentation with color lithography—the image is bold, yet the color palette is simple, with only four colors including the black outlining. Charles Sorlier, a master printer and long-time colleague of Chagall, described his method of working as similar to the way he painted: “Chagall draws on the lithograph stone just as he paints on his canvas.” Chagall blurred the divide between different types of media. In his foray into color lithography, he kept his style the same: bold figures and bright colors, deliberate rejection of perspective and realistic colors, and lack of formal composition. Mira Friedman points to Russian Icons as the inspiration for Chagall's stylistic qualities. She wrote that he “deliberately ignore[d] the academic laws of perspective...disperses images and scenic fragments...” The lack of perspective and deconstructed composition are also common to Russian Icons, which Chagall was surrounded by in his childhood. In *Le Coq Rouge*, Chagall disregarded perspective completely. The rooster is much larger than the two figures in the background, taking up the majority of the picture plane. The figures in the background, however, are proportional to each other and are completely flattened. The only suggested perspective comes from the ratio of the rooster to the greenery in the foreground.

Another quality of Russian Icon painting that Friedman invoked was Chagall's use of color: “His glowing colours too have their roots in the colouristic tradition of Russian art.” Even though the colors that Chagall used in this lithograph are simple, they are bright and bold. She said that the “[j]oy of colour...are reminiscent of icons.” The ‘joy’ in this lithograph can be seen in the simplicity and purity of the colors, and the bright tones. Conrad described the quality of color in Chagall's first color lithographs as “independent grounds alongside and behind the drawing, lending the entire composition an aethereal sketch-like quality.” While the color planes in *Le Coq Rouge* are clearly meant to describe the different objects and figures in the image, the color planes are also separate from the objects to which they belong. As Conrad says, they float independent of the drawing. Therefore, the coloring techniques in this image are part of Chagall's stylistic qualities rather than giving any explicit meaning to the imagery.

In Daphna Rix's article *Literal and Exegetic Interpretations in Chagall's “Song of Songs,”* she presented a possible meaning for the colors Chagall used. She wrote about a specific series of paintings done by Chagall in the 1950s. In this series, Chagall illustrated a portion of the Bible, but he used secular imagery to portray the specific passages. However, because of their proximity in time to *Le Coq Rouge*, we can assume that Chagall was thinking about similar themes and color ideas while making both *Le Coq Rouge* and the *Song of Songs* series. One image in particular is that of a pair of lovers, and the dominating color is red. Rix suggests that the red color is that of passion, and that it
makes it “...an implied erotic image...”\(^\text{10}\) The eroticism of the color red to reinforce the lovers’ passion in a painting does not make sense until one also learns that the rooster is a common symbol of fertility in the Jewish tradition, and is a prominent part of the marriage tradition: “The Babylonian Talmud (a sacred Jewish text)...states that a rooster and a hen were coupled on the wedding day, symbolizing the fertility of the bride and groom.”\(^\text{11}\) That the rooster was a common symbol of marriage and fertility in Jewish sacred texts, something that Chagall’s Jewish upbringing would have familiarized him with, gives one an immediate insight into *Le Coq Rouge*.

If the Rooster is a fertility image and Chagall was frequently depicting his wife in the early 1950s, we can assume that this image is a reference to her and their marriage. Rix also says that:

> The juxtaposition of the rooster and the couple becomes permanent and ubiquitous in Chagall’s work and from the early fifties on, whole sets of love scenes...depict the rooster side by side with lovers or a woman’s figure...\(^\text{12}\)

The reoccurrence of the image of a rooster and lovers leads us to believe that the figures in the background are lovers, and that this image can be seen to be about the love between the figures. The rooster also holds a second meaning as sexual love: “...the rooster and the hen were symbols of sexual activity as well...”\(^\text{13}\) This second interpretation of the rooster lends further possible meaning to this image. Not only is the more sacred love between the figures portrayed, but also the sexual nature of their relationship.

The female figure, possibly Bella Chagall, is the central focus of the image despite her small size compared to the rooster. She is the only figure that is not filled in with color and this highlights her distinction from the other figures. Her lack of color separates her from the other figures, but she remains fully in focus. The yellow figure wraps around the woman in a half moon shape. In other images by Chagall, yellow can be interpreted as relating to spirituality or God.\(^\text{14}\) However, in this image, because of the symbolic meaning of the rooster and relationship between the two figures, we cannot be so sure. It may be, however, that since Bella had passed away and this image was made in a time during which Chagall felt particularly nostalgic for her, that yellow may imply the transformed spiritual nature of their relationship. Chagall longs for Bella in the context of their marriage and relationship, but cannot have her.

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Jean Cocteau practiced art in almost every imaginable medium. He strove to explore the thoughts and emotions that he had experienced in his life. Translating ideas and emotions was part of the goal of the Surrealist movement that took flight in the 1920s, during Cocteau’s youth. Surrealism was based on the manifesto written by André Breton in 1924. Breton specifies that every moment in one’s life, good or bad, should exist as a continuum of experiences that are all opportunities to learn about one’s self and experience a reality that is individual.1

Psychologist Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theories and his book, *Interpretation of Dreams* (1913), shaped some fundamental aspects of Surrealism such as the emphasis on dreamscapes, the subconscious, and the practice of automatic drawing.2 The Surrealist aspiration to access hidden desires and emotions stems from the need to know what is “real” and “true” even if what is discovered is disturbing or pushes societal boundaries. Surrealism often focused on the issue of desire, and its artists believed that dreams revealed desires hidden within the subconscious. Automatic drawing was another method of accessing the subconscious, during which the artist allowed the pen or brush to flow across the page, unedited by conscious thought. Automatism does not concern itself with aesthetics; the artist is not reviewing the work or analyzing how images will look. The only goal is to unearth images from the unconscious.

Automatism emphasizes uncensored thought, and Surrealist artists were able to practice automatic drawing because they possessed the skills necessary to create the imagery that would communicate their ideas effectively. As Salvador Dali once said, “art should be as pure as lunatics,” for lunacy reveals the mysteries inside us, and by doing so, one will always paint the truth.3

Breton’s “Manifesto of Surrealism, 1924” places the movement in history because it is the first academic source that reveals the concepts and practices valued by the Surrealists. Surrealism questions how and what we know, what is hidden to one’s conscious mind, and how we gain knowledge of hidden truths. Surrealist imagery is not subjected to outside societal and cultural influences, but it was possible that an artist’s participation in culture and society would affect his thoughts, emotions, and desires.4

To a viewer, Surrealist works can be perceived as irrational and nonsensical, but by recognizing the imagery, the viewer is able to begin associating the work to the real, rational world. The concepts of “personal analysis” and “automatic imagery” imply a complete lack of control, but Surrealist art is, in fact, representative. The Surrealist artist is attempting to communicate with the viewer while still maintaining no preconceived idea of what he wants to express. Cocteau’s *Satyr* is a lithograph, a process that requires many steps, suggesting that *Satyr* was a deliberately conceived work.

*Satyr* is a compositionally diverse print that portrays the evidence of automatic drawing. Cocteau used a swift, decisive hand and the images certainly depict a landscape of desire. The kissing figures possess the quick lines suggestive of automatic drawing, implying that Cocteau might be portraying a personal experience. The artist was known for having an intimate relationship with his images, often mixing words with figures, and thus exemplifying his use of art as a means of communication.5 Cocteau’s writing style was, in his words, “rapid, hard, frugal…the idea gallops ahead. When it stops and looks back, it sees me trailing along behind. That makes it impatient. Off it goes…I belong to the moment.”6 *Satyr* demonstrates how Cocteau’s subconscious reveals an idea to his conscious mind that is then communicated to the viewer. Through the use of automatism, which assists in recovering subconscious thoughts and desires, ideas take on physical form.

The lithograph contains three coupled pairs, all kissing, and one sole figure on the left side of the page. The figure on the left side is the only one whose eyes are open, which is possibly suggestive of the fact he is the only figure that stands alone. The largest figures that occupy most of the center of the work look as if they could be one figure reflected in a
mirror, as there is a line dividing the two faces. The figures all have pointed lips, prominent noses, and a few have extruding tongues. Others also have horn-like objects extending from their heads or fish-shaped eyes. During the 1950s, Cocteau’s style became schematized and there was no longer a variety of subject matter. What remained was a single repeated face: a male shown in profile with a straight nose over a prominent mouth and fish-shaped eyes, as we see in Satyr. The horned figures are reminiscent of bulls and mythical creatures like satyrs and fauns. Cocteau used mythical imagery to express truths from his subconscious that preoccupied his mind. Cocteau was haunted by his obsessions and mythical objects allowed him the opportunity to present ideas that disturbed him in a non-threatening manner. Since mythological creatures do not represent reality, Cocteau was able to let his subconscious thoughts safely take shape.

In Annie Guedras’ book, Jean Cocteau: Erotic Drawings, she suggests that the projecting lips on the figures, a signature in Cocteau’s work, are those of Pierre Dargelos, a classmate she suggests that the projecting lips on the figures, a signature of his subconscious thoughts safely take shape. In this case, the desire to be like those whom he loved. These horns also symbolize the bull. Bulls were influential in Cocteau’s life given that he maintained a fifty-year friendship with Spanish artist Pablo Picasso, with whom he attended many a bullfight. Cocteau even befriended bullfighter Luis Dominguín, who became an actor in some of his plays. Cocteau’s erotic imagery might be a result of much time spent with Picasso. More specifically, bulls represent the virility and strength that Cocteau desired and which was exemplified by his close friend. The sexualized, mythical figures can be seen to represent Cocteau’s desires, that is, to be like those that he admired, such as Picasso.

The 1950s were Cocteau’s glory years. In his youth, he was cowardly and eager to please, but at this time he was an international celebrity. The modern media system had just become widespread and Cocteau’s face was everywhere. The public progressively craved more media appearances from Cocteau. Due to his celebrity status, his creativity suffered a bit of a “decrecendo” in the 1950s as his presence was mentioned much more often than his art. There are three identifiable drugs in the life of this artist. Cocteau’s first drug was self-awareness, the second was the drug of constant media attention, and the third was opium. During the 1950s when Satyr was printed, Cocteau was under the influence of all three of these potent drugs. The cloudy haze of opium in which Cocteau lived, he believed, was the only way to concern his thoughts with anything other than life and death.

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4 Jean Cocteau, Jean Cocteau: Erotic Drawings, ed. Annie Guédras (Köln, Germany: Benedikt Taschen Verlag, 1999), 5.
8 Cocteau, Jean Cocteau, 63.

10 Cocteau, *Jean Cocteau*, 11.

In 1912, Franz Marc painted *The Dream*. Pictured here is a lithograph of this painting. It appeared in an issue of *Derrière le Miroir*, an art magazine, in 1969 as an illustration of *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) art movement, of which Marc was a founder. The Blue Rider was founded in 1912 by Marc and Wassily Kandinsky. Its values were simple: to portray a new way of life and thinking about the universe, “a new world community and an altered definition of humanity… unity with the universe…”¹ In *The Blue Rider Almanac*, Marc writes clearly about the need for a new social order and how, in portraying their new ideas, Blue Rider artists should use a unified, abstract language of representation.²

Marc began painting in the late 1890s. He originally went to school to become a priest and then changed to the study of philosophy. Finally, he switched his studies to art. While he did not continue his religious studies, Marc remained religious his entire life and much of his writings reflect the influence of religion. In Marc Rosenthal’s biography of Franz Marc, he quotes the artist as having said, “You must not think I read the Bible poetically. I read it as truth…I see pure art as truth.”³ Marc meant that he stressed the spiritual and artistic values in the Bible rather than the literal truth of the stories. He also frequently referred to his art and the symbols in his art with a spiritual language.

In 1907, Marc married Maria Franck but left her on their wedding night to travel to Paris. In Paris, Marc’s style evolved dramatically from his academic beginnings. His early work was realistic, emphasizing the particular emotional qualities of the objects he portrayed. In Paris, he was exposed to Post-Impressionist artists, namely, Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Gauguin. Van Gogh, especially, had an impact on Marc, both in style and philosophy. According to Rosenthal, “Marc and Van Gogh were clearly kindred spirits. Each saw life in religious yet tortured terms, and each found transcendent effects in insignificant themes, echoing Symbolist notions… [Both] possessed the idea of the artist as a martyr.”⁴ Both Marc and Van Gogh painted ordinary scenes, using everyday objects to reflect a specific emotional message. For several years, Marc copied Van Gogh’s themes of outdoor farm life and his manner of painting. Around this time, Marc also started to paint animals. He especially showed an interest in the horse as a subject. Fredrick Levine’s book, *The Apocalyptic Vision*, attributes Marc’s continual fascination with the image of the horse to the fact that, “…the horse was a symbol of something [Marc] was not but which he longed to be, an ecstatic symbol of the life force, a potent surging being at one with the rhythm of the universe.”⁵ Marc’s desire to be one with the universe and at harmony with the world reveals itself through his writings and portrayal of animals. For Marc, the animal could have represented the ideal state of being. In fact, in Marcella Lista’s article, “Between Heaven and Earth,” she echoes this idea exactly: “…the purity to which modern man aspired could be attained at the unchanged sensibility at the heart of the animal life.”⁶

In 1911, Marc met Wassily Kandinsky in a group of artists called the Neue Künstlervereinigungmünchen (The New Artist’s Association of Munich). He and Kandinsky split off from this group after internal conflict to form The Blue Rider, but before they did, Marc had contact with several artists including the Fauves, who assisted in the development of Marc’s very specific theories about color. August Macke’s treatise on color theory especially influenced Marc. In fact, Marc’s writings about color theory are almost identical to Macke’s. Marc writes:

> Blue is the masculine principle, rugged and spiritual. Yellow is the feminine principle, gentle, joyful and sensual. Red is matter, violent and heavy; always the color that has to be fought and surpassed by the other two.⁷

He wrote extensively about these theories and included ideas about secondary colors as well. If one considers his ideas about what each color symbolized and then looks at his imagery, the vivid and strange colors reveal themselves to be significant rather than just aesthetically motivated.
Marc’s color choices are quite deliberate; he was thinking about the significance of colors when he painted.

During Marc’s involvement with The Blue Rider, his art evolved into something more abstract. He continued to use his color theories, but not as strictly. He also started to experiment with more abstract imagery while keeping his original goals the same. Rosenthal observes that, “…Marc’s thematic concerns remained intact; however, he had begun to develop a more abstract vocabulary to state them.”

Rosenthal also notes that in the midst of this movement towards abstraction, Marc had a period in 1912 where he became very interested in sleep and the dream state. He used it as a theme in several important works, like Atonement, Shepherds, and Sleeping Shepherdess. He also portrayed animals sleeping, most notably in Deer in the Forest and Horse Asleep. Rosenthal points out that sleep is something peaceful and positive, “…not a time of nightmares… [The] image of sleeping figures represents a paradisiacal scene of human-peace and spiritual….”

The peaceful dream coincides with Marc and The Blue Rider’s beliefs about a unity with the world; if one is in harmony with the universe, it will be as a peaceful dream.

The Dream comes from the period in Marc’s work where he was interested in the sleeping figure. He depicts a pink, seated female figure in the foreground surrounded by animals. To the left of the figure is a yellow architectural structure and a yellow lion. To the right are two blue horses. The background recedes into a hilly landscape with some suggestion of trees or a forest. Also in the background, larger than life, are two more horses: one red and one pink. What little suggestion of sky there is is extremely dark. Finally, in front of the figure is some sort of imaginative foliage. The first impression of the image reflects Rosenthal’s earlier quotation directly; this is not a nightmare, it is a peaceful dream. The female figure is the dreamer, at harmony with her environment. Her nudity shows her vulnerability. Her peaceful expression and meditative-like pose show that she is safe in this dream. The two large blue horses behind her are evocative of other horses that Marc painted. As Rosenthal remarks, “The male blue horse is contemplative and spiritual…”

The positioning of the horses and the dramatic turn of their heads is reminiscent of The Large Blue Horses, a painting that Marc created in 1911. With respect to this painting, Rosenthal says the horses are reminders of The Blue Rider ideals: “…the symbol of the horse [is] a vehicle for breakthrough, in the emphasis on the spirituality of blue, and in the idea of spirituality battling modernism.” The horses are dream apparitions that represent the values of spirituality that Marc was thinking and writing about. The other horses in the image also reflect spirituality, as they appear “…in an attitude one might call meditative: …bent towards the left and curled around themselves, they literally turn inwards.” The ‘turning inwards’ also reflects the meditative position of the female figure and the contemplative nature of the horse that Marc envisioned. In this context, one can suggest that the painting is Marc’s ideal vision of the world, namely, humanity in harmony with the universe.

The composition of the scene also supports the theory of harmony. The colors of the female figure are reflected in the hills behind her. The pink horse fades into the background, only appearing because of the dark contour lines. The other horses’ necks and backs are imitated by the diagonal lines and rolling hills. As Lista says, “…they [the animals] have acquired a graphic echo in the lines of the landscape…” In Rosenthal’s article, “Franz Marc’s Animalization of Art,” he points out that this harmony is “…typical of Marc’s mature work—animals arranged rhythmically, yet with each indicating an individual and potentially symbolic attitude.”

Finally, the lion and the building are both yellow, and the lion only stands out because of its contour lines, just like the pink horse. The lion leans backwards, which is also reflected in the lines of the roof of the building and even in some of the hills. The building has no immediate explanation other than to create a strange, dream-like setting for this scene. Finally, the strange foliage that the figure is seated upon also adds to the mystery and oddity of the image.

In The Blue Rider Almanac, Marc wrote three short essays that explained his ideas about the importance of both art and spirituality in shaping ideas of a culture. He wrote in the essay, “The Savages of Germany,” that the spirituality of The Blue Rider movement would help them to ‘overthrow’ culture: “In this time of the great struggle for a new art we fight like disorganized ‘savages’ against an old, established power. The battle seems to be unequal, but spiritual matters are never decided by numbers, only the power of ideas.”

Marc firmly believed in the power of ideas, especially spiritual ideas, to transform culture. He also recognized that to transform a culture is not an easy process: “New ideas are hard to understand only because they are unfamiliar. How often must this sentence be repeated before even one in a hundred will draw the most obvious conclusions from it?”

Marc was dedicated to ‘pure and genuine’ art: “like everything genuine, [art’s] inner life guarantees its truth. All works of art created by truthful minds without regard for the work’s conventional exterior remain genuine for all times.” Marc’s use of abstraction, colors, and forms are a reflection of his belief that the ‘exterior’ of a painting is second to the meaning imbued in it. In Marc’s art, the inner purpose is his desire for harmony in the universe and “…to evoke a new vision of spirituality.”


André Breton, a French writer, poet, and founder of Surrealism, articulated his theoretical definition of the movement in his *Surrealist Manifesto*, which was published in 1924. In this work, Breton defined Surrealism as,

Pure psychic automatism with which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.¹

Breton not only argued for one to banish reason and rationality, but he also made reference to the universality of Surrealism by stating that pure psychic automatism can be reached through writing and “any other manner.” Although Surrealism originally developed in the 1910s and early 1920s as a literary movement, it later flourished and evolved into a dynamic visual art movement. The literary and artistic style of Surrealism was heavily influenced by the nihilistic and irrational Dada period, a somewhat short-lived art movement that emerged during World War I.² Many Surrealist ideas and techniques stem from Dada’s understanding of irrationality, absurdity, and the unconscious. Dadaists believed that rationality and logic were the culprits of World War I. Dadaists, like Surrealists, attempted to reject the rational world in order to discover the irrational dimension, or the powerful realm of the unconscious or psyche. According to Surrealists, this side was closer to truth and much more revealing than reason.

Surrealism is usually divided into two aspects: biomorphic and naturalistic Surrealism. Biomorphic Surrealists, such as Joan Miró, depict scenes that barely suggest the presence of a human form. In these works, such as Miró’s 1953 untitled lithograph featured in this exhibition, Surrealists created organic or biomorphic shapes. Naturalistic Surrealists, on the other hand, such as the Spaniard Salvador Dali, depict identifiable scenes that are seeped in juxtaposition and abnormality.³ Dali proudly stated, “I revitalized subject matter to such an extent that the name Dali will remain synonymous with the sacred iconography of concrete irrationality.”⁴ Despite the dissociated images that are often the result of spontaneous actions or techniques, such as Dali’s paranoiac-critical method, a free-association device in which the artist would induce himself into hallucinatory states to access irrational and impulsive thoughts, most Surrealists of this particular school depict recognizable scenes based in naturalism. According to Dali himself, the artist attempted to “materialize the images of concrete irrationality with the most imperialistic fury of precision...in order that the world of imagination and of concrete irrationality may be as objectively evidence...as that of the exterior world of phenomenal reality.”⁵

Dali, one of the most well-renowned figures of the Surrealist movement, depicts dream-like scenes with absolute realism and clarity in which nonsensical images of the unconscious psyche are made accessible through his obsessive attention to detail and his ability to imitate closely the world around him. Born in Figueras, a small town in northern Catalonia on May 11, 1904, Dali was first introduced to Surrealism in 1928 when he met Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró in Paris.⁶ Before this meeting and prior to the formulation of Dali’s Surrealism, the artist spent years dabbling in a variety of artistic styles and gained extensive knowledge while working with Impressionism, Pointillism, Futurism, and

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Cubism. Dali learned these various styles while attending the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid from 1921 to 1925. He was later expelled when he claimed to know more than his teachers and refused to take his final exam.8

While Dali’s own style was heavily influenced by his studies of various artists, such as the meticulous Flemish painter Jan Vermeer, who experimented with color and exaggerated perspective, Dali grew disdainful of the modern art movement and called Paul Cézanne, for example, “a very dirty painter.”9 After Dali declared himself the savior of subject matter and had established himself as the front-runner of the Surrealist movement, he was expelled from the group in 1934 when Breton accused the unconventional artist of greediness and extremism.10

Although the rift between Dali and his fellow Surrealists was growing, Dali was able to establish his own individual and distinctive style. Dali’s images, such as the 1934 etching entitled The Grasshopper’s Child, not only display irrationality and juxtaposition, but also reflect naturalism in which Dali uses visual sharpness, clarity, and detail.

Dali’s The Grasshopper’s Child depicts an ambiguous environment that contains three figures who appear completely dissociated from one another. The grasshopper’s child stands in the middle of the work. His elongated head, which lies on a table, points to a naked male figure whose hands are placed on a phallic form that shoots off from the architecture. An eroticized female figure stands to the left of the grasshopper’s child. She is part human, part insect. Her sexual anatomy is emphasized, yet she does not have a head on the top of her body. Furthermore, blood appears to drip from her sides.

This bizarre work was created in 1934 after Dali was commissioned to produce etchings as illustrations to Comte de Lautreamont’s poem, Les Chants de Maldoror. Lautreamont, also known as Isidore Lucien Ducasse, was a French Uruguayan poet who wrote his poetic novel between 1868 and 1869. Lautreamont’s poem, which focuses on the basic themes of Surrealism, such as the refusal of logic and rationality, but this image also highlights the developing world of psychoanalysis and the significance of Sigmund Freud’s theories of the subconscious, dreams, and fear.

Dali was first introduced to Freud’s theories in 1921 while he was a student at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid. Upon reading Freud’s Die Traumdeutung (The Interpretation of Dreams), Dali emphatically claimed that the book “was one of the greatest discoveries of my life. I was obsessed by the vice of self-interpretation—not just of my dreams but of everything that happened to me, however accidental it might at first seem.”11

In The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud stated that there exists a direct connection between dreams and the unconscious mind. While the conscious mind prevents certain repressed images and thoughts from coming to the surface, the subconscious mind is free to express itself during sleep. Once asleep, the repressed feelings make their way out of the unconscious realm and into the world of dreams. Dreams, according to Freud, allow the subconscious mind to express its true desires.14

Dali not only described his work as “dream images,” but his paranoiac-critical method also reflects Freud’s theories. The method is a form of Freudian psychoanalysis in which Dali was able to experience repressed images and emotions by accessing deeper levels of the conscious. Dali expressed these repressed childhood memories in his 1934 etching, The Grasshopper’s Child. This image was not only influenced by Freud’s theories on dreams and the subconscious, but this work was also shaped by Freud’s ideas about anxiety and sexuality, which become two major themes in Dali’s etching. While eroticized figures and forms are scattered throughout this work, such as the ambiguous headless female and the phallic form that extends into the background, creating accelerated perspective, the grasshopper stands as the main symbol of Dali’s most irrational fear; this motif can also be linked to Dali’s obsession with sexuality.

Dali’s The Grasshopper’s Child reveals his fascination and fear of grasshoppers. Dali stated, “The story of this terror remains for me one of the greatest enigmas of my life.”13 The
male grasshopper figure who sits in the center of the work resembles the youth in Dali’s previous 1933 painting entitled Myself at the Age of Ten When I was the Grasshopper Child. There are similarities between these two works and it is helpful to examine the 1933 painting in order to gain insight into Dali’s 1934 etching. In the 1933 image, Dali depicts himself at the age of ten when he was a “grasshopper child.” In other words, Dali portrays himself as his own worst fear. Dali’s 1934 etching also reveals this same youthful figure, yet the image contains two forms not included in the 1933 painting. In The Grasshopper’s Child, Dali portrays a human male figure and a female grasshopper figure whose sexuality has been emphasized and distorted. Furthermore, this eroticized female figure appears to be in the position of attack. Dali was not the only Surrealist fascinated by the image of the grasshopper. Many other Surrealists used the grasshopper or praying mantis figure to express the negative female archetype, or the destructive nature of women. Depicting the female grasshopper reflects the image of the preying female or the castrating woman because grasshoppers are known to devour their sexual partner during or after sexual activity. This idea also reflects Freud’s castration theory, or the idea that a young boy will come to fear the loss of his private parts as a form of punishment.16

Although Dali’s The Grasshopper’s Child expresses ambiguity and the irrational thoughts that originated from Dali’s paranoiac-critical method, Dali portrays the illogical character central to the Surrealist movement. Although The Grasshopper’s Child is puzzling, it can be understood as a response to Freud’s theories and as a visual articulation of Dali’s most inner, illogical thoughts. Dali brings a “concrete irrationality”17 to his images by expressing his repressed feelings and childhood memories through the clarity of his line and his attention to detail.

7 Descharmes, Salvador Dali, 21.
10 Steven Harris, Surrealist Art and Thought in the 1930s (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20-21.
12 Carlos Rojas, Salvador Dali, or the Art of Spitting on Your Mother’s Portrait, trans. Alna Amell (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University, 1993), 156.
17 LaFountain, Dali and Postmodernism, 64.

by Blair Thompson

The Surrealist movement formed new visual concepts based on representing the non-representational. Writers and artists believed in “irrational elements, impossible associations and everything that defies simple logic and the physical laws of the universe.” Images relevant to the context of Surrealist art contain elements of the real world that are distorted into a new form while retaining the identifiable characteristics of that object. Surrealism overcomes the barrier between the subconscious world and conscious world, enabling the non-representational to have representation.

In 1924, André Breton wrote the “Manifesto of Surrealism” in which he defined the characteristics, qualities, and process by which artists and writers should create images or write in the Surrealist sensibility. Breton’s conception of the Surrealist movement constituted “the dictation of thought, in the absence of all control by reason, excluding any aesthetic or moral preoccupation.” When applying his method to literary theory, Breton described Surrealism as a constant written stream of subconscious thoughts, unmediated by the external, objective world. This process was known as “automatic writing” because the mind neglected aesthetics and punctuation, allowing for free thought in the absence of exterior construction. Automatic writing could also be enacted in drawing, which facilitated independence of the hand and mind. The term, “automatic,” implied the notion of doing without thinking and thus permitted the subconscious realm to be illustrated.

Breton claimed that Surrealism lacked concern for aesthetics and composition because it observed irrational object groups that did not function in the rational world. Surrealist artists did not completely negate aesthetics to illustrate the freedom of the mind, but used aesthetics to enhance irrationality by reinventing the way in which the viewer was to read the image. A grouping of objects may be illogical, but the placement of the objects and their association to one another was intentional. When viewing Surrealist art, the audience was encouraged to expect the unexpected and be challenged by visual cues. It is helpful to recognize that the purpose of Surrealist art was to confront the irrational when analyzing the etching by Salvador Dali, *L’Incantation* (1960).

*L’Incantation* was made in 1960 when Dali was working on illustrating the book, *Les Chants de Maldoror* by Lautreamont. Pierre Argillet, an avid art collector and publisher, established a working relationship and friendship with Dali in the late 1930s. Together, Argillet and Dali produced nearly 200 etchings throughout their relationship, including *L’Incantation*. In 1974, however, Argillet refused to accept Dali’s new type of photography-based etchings because he preferred the more traditional copper-based etchings. The photo-based etchings allowed for a greater number of productions, which enabled Dali to experiment with new subject matter that appealed to a larger group of people. The relationship of artist and collector had led to one of the greatest collections of Dali prints in the world. The collection is now permanently displayed in the Salvador Dali Museum in Figueras, Spain and it was also recently exhibited at The Russell Gallery in Austin, Texas. The collection contains a print of *L’Incantation*, which Dali revisited after the initial etching was printed. Sometime between 1960 and 1974, Dali added dry point colors to *L’Incantation*, but the etching examined here is still in its original 1960 black-and-white form.

During the 1960s, Dali was illustrating a book with copper-based etchings by the author, Lautreamont, at the same time that *L’Incantation* was produced as a unique
copper-based etching.\textsuperscript{13} Not only is the imagery within the book rich in examples of Dali’s concepts of Surrealism, but \textit{L’Incantation} also demonstrates Dali’s notions of irrationality.

\textit{L’Incantation} was not the first work in which Dali used words within his images. In 1929, he produced a shocking image called \textit{The Sacred Heart} in which he drew the outline of Christ and inscribed, “Sometimes I spit with pleasure on the portrait of my mother.”\textsuperscript{14} The image outraged critics and the public. On the other hand, \textit{L’Incantation} examined a specific, although illogical, ceremony or ritual act performed by characters. \textit{L’Incantation} and \textit{The Sacred Heart} demonstrated Dali’s use of words in an image to help identify the potential meaning of the image through the relationship of subject matter and language.\textsuperscript{15}

The term, incantation, is defined as, “a use of spells or verbal charms spoken or sung as a part of a ritual of magic; also, a written or recited formula of words designed to produce a particular effect.”\textsuperscript{16} Similar to other images with writing, Dali intended for the word \textit{L’Incantation} to be associated with the image.\textsuperscript{17} Interestingly, Dali uses the French word for ‘incantation,’ instead of his native language, Spanish. The use of the French over Spanish can be attributed to his relationship with Argillet and to his illustrations of \textit{Les Chants de Maldoror}. The word enables the viewer to construct a meaning based in its definition through his illustration of the ‘incantation,’ while a childhood phobia manifests itself as a main character in the image.\textsuperscript{18}

Dali’s phobia since childhood was a fear of the praying mantis and grasshoppers, which appear throughout his work.\textsuperscript{19} His phobia derived from the cannibalistic rituals of the praying mantis where, after a male and female fornicate, the female eats the male.\textsuperscript{20} The praying mantis-like figure on the left side of the etching is an anamorphic creature crossing between an insect and a human. The creature has an insect-like back end, elongated limbs, a disc shaped head, and human feet. Dali emphasized the creature’s presence in the image by portraying him in the darkest and most prominent black. What looks like a large splotch of ink, draws the viewer’s eye directly to the creature. The use of the splotch and heavy lines suggests that the creature was the performer and the manifestation of the incantation because of his size, stance, and prominence in the image. Dali accentuated his size through the miniature mountains, the demure nude woman, and small skull and bones. The creature’s distinct size casts him as a focal point of the etching.

Dali arranged the creature’s legs in a lunge-type stance with its arms moving upward over the nude woman’s head. The sense of motion created by Dali moves the viewer’s eyes horizontally across the page. As the viewer’s eye shifts from left to right, Dali depicts the incantation through a series of symbols starting with the skull and bones, to the large creature, to the nude woman, and finally to the small angel within the mountains. Fireworks or light in many cultures have been used to show the presence of a spirit. Here, Dali could be suggesting that the creature’s incantation was that of a spirit. The artist placed focus on the creature as the actor of the incantation, but what about the nude woman as a participant in the ritual? The nude woman could perhaps represent the reason for the incantation or ritual in the first place.

Dali’s emphasis on the large creature leads the viewer to believe that he was the focus of the incantation, but the nude woman’s presence could be the cause or the person in need of an incantation. It is possible that Dali wanted the viewer to see the nude woman as the initiator of the incantation, whereas the creature is the performer. Dali presented her as exposed to the world through her nudity and her position above the mountain range. He tilted her head to one side away from the fireworks as she covers her genitals with a single hand. Dali placed a peaceful expression on her face suggesting that she knew all along how the incantation would manifest itself in an anamorphic creature that shed light upon her.

Not only do the main characters support the notion of the incantation, but also the small details added by Dali allow for the viewer to understand the image as ritualistic. The skull and bone in the foreground of the image could be symbolic references that were used in a ritual to call upon divine beings. Human bones have been used for ritual ceremonies over the course of history to cure the sick and appease the gods in many types of ceremonies. Dali positioned the bones beneath the legs of the creature to suggest that he has or will use them to perform the incantation for the nude woman.

More interesting than the bone and skull is the depiction of an angel holding a cross. Dali portrayed the angel as the same proportional size as the mountain range. He showed the angel in profile facing toward the nude woman in the middle and raising the cross toward the sky. The presence of an angel raises the question as to whether the incantation is a religious ritual. Do the nude woman and praying mantis-like creature symbolize characters from a religious ritual? It could also be possible that the angel is the one muttering the incantation as the larger figures were the manifestation of her own dream. The first was more plausible because an angel is a celestial being that works as an intermediary between heaven and earth. If the viewer understands this definition of an angel, then the angel is another part of the incantation being performed by the creature for the nude woman.

\textit{L’Incantation} displayed Dali’s ability to express Surrealist ideals by representing irrational or abstract characters in settings that were beyond the real world. He was able to alter
the notion of an “incantation” by distorting the real concept of a ritual into a new form, while retaining the information needed to understand the image as a ritual or “incantation.”

In 1956, Jean Cocteau was commissioned to create a poster for the musical festival in Menton, France. He chose a subject that he had used many times in previous works: the profile of Orpheus. Throughout his life, he was fascinated with Greek characters such as Antigone, Oedipus, and Orpheus. He used Greek figures constantly in his work and even created a three-part film series based on various narratives around the character, Orpheus. Orpheus was a mythical Greek musician who was able to charm all of the animals and the underworld with his music. He tragically lost his wife, Eurydice, and traveled to the underworld to win her back. After winning the rulers of the underworld with his music, Orpheus was able to take Eurydice back to Earth with one exception: he could not look at her until they had arrived back to Earth. Unfortunately, Orpheus thought Eurydice was no longer behind him, so he looked back, saw her, and lost her forever.

The Menton lithograph shows Cocteau’s obsession with Orpheus, since he had used the same Greek-inspired side profile in over ten works prior to Menton. The text located on the side of the print above the date reads: “Etais pour l’affiche de festival du musique” (I was for the poster of the music festival).

As a Surrealist artist, Cocteau was very interested in understanding his subconscious and representing it in art. He used many outlets in order to explore his subconscious, such as the concept of death in the Greek myth of Orpheus and his avid use of opium. Although Cocteau is associated with Surrealism today, many of his fellow Surrealist artists did not approve of his work. His opposing views on the Nazi government as well as his obstinate preference of being independent had negative impacts on how other Surrealists viewed him. Cocteau hated dictators such as Hitler. Cocteau openly attacked the Nazis during World War II; he was once beaten during the war for refusing to salute the French flag that was held by Nazi soldiers. Another reason for Cocteau’s isolation was that in the beginning of his career, French Symbolist writers, such as Odilon Redon, attacked his early poems causing Cocteau to become cautious with artistic movements and manifestoes. Noël Simsolo explores Cocteau’s dislike of theoretical movements such as the Surrealism:

He learned his lesson and became wary of radical manifestos, systematic scandal, seductive illuminations that hide the void by varnishing it with theories, and groups where each praises the other to the skies in order to claim the best part to themselves.²

Cocteau never wanted his work to be associated with any particular movement. Throughout his lifetime he preferred to stay as an independent artist, not attached to any specific genre or category.

Automatic drawing was a major element of the Surrealist movement. André Breton established this concept in the “Manifesto of Surrealism, 1924”:

Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.³

Cocteau demonstrated this concept in Menton, since both figures appear as if they had been created from a single, fluid
line. *Menton* looks as if Cocteau never raised the pen from the plate. The words ‘festival’ and ‘Menton’ are seamlessly connected to the line, symbolizing the importance of understanding the imagery and words together.

The stylistic quality of the ‘M’ in Menton is a characteristic in many of Cocteau’s works. Cocteau elaborated on the importance of lines:

What is line? It is life. A line must live at each point along its course in such a way that the artist’s presence makes itself felt above that of the model... It is, in a way, the soul’s style, and if the line ceases to have a life of its own, if it only describes an arabesque, the soul is missing and the writing dies.

Cocteau established his theory of line in his autobiography, *The Difficulty of Being*. The line connects the figure of Orpheus to the words in *Menton*, thus suggesting to the viewer that the figure and words are to be understood together. His theory presents a typical Surrealist ideal in preserving the artist’s first impulse in automatic drawing. As André Breton wrote in the “Manifesto of Surrealism,” an artist should write in a stream of unconsciousness in order to represent the “truth.” Cocteau followed this Surrealist mantra, and included the line and writing in one stream, as seen in the words ‘Menton’ and ‘festival’.

Cocteau’s reuse of many themes in his works, such as the Orpheus motif, originated from his artistic practice. He believed that in reusing images and objects, he was perfecting them. After 1950, Cocteau created numerous drawings and lithographs based in mythology, specifically Orpheus.

François Nemer stated the lithographs created in the 1940s and 1950s, such as *Menton*, depict the decline of Cocteau’s graphic works:

Stylization became schematization, loud colour broke in, the pen was often replaced by a felt-tip and, above all, subjects disappeared to be replaced by a single type, indefinitely repeated, a neo-Greek, male face, in profile, with a straight nose above a prominent pout and the eye of a dead fish.

The lithograph *Menton* is almost an exact replica of Cocteau’s 1950 poster for *Orphée* and 1960 poster for *Le Testament d’Orphée*. His multiple versions are slightly different, however, which shows that he was continually attempting to change the quality of his works.

*Menton* portrays a connection to the figure of Orpheus pictured with a bull lyre. Cocteau wrote that his obsession with Greek culture had begun when a friend, Philippe Legrand, had brought him a present from Greece: “He was just returning from Greece and brought with him one of those shepherd staffs whose handle is a goat’s horn arched like Minerva’s eyebrow.”

Brown states that after Cocteau received this present, he became immediately drawn to Greek mythology and began revisiting the Classics, starting with *Antigone*, the tragedy by Sophocles. His film, *Orphée*, exemplifies his attempt to modernize Greek myth. The film is placed in a modern context where motorcycles and a Rolls Royce are symbols of death. Cocteau imagined Greek mythology and tragedy in order to explore the unconscious. Laurence Schifano explores this concept further:

It is here rather than in the writing of dreams that the buried, unconscious world of the passions is encountered; this is the world in which Cocteau claims to have carried out repeated ‘excavations’, on a par with the Surrealists.

Instead of using dreams to comprehend and represent his unconscious, Cocteau used Greek myth to explore the inner depths of his mind. By connecting himself to the figure of Orpheus, Cocteau was able to explore the underworld and death, two concepts with which he was fascinated. But Cocteau was not able to tap into his unconscious alone; opium played a large part in inspiring his works. Cocteau was physically unable to produce works or even function without smoking opium in the 1950s. His works were primarily dominated by his drug-induced state, therefore allowing him to pass boundaries between life and death, which is what he found so alluring in the myth of Orpheus.

After 1950, Cocteau created many works containing his commonly used greco-roman profile, which was a side-profile of a male with fillets above his ears and a mouth slightly open. The 1950 poster for *Orphée* first shows the greco-roman profile, but rather than a single unending line as in *Menton*, *Orphée* shows Cocteau’s dotted line theory; seen in the ‘M’ of Menton. By the time he had created *Menton* in 1956, his concept of line and understanding of Orpheus was much more pronounced. The full realization of Cocteau’s imagery is seen in the 1960 poster for *Le Testament d’Orphée*, which is similar to *Menton*, but had been reworked.

Cocteau made countless works in the South of France that depicted Greek mythology. He resided there with his good friend, Francine Weissweiller, in her villa on the coast called Santo Sospir, which became a mythological palette for Cocteau to explore. In order to thank Francine for her hospitality, Cocteau painted numerous mythological scenes on the walls of her villa. Cocteau wrote in a letter to a friend: “It is a bath of laziness and flowers, but since I cannot stay
quiet and my hands haven’t the knack of hanging idle, I have
decorated the walls, one after the other, with the help of an
old Italian from nearby who is skilled in fresco.\(^9\) The full
realization of Cocteau’s Orphic imagery occurred when he
began painting the Marriage Salon in Menton with Orpheus
and Eurydice imagery. Cocteau considered Orpheus as “le
frère du jeune prince de Knossos” (the brother of the young
prince of Knossos), and his fresco as beautiful as those in the
Palace of Knossos.\(^10\) The bull was a symbol of reverence and
worship in the Minoan culture. The bull’s horns in Menton
are exceptionally long and almost reach the top of Orpheus’
head, clearly demonstrating the importance of the lyre
formed between each horn. By including both Orpheus and
a direct connection to the Minoan bull, Cocteau asserts the
“Prince of Knossos” theory that he had formed about
Orpheus.

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7 Pompidou, *Jean Cocteau*, 54.
8 Pompidou, *Jean Cocteau*, 40.
In 1956, when Jean Cocteau had begun frescoing the walls of the chapel in Villefranche-sur-la-mer, he traveled to Venice to see Peggy Guggenheim’s new modern museum with his good friend and benefactor at the time, Francine Weisweiller. It was in Venice that this lithograph, *L’Avenir*, was presumably made as there are explicit references to Venetian objects throughout the work. The images in *L’Avenir* are particularly Surrealist in that the viewer must know the preconceived language before attempting to understand the work. *L’Avenir* suggests that Cocteau explored many Surrealist techniques, such as depicting his subconscious ideas and thoughts.

André Breton’s “Manifesto of Surrealism, 1924” defined the Surrealist movement. He said that the artist must examine his subconscious in order to deny cultural and aesthetic concerns. Breton stated that sometimes drugs were needed to examine the interior of one’s mind, “And, indeed, hallucinations, illusions, etc., are not a source of trifling pleasure. The best controlled sensuality partakes of it.”

Cocteau’s work follows Breton’s suggestions, as he indulged in opium in order to explore the interior of his mind. Jean Cocteau’s addiction to opium had major impacts on his work and how it was created. William Emboden stated that opium placed Cocteau in an artistic mindset: “He asserted that the subconscious had become his normal state and that he was condemned to a kind of solitude, with death residing in him.”

His drawings during his various attempts to cure himself of his addiction depict absolute non-realities. Most of his opium-inspired figures created in 1928 are composed of multiple, long cylinder shapes similar to opium pipes.

The sign located in the poster reads: “Je me souviens de l’avenir” (I remember the future). Jean Cocteau explains his concept of the future and past in his work, *Opium*: “The past and the future torment me and the acts of passion are rare. Now opium stirs up the past and the future, making a present whole. It is the negative of passion.” In his excerpt, Cocteau examines his inability to live in both the past and present. Opium allowed him to live between death and life, therefore giving him the capability to explore both. He states in *Opium* that passionate acts in the present are rare. Cocteau wrote *Opium* in 1930 when he was in a rehabilitation facility for his addiction. During his periods of unconsciousness, Cocteau believed he was reaching the inner depths of his mind. He became entirely dependent on the drug to function and create art by the later years of his life from 1950 until his death in 1963. Cocteau writes in a letter to Jacques Maritain about what opium did to him: “Opium upholsters us, it carries us upon the river of the dead, it disembodies us until it makes us become a light meadow; the night of the body swarms with stars, but our bliss is a bliss in a mirror.”

Cocteau revealed to Jacques Maritain that under the spell of opium, he was able to imagine the act of dying and represent it in his works.

There are many subtle hints to death in *L’Avenir* and without the proper language or understanding on the part of the viewer, Cocteau’s hints are lost. *L’Avenir* consists of a fantastical setting. The scene is located on a platform without any support or balance, immediately placing it in the realm of the unreal. Noël Simsolo explains Cocteau’s reasons for his bizarre objects and scene:

There is nothing like something indistinctly shown to reveal something luminous and hidden. All this is done in order to materialize the invisible, to see the impossible, to catch the mysteries of the zone with a flash to create an illumination.
Cocteau, as Simsolo states, makes the visible unreadable and hard to understand, which therefore requires the viewer to know what each object means prior to viewing the image. Since many of the objects had been used previously in other lithographs, the understanding of the symbols in L'Avenir can be deciphered from these earlier representations.

Cocteau referred to the two candlesticks located on either side of the platform in L'Avenir as “the Candlesticks of the Apocalypse.”66 Cocteau began decorating a small church dedicated to St. Pierre in Villefranche-sur-la-mer starting in the spring of 1956. Cocteau's candlesticks are located in numerous areas of the chapel: on either side of the inside doors, outside the chapel, and on the altar. The inspiration behind these candlesticks was a quote Cocteau saw in the Revelations: “And these candlesticks had a human face, and these candlesticks had a nose, a mouth, and an eye that watched the lamb.”7 In a letter to Milorad on the twenty-fifth of November, Cocteau wrote that the candlesticks were inspired by a passage from the Bible and a poem he had read. Cocteau also wrote to Milorad that the candlesticks were to be understood with the quote from St. Pierre located above the doorway: “Enter into the structure as living stones.”78 Cocteau did not start using the candlestick symbol frequently until 1955 when he was in Venice learning to blow glass. In a preparatory drawing for the chapel in 1956, Cocteau expanded the previous candlestick design from 1955 to include a nose and mouth. The text, which corresponds to the candlesticks, is also located next to the design, as if to certify and show where his idea had come from.

Cocteau had never really practiced religion when he was growing up, although he had always felt very strongly towards God. In 1925, Cocteau re-converted to Catholicism and used his newfound faith to explore the meaning of his life. He was influenced by the Catholic poet Jacques Maritain and in 1926, Cocteau composed a pamphlet called Art and Faith: Letters to Jacques Maritain, in which he explored and attempted to prove the existence of God.9 He explained to Maritain that God had taken many of his friends but not him. He stated that God had consciously forgotten to take him to Heaven. He asserted to Maritain that opium allowed him to experience the connection with God more thoroughly and that all of his works were made for God. Cocteau's new religious sensitivity had impact on how he viewed his art in relation to God. Even though L'Avenir was created twenty years after his new religious conversion, there are obvious religious undertones in the candlesticks. The candlesticks show how Cocteau attempted to portray his new religious sensibilities in an image that could also be associated with death, such as in L'Avenir.

The giant rose in the background of L'Avenir is a symbol that Cocteau included in many of his lithographs and drawings. Guy Davenport states that in Cocteau's poetry, the rose is always associated with the glans penis.10 Works such as Les Vacances and Le Mystere de Jean l'Oiseleur contain large roses, both in different contexts. Les Vacances depicts a tropical island scene with bizarre-looking animals and angels flying on the horizon. A lizard attempts to climb onto the flower, which Davenport suggests has an erotic undertone since the lizard was a playful word for glans penis in ancient Greek poetry: “An iconographer who has learned Cocteau's code could explain the drawing a coherent fantasy rich in erotic lyricism.”11 Another example of rose imagery used is in Le Mystere de Jean l'Oiseleur in which Cocteau drew a rose projected out of the figure's chest, while his heart is projected out of his back. The set of lithographs are self-portraits of Cocteau made in 1925. Another drawing in the set depicts Cocteau with blank eyes and a thorny stem in his mouth, which can be seen as a sexual metaphor with the association to the rose, as Davenport suggested. Cocteau never revealed himself as a homosexual, although many of his publications, including the highly erotic Le Livre Blanc, suggest otherwise. It is difficult to decipher the true meaning of the rose, but it seems to suggest Cocteau's association of homosexuality and eroticism with the theme of death, since the rose dominates the background of the image. Cocteau believed that homosexuality was condemned by society; therefore, Cocteau never revealed himself as a homosexual for fear of the societal death he believed would occur.12

Cocteau had always associated the city of Venice with death as a child. He writes in the book, The Venice I Love, published in 1957, that he had contracted an epidemic from the Venetian mosquitoes so his trip was overridden with sickness. It was not until he visited Venice later as an adult that he became fascinated with the gondolas, the labyrinthian streets, and the association with death. His connection with Venice and death primarily came from his friend Vivian Wilde, who committed suicide on the steps of the Basilica di Santa Maria della Salute. Since the work was created in Venice, Cocteau was obviously influenced by many of the objects that he saw everyday, such as the gondolas. Cocteau also saw the gondolas of Venice as transportation for the dead. Frederick Brown explores this concept from Cocteau's poem, Gondola of the Dead: “His poem, ‘Gondola of the Dead’, in which the gondola is compared to a scorpion whose tail is poised to strike itself.”13 Cocteau associated with the gondola as a symbol of death, and he referred to Richard Wagner's gondola-hearse from 1883 in many of his works.

L'Avenir seems to convey Cocteau's belief and understanding of death combined with the cultural influences of Venice, where the lithograph was created. Cocteau confessed throughout his lifetime his obsession with death and how opium allowed him to hover between the boundaries of life.
and death. Since Cocteau already had had a life-threatening stroke by 1956, the prospect of death could have been a dominant thought in his mind. The candlesticks give the impression that Cocteau connected the theme of death to his newly-found religion of Catholicism, since he called the candlesticks the “Candlesticks of the Apocalypse.” The giant rose in the background seems to convey Cocteau’s belief that homosexuality was forbidden in society and therefore was associated with social death. Even in his childhood, Cocteau believed that Venice was a “city of the death,” and his sensibility only intensified with his connections to Wagner and his friend Vivian Wilde. Once the various symbols are understood together, L’Avenir seems to present Cocteau’s understanding of death and the symbols associated with death, such as religion, Venice, also known as “the city of death,” and the social death that came with being homosexual.

12 Jean Cocteau, Jean Cocteau: Erotic Drawing, ed. Annie Guédras (Köln, Germany: Benedikt Taschen Verlag, 1999), 5.
In the year 1950 Max Ernst, a very well-established artist, had his first post-war retrospective at the Galerie Rene Drouin in Paris. Up to this point, Ernst had been thoroughly involved with two of the most persistent European art movements of the century: Surrealism and Dadaism. He had also lived through three major wars WWI, WWII, and the Spanish Civil war. It was also in 1950 that Ernst finished his lithograph, Star of the Sea, on a yearlong trip to Europe with his wife Dorothea Tanning. Ernst’s Star of the Sea is a double-image narrative. This narrative is at once an autobiography of his childhood and a satire of the multiple wars fought within his lifetime.

Star of the Sea at first glance exhibits a wide range of images arranged into a strange composition. One can recognize not only stencils of sea creatures, but also Mediterranean blue colors and instrument-like hard-edged figures. Ernst claimed that these fairly disparate images were present in the nature of his birthplace. The contradictory nature of Ernst’s birthplace in Bruhl, Germany is an introduction to the contradictory nature of Star of the Sea. Bruhl, Germany is located west of Cologne. Ernst described this area as, “a cross-point of the most important European culture-tendencies, early Mediterranean influence, western rationalism, eastern inclination to occultism, northern mythology, Prussian categorical imperative, ideals of the French Revolution and so on.” From this wide range of mythology, philosophy, and history, Ernst picks seemingly contradictory images and romances them into a single composition in this lithograph.

An equality between subject and object first developed through his relationship with his father and can be found in Star of the Sea. Ernst described himself as being born into a strict Catholic bourgeois family. He primarily applied this description to his devoutly Catholic father, Philip, who was both a teacher for the deaf and a painter. Ernst had more than a few qualms with Philip and one particularly revealing account is of an instance in 1898. In this year, Philip had made a landscape painting of their home garden in Bruhl. In his composition for the painting, he omitted a tree and later literally had this tree removed from the garden so that, as Ernst would later claim, “there was no difference between nature and art.” Ernst explained that it was at this point that he first expressed an artistic choice towards a more “equitable conception of the relationship between the subjective and the objective world.” In removing the tree, his father blurred the difference between subjective and objective realities by forcing his composition onto the object he was painting.

Ernst creates a fictional space, the background of which is devoid of realist perspective. His background, instead, is the flat white of the paper with a Mediterranean blue frame. This fictional space is what André Breton, founder of the Surrealist movement, called “super reality.” Further defining “super reality,” Breton explained that it is “a function of our will to put everything out of place.” In Ernst’s background, we see that while his father’s realist painting forced everything in place, Ernst’s “super-realist” lithograph put everything out of place.

Another instance involving Ernst’s relationship with his father, here a bit more dramatic, reveals the intense revolt Ernst would feel against his controlling consciousness. In this instance, Ernst had written a lengthy book entitled Divers’ Manual. This book included topics such as monsters,
eroticism, lunatics, poets, and when Philip found it, he immediately burned it. In burning Ernst's book, his father was, again, suppressing the objective by actively forcing his subjective reality onto Ernst. Ernst's response was radical in that he turned to figures such as the German philosopher Max Stirner.

Further rebelling against his father's forced subjective and objective reality, Ernst formed an affinity for Stirner. Ernst was specifically invested in Stirner's book, Der Einzige und sein Eigentum (The Individual and His Property). In this book, Stirner writes: “the vital thing was to break out of the ‘Christian magic circle’ in which the self has to keep other selves in mind, and to establish instead that I am the only I... I do not see myself as contributing to ‘Mankind.’ I am developing my own self.” Stirner's fight for autonomy can be seen in Ernst's double-image narrative he creates in Star of the Sea, which I will elaborate upon later.

It is perhaps due to Ernst's radical break from his strict Catholic, bourgeois childhood that he would later be involved with two revolutionary artistic movements, Dadaism and Surrealism. The ideologies of these movements are evident in Star of the Sea, starting with the Dada movement that aimed to obliterate any common reality one might believe in.

Dada had been in action since its first appearance in Zurich in 1916. In 1909, Ernst moved away from home to attend the University of Bonn as a philosophy major. He remained at the university until 1914 when he was drafted into the military. By 1919, Ernst was released and had not only already familiarized himself with the movement but had also gone on to co-found the Dadaist branch in Cologne, France. Ernst, along with Hans Arp and Johannes Baargeld named this branch “dada W/3.” The “W” of this name stood for “weststupidia,” and the three stood more obviously for the three co-founders. When speaking of this movement, Ernst said that “Dada...attacks on the foundations of the civilization responsible for the war...” The foundations can be seen as the blurring of the subjective and the objective already mentioned in Ernst's childhood account of his father, Philip.

Ernst's relationship with the Surrealist movement is equally evident in Star of the Sea. Two years prior to creating Star of the Sea, Ernst had published his treatise, Beyond Painting. In Beyond Painting, Ernst discussed his connection with Surrealist ideas. This treatise compiled 173 of his illustrations with essays written by Ernst himself and by some of his friends. One important account describes a group of Surrealists', including Ernst's, reaction to a scientific journal of plates, the relationship to which they called a “paranoiac” or double-image. André Breton, leader of the Surrealist movement, explained the double image as, “…such a representation of an object that it is also, without the slightest physical or anatomical change, the representation of another entirely different object, the second representation being equally devoid of any deformity or abnormality betraying arrangement.” In Star of the Sea, this double image becomes clear when looking at the two octopi above the figure to the right. The octopi are not merely sea creatures, but by their position above the head of the figure, they also turn them into a hat. Ernst said that the double image “…is helping, with a smile on its lips, to hasten the general crisis of consciousness due in our time.”

Ernst's lithograph, Star of the Sea, can be seen as a double-image narrative. While this lithograph is not a collage, Ernst's definition of collage provides a good frame for understanding the double-image effect in his lithograph. Ernst defines collage as, “the systematic exploitation of the fortuitous or engineered encounter of two or more intrinsically incompatible realities on a surface which is manifestly inappropriate for the purpose, and the spark of poetry which leaps across the gap as these two realities are brought together.”

Here, Ernst first addresses the act of selecting contradictory objects. The light orange sea creatures in Star of the Sea are most likely drawn from J. B. Petitgrew's three volume Design in Nature that he picked up in his 1942 arrival in New York. From Petitgrew's book, Ernst would have made stencils of the starfish, two octopi, and two cel using tracing paper.

Apart from these sea animal stencils, Ernst used geometric shapes and scientific instruments to produce the two figures in the scene. Ernst often used various scientific instruments in his work to represent the bodies of animals and humans. Here, we have one instrument gracefully duplicated with the same pivot and gesture. In his harmonious mirroring of figures, Ernst has created something very delicate out of these hard-edged instruments. As heads, Ernst has chosen two shapes: an inverted triangle and a cone. The cone belongs to the figure on the left who focuses its attention to the figure on the right. The side-turned head seems to be part of a motif he often used in his work to represent the female figure. One sculpture in particular, Parisian Woman, created within the same year as Star of the Sea, shows a very clear parallel to this motif. The body of the sculpture is treated differently, but this same side-turned cone appears. It is no mistake that this head should be different from that of the figure on the right, which could be considered a male figure. The inverted triangle of the figure on the right can also be seen in other works by Ernst to represent a male figure.

Ernst then discussed an “encounter” of these objects on one surface “manifestly inappropriate for the purpose.” This
surface is Ernst’s background, which he composed with a Mediterranean blue frame that carves out an undulating rectangular shape from the white ground. This background is two-dimensional and works much like a stage creating an imaginary space for the objects within. This Mediterranean color draws the mind towards images of the sea.

So, it seems at first glance that Ernst’s lithograph is merely a collage-like encounter of geometric figures with sea creatures on a two-dimensional background. However, as we have seen in our discussion of Ernst’s childhood, his ability to combine contradictory images into narrative forms is more than a chance encounter. In his combination of images, Ernst has completed his “spark of poetry” or double-imaged narrative. This double image is, again, seen in the two octopi above the head of the figure to the right. While I have already stated that these could be all at once octopi and a hat, there is one additional image that comes forward in the narrative.

The octopi along with the other sea creatures of this scene seem to give this narrative an erotic connotation. The octopi consume each other above the head of the supposed male. The eel ride not side-by-side or in a line, but one atop the other. The starfish mirrors the lithograph in title, Star of the Sea. This same title in its original French, L’etoile de Mer, was first used for a Surrealist film directed by Man Ray in 1928. The subject of this film is a love triangle with the constant image of a starfish as a metaphor of a regenerating affair. The use of this title is far from coincidence. By placing this title on his lithograph’s composition of scientific objects, Ernst further eroticized their presence with something as unscientific as a love triangle. The strategic position of the starfish between the two figures can also be seen to allude to the love triangle in the film.

Furthermore, Ernst uses the same orange and blue coloring for his male figure and female figure, harmonizing them beyond their mirrored gestures. This harmony of color and gesture has a more graceful and therefore, more human quality. Continuing this human quality is the position of the female figure’s cone head. This position seems almost to advance towards the male figure. This advance is achieved first by the very positioning of the head facing towards the male, and then by the slight overlap into the space of the Mediterranean blue frame. While the male figure remains inside the carved-out white space, the female breaks free into an advancing dimension. The eroticizing of these marine creatures originally intended for scientific analysis and dissection, draws a new image out of these seemingly straightforward stencils.

In Star of the Sea, Ernst satirically juxtaposed contradictory images into a double-image narrative of romance and science. This romantic scenario is entirely inappropriate to the scientific object’s original intent and it breaks down their power and authority. The satire inherent in Ernst’s lithograph is at once comical but also carries serious weight. It has now become increasingly clear that Ernst was very aware of the power in everyday definitions of objects. In speaking of his fight for autonomy, Ernst said he was concerned with the “deluge of visual and verbal information which threatens to engulf contemporary man.” The deluge Ernst spoke of rests within the power of blurring differences between individual realities and objective experience which is something Ernst fights with satire in his lithograph.

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3 Schneede, Max Ernst, 184.
5 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 28.
6 Schneede, Max Ernst, 8.
7 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 27.
8 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 28.
9 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 21.
10 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 22.
11 Russell, Max Ernst, 18.
12 Russell, Max Ernst, 306.
13 Schneede, Max Ernst, 16.
14 Schneede, Max Ernst, 16.
15 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 20.
16 Ernst, Beyond Painting, xiv.
17 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 21.
18 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 21.
19 Schneede, Max Ernst, 64.
20 Russell, Max Ernst, 87.
21 Schneede, Max Ernst, 64.
22 Schneede, Max Ernst, 64.
23 Werner Spies, Max Ernst (Gent: Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent, 2002), 100.
Marc Chagall's etchings illustrate a book entitled *Les Âmes Mortes* (*The Dead Souls*). It was written by Nikolai Gogol and was first published in 1842. The work is in two parts (originally three), but Gogol did not finish the third. Gogol saw his work not as a novel, but as an epic in the style of Homer or Dante; the first section of the novel was meant to invoke Inferno from the *Divine Comedy*. Understanding Gogol's text appears to be crucial to understanding the decisions Chagall made when illustrating it. For example, the title "Dead Souls" actually refers to "dead serfs." Previous to the emancipation of serfs in Russia, serfs were considered property as much as any livestock. "Dead souls" refers to those serfs who were still counted on property registers and taxes even after they had died.

For the most part, *Les Âmes Mortes* is a satire that introduces us to an array of characters. The plot of the novel is a means by which Gogol can satirize Russian life. The story follows a young middle-class man named Chichikov, who has just arrived in a small Russian town. He immediately begins trying to impress the townspeople, especially the officials. Chichikov has a plan: to buy up the "dead souls" in order to make a profit. Wealth is Chichikov's greatest motivation and his plan is nothing more than a "get-rich-quick" scheme—an easy way for him to accumulate money with minimal work. He assumes that the ignorant people will be pleased to sell him their "dead souls," which proves incorrect as he meets a variety of absurd characters, but he does eventually become rich. As he is celebrated back in town, however, a number of rumors begin to circulate that eventually force him to flee the town.

While *Les Âmes Mortes* is a story, the plot itself does not drive the story—rather, it is character driven. The intention of *Les Âmes Mortes* is to introduce us to a wide variety of ridiculous people. They are, in many cases, caricatures, representing ideas and exaggerated reactions to life, such as greed and paranoia. Chichikov himself is a character that represents the idea of poshlost, an untranslatable Russian word that means, roughly, "petty evil or self-satisfied vulgarity."

Marc Chagall's illustrations of *Les Âmes Mortes* were begun in 1923. Chagall himself was Russian-Jewish, born in the town of Vitebsk (now part of Belarus). Chagall's identity as a fellow Russian is often emphasized in scholarly studies of his etchings for *Les Âmes Mortes*. Familiar with Russia's physical and political climate, Chagall knew how to create
vivid landscapes for Gogol’s scenes that were both visually interesting and appropriately representative for Gogol’s text.4

When Chagall first arrived in Paris as a young man in 1910, Cubism was the dominant style. Chagall, however, did not immediately fall into the movement as other artists had done. He was too timid in some ways and too set in his own style to make a radical shift to Cubism. In particular, he was not interested in separating his imagery from the natural world, nor was he an extremist who could identify with the rigor and logic of Cubism. He loved color and poetry and favored images that evoked strong emotions. Therefore, it is not surprising that he became friends not with other artists, but instead, with poets. He worked near poets such as Guillaume Apollinaire and painted many scenes of his hometown of Vitebsk.5 Still, as much as he resisted joining the Cubist movement, he did incorporate a few elements of Cubism into his work, particularly the ideas of viewing an object or person from multiple viewpoints and breaking down objects into geometric shapes.

Chagall resisted categorization with any of the larger stylistic movements. For him, his imagery was personal and although he would continue to integrate ideas from other styles, he would resist general categorization with any one of them for the rest of his life.6 This did not mean, of course, that his individual works of art could not be individually categorized. While Chagall may have bristled at the suggestion that he was a Surrealist, or a Fauvist, or a Cubist, his works, despite their fierce sense of individuality, were influenced by these styles. His illustrations for Les Âmes Mortes are no exception. Settimio Marzetti, for example, says “The Dead Souls is noted for, perhaps more than elsewhere, an analytic narration that recalls that northern Surrealism, where animals and things are distributed in a composite environment and every particular is rendered with things carefully delineated.”7 Marzetti’s comment applies to Gogol’s text but even more so to Chagall’s illustrations, where animals figure prominently in many scenes despite not being mentioned in the text. At first, the animals appear haphazard, but like Chagall’s sparsely illustrated interiors, they serve a purpose: they indicate specific settings and moods through only a few objects.

Chagall’s undertaking of Les Âmes Mortes was made possible largely because of a climate in Paris that was disposed to printing art books. Besides being full of immigrant artists such as Chagall, Paris was also full of publishers and editors. It had become the “spring board” of the book industry. Painters at this time were interested in illustrating both new and old literature. In the same ways that poets had experimented with words to create new types of poems, artists experimented with illustration. Even the lines between book illustration and painting were becoming less distinct.

Consider the words of Matisse, who stated that “I do not make a distinction between the construction of an art book and the construction of a painting.”8 Chagall had already begun experimenting with engraving when he arrived in Paris for a second time. His autobiography, My Life, contained twenty or so engravings, in which his life in Vitebsk—as well as the surrounding barnyards, houses, and people—came to life through black and white. Back in Paris, however, he met the French art dealer Ambroise Vollard, who suggested that he do illustrations for a children’s book. Chagall, however, had a different idea: he wanted to illustrate Gogol’s Les Âmes Mortes. Chagall got his way and from 1923-1927 he worked on the illustrations. While they were printed in 1927, they were not published and distributed until much later, in 1950. There are a total of 368 copies, all printed on different types of paper but bearing the same watermark (“Les Âmes Mortes”).9

Besides his work for Les Âmes Mortes, Chagall also completed illustrations for the Bible and for another work, Fables of La Fontaine, around the same time. Chagall understood the importance and significance of illustration in his life, saying,

It seems to me that something would have been lacking…If, apart from the color, I was not busy at that moment in my life, with engravings and lithographs. By holding a lithographic stone or copper plate, I believed I was holding a talisman. It seemed to me that in them I could place all my sadness, all my joys. All of the moments of my life, all that crossed the course of my life all the work in my life; births, deaths, marriages, flowers, animals, the working poor, parents, lovers in the night, and with age, the tragedy of life in us and around us.10

But what was it about Chagall, in particular, that made him so suitable to illustrate Gogol’s work? One of the first and most obvious similarities between the two men is that they were both Russian. Although Chagall was born in what is now known as Belarus, this geographic similarity bridged the temporal gap between the two men. In Gogol’s book, Chagall found something familiar: as Marzetti remarked, “the characters are grotesque versions of Chagall’s own cast in Vitebsk and are portrayed with biting humour….light-hearted and illustrative, with figures that are, in effect, caricatures.”11 It was not only Gogol’s characters, however, that drew Chagall to Les Âmes Mortes. It was also “the Russian province, the landscapes, the houses, the animals and the weight of the air that the characters of Gogol breathe is that same charm and grotesque of Chagall: the spectacular epic
and sad Russia, remaining at the first decades of the feudal nineteenth century and that of its civil life and social control. In a way, there could not have been a more suitable illustrator for the job.

One of the most often discussed elements of Chagall’s work is the way in which he seems to have avoided categorization. Although elements of his work have been called “Surrealist” or “Cubist,” for example, Chagall is described as an artist whose work does not concretely fit into one stylistic movement. What is true, however, is that while Chagall may have had his own unique style, he was attracted to other movements and sources. Therefore, in terms of style, we can evaluate his individual works and determine how they fit within his larger body of work in general. In these two etchings, for example, we have both the unique pictorial style of Chagall and the evidence of movements such as Cubism and Fauvism.

The composition of the first of the etchings, titled Chichikov and Sobakevich Discussing Business, depicts the main character of the novel, Chichikov, in discussion with another character, Sobakevich. At their first meeting, Gogol describes the latter as “a landowner of more uncouth exterior named Sobakevich—whom began the acquaintance by treading heavily upon Chichikov’s toes, and then begging his pardon.” Later, Gogol expands upon this description, from Chichikov’s point of view:

His host exactly resembled a moderate-sized bear… As for his face, it was of the warm, ardent tint of a piatok [a copper coin]. Persons of this kind—persons to whose designing nature has devoted not much thought, and in the fashioning of whose frames she has used no instruments so delicate as a file or a gimlet and so forth—are not uncommon…. Sobakevich was just such a ragged, curiously put together figure—though the above model would seem to have been followed more in his upper portion than in his lower. One result was that he seldom turned his head to look at the person with whom he was speaking, but, rather, directed his eyes towards, say, the stove corner or the doorway. As host and guest crossed the dining-room Chichikov directed a second glance at his companion. “He is a bear, and nothing but a bear,” he thought to himself.

Chichikov, by contrast, is “a man who, though not handsome, was not ill-favoured, not over-fat, and not over-thin. Also, though not over-elderly, he was not over-young.”

In this particular scene, Chichikov is at Sobakevich’s house. Sobakevich is a man who is rather difficult to converse with—Chichikov has been frustrated with the general conversation up to this point in the visit, and does not think too highly of his host whom he is nonetheless trying to impress. Finally, after dinner with Sobakevich and his wife, Chichikov gets to discuss business. As his host listens, Chichikov describes his plan for buying Sobakevich’s “dead souls.” Chichikov will soon be frustrated to discover that Sobakevich will sell him the souls at an extremely high price.

Although Gogol describes him as rather average-looking, Chichikov’s features are exaggerated: his hair, for example, is twisted up into a horn-like shape on top of his head, while his nose is extremely prominent and hook-shaped. Chagall is consistent in his depictions of Chichikov in that he is always recognizable by these certain over-exaggerated features, even though the shape of his body may change slightly from scene to scene. As Gogol created characters into caricatures of certain types and attitudes, Chagall translated these exaggerations into visual form. Therefore, a “realistic” depiction of someone like Chichikov is not entirely possible—after all, he is not a “realistic” portrayal of a person.

Interestingly, while certain physical features are always exaggerated, Chagall seems to think of other parts of the composition as afterthoughts. Chichikov’s upper hand is sketchy, without even a proper outline. Similarly, while his head is a major source of detail, its outline is also not connected. At first glance, it appears that there is a light source in the room, as parts of Chichikov’s suit are cast in light and shadow. But while the shadows are portrayed under Chichikov’s neck, the shading in his suit is random and seems not to be based on light from any discernable light source.

Chagall’s background seems to have been added almost as an afterthought. The main setting for the characters—in fact, the only thing that establishes them as being inside—is the uneven diagonal lines made to suggest floorboards. There are also faint hints of what may be windows, pictures, or a lamp. Depicting the background accurately is not Chagall’s priority—rather, suggesting a background through sparse details is. A vague background too, is true to Gogol’s text, where characters drive the story.

Chichikov’s companion, Sobakevich, is portrayed in a similar way. He is a large, square sort of man, with his face twisted in a strange expression. Like Chichikov, he is not realistic-looking, with his lumpy head and crude features. Also like Chichikov, an accurate representation is not the goal. His figure fills a large easy chair with dark shadows behind his head and back suggesting that he sinks far into it.

The second etching is a frontispiece and is very different in both composition and purpose. Part of this difference lies in its function. A frontispiece is intended to precede a section...
of text: in this case, the second section of Les Âmes Mortes. It depicts, however, Chagall and Gogol. Gogol is the figure in the bottom left corner, shown with his head pressed against his hand. He is obviously writing, probably working on Les Âmes Mortes. In the other corner is Chagall, shown with his painter’s palette. Here, Chagall has made a very conscious choice to equate himself with Gogol, even being so bold as to put himself at the beginning of the second part of the work. Both Chagall and Gogol are shown in the process of creating in their respective fields.

In back of the two artists, a smaller scene unfolds. In the center is a man carrying two buckets of water, and behind him are several indistinct faces. There are a few suggestions of buildings with crosses on top. Above the buildings are several large, puffy clouds, with a figure emerging from one of them. These figures are all easily discernable from looking at the work, but the function of the figures is not clear. By choosing to emphasize himself and Gogol, Chagall has inserted himself into the narrative as much as any of the characters. His interpretations of the characters and story are as important as Gogol’s, even when he is changing them to suit his own artistic preferences. Marzetti sums up Chagall’s attitude towards the source material well, reminding us that, “Chagall does not respect the happenings of the text. He, as a matter of fact, reverses the order of the episodes.” Because the ending of Les Âmes Mortes did not exist, Chagall felt free to invert the text for illustrative purposes.

Chagall’s changes, however, are not made in order to change the story of Les Âmes Mortes. By depicting himself and Gogol together on the frontispiece, Chagall has united the two as artists working on a common project. The two are represented as collaborators, even though they were working years apart. While Gogol provides the foundation for the story, Chagall is the one who must interpret it, drawing the most important parts of the text out in a way that is able to be understood.

4 Marzetti, “Gogol…,” 16.
5 Marzetti, “Gogol…,” 16.
6 Marzetti, “Gogol…” 18.
7 Marzetti, “Gogol…” 15.
8 Marzetti, “Gogol…” 15.
10 Marzetti, “Gogol…” 16.
11 Marzetti, “Gogol…” 16.
12 Marzetti, “Gogol…” 17.
13 Gogol, Dead Souls, 15.
14 Gogol, Dead Souls, 106.
15 Gogol, Dead Souls, 5.
16 Marzetti, “Gogol…” 17.
Marc Chagall (1887–1985) was born in the small town of Vitebsk in Russia but began to live and work around Europe in his early twenties. In 1923, Chagall permanently moved to France with his wife, Bella, and daughter. That same year, Chagall received a letter of commission from Ambroise Vollard, a prominent publisher and art dealer, for an illustrated book. Vollard suggested Chagall make etchings for a children’s book by the Comtesse de Ségur, but Chagall, uninterested, suggested Gogol’s Les Âmes Mortes instead and Vollard agreed. Chagall produced 107 etched plates for the project between 1923 and 1927. Volland also commissioned Chagall to create etchings for Fables de La Fontaine (1927–1930) and the Bible (early 1930s). In addition to these commissions, Chagall was working with etchings for multiple other projects during this period including those for Ma Vie (1922), Motherhood (1923–1927), and The Seven Deadly Sins (1923–1927).

In 1939, Vollard died leaving Chagall at a point where only 66 out of the intended 105 etchings for the Bible were completed, and without a complete printing of Les Âmes Mortes. Luckily, in 1948, the publisher Tériade acquired all the etchings for Les Âmes Mortes, Fables de La Fontaine, and the Bible from the Vollard Foundation. That same year, he published Les Âmes Mortes in its entirety along with new chapter headings by Chagall. The book was finally printed by Louis Fort, who also printed Chagall’s Fables de La Fontaine and the Bible.

In plate 30 of Les Âmes Mortes, The Dreams of Chichikov, we see Chichikov, the main character in Gogol’s epic satire of Russian peasant life, being driven away from a minor crash encountered on his search for “dead souls” (literally, “records of dead serfs”). The occupants of the other carriage involved in the crash had been an elderly woman and a stunningly beautiful young woman. Gogol writes that as the carriages were being disentangled from the crash, Chichikov endeavored to strike up a conversation with the young woman, but she was disinterested and ultimately left with her elderly guardian without giving Chichikov her name. According to Gogol’s narrator, the young woman was “a vision unlike anything he [Chichikov] has ever seen before, which for once rouses in him feelings entirely unlike those he is destined to experience all the rest of his days.” While being driven away from their meeting place, Chichikov rationalized away the strength of his feelings. Rather than acknowledging and attempting to understand his feelings, he attributed them to the lady’s youthful air, an attitude Chichikov perceived as relatively untouched by and separate from her “biddies and
aunties” of guardians who would eventually turn her into a woman. He does concede that she would make an adequate wife for “the right man,” provided that she had a sizable dowry and he wishes that he had learned the name and profession of her father.  

One may then assume that the woman seen above Chichikov in the sky is a visual representation of his thoughts or dreams. Chagall has shown the woman as she is described by Gogol’s narrator; she has an oval face, hair swept up, is dressed beautifully, and rides in an expensive carriage that is pulled by strong horses. The “C”-shaped cloud formations around her add to the idea of a vision or dream that comes by surprise, or something suddenly appearing out of nothing.

Chagall’s use of scale in this print is also quite telling. The important vision, the source of Chichikov’s intense emotions, is the largest object, appearing above the main character and occupying most of the sky. Her enormity in comparison to the tiny Chichikov, who is anchored to the bottom of the print in his small carriage, helps the viewer understand just how extraordinarily important and overpowering the encounter and her presence actually were within the story and, more specifically, to Chichikov.

However, in looking at Chichikov’s upset, upturned face, it is easy to understand that he will not be changed by this revelation at all. If anything, Chichikov looks annoyed by the vision and is perhaps in the process of rationalizing it away as described in the text. Chagall may have shown Chichikov in this state to hint at Chichikov’s occupation with social standards and monetary concerns.

Chichikov’s blatant disregard for a visionary moment of insight and truth is exemplary of the attitude that Symbolist artists were fighting against in their work. Here, Chagall helps the viewer understand that the woman in the sky is not necessarily the actual woman that Chichikov met; indeed, she is not even given a name or any personal attributes beyond her appearance. This anonymity suggests that she is a representation of all that is pure and good—the ideal woman or dreams. Chagall has shown Chichikov in this state to hint at Chichikov’s occupation with social and monetary concerns.

Chichikov’s shading and emphasis on technique serve to imbue this particular print with a sense of foreboding. Instead of an airy, idealized, clean church, Chagall has given
us a place where the figures are enclosed by columns and are left with an impersonal Christ figure for prayer. Adding to the strange environment, we cannot identify the main figure, the woman. All we can see and use to identify her is her back, dress, and braided hair. Given that this chapter does not mention a woman of this description, her presence in the print is quite mysterious.

Equally strange is the fact that the chapter does not mention a church or a scene remotely similar to the one depicted here, *In the Church*. The passage that is most similar to this scene in its reference to church-goers can be found within dialogue between two old men: Khlobuyev (a debtor) and Mourazov (a respected man). The conversation begins with Mourazov commenting that Khlobuyev goes to church frequently and often early in the morning, even though Khlobuyev does not like being awake so early. In response, Khlobuyev remarks that he does it all to serve God, for he is merciful and all forgiving. Mourazov then tells Khlobuyev that he should think of work as a prayer and service to God; through work for God, perhaps he will run out of ways to gamble and spend time in high society. Clearly, though related to religion and the act of going to church, the conversation itself is not shown in this image.

Elizabeth Underhill argues in her article, “Marc Chagall Prints: 1922–1927,” that Chagall’s prints completed during that time period can be separated into two categories: the monumental and the narrative. The former have central figures, can be considered more painterly (*In the Church*), and are often not as strictly illustrative as the latter, which has a very clean line and looks more like a drawing (*The Dreams of Chichikov*). I think that perhaps *In the Church* can be considered relatively monumental with a central image, as opposed to the narrative and more illustrative print of *The Dreams of Chichikov*. It is therefore not necessarily illustrative of the text at all.

With this in mind, we may consider *In the Church* to be more interpretation than a strict illustration. Therefore, the woman and church must not follow the text faithfully, and actions taking place within the print must not strictly represent the actions taking place in the final chapter.

Keeping with Gogol’s satirical mood, Chagall has made a church that certainly would not help a gambler like Khlobuyev; this is not a place to find God (as seen in the strange and sketch-like Crucifix) or get away from men who would tempt him (as seen in the gesturing man coming out of the shadows). Instead, this is a place where modern materiality has crept in and corrupted something once pure, which is very different from Chagall’s peaceful and reverent depictions of churches in his Bible. Chagall has utilized his role as an illustrator and artist to interpret and represent the Russian church, a location barely referenced by Gogol in the text.

However, the very mention of organized religion intended as a place of salvation for the men besieged by modern life offers a glimmer of hope within the narrative. Catholicism and organized religion in general were a significant component in life and art for the Symbolists. While this church may not be the most ideal space for renewal and self-discovery, the fact that Chagall chose to depict it instead of Khlobuyev and Mourazov, hints at a possible fascination with the church. Both spirituality and the loss of the ideal are Symbolist themes, and we see both of these themes in *In the Church*. The church’s presence, though certainly not idealized, serves as a reminder of the potential in religion. However, this ideal has obviously been lost and corrupted by modernity, which is, again, a Symbolist concept. These themes within Chagall’s imagery are so easily read, that I find it almost obvious to call this work a “Symbolist” etching in spite of Chagall’s multiple declarations that he was not a Symbolist artist.

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5 Gogol, *Dead Souls*, 86.
11 Gogol, *Dead Souls*, 386.
German Expressionism was a response to the social climate of early twentieth-century Germany, particularly during and after World War I. Many German artists and writers believed that the war was a solution to purging society of its impurities, but instead, the war had proven to have been a failure when Germany was left economically and socially in shambles. Immediately after the war in 1919, the German Revolution broke out as a rebellion against Imperial authorities. The German fatalities from the war were very high, amounting to 2.7 million dead and about 4 million wounded. In addition to the depletion of the German population, the country was burdened with a mountain of debts and inflation of about 250 percent. In total, the “Great War,” in every shape and form, had affected the social fabric of Germany, creating an upheaval of strong opposition to war in general, and prompting new political ideas, namely, socialism and the future formation of the Nazi party.

The war in Germany influenced the beliefs of the German people, primarily the intelligentsia of writers and artists. This elitist group saw the war as a way to cleanse society of its “impurities,” mainly the effects of modernization. This same group would later discover that they were mistaken because their “assumption that the [Great] war would revitalize cultural activities had been proved wrong [and]…the reality of warfare did not match the grand ideals which the intelligentsia had invested in it.” Among those who had such beliefs, the German Expressionists felt they were “rejecters of conventional attitudes,” and described their art as “a sign of the tension and conflicts of their age…[used] as a possible tool in the struggle to build a better society.”

One German Expressionist journal from the period reads, “Art and Revolution! They go together.” It was only toward the end of the war that artists and writers used their skills as revolutionary tools to represent their anti-war sentiment. Initially, German Expressionists rejected realism, becoming more conceptually and figuratively abstract in an attempt to create a new German Art. This movement had strong nationalist tendencies, and the art it produced related directly to the social and political upheaval of Germany. Stylistically, German Expressionism was characterized by “the simplification of forms, the contrasts of bright color, the emphasis on painterly texture [which] allowed the artist to transmit universal cosmic feelings instead of the minute details of topical interests.” Artists working in this movement used vibrant colors and jagged brushstrokes to convey the ideas that inspired their work. Because of their disdain for the war, German Expressionists used these stylistic elements to create dark and ominous imagery. Because the war not only failed to cure the wrongs in society but also seemed to intensify them, artists’ prints, especially, often reflected the hopelessness of the period.

Expressionist artists “almost single-handedly revived the long-neglected German tradition of printmaking.” Artists found that printmaking was most conducive in spreading their ideas about the war because of its mobility as a medium. Post World War I German Expressionist artists were not the first to use prints to denounce war. Francisco de Goya used etchings in the early nineteenth century to show his opposition to the Peninsular War that Spain fought against Napoleon. From Goya’s series of miniatures entitled Los Desastres de la Guerra (The Disasters of War), he “recorded the brutality, inhumanities and miseries” of war with violent imagery. According to Jean-Michel Palmer, printmaking “afforded a means of appealing to a much wider public than could be reached by mere canvas [and]…given their subject matter and freedom of handling, [the print] was at once a means of challenging and appealing to a wide audience which would not fail to react to the violence of their style.” The printing press provided German Expressionists with the ability to mass produce their work, spreading their message throughout the German population within magazines, literary illustrations, and posters. The combination of technical advancements in printing as well as the recent increase in popularity of print collecting provided the German Expressionists with the ideal climate to introduce their ideas in print form.

At this time, artists “rediscovered the frank, highly personal idiom of prints” that had been a national tradition. Throughout the history of miniatures, both with painting and printmaking, the size was intentional for intimate reflection at close quarters, thus creating a direct relationship between the viewer and the image. In many ways, the miniature lends itself to the German Expressionist’s goal of instigating social change. Artists such as Otto Dix and George Grosz used grim imagery to display their contempt for the war and society and chose to display them within a small lens. Within their prints, “miniaturism tries to present the horrible side of the world in the crudest manner.” By making their images small, they were able to put them “under the very noses of the bourgeoisie, who usually disagree to look at such disagreeable sights.”

Stefan Eggeler’s etchings from the series, Musikalische Miniaturen, encompass the values of German Expressionism. Published in 1921, the series captures the post-war trauma in
Germany when the country fell into social and political shambles. The _Musikalische Miniaturen_ series is comprised of Eggeler’s six etchings that illustrate a short story written by the German author, Hanns Heinz Ewers. This folio, in particular, is number 53 out of 300 copies made, meaning that the series was created with the intention of being distributed. Each print measures about 3 ⅛ by 3 ⅛ inches in size, and they are conceived in the miniature style of prints that forces the viewer into close range with the imagery.

The short story written by Ewers is one of love and death. There are many characters discussed, but the main love story is between Pierrot and Columbine. Ewers alludes to the characters Pierrot and Columbine from the Italian _Commedia dell’Arte_. The _Commedia dell’Arte_ was a mobile improvisational theater that used stereotyped characters, masks, broad physical gestures, and clowning to perform certain actions. The interest in the _Commedia dell’Arte_ was revived during the early twentieth century through literature and art. Many books were published on the subject, such as Constant Mic’s _The Commedia dell’Arte_ (Petrograd, 1914), P. L. Duchartre’s _La Comedie italienne_ (Paris, 1925), and Allardyce Nicoll’s _Masks, Mimes, and Miracles_ (London, 1926). Typically, the illustrations of these books contained defecation, nudity, and perverse sexual scenes that were rarely described in the texts. The 1921 series, _Musikalische Miniaturen_, follows this trend where Ewers’ text alludes to the _Commedia dell’Arte_, but does not narrate everything that Eggeler represents in his etchings.

There is little biographical information about Stefan Eggeler. He was an Austrian painter, printmaker, and illustrator of literary texts. Born in 1894, Eggeler began his career at a young age, having had his first etching published in 1914, and earning a commission for his self portrait by Vervielfaltigende Kunst, a Viennese publisher, in 1915 at the age of twenty-one. Eggeler attended The Vienna Academy and for the next twenty years continued to work predominantly in the print medium.

Ewers was a German writer of pornographic novels in pre-Hitler Germany who later worked with Hitler as a member of the Nazi Party. His work, however, was banned and burned by the Nazis, as it was considered “degenerate,” and shortly thereafter Ewers fled Germany and died in obscurity in 1943. Ewers’ writing style is often compared to that of Edgar Allan Poe, and in _Musikalische Miniaturen_, Ewers uses this style to talk of dreams and reality, love and death.

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3 Horne, _State, Society and Mobilization…_, 32.
5 Long, _German Expressionism_, 173.
6 Long, _German Expressionism_, 14.
9 H. P. R., “Goya Drawings and Prints,” 43.
More than ever before for today’s artist the dream is life itself. And that is certainly the case for the artist who created these prints. In them he tells about his life—about the dream that is life for him. He is Pierrot and sings his song of love and death to Columbina, the woman he loves.1

The first image in the series *Musikalische Miniaturen* is entitled *Pierrot’s Song of Love and Death*, and it contains two figures: a man and woman in a forest setting. The woman is nude and the man is dressed in white playing a wind instrument. The focus of the image is on the two figures, and there is no depth or perspective; the scene is flattened by the lack of a background. By inserting an instrument, the artist suggests a clear relationship to music. Ewers’ story tells of people occupying their time with dreams and fairy tales to avoid the “revolting banalities of everyday life, which eat away at her/his soul like suppurating boils.”2 The man is named Pierrot and in this print, he “sings to Columbine, the woman he loves.”3 Because she is nude and almost lost in the light, mystical background, Columbine is likely a figure conjured by Pierrot’s song. There is no interaction between the two figures and the change of plane and tone in the foreground spatially divides them. On the left side where the woman stands is a light, ovular shape where the lines fade out as if she is standing in mist. The right side is etched with several tonal shades of brown that could be an effect of the printing, but is more likely a method of highlighting the literal and metaphorical distance between the two figures. This scene depicts Ewers’ statement that Columbine is Pierrot’s dream in order to escape the reality of his life.

This image combined with the story is not one of violence or struggle, yet the tones in the etching create a stark contrast of light and dark that sets the desperate mood in each of the following images. The lines are imprecise but bold, and the darkness of the indecipherable background highlights the presence of the two figures. Eggeler adds a single skull placed in the tree directly above the man’s head. This skull is not mentioned in the story, yet it becomes a significant symbol of death and foreboding throughout the rest of the series. It likely relates to the title, *Pierrot’s Song of Love and Death*. While his love, Columbine, appears in front of him, death lurks above Pierrot’s head. The skull is also an example of Eggeler exercising his artistic license to create an ominous tone.

*Prostitute and Organ Grinder* is the second image in the
series and it contains much darker imagery also apparent in the following passage from Ewers’ text:

He wanders through the alleys, a blind organ grinder who follows the prostitute. Or throughout the night from far away he hears the sound that has become so familiar to us through all these years, the sound that we will never forget as long as we live. Somewhere he is walking, the man, year in and year out and will never let go of us….

This image depicts a city scene and an encounter between a woman and organ grinder. Eggeler creates depth in the background of this print, but the lines do not fade as they retreat nor do the angles provide an accurate perspective of the roofs. The organ grinder is a hunch-backed old man pulling his cart through the street. He does not have a definite form, but is rather a shapeless black mass with a head and hand. Although she is wearing a cloak, stockings, and pumps, the woman is otherwise nude. Ewers refers to her as a prostitute in the story. Assuming that the woman is the same person throughout the series, unlike the first image where she appears as a perfection in the dream of Pierrot, here, she is a prostitute whom the organ grinder follows. The depiction of Columbine changes throughout the story as Ewers suggests in his text that she is the representation of love, beauty, death and is both “purity and prostitute.”

This image is tonally darker than the first, and the only highlight is the woman’s nude body. The background is more detailed than the previous image, suggesting that this scene is an event occurring in the text, whereas the first scene was the depiction of an idea. The obscure quality of this image is in the shadow that emerges in the doorway in the alley behind the two figures. The shadow has a vague human shape, appearing only in silhouette. While there is no specific mention of this shadow as a character in the story, he could be the man described as he who “year in and year out…will never let go of us.” Because this description is abstract, not referring to one of the characters in the story, Eggeler may have depicted him as nothing more than a shadow in the background.

The third image in the series is called War Song. The harlequins depicted in this scene are described as:

…that is the man who beats the drum—that is the man who gives the drum roll on the small drum and on the great drum!

Set in a forest similar to the first print, this scene depicts two men, referred to as harlequins in Ewers’ text, walking through woods. Each man carries an instrument; the first figure carries a bagpipe and the second, more prominent figure, is beating a drum. Neither figure seems to notice the two skeletons hanging from the trees near where they are walking. Both harlequins are bent over in inhuman positions, impractical for traveling. The background is a mountainous landscape that flattens the image from lack of perspective.

This image is the first of the series that has overt anti-war imagery. The men are dressed as court jesters as a possible commentary on the unstable political climate. The Hapsburgs were exiled from Austria-Hungary after World War I, leaving the region in shambles. The wandering jesters could symbolize the loss of a centralized authoritative power. The desensitization to war and violence is exhibited by the two figures’ lack of acknowledgment of the hanging skeletons above their heads. Ewers’ story mentions harlequins and the “man who beats the drum,” but he does not describe the scene nor mention the skeletons. The addition of the skeletons in this scene, as with the shadow in the second print and the skull in the first, are the invention of Eggeler and the influence of the anti-war Expressionist movement.

These images portray the qualities of German Expressionism as they represent emotionally evocative scenes of post-war German society. Expressionist artists were looked to for a “transcendent meaning” of the suffering that society saw during and after World War I. Through their imagery, the horrors of war were broken down in series such as Eggeler’s and those of Otto Dix. Because Eggeler had Ewers’ text to work with, he was able to combine the social desperation of the text with his own images to help provide an explanation and escape. Society had “shifted all of the torment and doubt of our situation onto the artists’ consciences…he expresses the meaning and insanity of everyday which we hold hidden in our hearts.” These images impart a sense of the imaginary induced by the daily proximity to death. Expressionism was meant to be experiential without concern for realism. Few of the figures have weight or a distinct structure beneath their clothing, nor do any of the nudes have a defined shape. In the first print, Columbine is the most natural-looking figure, but exists only as an outline with her breasts and genitals defined. There is no musculature or volume in the nudes. Because of the separation from reality, these images have little sense of time. They are all dark, but do not necessarily take place at night. War Song is outside and it is light, but there are no shadows and no direct light source. Despite its narrative form, the passage of time is not documented in text or image. The unnatural images emphasize the imaginary, dreamlike atmosphere in this series.
The series of etchings by Stefan Eggeler, entitled *Musikalische Miniaturen*, illustrate a text written by Hanns Heinz Ewers. The literature gives the viewer another medium with which to understand the visual message of the series. Together, the imagery and text narrate the story of love and death between two characters, Pierrot and Columbine. From the last three etchings, entitled *Drinking Song, Serenade, and Death Game: The Burning of Witches*, Eggeler alludes to a variety of themes that had been present in art and literature for centuries, and became reintegrated into European twentieth-century art, such as the “dance of death” and themes from *La Commedia dell’Arte*. Eggeler also touched on current social issues by alluding to prostitution and the “femme fatale” in his imagery. All of the themes in *Musikalische Miniaturen* offer a deeper contextual understanding of the imagery that shed light on the connections between Eggeler’s prints and German Expressionism.

The fourth etching in the series is titled *Drinking Song*. It corresponds to Ewers’ text below:

> Then on other occasions he sits in the tavern, drunk from wine, bellows student songs, shouts soldier’s songs and dreams of being a hero.

In the etching, Eggeler illustrates Ewers’ words, but includes elements that are not within the text. What is seen in the print are three figures in a bar setting: two fully clothed men, and one completely nude woman. It is obvious that the drunken man, spoken of in the text, is the figure in the middle, while the other two figures, the bartender to the left and the nude female to the right, are not written about by Ewers. In the print, while the bartender is topping off the man’s drink, the drunken man is fondling and gawking at the woman’s breasts. Unlike the two males, the female figure has a blunt demeanor about her appearance; not only is she completely nude within a public setting surrounded by fully-clothed men, but her body is also vulnerable and exposed. The manner in which she is portrayed by Eggeler makes her a focal point within the print through the strong contrasts between darks and lights, consequently making her body stand out more than the other figures. It is her shocking nudity that the viewer sees first. Eggeler used Expressionism’s bold style to articulate the female nude and make her the focus of the etching, whereas the drunken man, who is the main character according to the text, is given a secondary role by Eggeler.

This woman is perhaps a prostitute as indicated by the
degrading and sexual manner in which she is portrayed. Prostitution was widely scorned by the bourgeoisie, yet it was still popular subject matter for German Expressionists during the early twentieth century because the harlot was seen as the quintessence of a decaying society. As already mentioned, the Expressionists were anti-traditionalist in their style and anti-bourgeoisie in their values. Therefore, artists set out to confront the bourgeoisie with the realities of society that they refused to acknowledge, such as prostitution. Many Expressionists related to the plight of the prostitutes because both were victims of bourgeois society and as a result, the prostitute was seen as the artists’ accomplice. The prostitute represented the poverty, violence, despair, and sickness of a modernizing Germany. And, because prostitution had become one of the most talked-about social issues of the German Empire, the prostitute as a subject was the most politically explosive. Not only was the growth of prostitution the result of early twentieth-century modernity in Germany, but also a ‘new’ German woman emerged from this modernization. The role of women in postwar Germany in the 1920s was marked by a period of outward positive change in women’s lives. After years of oppression, women had finally been given legal rights and were acquiring jobs they had never been granted in the past. These changes created a ‘general belief that a ‘new woman,’ an emancipated woman had come into being.”

Not only was the growth of prostitution the result of early twentieth-century modernity in Germany, but also a ‘new’ German woman emerged from this modernization. The role of women in postwar Germany in the 1920s was marked by a period of outward positive change in women’s lives. After years of oppression, women had finally been given legal rights and were acquiring jobs they had never been granted in the past. These changes created a “general belief that a ‘new woman,’ an emancipated woman had come into being.” The woman from Drinking Song appears to be the opposite of the ‘new woman’ in the German society. These ‘new women’ were active females who took control of their lives, while Eggeler’s woman is portrayed as passive and lacking in any personal control over her own body. As seen in the text, Ewers supports the concept of prostitution by specifically calling the woman a “harlot.” The word “harlot” is used in the narrative of the fifth print, entitled Serenade:

Or he stands as Arlecchino in front of his beauty’s balcony and raises his song of yearning for her to lute accompaniment. He sings to Colombina, his beauty. He sings to his beloved whom he simultaneously sees as both purity and prostitute.

Here, Ewers describes Pierrot as Harlequin who sings to Colombina from the streets. And, unlike the previous narrative that correlated with Drinking Song, this narrative corresponds more closely with its etching. In Drinking Song, Eggeler added two figures that were not described in the text while the imagery in Serenade is fully present in Ewers’ text. The etching consists of two figures, one female and one male, where Harlequin is in the foreground and a somewhat naked Colombina is looking out into the street from the balcony. Harlequin’s longing that Ewers describes, is implied as a sexual longing because Ewers mentioned that she was a prostitute, and Eggeler chose to depict her with her clothes half on.

It is plausible that both Eggeler and Ewers were referencing La Commedia dell’Arte in Serenade. Not only is Columbine a major character from La Commedia, Harlequin is as well. Columbine in La Commedia typically went by her Italian name, Columbina. Her character was a servant whose personality was described as being intelligent, pretty, skilled in rhetoric and dance, and who also expressed a vulgar yet charming interest in sex. Harlequin, or Arlecchino, was a “zanni,” a comic character from La Commedia, who was often portrayed as either stupid or cunning. His trademark appearance consisted of multi-colored patchwork clothing, a conical hat, and either a black mask or tons of makeup. In Eggeler’s Serenade, Columbine is portrayed naked in the balcony, while the Columbina from La Commedia was almost never seen in the nude, but was typically dressed. Harlequin, from the print, is wearing the typical harlequin hat, colorfully patched clothing, and clown-like makeup.

There are various scenarios in La Commedia where Columbina and Arlecchino interact, but the most popular among them is that of their forbidden love for each other. This story became widely known throughout Europe at the end of the nineteenth century when Ruggero Leoncavallo composed an opera entitled Pagliacci that was first performed at the Teatro dal Verme in Milan, May 21, 1892. The opera recounts the tragedy of a jealous husband of Columbina, who discovers that his wife and Arlecchino were lovers. One scene, in particular, from the opera displays Arlecchino in the street below Columbina’s balcony, serenading her with his music. This scene between Columbina and Arlecchino from Pagliacci is similarly portrayed by Eggeler in the etching, Serenade, where we see Harlequin in the street below Columbine’s balcony, serenading her.

The last and final etching of the series, Death Game: The Burning of Witches, corresponds to Ewers’ text below:

She is a saint to him—but also a witch who atones at the stake for her pact with the devil.

Visually, it is the crescendo of the series. In the text, Ewers describes Columbine as both holy and as a witch, and therefore she makes amends for her deal with the devil on a funeral pyre. In Eggeler’s etching, he adds five ominous skeletons surrounding a naked Columbine, who were not mentioned by Ewers. The most prominent element within the print, besides the five skeletons, is Columbine’s vagina that is being mutilated by one of the skeletons with an executioner’s axe. Eggeler strategically placed this part of her body in the center of the print so as not to be ignored by the
viewer. Instead, the viewer is confronted with an exposed and uncomfortable depiction of the female body.

The title, *Death Game: The Burning of Witches*, is clearly referencing an old and popular theme from European art. Dating as far back as the fifteenth century, the dance of death in art was often used as a metaphor for social catastrophes. The theme tended to be more prominent during and after plagues and wars in Europe. In 1921, the year that *Musikalische Miniaturen* was published, Germany and most of Europe still were feeling the negative effects of the Great War. The total estimated casualties due to the war amounted to 33,000,000 people. This statistic included the wounded, those who died in action, and those who died of disease and famine from harsh living conditions as a result of the war. Germany alone had an estimated 7,000,000 casualties from the war. It is clear then that the outcomes of the war reverberated through European society, leaving a lasting impression. Therefore, it is probable that Eggeler was alluding to the “dance of death” in his print as a response to the post-war social climate in which he lived.

What remains a constant within “dance of death” imagery is the use of skeletons. They always appear to derive a great deal of pleasure from the pain inflicted on their victims. We can see this motif carrying over into Eggeler’s etching through his portrayal of the skeletons and the victim, Columbine. Even though each skeleton is doing something different, their expressions show no disdain for Columbine’s suffering. The fact that she is described as a witch can be justification for her suffering, yet Eggeler also describes her as a pure being. The duality of this female image, often used in art and literature, alludes to the characteristics of the “femme fatale.” A “femme fatale” is known to be deadly, seductive, and alluring, and whose charms trap her lovers in bonds of irresistible desire. The idea of the “femme fatale” is closely linked with the male’s fear of women because they were characterized as deadly though enticing, and were often depicted as witches and demons. The way in which Columbine is depicted, as both good and evil, suggests that Eggeler and Ewers were alluding to the “femme fatale.”

Stefan Eggeler’s series of prints have a significant impact on the viewer that supersedes their size. These miniatures force the viewer into close range in order to comprehend the imagery. And, once close enough to read them, the viewer can be shocked by how provocative the imagery is. Not only are Eggeler and Ewers drawing from older artistic themes to create this provocative rendition on the story between Pierrot and Columbine, but both also borrowed themes from more current aspects of a decaying society that were typical of German Expressionists. Hermann Bahr described German Expressionism as “stimulating a change of attitude among viewers because of its disturbing qualities.” Eggeler’s prints are indeed “disturbing” imagery that, according to German Expressionist ideals, would spark a revolutionary spirit within the German people of the twentieth century.

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2 Schönfeld, *Commodities of Desire*, 113-114.
7 Martin, *The Opera Companion*, 583.
1
Paul Wunderlich (b. 1927), German
Jutta auf dem Sofa, 1968
Color lithograph on paper
25 5/8 x 19 3/4 in.
Gift of Joan L. Tobias
2009.7.2

2
Paul Wunderlich (b. 1927), German
Paul, Halts Maul, 1967
Color lithograph on paper
17 7/8 x 22 3/4 in.
Gift of Joan L. Tobias
2009.7.4
Paul Wunderlich (b. 1927), German

3

Joanna Dreaming of Bismarck, 1968
Color lithograph on Rives paper
19 ¾ in. x 25 ¾ in.
Gift of Joan L. Tobias
2009.7.3

Die Stuhl, 1969
Aquatint on Rives paper
23 ⅞ x 15 ⅞ in.
Gift of Joan L. Tobias
2009.7.1
5
Salvador Dali (1904–1989), Spanish
Cosmic Madonna, 1981
Lithograph on Arches paper
38 ¼ x 31 ½ in.
Gift of Joseph Weniger
1985.11

6
Joan Miró (1893–1983), Spanish
Cuivre rayé après tirage, 1953
Etching
7 ¾ x 7 ¾ in.
Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin
1989.1.55
Marc Chagall (1887–1985),
Russian-French
Le Coq Rouge, 1953
Lithograph
15 x 22 in.
Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin
1957.1.24

Jean Cocteau (1889–1963),
French
Satyr, 1958
Lithograph
29 ½ x 20 ½ in.
Gift of Philip and Muriel Berman
1986.4.3.8
Franz Marc (1880–1916), German
*The Dream*, 1912
Lithograph on paper
15 x 11 in.
Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin
1969.1.15.81

Salvador Dali (1904–1989), Spanish
*The Grasshopper’s Child (Les Chants de Maldoror)*, 1934
Etching
25 ¾ x 20 in.
Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin
1969.1.14
Salvador Dali (1904–1989), Spanish
L’Incantation, 1960
Etching
22 ¼ x 15 in.
Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin
1984.3.2

Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), French
Menton, 1958
Lithograph
29 ½ x 20 ½ in.
Gift of Philip and Muriel Berman
1986.4.3.24
13
Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), French
_L’Avenir, 1958_
Lithograph
29 1/2 x 20 1/2 in.
Gift of Philip and Muriel Berman
1986.4.3.20

14
Max Ernst (1891–1976), German
_Starfish (Etoile de Mer), 1950_
Color lithograph
21 3/8 x 14 3/4 in.
Gift of the Doctors Meyer P.
and Vivian O. Potamkin
1969.1.16
Marc Chagall (1887–1985), Russian-French

The Dreams of Chichikov, Les Âmes Mortes (Nicolas Gogol), 1948
Etching on paper
(paper size) 14 7/8 x 11 1/8 in.
Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin
1969.1.12.28

Marc Chagall (1887–1985), Russian-French

Chagall and Gogol, Les Âmes Mortes (Nicolas Gogol), 1948
Etching on paper
(paper size) 14 3/8 x 11 1/8 in.
Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin
1969.1.12.48
Stefan Eggeler (1894–1969), Austrian
I. *Pierrot’s Song of Love and Death*, 1921
Etching on handmade paper with
deckled edge
3 ⅛ x 3 ⅛ in.
Gift of Joan L. Tobias
2009.7.7.1

Stefan Eggeler (1894–1969), Austrian
II. *Prostitute and Organ Grinder*, 1921
Etching on handmade paper with
deckled edge
3 ⅛ x 3 ⅛ in.
Gift of Joan L. Tobias
2009.7.7.2
21
Stefan Eggeler (1894–1969), Austrian
III. War Song, 1921
Etching on handmade paper with
deckled edge
3 7/8 x 3 7/8 in.
Gift of Joan L. Tobias
2009.7.7.3

22
Stefan Eggeler (1894–1969), Austrian
IV. Drinking Song, 1921
Etching on handmade paper with
deckled edge
3 7/8 x 3 7/8 in.
Gift of Joan L. Tobias
2009.7.7.4
23
Stefan Eggeler (1894–1969), Austrian
*V. Serenade*, 1921
Etching on handmade paper with deckled edge
3 ¼ x 3 ¼ in.
Gift of Joan L. Tobias
2009.7.7.5

24
Stefan Eggeler (1894–1969), Austrian
*VI. Death Game: The Burning of Witches*, 1921
Etching on handmade paper with deckled edge
3 ¼ x 3 ¼ in.
Gift of Joan L. Tobias
2009.7.7.6