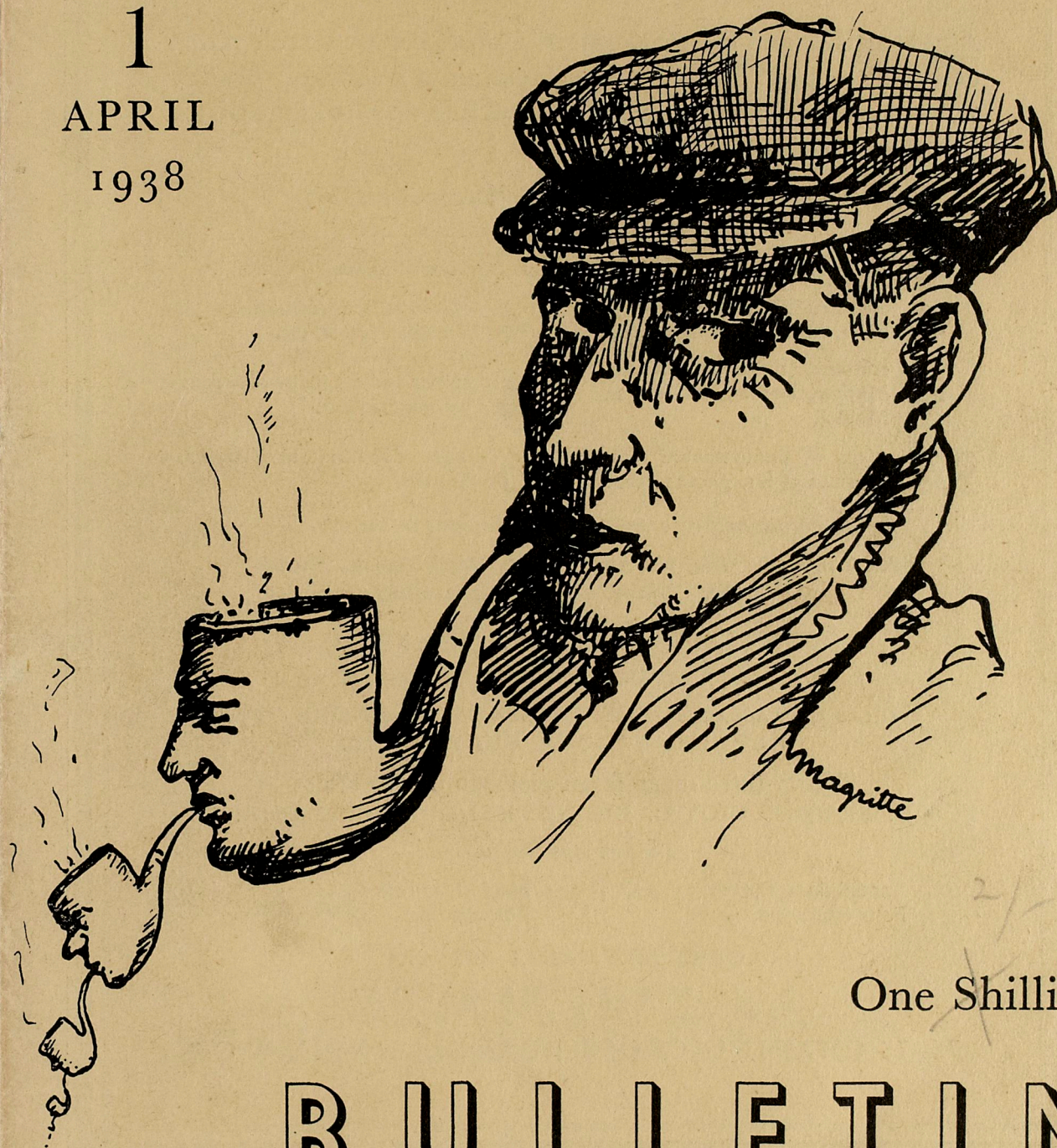


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1938



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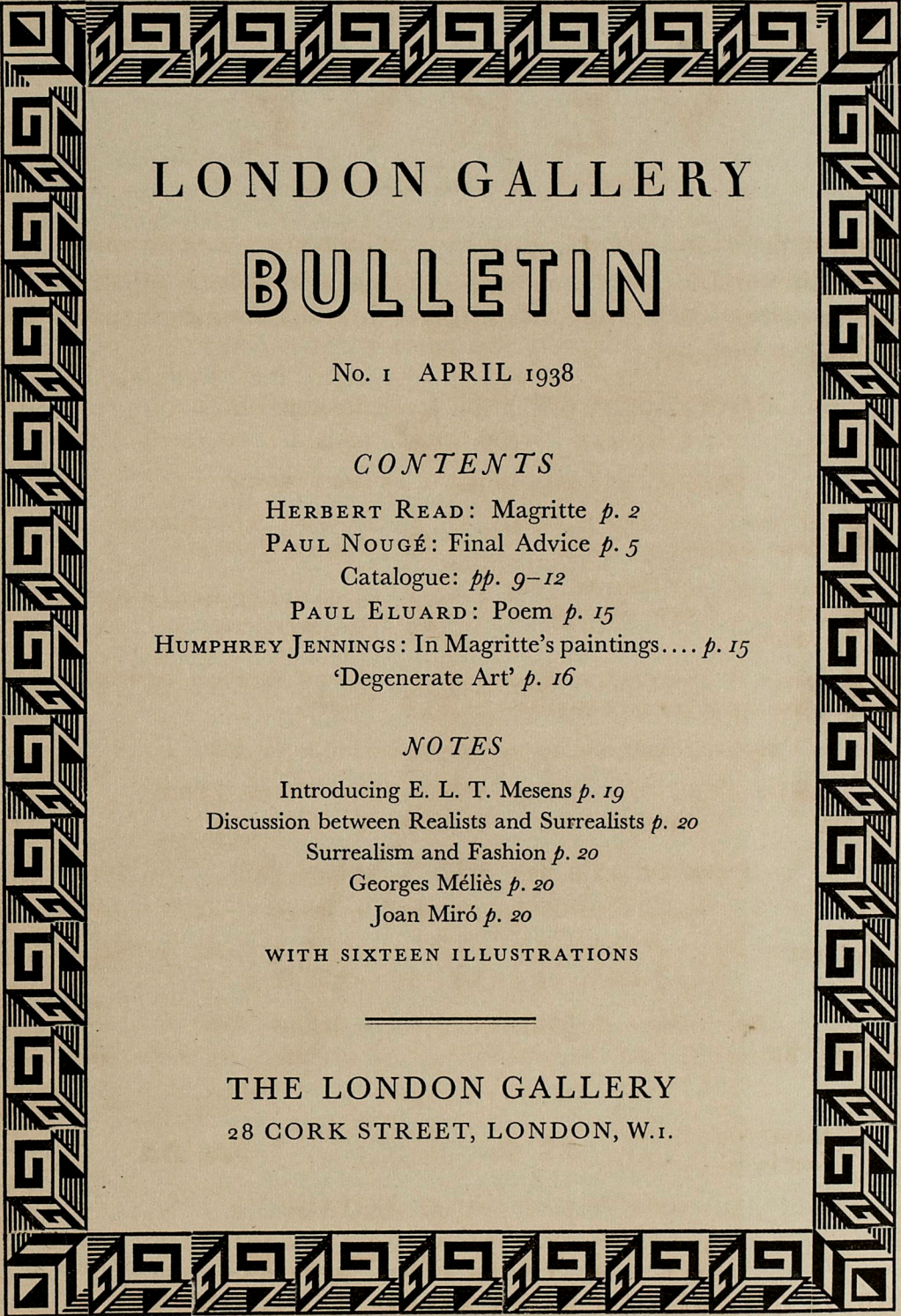
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LONDON GALLERY BULLETIN

No. 1 APRIL 1938

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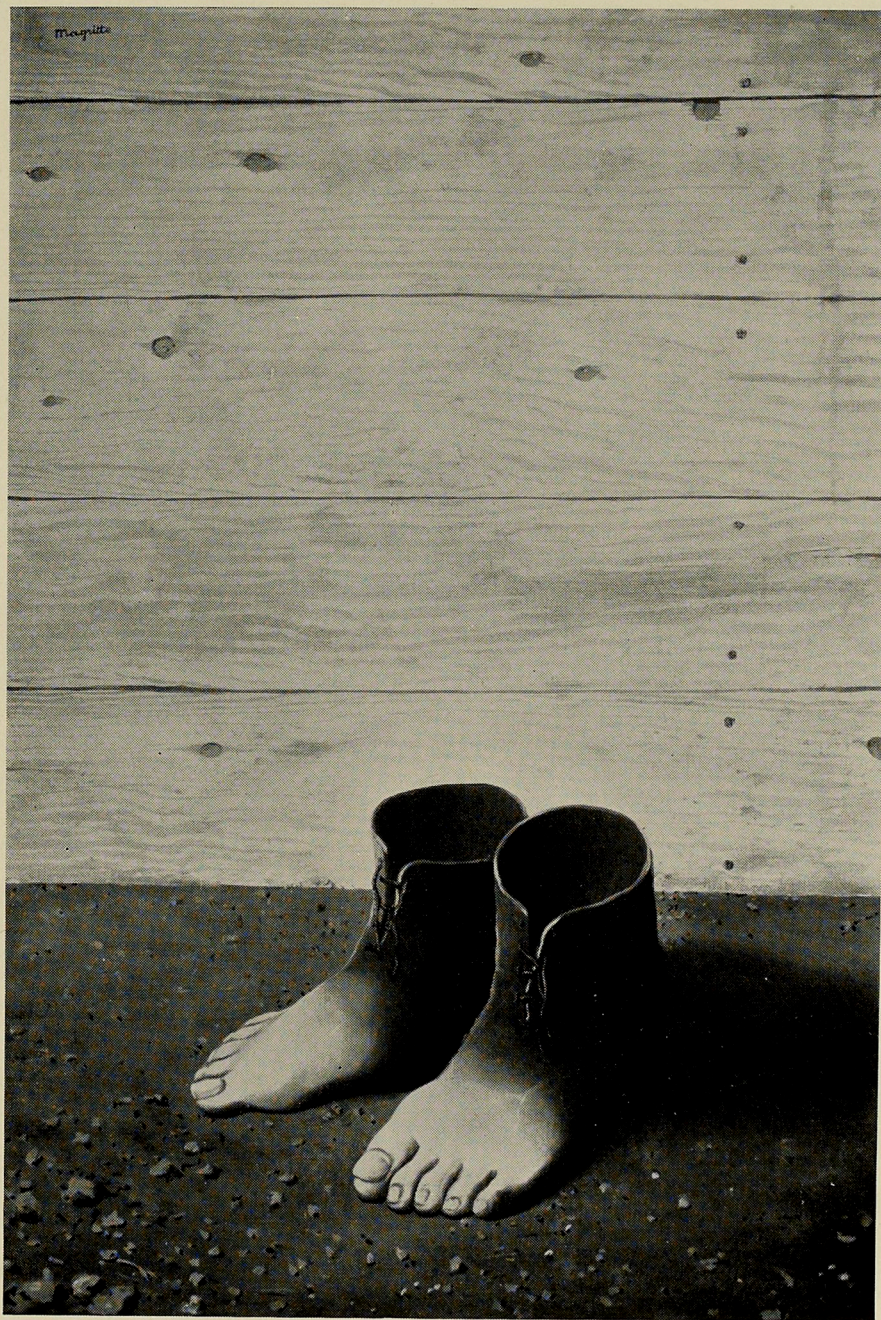
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108



MAGRITTE

by *HERBERT READ*

RENÉ MAGRITTE is quickly assuming a pivotal position in the modern movement. He has dared to take a step which neither Picasso, nor Klee, nor Miró—not even Max Ernst—has yet dared to take. He has dared to assert the self-sufficiency of the poetic idea in painting. I do not mean that he is necessarily indifferent to technique; but technique is only important for the directness and adequacy with which it expresses the imaginative unity of the picture. Visual unity—the sensuous qualities which still intrigue a Picasso or a Miró—these he rejects along with all the babble about form and ‘facture’. A painting by Magritte is a statement, just as a romanesque fresco or a painting by Van Eyck is a statement: the statement of an idea, a poetic idea. In the case of the medieval artist it is difficult to disengage the poetry from the religion, the idea from the symbol; the modern artist is free to create his own symbols, to exercise the metaphorical activity without restraint. I say ‘without restraint’, but there is always the restraint which is the unity of the work of art: that cohesion or counterpoise of forces which is the vital suspense isolating the work of art from the chaos of existence. The imaginative process, to be valid, must be logical. Like the logic of reasoning, the logic of imagination has its syllogism, which is an instrument for making judgements or discovering truth. Some day, no doubt, we shall learn to dissect the imaginative syllogism, but to what end? To distinguish the true from the false? Poetic truth is not in need of such mechanical aids. I possess a beautiful drawing by Magritte. A stream or canal cuts diagonally across a flat landscape; on the right bank, reflected in the water, a curtain—a very bourgeois curtain, hitched up with a girdle—hangs in the sky; on the left bank a tree rises, and its foliage, shaped like one immense leaf, consists of a brick wall; to the left of the tree lies a cannon-ball; there is a vague object at the point where the canal meets the distant horizon. It is not difficult to point out a few terms in the syllogism: the straight and horizontal flowing of the canal and the free and vertical flowing of the trunk and branches of the tree; the wide open plain and the hard concentrated sphere of the cannon-ball; the transition from leaves to bricks, both countless, cohering but detachable, tree-wall, wall-tree—it is comparatively easy to reveal this metaphorical activity, just as it is comparatively easy to analyse the iconography of a medieval picture, or the images in one of Shakespeare’s sonnets. In that way we project our minds into the picture. But the picture itself is producing a synthesis; its imaginative logic has resulted in a poem, and that poem, unless our senses are dead, we accept in all its compelling unity.



RENÉ MAGRITTE

The Red Model (1936)



RENÉ MAGRITTE

The Rape (1934)

FINAL ADVICE

by PAUL NOUGÉ

to Humphrey Jennings

IN a really serious situation one is allowed to overlook delicate distinctions and to speak brutally.

* * *

If looking meant seeing, we should see an apparently miraculous snuffing-out of various arguments, the fading away of so-called absolute misunderstandings, and the disappearance of some supposed problems which lie in the foreground of our mental universe and which in fact stop us from giving attention to essential questions.

It is easy to agree thus far. But when it comes to describing the nature of this intellectual blindness then opinions differ.

* * *

But, in fact, it is not difficult to find out what is stopping us. It lies right in the heart of the mind itself, where the most fruitful theories, if they are allowed to crystallize into dogmas, form a kind of prison from which thought has no escape.

This is because theories and doctrines are double-edged weapons.

Although they are the instruments of all our conquests the moment they cease to be tools and become 'truths', they can be seen turning against the system of thought which constructed them for its own purposes, and working to destroy it.

* * *

Our past is crawling with troubles of this kind, and some of them are far-reaching.

The doctrine of Marxism still remains without question the only doctrine on which the proletarian revolution can rely. At the same time it is undeniable that the transformation of a proposition by Marx about the 'inevitable' character of this revolution into a 'truth' was the cause of the disastrous reformist side-tracking which had for its punishment the bloody collapse of the German Social Democrats in 1914.

The psycho-analytical theories of Freud have freshened man's knowledge of himself and given the investigator an incomparable method of approach. But what are we to say for dogmatic Freudism, of its idiotic mistakes, of the results of its daily abuses of the Oedipus complex, and of sexual symbolism in general? And what about the wretched excursions of Freud himself into the domain of bourgeois sociology?

It is not much simply to recognize that Surrealism has turned poetic and pictorial expression upside down. One may say that it has given back to

these distinctive forms of thought their real meaning and basic value. Surrealism in destroying æstheticism, in bringing so-called artistic expression back into really vital channels, has given a validity and objective content to what ought to be called 'universalized poetry'.¹

But what is to be thought of the poor beginner who, under the pretext of Surrealism, devotes his attention solely to dream-worlds, the appearances of automatism, and who proposes to reduce every Surrealist undertaking to certain elementary formulas about dreams, delirium, and the mechanism of the unconscious?

* * *

One may remind the visitors to an exhibition of paintings by René Magritte that the images with which they are met here derive from a mental exploration which is highly heterogeneous and complex.

This painting has been led by a constant consideration of the relations of the exterior world to man, of the kind of dialectic of which man and the exterior world are the two terms in an endless advance, to living unity and telling expression.

May one add that Magritte is not a painter in the sense understood by the æsthete, but a man who uses painting to perfect astonishing experiences in which all forms of our existence find themselves taking part? And that each of his works tries to show us a section of the revolutionary evidence which he has been patiently collecting?

With them Magritte appeals to our everyday life, to the limits of our consciousness, and not to theoretical abstractions which we may have constructed or assimilated with less or more ingenuity.

His images lie right in the middle of reality.

It is there that one must try to reach them—to get the best out of them.

* * *

Not all difficulties are resolved by using a metaphor.

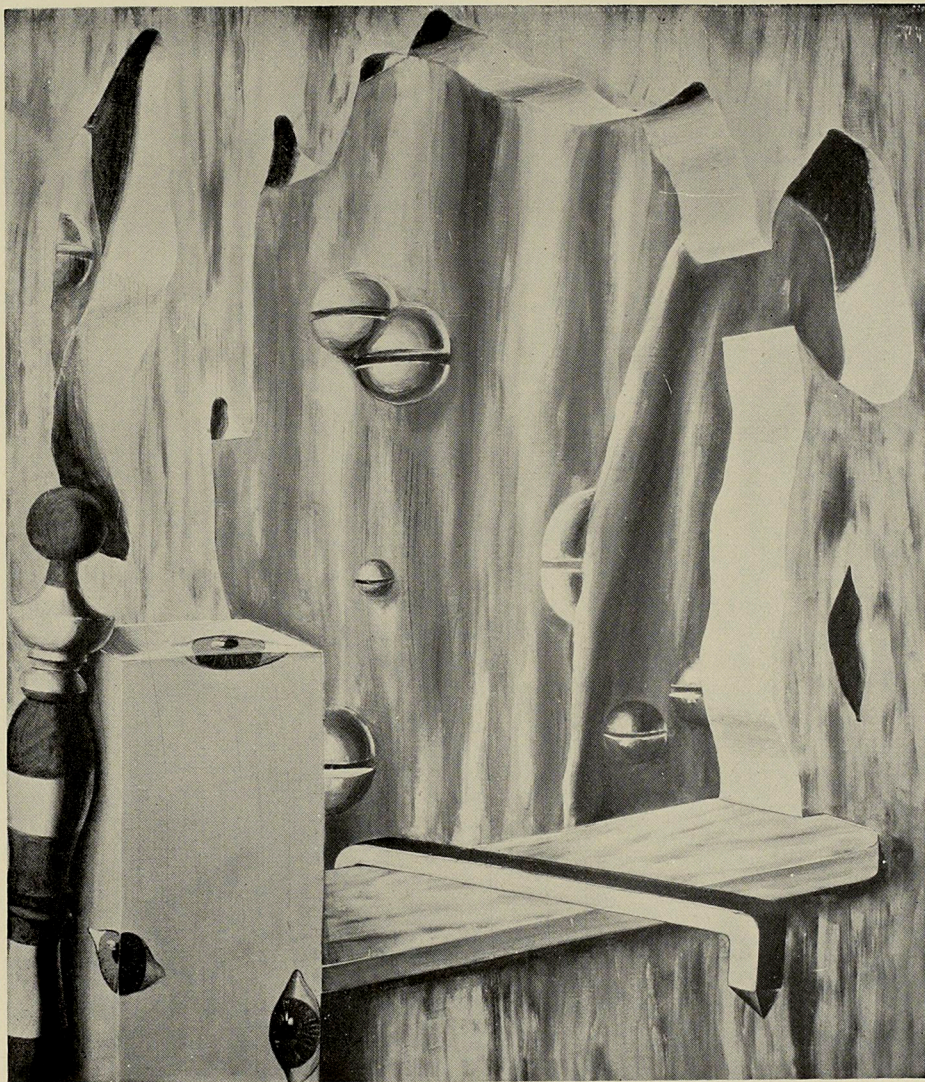
From time to time our friends have to be reminded of this elementary truth.

¹ cf. Lautréamont: 'Poetry should be made by all. Not by one.' (Translator's note.)

What is Surrealism?

**It is the Cuckoo's egg laid in the nest (whose brood is lost) with
the complicity of René Magritte.**

André Breton



RENÉ MAGRITTE

The Chasm of Silver (1926)



RENÉ MAGRITTE

The Key to Dreams (1930)

CATALOGUE

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. YOU WILL NEVER KNOW (1926) | Collage-drawing |
| <i>Formerly Coll. Galerie "La Centaure", Brussels</i> | |
| 2. THE PILGRIM (1926) | Collage |
| <i>Formerly Coll. P. G. van Hecke, Brussels Galerie "L'Epoque", Brussels, W. Schwarzenberg, Brussels.</i> | water-colour |
| 3. THE RIGHTS OF LIFE (1926) | Collage |
| | water-colour |
| 4. THE CHASM OF SILVER (1926) | Oil |
| <i>Lent by Roland Penrose, Esq., London.</i> | |
| <i>Formerly Coll. René Gaffé, Brussels.</i> | |
| <i>Reproduced in "Les Beaux-Arts," Brussels.</i> | |
| 5. THE TREE WITH BRIGHT EYES (1926) | Oil |
| 6. THE WISE TREE (1926) | Oil |
| <i>Lent by Alberto Cavalcanti, Esq., London.</i> | |
| <i>Formerly Coll. E. L. T. Mesens.</i> | |
| 7. THE DARE-DEVIL (1927) | Drawing |
| 8. THE LATEST HABITS (1927) | Oil |
| 9. THE LADY FENCER (1927) | Oil |
| 10. THE FLYING STATUE (1927) | Oil |
| 11. THE NICE CUP AND BALL (1927) | Oil |
| 12. THE FUTURE OF STATUES (1927) | Interpreted object |
| <i>This object exists in several states:</i> | |
| 1. Coll. Edward James, London. | |
| 2. Coll. Paul Colinet, Brussels. | |
| 3. Coll. Claude Spaak, Paris. | |
| <i>Seven further states may be subscribed for.</i> | |
| 13. THE BARBARIAN (1928) | Oil |
| 14. THE RENDEZ-VOUS (1928) | Oil |
| 15. THE SECRET LIFE (IV) (1928) | Oil |
| 16. THE IMPATIENT ONES (1928) | Oil |

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 17. | THE ISOLATED LANDSCAPE (1929) | Oil |
| 18. | THE CLOAK OF DARKNESS (1929) | Oil |
| 19. | THE MIMOSA OF THE MOMENT (1929) | Oil |
| | <i>Lent by Basil Wright, Esq., London.
Formerly Coll. E. L. T. Mesens.</i> | |
| 20. | THE ETERNAL EVIDENCE (1930) | Picture-object |
| 21. | THE LADDER OF FIRE (1933) | Oil |
| 22. | THE COPPER HANDCUFFS (1934) | Interpreted object |
| 23. | THE RAPE (1934) | Oil |
| 24. | THE REVOLUTION (II) (1936) | Oil |
| | <i>The first version of this picture belonged to the late M. Paul Spaak.</i> | |
| 25. | "FAIR PLAY" (1936) | Oil |
| 26. | THE PORTRAIT (1936) | Oil |
| 27. | THE FORERUNNER (I) (1936) | |
| | <i>The second version of this picture is in New York.</i> | |
| 28. | THE FIRST FACT (1936) | Object |
| 29. | THIS IS A PIECE OF CHEESE (1936) | Object |
| 30. | THE VICIOUS CIRCLE (1937) | Oil |
| 31. | THE WHITE RACE (I) (1937) | Gouache |
| 32. | THE WHITE RACE (II) (1937) | Gouache |
| 33. | THE WHITE RACE (III) (1937) | Oil |
| 34. | THE BLACK FLAG (1937) | Oil |
| 35. | THE RENDEZ-VOUS (1937) | Oil |
| | <i>Reproduced in the "Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme".</i> | |
| 36. | THE GOOD OLD TIMES (1937) | Oil |
| | <i>Reproduced in the "Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme".</i> | |
| 37. | GOOD FORTUNE (1937) | Oil |

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 38. | THE SONG OF THE STORM (1937) | Oil |
| 39. | REPRODUCTION FORBIDDEN (1937)
<i>Lent by Edward James, Esq., London.</i> | Oil |
| 40. | THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE (1937)
<i>Lent by Edward James, Esq., London.</i> | Oil |
| 41. | SPONTANEOUS GENERATION (1937)
<i>Lent by Roland Penrose, Esq., London.</i> | Oil |
| 42. | THE GIANTESS (1937)
<i>Lent by Herbert Read, Esq., London.</i> | Drawing |
| 43. | NATURAL SELECTION (1938) | Oil |
| 44. | Sketches for "THE ENDLESS CHAIN" (1938) | Drawings |
| 45. | THE ENDLESS CHAIN (1938) | Oil |
| 46. | ETERNAL SPRING (1938) | Gouache |

RENÉ MAGRITTE

Born at Lessines, Belgium, November 21, 1898.

Recent one-man exhibitions:

- Julien Levy Galleries, New York, 1936.
- Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, May 1936.
- Galerie Esher Surrey, The Hague, 1937.
- Hollywood, September 1937.
- Julien Levy Galleries, New York, October 1937.

Works by Magritte have also been shown in the following recent exhibitions:

- Exposition d'objets surréalistes, Paris, Charles Ratton, 1936.
- International Surrealist Exhibition, London, New Burlington Galleries, 1936.
- Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936.
- Idem, Pennsylvania Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 1937.
- Idem, Museum of Modern Art, Boston, 1937.
- Idem, Museum of Art, Springfield, 1937.
- Idem, Art Institute, Milwaukee, 1937.
- Idem, University Art Gallery, Minneapolis, 1937.
- Idem, Museum of Art, San Francisco, 1937.
- Artists International Association, London, 1937.
- Young Belgian Painters, London Gallery, 1937.
- Surrealist Exhibitions at Tokio, Osaka, Nagoya, (Japan), 1936-7.
- Surrealist Objects, London Gallery, November 1937.
- Belgian Art Exhibition, Moscow and Leningrad, 1937.
- Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme, Paris, 1938.

Pictures and objects by Magritte figure in the following collections:

ENGLAND:

Dr. Bray, Miss Mary Ellis, Roland Penrose, Alberto Cavalcanti, Edward James, Basil Wright, George Reavey, Humphrey Jennings, Herbert Read, Ivor Montague, David Gascoygne, etc.

BELGIUM:

Frans Buyle, Jean Bastien, Charles Bernard, Gaston Burssens, Birnie, Louis Camu, Stéphane Cordier, Paul Colinet, Capuano, Mme. Drost, Paul Delvaux, André de Ridder, Rene Gaffé, Robert Giron, Dr. Gaspar, Emile Hartog, Sta Jasinsky, Pierre Janlet, Max Janlet, Millardet, Mme. A. Michel, Masson, Moerman, Denis Marion, Paul Nougé, Mlle. Ruth Peters, Olivier Picard, Mlle. V. Paridant, Victor Servranckx, P.-H. Spaak, Jean Scutenaire, Alex Salkin-Massé, Andre Thirifays, Geert van Bruaene, P.-G. van Hecke, J. van Parys, Georges Vriamont, Paul Desmeth, Fernand Quinet, Mme. Suzanne Samuel, Pierre Crowet, Mme. B. Bertrand, etc.

FRANCE:

Mme. Lise Deharme, Joe Bousquet, Salvador Dali, Paul Eluard, Leon Kochnitsky, Charles Spaak, André Breton, Claude Spaak, etc.

HOLLAND:

Mme. Charley Toorop.

BELGIAN CONGO:

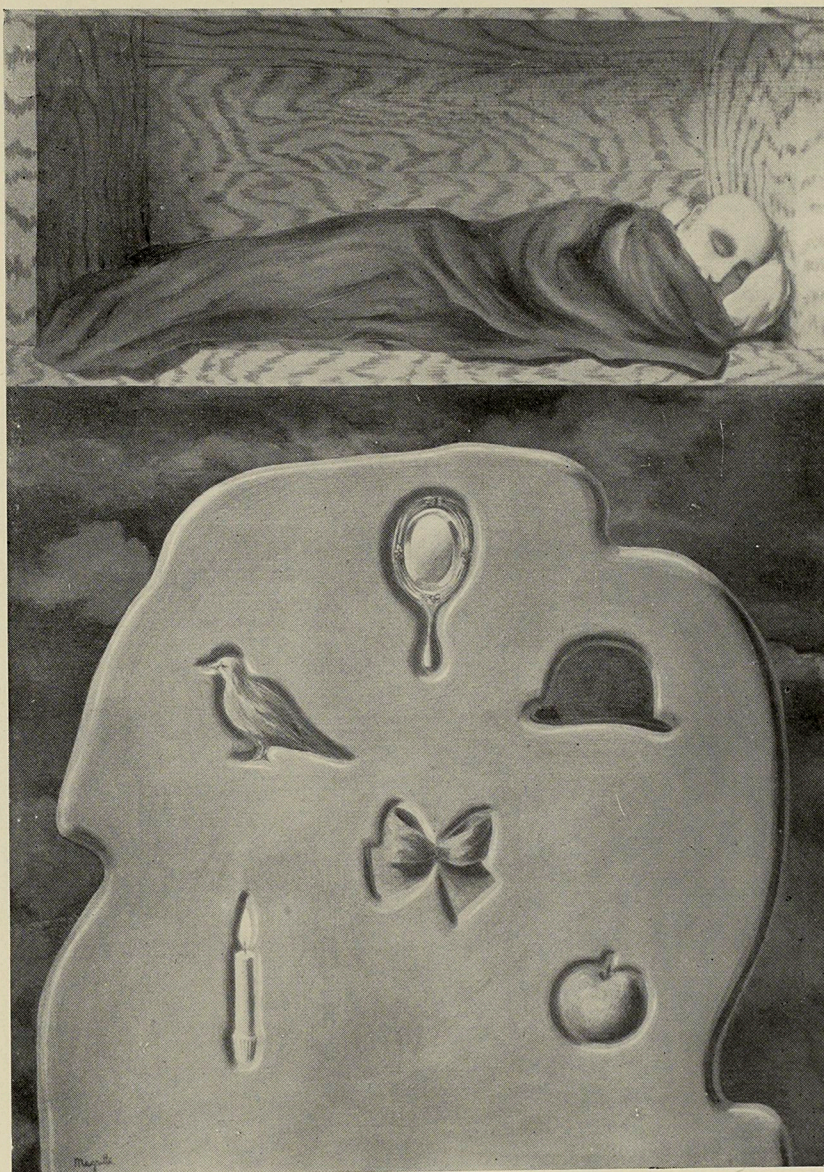
Robert Michel.

DUTCH EAST INDIES:

Dr. J.-H. Levelt.

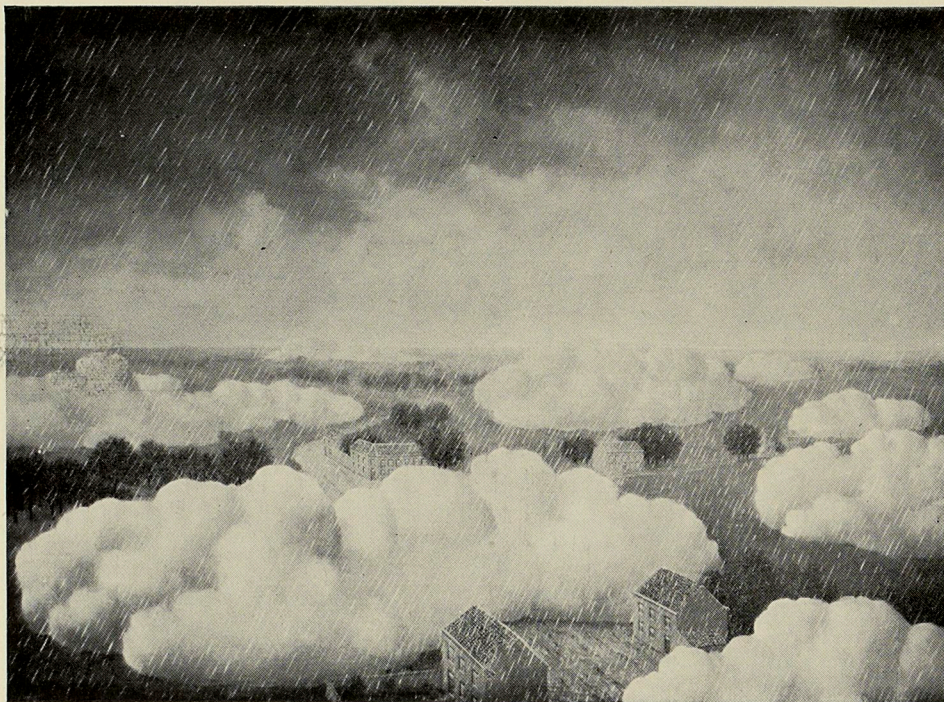
U.S.A.:

Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Julien Levy, etc.



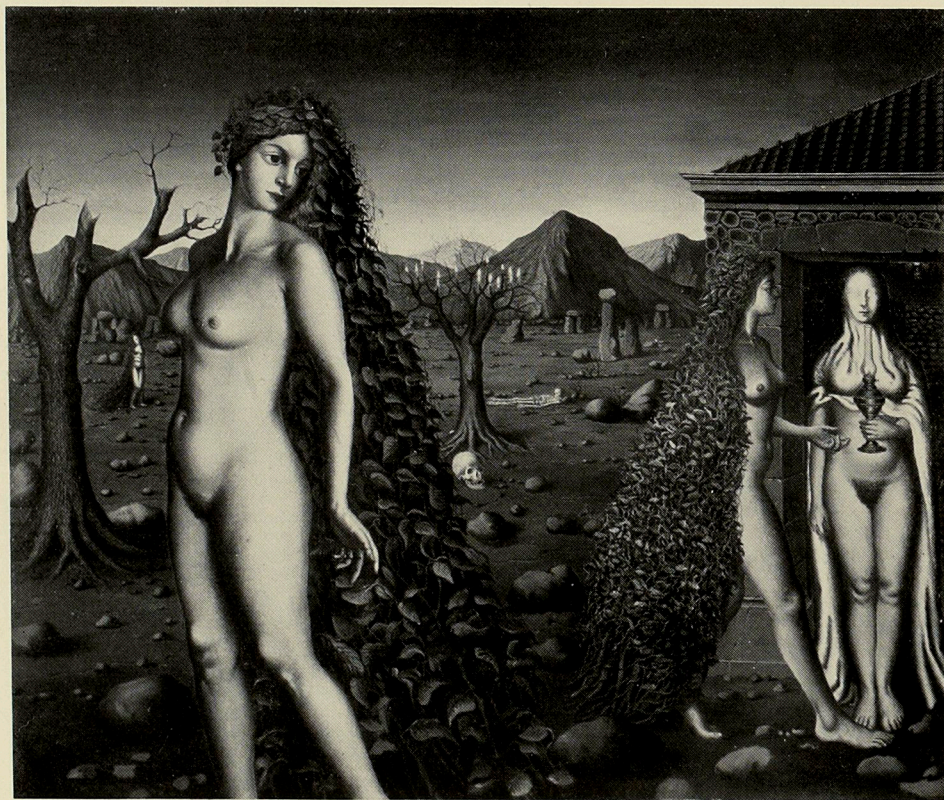
RENÉ MAGRITTE

The Hardy Sleeper (1928)



RENÉ MAGRITTE

The Free Union (1937)



PAUL DELVAUX

The Call of the Night (1937)

RENÉ MAGRITTE

by PAUL ELUARD Translated by Man Ray

*Stairs of the eye
Through the bars of forms*

*A perpetual stairway
Repose which does not exist
One of the steps is hidden by a cloud
Another by a big knife
Another by a tree which unrolls
Like a carpet
Without gestures*

All of the steps are hidden

*Green leaves have been sown
Immense fields forests deducted
At the setting of leaden rails
Level with the clearings
In the thin milk of the morning*

*The sand quenches with rays
The silhouettes of mirrors
Their shoulders pale and cold
Their decorative smiles*

The tree is tinted with invulnerable fruits

IN MAGRITTE'S PAINTINGS...

by HUMPHREY JENNINGS

IN Magritte's paintings beauty and terror meet. But their poetry is not necessarily derived from the known regions of romance—a plate of ham will become as frightening as a lion—a brick wall as mysterious as night. His painting is thus essentially *modern* in the sense required by Baudelaire. Simultaneously Magritte never allows himself to be seduced by the immediate pleasures of imitation. Precisely his passionate interest in the concrete world has made him remember that a painting itself is only an *image*.

Poetry, according to Aristotle, implies a 'bringing together'. But the elements in a picture by Magritte are not *forced* together. Their 'bringing together' *occurs* in a passive sense in the painter's imagination. Hence their simultaneous irrationality—since nothing is chosen 'on purpose'—and their evident truth—since their 'bringing together' is in fact an 'event' beyond choice. It is of the likenesses and discrepancies between the image and the reality that these events are composed, and it is in the relentless logic of these likenesses and discrepancies that Magritte sees the central human situation: *La Condition Humaine*.

'DEGENERATE ART'

*Arranged and Codified by
the Culture Service of Dr. Goebbels*

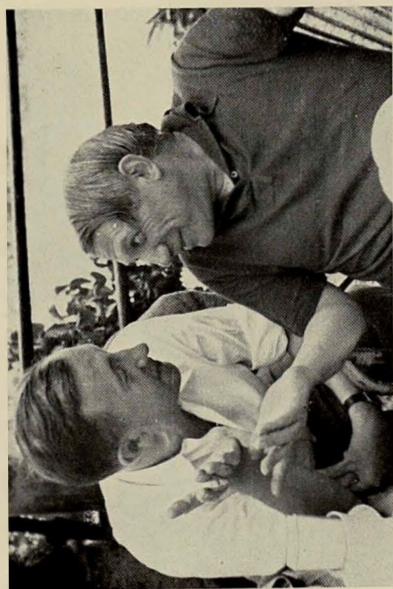
THE works collected together last summer, in the Exhibition of 'Degenerate Art' at Munich, have lately been transferred to Berlin, and exhibited in the Art Centre of the National-Socialist party, under the direction of Dr. Goebbels.

On this occasion the works have been classed in a dictatorial way into nine groups and explained by an official commentary, which gives us abundant information about the æsthetic and moral conceptions of art under the Nazi regime.

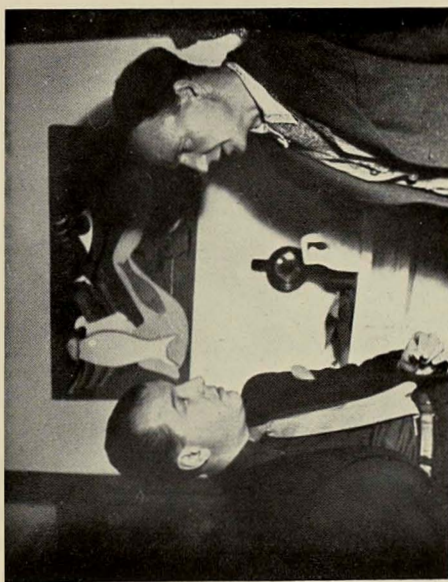
These nine groups are: 1. Works 'of a barbaric character, where the drawing is distorted and the colour violent'. 2. Works of religious inspiration treated in a realistic manner, such as is sufficient in itself to deride religion. 3 and 4. Works with political, social and anti-militarist intention. 5. Works portraying courtesans and so glorifying moral degradation. 6 and 7. Works that draw their inspiration from the primitive art of Africa and Oceania, or those representing the art of the naïve, the only lawful canon being that of Greek beauty, already enfeebled as early as in the third and fourth centuries B.C. (These works are considered as a deliberate attack on race-consciousness). 8. Naturally paintings by Jews. Finally 9. The attempts made by lunatics with which certain of the former groups are accused of sharing an affinity.

The application of these principles thus eliminates not only Renoir, Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, and generally all the famous painters of the French School for the last seventy years, but also el Greco, Ribera, Murillo, Rembrandt, who have painted religious scenes with realism, and represented beggars; Callot, Gros, Goya, Daumier, etc., who have described the horrors of war; da Vinci, Raphael, Titian, Veronese, Velasquez, Reynolds, Goya, Courbet, Manet, who have portrayed the 'Belle Ferronnière', the 'Belle Impéria', the 'Maja', the 'Demoiselles de la Seine', 'Olympia', 'Nana', and in general all painters who found inspiration in women who traded on their beauty.

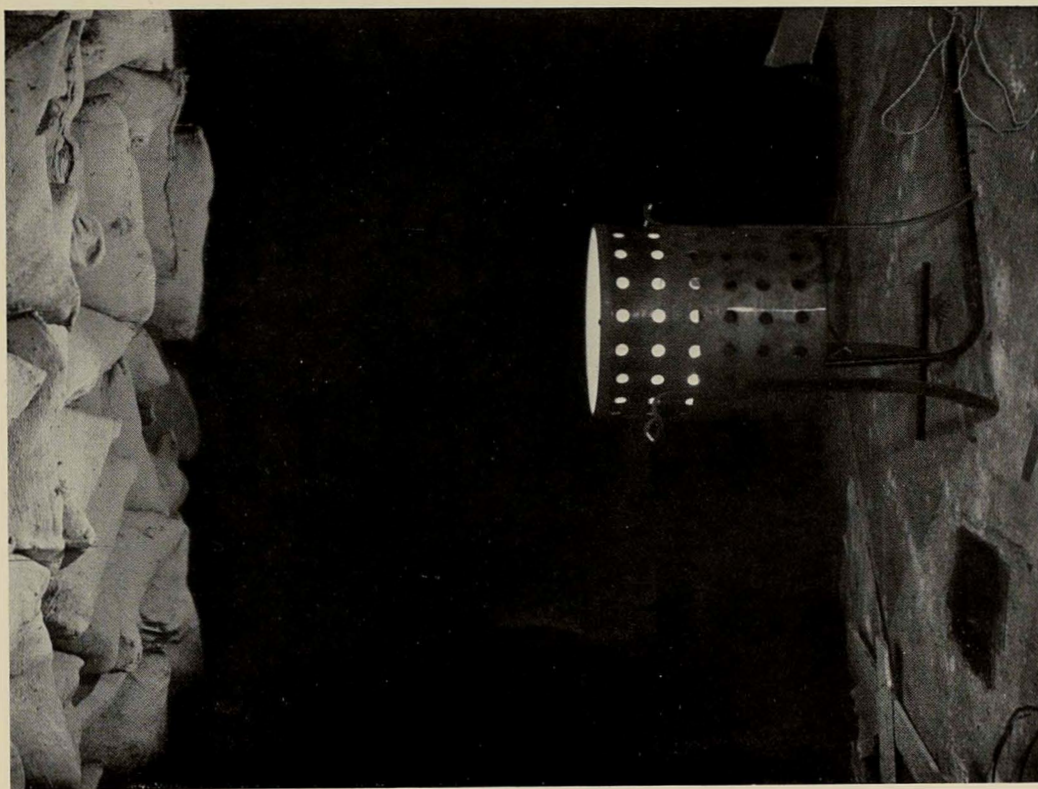
The Nazis, anxious to show their own abilities, have festooned all the rooms of the Exhibition at Berlin with long streamers, displaying the propaganda of the party, and many works are stuck over with little notices on which is written: 'idiots', 'imbeciles', etc.



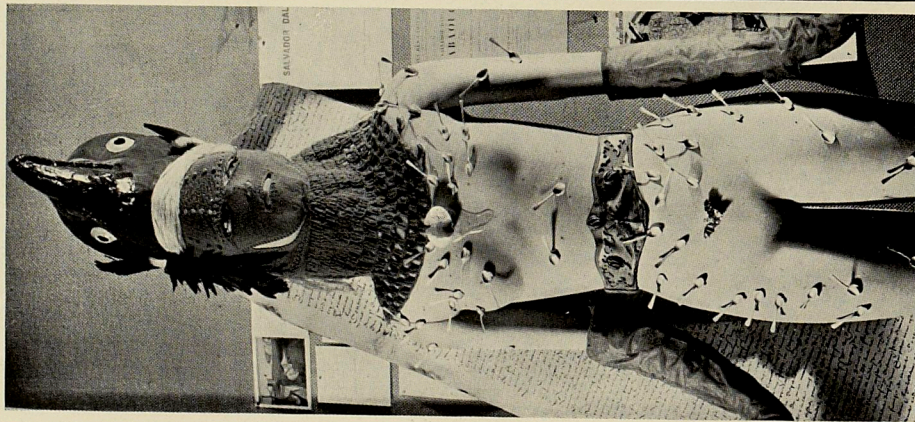
PAUL ELUARD and PABLO PICASSO
in the South of France



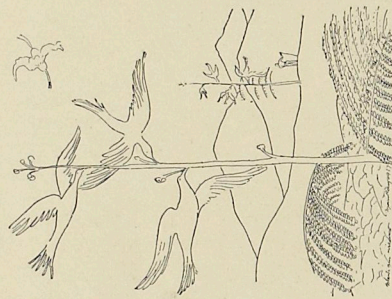
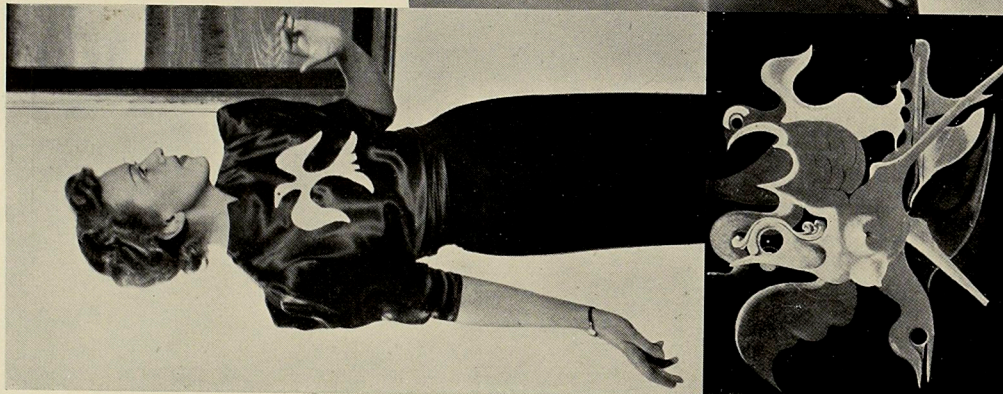
E. I. T. MESENS with HENRY MOORE
in Roland Penrose's Studio



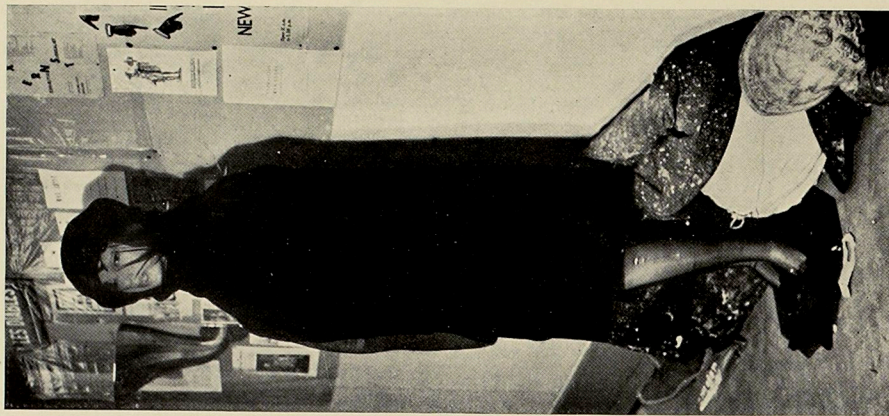
General View, the International Surrealist Exhibition at the Galerie
Beaux Arts, Paris, January 1938



Mannequin by SALVADOR DALI



Dresses by NORINE embroidered with motifs from Surrealist paintings



Mannequin by MAX ERNST

NOTES

INTRODUCING

E. L. T. MESENS

In past centuries English artists went abroad so often for study and work that English art dealt far too much with Venice or the Lac Lèman.

Now things have changed. Both Kurfurstendam and Montparnasse are no more than ordinary 'quartiers', haunted by a group of bohemian ghosts, ghosts so frightened, so pale, and so devoid of mystery that they have become hopelessly dull. Running away from the Continental hurry-scurry, the English artists are living longer in Chelsea or Bloomsbury, where it is their turn to welcome many foreign visitors.

These foreign visitors, when they stay more than three months on this side of the Channel, are given by the Bow Street Police Bureau a grey alien registration card. We all know that there is a certain amount of contempt attached to the word 'alien'. But the artists, because of a certain nostalgia for their past travels, do not share this general feeling, and they receive their incoming foreign comrades with open arms.

E. L. T. Mesens is one of these. He is of Flemish peasant stock. Divine Erik Satie was his friend, and young Mesens, under Satie's influence, became an active musician. Nevertheless, he soon felt all the restrictions inherent to modern music, and here I quote his own words: 'In 1924 I abandoned music for moral reasons and decided to concentrate on poetical expression whose manifestations will conquer all the domains of human activity'.

With Magritte and Nougé, he became one of the leaders of the Surrealist group in Belgium, uttering protests, and issuing manifestos, always in close collaboration with the Paris group.

By 'poetical expression', Mesens means two largely different branches; the first of which includes the writing of 'Femme Complète' and 'Alphabet sourd-aveugle'

and editing 'Violette Nozière' (an anthology of moral poems with illustrations); and the second his amazing activity as a gallery organizer: The 'Galerie de l'Epoque' (1927), 'Galerie Mesens' (1931), and the 'Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles'.

These three galleries became important centres of art-demonstration, such as the First and Second International Exhibitions of Photography and Cinema (1931 and 1932), and earlier, for the first time in Brussels, the showing of the works of Paul Klee, Hans Arp, Chirico, Kandinsky, Man Ray and Tanguy.

In Paris he organized exhibitions of the works of Fritz van den Berghen and Gustave de Smet.

In London he was one of the Committee of 'The International Surrealist Exhibition', and also arranged exhibitions of 'Young Belgian Artists' at the London Gallery and 'Miro—Chirico—Picasso' at the Zwemmer Gallery.

He has now become Director of the London Gallery, and the past activities of such a Director give us the greatest hopes for its brilliant future.

But amongst E. L. T. Mesens's credentials I purposely left until the end that which interests the London Gallery Bulletin, his previous collaboration with *Selection* (1922), *Oesophage* (1925), *Marie* (1926), *Distances* (1927), *Documents* '34, *Intervention Surrealiste* (1934), and the *Bulletin International du Surrealisme No. 3* (1935). During the years 1928–1930 he was on the staff of *Variétés*, which still remains the most perfect type of art magazine ever published.

Here again we feel certain that Mesens's past work represents a definite promise for this *Bulletin's* destiny, and that, at least in his case, English artists are right in receiving him as they do.

After all, the world 'alien' as well as signifying refugees and emigrés, also includes in its meaning ambassadors.

ALBERTO CAVALCANTI

SURREALISM AND FASHION

On page 18 we reproduce two of the mannequins which were part of the great Surrealist Exhibition in Paris, February 1938. At the feet of Max Ernst's young widow the Lion of Belfort, already celebrated in his books, lies peacefully asleep. For his mannequin Dali has utilized a mask for winter sports by Schiaparelli, already in itself sufficiently disturbing.

These two mannequins represent irrational 'couture' by Surrealists themselves—but parallel to this, the conquests of Surrealism have been utilized by a dress-designer. In Max Ernst's paintings thousands of doves open their wings of rock and metal—among his drawings Man Ray plants a tree whose branches are flying birds and round whose branches flowers fly. Evidently the application of poetry to fashion has its dangers—but the talent of Norine has saved it from the degradation of æstheticism.

GEORGES MÉLIÈS

An exhibition of drawings by Georges Méliès was given on March 18th at the G.P.O. Film Unit, 21 Soho Square.

Georges Méliès, who died in Paris a few weeks ago, was one of the pioneers of cinema. A number of his films, preserved by the Cinemathèque Française, were recently shown at the London Film Institute. Some of them reveal great ingenuity in trick photography (Méliès was originally an illusionist), and others are remarkable essays in the spectacular, one or two of them very successfully rendered in colour.

His drawings are full of invention, and show Méliès as an artist of great imagination and talent, particularly in the grotesque and in pictorial fantasy. The subjects which attracted him are indicated in such titles as 'Le Merveilleux Eventail Vivant', 'Gulliver chez les Lilliputiens', 'Le dragon de feu', 'Le Voyage à travers l'impossible', 'La Chenille Géante, le Cocon, et le Papillon d'Or'.

F.

DISCUSSION BETWEEN REALISTS AND SURREALISTS

On the evening of Wednesday the 16th of March, Mr. Robert Medley and a Full Moon presided over a debate between Realists and Surrealists organized by the Artists' International Association. We are partisans of the Surrealists in this matter, but no unprejudiced observer could describe the affair as anything but a rout. Somewhere in Russia the body of the most competent and most convincing exponent of Socialist Realism was awaiting a so-called traitor's grave; perhaps for that reason the Realists avoided the political issue. But that is the only issue on which they have a plausible case; otherwise they are reduced to talking about the camera and Courbet. Actually, of course, our English Realists are not the tough guys they ought to be, but the effete and bastard offspring of the Bloomsbury school of needlework. We have tried to remember anything contributed to the debate by Graham Bell, William Coldstream and the Peri, but there is only the stammer and the sweat. On the other side, Roland Penrose contributed some very cool and convincing aids to extra-retinal vision; Julian Trevelyan revealed himself as a brilliant dialectician, and Humphrey Jennings made some extremely important statements on the nature of automatism.

H. R.

JOAN MIRÓ

A Miró Exhibition is being organized at the Mayor Gallery, 19 Cork Street, for the month of May. This is the third exhibition to be held in England of this most interesting modern painter, whose works are still too little appreciated here. When it gets an opportunity of seeing what this artist can do for its entertainment, as in the ballet *Jeux d'Enfants*, which is now all too rarely given at Covent Garden, the public is not reluctant to applaud. Why is it frightened of the same things on canvas?

D. L.

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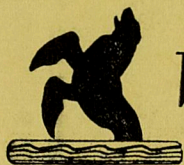
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