

GLOSSARY OF COMMON SYMBOLS, THEMES, AND MOTIFS IN SURREALISM

Death, sleep, dolls, birds, distorted forms, and mythology are just a few of the symbols and motifs in Surrealist art. They conjure complex ideas and concepts that grew out of the group's reactions to the devastating loss of life and significant technological, social, and political changes in post-World War I Europe. The theories of Sigmund Freud, the Viennese neurologist and father of psychoanalysis, who looked to dreams and the unconscious as keys for understanding human behavior also influenced the Surrealists.

The following is a key to many recurring themes and symbols that feature in the works on view in *The Conjured Life*. Look for the symbols on the individual object labels to direct you to which themes can be found in the artworks.



ANGELS, BIRDS, AND WINGED MESSENGERS

Surrealist art frequently evokes a dreamlike state, emphasizing transitions between various realities. Angels, birds, and other winged messengers signal movement between these realities. Birds were a favorite motif and were used to convey a range of meanings from freedom to peace to power.



DEATH

The Surrealists were fascinated by death. The specter of death lingers over works that address mortality, illness, disease, and the memorializing of the dead.



THE GROTESQUE

The Surrealists challenged ideas of reality. Often they depicted objects or people transformed into absurd or ugly things. These distortions of the body often verged on the grotesque.



MANNEQUINS AND DOLLS

Fascinated by automatons, robots, and other proxies for the human body, the Surrealists were particularly obsessed with mannequins and dolls. These stand-ins for humans often symbolize the tensions between the animate and inanimate, object and subject, and the real and the imaginary.



MYTH AND LEGEND

Surrealists looked to historical myths and legends to provide insight into the human psyche. Sigmund Freud, father of modern psychology, whose theories inspired the Surrealists, saw ancient Greek and Roman myths as bearers of truth and a way to understand the mind.



THE PHANTASMAGORICAL STAGE

The Surrealists often presented their works in what we now call "installations"—mixed media constructions or groupings typically designed for a specific place and period of time. They frequently staged events and depicted the stage in their paintings, emphasizing the theatrical. They also used the stage as a symbol for access to alternate realities.



SLEEP AND SOMNAMBULISM

Surrealists believed that dreams acted as portals to the subconscious and thus often depicted sleep or somnambulism, a sort of waking sleep. Sleep was a state open to visions, revelations, and prophecies.



THE SURREALIST PORTRAIT

While the Surrealists did not promote portraiture per se, many works can be seen as psychological or alternative portraits. Often the head appears, portrayed semi-abstracted or in a childlike manner.

A large-print version is also available [here](#).

Gertrude Abercrombie
(American, 1909–1969)

Giraffe House, 1954

Oil on Masonite

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, bequest of Ruth S. Nath, 1998.5

Bowl of Grapes, 1945

Oil on Masonite

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Mary and Earle Ludgin
Collection, 1982.51

Switches, 1952

Oil on Masonite

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Albert and Muriel Newman,
1982.11

The Courtship, 1949

Oil on Masonite

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of the Gertrude Abercrombie Trust,
1978.56



This selection of four paintings by Gertrude Abercrombie is representative of her distinct style, which is simultaneously unassuming, disquieting, and, at times, autobiographical.

The Courtship draws from Abercrombie's troubled relationship with her first husband and features a self-portrait of the artist. In the serene, small-scale composition of *Bowl of Grapes*, the presence of two black gloves, set in

the shape of a cross, alludes to Abercrombie's experience as a garment illustrator.

Self-taught, Abercrombie was a pioneering Chicago artist and deeply influenced by the Surrealist movement. Many of her paintings stem from an interest in the enigmatic quality of everyday life. Her theatrical and austere compositions feature ordinary subjects that are then filtered through the artist's imagination.

Auste
(American, b. 1950)

Scorn of Activity, n. d.
Acrylic, graphite, and pastel on paper
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Maxine and Jerry Silberman,
1984.42



Enrico Baj
(Italian, 1924–2003)

*Le General Mechant et Decore (Angry General
with Decorations)*, 1961

Oil, fabric, G-string, beads, metal, ribbons,
lace, metal string, colored glass, leather buttons,
and medals

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1992.48



One of a number of Enrico Baj's collages that depict military officers festooned with actual medals, this "angry general" looks more like a deranged puppet. The way Baj depicted him is no accident. Although influenced by several different political movements in his native Milan, Baj identified as a Surrealist even though he was of a younger generation than the original group. As such he brought a biting political satire to his work. Whether collaged or portrayed sculpturally as a clown-like vinyl blow-up, as in *Punching General* nearby, Baj's feelings about war as expressed through portraits of military men were fueled by the relentless killing fields of World War II.

Enrico Baj
(Italian, 1924–2003)

Punching General, 1969

Vinyl, metal, cloth, ribbon, foam, cord, wood,
Bristol board, medals, coil, curtain hooks, spring,
and acrylic

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1992.49

Balthus (Count Balthazar Klossowski de Rola)
(Swiss, b. France, 1908–2001)

Two Young Girls, 1949

Oil on board

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1998.33



In a familiar motif for the artist, this painting depicts a pair of adolescent girls in a closed interior space, each lost in her own self-absorbed reverie. An established figure of the 1930s avant-garde art scene in Paris, Balthus shared an interest in Freudian psychoanalysis with many of his Surrealist contemporaries—in particular, Freud’s influential writings on sexuality. Coily suggestive but not explicit, the foregrounded figure in this painting lounges in a dream-like state, recasting the art historical subject of the reclining female nude in a style influenced by Surrealism.

Don Baum
(American, 1922–2008)

The Babies of della Robbia, 1965

Plastic dolls, nylon, paint, wood, cloth, and paper
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1992.51



A collection of cast-off dolls, this work animates the triangular shape of a classical pediment, found often in architecture of the Renaissance period. The assemblage refers to the fifteenth-century Florentine family of sculptors, the della Robbias, known for their glazed terra-cotta reliefs of the Madonna and child. The baby dolls, stand-ins for the innocent, chubby putti found in Renaissance art, are spray-painted white. Their closed eyes and awkward arrangement emphasize their lifelessness. A reproduction of a Madonna and child peaks out from under the dolls.

Don Baum, associated with the Monster Roster of the late 1950s—so named by a local critic for their grotesque figuration rendered in somber colors—was a galvanizing force in Chicago as an artist. But he was especially important as an impresario who organized groundbreaking exhibitions at the Hyde Park Art Center, including the *Hairy Who* shows in the mid-1960s.

Don Baum
(American, 1922–2008)

J'ai Seul la Clef de cette Parade Sauvage (I Alone
Have the Key to This Savage Parade), 1965
Plastic doll arms, wood, fur, and metal hardware
in wooden box
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of the artist, 1980.33



William Baziotés
(American, 1912–1963)

Cat, 1950

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1992.52

Through his association in the 1940s with Surrealists in New York who had fled World War II, William Baziotés became interested in automatism—the performance of actions without conscious thought or intention. His Surrealist identity was assured when he showed with Matta, Max Ernst, Victor Brauner, Leonora Carrington, Wifredo Lam, Alexander Calder, Kay Sage, Kurt Seligmann, and Yves Tanguy—all of whom who are also represented in this exhibition—in the scandalous 1942 *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition in New York. Baziotés was particularly drawn to animal imagery, as in this free interpretation of a cat that emphasizes the feline's head and round fluffy paws. Baziotés achieved an otherworldly quality in his paintings through lyrical brushwork and the use of clear but muted color, differentiating his work from the European Surrealists for whom color was not a primary concern.

Hans Bellmer
(German, b. Poland, 1902–1975)

Là Poupée (The Doll), 1934
Silver gelatin print mounted on canvas
Private collection



Hans Bellmer was conversant with the procedures of studio photography, and posed his model—a conglomeration of mannequin and doll parts—and employed lighting and props to create this haunting image. Although the large scale of this work is unusual for photography of the 1930s, the negative image was more common, one of the many ways artists experimented with the medium.

Bellmer was exploring sexuality and his own psychology in the doll works, but they were also a political statement against the perfection of the body as promulgated by the Nazi's claims of Aryan superiority. Bellmer had made works such as this piece, which were seen as Surrealist in Germany, before he was forced by the rise of Nazism to leave in 1938. In Paris he fell in with the Surrealists for whom the political and the personal were of great importance.

Hans Bellmer
(German, b. Poland, 1902–1975)

Là Toupie (The Top), 1938/1968

Oil on bronze

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1998.34



Fred Berger
(American, 1923–2006)

A Flower; A Child; Will They Grow?, 1971
Charcoal and white crayon on brown paper
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, restricted gift of Ruth Horwich, Samuel
W. and Blanche M. Koffler, Audrey and Bob
Lubin, Susan and Lewis Manilow, Joseph and
Jory Shapiro, and Lynn and Allen Turner, 1991.6



Harry Bertoia
(American, b. Italy, 1915–1978)

Landscape Fantasy, n. d.

Lead, wire, and stone slab

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Ruth Horwich, 1993.5.a–j

Forrest Bess
(American, 1911–1977)

All works are oil on canvas, and Collection
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago,
gift of Mary and Earle Ludgin Collection

Clockwise from upper left:

Seascape with Sun, 1947
1981.27

Seascape with Moon, 1947
1981.26

Wheatfield, c. 1951
1981.28

Untitled, c. 1950
1981.21

Untitled, n. d.
1981.30

Homage to Ryder, 1951
1981.22

Untitled, n. d.
1981.29

Forrest Bess's art is based on the Surrealist principle of the unconscious as a fundamental creative medium and instrument of knowledge. He was particularly inspired by Swiss psychoanalyst C. G. Jung, with whom he corresponded. Jung argued that the power of the unconscious allowed individuals to visualize cosmic ideals through a

system of primary, collectively shared images. Bess's entrée into this "collective unconscious" was to capture the visions he experienced while drifting off to sleep. His paintings are characterized by a recurrent vocabulary of simplified geometric and organic forms—which the artist described as "primordial symbols" that he connected with the life energy of sexuality, both male and female. Following his belief that the unity of the two sexes would lead to immortality, Bess underwent surgery to become a "pseudo-hermaphrodite."

A self-taught artist, Bess was a Texan who barely scraped by as a shrimp-fisherman. He painted on tiny scraps of canvas and often framed the works with driftwood he collected on the beaches of his Bay City home. As the result of another correspondence with Betty Parsons, from 1950 until 1967, his paintings were represented by her pioneering Manhattan gallery. Bess frequently made homages to other artists whom he felt viewed creativity in a manner similar to his own. Two such works can be seen here: *Homage to Ryder* and *Wheatfield*. *Homage to Ryder* refers to Albert Pinkham Ryder, known for his allegorical landscapes. *Wheatfield* is a dark homage to Vincent Van Gogh, who painted numerous canvases on this subject, and whose quest for personal, emotional truth resonated deeply with Bess.

Lee Bontecou
(American, b. 1931)

Untitled, 1990–2000

Welded steel, porcelain, wire mesh, silk,
and wire

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Helen and Sam Zell, 2005.26

In this suspended sculpture, Lee Bontecou fashioned small porcelain balls that connect through an intricate network of piano wire to a large central orb; sections of wire mesh and silk fabric define planes and arcs. This slowly whirling galaxy of forms conjures an array of associations—a sailing ship, a tropical angel fish, a planet with its moons, and so on.

As with many contemporary artists, Bontecou draws from a number of sources, but Surrealism is a major influence. The overall feel of *Untitled* mirrors the dynamic lines and organic shapes found in Matta's canvases, which are on view in this exhibition. She was also influenced by the mysterious boxes of Joseph Cornell, whom she knew and admired.

Phyllis Bramson
(American, b. 1941)

Perfumed Garden (Implications), 1994

Monotype and collage on paper

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of The Ruttenberg Family, courtesy
of the David C. and Sarajeon Ruttenberg Arts
Foundation, 1996.30

Pastoral and sensual vignettes structure a dream-like narrative in this exploration of Romantic love. Phyllis Bramson draws from numerous eras and styles, connecting the visual materials with color and patterning. This patterning includes a swath of wallpaper that depicts grapes ready for the harvesting, a none too subtle reference to “ripe for the plucking,” common nineteenth-century parlance for taking advantage of naïve young women.

While Bramson’s influences arise from a broad range of art history and popular culture, especially kitsch, the overall effect of her work is of a pleasant yet ultimately disquieting step away from reality that connects it to Surrealism. While not associated with any of the self-named groups, such as the Hairy Who, which emerged from the Hyde Park Art Center and came to be collectively dubbed “Chicago Imagism” in the 1970s, her work has many affinities to this style in its distorted figuration and bright colors.

Victor Brauner
(Romanian, 1903–1966)

The Knight, August, 1949, 1949

Encaustic on board

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1998.35



Victor Brauner's two paintings in this exhibition span more than a decade of his career. *The Knight, August, 1949*, is typical of the artistic style Brauner developed after his fallout with the Surrealists, with whom he had exhibited frequently in Paris until 1948. In it, Brauner creates a more flattened sense of space, and the work reveals the influence of indigenous cultures of the Americas. In contrast, Brauner's earlier work on display, *The Object that Dreams II* (1938), employs the modeling of light and shadow to create a three-dimensional space with greater depth. Yet, key Surrealist tropes are evident in both: the use of animal spirits, symbolism, and sexuality.

Victor Brauner
(Romanian, 1903–1966)

L'Objet qui reve II (The Object that Dreams II), 1938

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1992.53



Claude Cahun
(Lucy Schwob; French, 1894–1954)

Autoportrait (Le Mystère d'Adam)
(Self-Portrait [The Mystery of Adam]), 1929
Silver gelatin print
Private collection



Wearing angel wings but hardly presenting herself as an innocent angel, Claude Cahun enacts a scene from a 1929 adaptation of the twelfth-century play, *The Mystery of Adam*, which explored the biblical story of Adam and Eve. The character she plays is actually Satan, who, after all, was a fallen angel.

A revolutionary figure who showed frequently with the Parisian Surrealists, Claude Cahun can rightly be seen as a predecessor to Cindy Sherman, on view opposite, in that she employed elaborate costumes and makeup and performed as the subject of her photographs. With her partner Suzanne Malherbe, who like Cahun took a male nom-de-plume (Marcel Moore), the couple fled the Nazi occupation of Paris, relocating to a family cottage on Jersey Island. During World War II, however, this island was the only part of Great Britain to be conquered and Cahun and Moore, fearless proponents of their personal, political, and artistic beliefs, were active in the resistance to the Nazi occupation.

Alexander Calder
(American, 1898–1976)

Untitled, c. 1944

Steel and wire

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Mary and Earle Ludgin

Collection, 1983.108

This mobile, a form that Alexander Calder invented, shows elements that are similar to works of the same era that he titled “Spider,” in which the forms resemble pedipalps, a specialized mouth part of spiders. The matte black color also evokes the spider. Although he never associated himself with any art movement, Calder had a Surrealist period in his inventive and prolific career. As a young man in 1920s Paris, Calder had made friends with many of the avant-garde. As Surrealism grew into an international movement, Calder notably participated in the 1942 *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition, with recent scholarship postulating that Marcel Duchamp’s famous “cobwebbing” of the exhibition with yards of white string had in fact been sparked by an off-hand remark by Calder.

Alexander Calder
(American, 1898–1976)

A Detached Person, 1944/1968

Bronze

Edition 2 of 6

The Leonard and Ruth Horwich Family Loan,
EL1995.5



Leonora Carrington
(Mexican, b. England, 1917–2011)

Portrait of the Late Mrs. Partridge, 1947

Oil on board

Private collection



When asked about this work, the artist identified her subject as the painter Dora Carrington (no relation). Both Leonora and Dora had been part of the Surrealist scene in 1920s Paris revolving around poet André Breton. Later Dora had an unconventional marriage to Major Ralph Partridge that allowed her to continue an intense affair of the heart with writer Lytton Strachey, a member of England's Bloomsbury literary and arts group. Shortly after Strachey's death from cancer in 1932, Dora Carrington committed suicide, thus the "late Mrs. Partridge."

The extravagant hairdo was one of Leonora Carrington's painterly trademarks, perhaps originating with the first line of one of Breton's well-known poems: "My wife with the hair of a wood fire." A poet and writer herself, Leonora Carrington lived a long and colorful life. She was born into British-Irish aristocracy but rebelled against its strictures as a young woman. She was Max Ernst's companion in the 1930s. During World War II, she had a severe mental breakdown and was confined to an asylum in Spain. Later she fled to Mexico where she was close to Remedios Varo, also on view in the exhibition. Carrington briefly relocated to Oak Park, Illinois, in the 1980s and enjoyed a friendship with her

neighbor, Surrealist collector and MCA benefactor Joseph Shapiro.

Patty Carroll
(American, b. 1946)

Octopussy from the series *Anonymous Women*,
c. 1995

Chromogenic development print

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of John and Dorianne Venator,
2011.35



Nick Cave
(American, b. 1959)

Hair Brush, 1999

Hair Brush, 1999

Wood, metal, and hair
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gifts of John and Dorianne Venator,
2010.30 and 2010.31

Saint Clair Cemin
(Brazilian, b. 1951)

Untitled (Collapsing Table), 1988
Wood, bronze, fabric, and metal
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, Will Hokin Family Collection,
2009.24.a-b



George Cohen
(American, 1919–1999)

Hermes, 1954

Oil on Masonite

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, gift of Gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1991.27



In this work, Hermes, the winged messenger god of the Greeks, is shown as a sort of whirligig in the center of the painting. George Cohen indicates Hermes's additional role as an escort of souls to the netherworld by the shadowy figure on the right and the dark, schematized head at the painting's bottom center. One of the Monster Roster, a name given to like-minded artists who emerged in Chicago in the immediate post-World War II era, Cohen was a lifelong Chicagoan and a beloved teacher at Northwestern University.

Along with his School of the Art Institute of Chicago compatriot Leon Golub, also on view, Cohen was inspired by the new field of psychoanalysis. He was also influenced by Surrealism, which supported his observations at the Field Museum where he worked during his student years. The Field's wide-ranging cultural collections revealed to him deep wellsprings of artistic creativity. Like many of the Monster Roster, Cohen looked to Classical mythology to frame his explorations of the transitory and fragmented nature of postwar life, a period when both nations and individuals attempted to rebuild.

Willie Cole
(American, b. 1955)

Heal and Rest, 1992

Painted wood, steam iron handles and electrical
cords, and plugs

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Lannan Foundation, 1997.31

Hybrid Casco/G.E., 1992

Casco and G.E. electric irons

Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art,
gift of Lannan Foundation, 1997.30



Willie Cole transforms discarded domestic objects into sculptures that often refer to elements of traditional African art and history. The totem-like figure that results from the combination of old steam iron parts and painted wood resembles sculptural forms from West Africa, which are often imbued with sacred meanings or healing powers. Thus, the title of Cole's work—*Heal and Rest*—points to the particular powers the artist associated with this piece, melding ancient rituals and traditions with late-twentieth-century cultural artifacts. This kind of mash-up was a favored strategy employed by Surrealist artists, who were also interested in destabilizing perceptions of high and low culture.

Antonia Contro
(American, b. 1957)

iO, 2013

Photographic cut-outs, doll socks, beeswax,
and pins in artist's frame
Courtesy of the artist



Described as a self-portrait by the artist, this work draws upon many of the strategies employed by the Surrealists. Antonia Contro's use of collage elements allows for multiple interpretations, notably incorporating cut-out images of her own eyes that are then adhered to miniature doll socks. The artist also notes that "the unconscious or 'suspended state' guided the execution of this piece." Based in Chicago, but of Italian descent, the title playfully suggests the inward-looking nature of the work, since "io" is the Italian translation of "I"—and is further translated into image form through the repetition of her "eyes."

Joseph Cornell
(American, 1903–1972)

Untitled (Doll Habitat), 1950–65

Wood and plastic doll

Private collection



Although more simple than many of Joseph Cornell's assemblages, the coyly posed doll within the encrusted wooden box has the mystery and drama that the artist is so well known for. Cornell was aware of Hans Bellmer's (also in the exhibition) highly manipulated and often explicit dolls and by presenting his doll intact, he may have been mounting a subtle protest about what he considered "the dark side of Surrealism," which was often violent and highly sexual. Because his artistic thinking paralleled that of many of the original group, Cornell has often been aptly described as "the American Surrealist."

By placing incongruous and seemingly disconnected objects within a box, Cornell was not only claiming them as symbols in his own dream life, but also trying to construct an imaginary past.

Aaron Curry
(American, b. 1972)

Figure Drawing, 2009

Wood, spray paint, acrylic, colored pencil,
paper, painter's tape, and steel base
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Helen and Sam Zell, 2013.1

In titling this work *Figure Drawing* Aaron Curry immediately set up a dissonant situation: although it consists of flat planes upon which marks have been made, the object is clearly three-dimensional, and thus belongs to the artworld category of sculpture. Curry draws from both the Modern artists of the early twentieth century, especially Alexander Calder and the Surrealists Hans Bellmer and Yves Tanguy (all of whom are on view here), as well as today's skateboard and graffiti culture. His contemporary statements are thoroughly versed in art history.

Like many others in this exhibition, Curry studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; Barbara Rossi, also on view, was one of his teachers. The Chicago Imagists in general and the work of sculptor H. C. Westermann were also important to his development, in part because of their contrarian, as well as surrealist tendencies to explore psychological states.

Tom Czarnopys
(American, b. 1957)

Untitled, 1984

Oak and maple bark, poplar branch, and acrylic paint and matte medium on plastered gauze
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, restricted gift of MCA Collectors Group
and Illinois Arts Council Purchase Grant, 1985.16



Like many of the more traditional Surrealist artists, Tom Czarnopys discovers the extraordinary in the ordinary through curiosity, imagination, and wonder. A native of Western Michigan, the artist spent much of his youth immersed in the natural environment, which left a lasting impression on him. This untitled sculpture by Czarnopys evokes the spirit of the deep woods, which is both familiar and unfamiliar in its transformation of the human figure. To make this piece, the artist cast a figure in plaster gauze and then attached segments of gathered tree bark to the external surface.

Henry Darger
(American, 1892–1973)

Untitled (At Jennie Richee—Mabel introduces her blengin sisters (three of them) to the little Vivians one p.m./At Jennie Richee 12:35 p.m. storm breaks loose (Vivian girls) seeking shelter with blengin friends, n. d.

Carbon ink, graphite, tempera, and collage on paper

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Nathan Lerner, 1980.64.a–b

Self-taught artist Henry Darger worked in complete anonymity during his long life; thousands of his drawings and written works were discovered after he became ill and was moved to a nursing home. His landlord, well-known photographer Nathan Lerner (who is also in this exhibition) recognized their importance and had them conserved and disseminated to viewers and collectors in Chicago and beyond. Darger used techniques of collage and tracing, often copying images from magazines and children's books. This work is typical of his compositions depicting homey interiors populated by children and fantastic creatures—here ram-horned girls described as “blengins.”

The Surrealists and many Chicago-based artists were attracted to self-taught artists. Their unfettered imaginations provided fascinating and inspiring glimpses into creativity and the human subconscious.

Enrico David
(Italian, b. 1966)

Room for Small Head (Nādiā), 2013

Plaster

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Albert A. Robin, Arnold M.
Gilbert, and James Petrozzini by exchange,
2014.17



References to the human body ground the experience of Enrico David's sculptures, but ultimately his forms embrace the enigmatic. Modeled after a wooden form on a Nordic sailing ship that functions to stabilize the mast, *Room for Small Head (Nādiā)* is reminiscent of both a device for holding down the body and a prostrate human form. Depicting the perpetual metamorphosis and change that is inherent to living bodies, David's sculpture blends abstraction and anthropomorphism. Both clumsy and elegant, the work demonstrates the dissolution of the body into abstraction, adapting the visual language of Surrealism to a three-dimensional form.

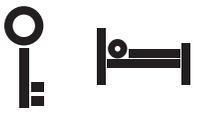
Paul Delvaux
(Belgian, 1897–1994)

Penelope, 1945

Oil on board

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1998.36



As told by Homer in the ancient Greek epic *The Odyssey*, Penelope is the wife of the Odysseus, king of Ithaca, who was called to fight in the Trojan War. Penelope is left waiting twenty years for Odysseus's return as he is challenged by the gods again and again during his voyage home. She wards off suitors by weaving a tapestry by day and undoing the work by night, as she announced she would marry when the tapestry was complete. Besides the title, Paul Delvaux gives a number of clues to the woman's identity: Her garb is rendered in a color known as Tyrian purple, a costly dye associated with royalty. In the distance classical Greek Ionic columns are silhouetted against the sky, and she paces a dock alongside a dark, choppy sea. The turbulent waters and her profile reflected in the skewed mirror to the right symbolize her long-standing distress.

Delvaux was not in the central group of Surrealists but showed with them from time to time. Influenced by his fellow countryman René Magritte and others, he developed his signature women—often nude and often described as appearing to be walking in their sleep—in architectural settings that evoked a timeless mystery.

Leonardo Drew
(American, b. 1961)

Number 68, 1998

Ceramic, fabric, paper, metal, and wood
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of the Cooper Family Foundation,
2003.6.a-b

Jean Dubuffet
(French, 1901–1985)

La Verrue sous le nez (Wart Under the Nose), 1951
Oil on board
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Bergman,
1978.43



Jean Dubuffet shared the Surrealists' interest in the art of the untrained or by individuals held in asylums. André Breton and others central to the movement had long been fascinated in the expressions by these so-called naïve artists, who were thought of as being more authentically in touch with an individual's or perhaps even the universal subconscious. Dubuffet had collected a large number of works of what he dubbed *l'art brut* before he himself took up painting. In his artistic efforts, Dubuffet was guided by the idea of direct, untrained expression as can be seen in this work, which resembles a child's drawing. In it he failed to differentiate between the man's head and his hat and thickly applied paint to create the wart of the title.

Jimmie Durham
(American, b. 1940)

In a Cabin in the Woods, 2010

Deer skin, wood, and felt

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Mary and Earle Ludgin by
exchange, 2014.36

Jimmie Durham's work resounds with Surrealist techniques, especially in the juxtaposition of incongruous objects and images that evoke a dream world or the reveries of a shaman. Durham comes to his imagery via a very different path than the Surrealists, however, negotiating his Native American heritage in relation to other cultural, social, and political forces. The wooden box placed as the "head" of the felt coat that shows a deer's head peeping from within the folds transforms the familiar into the uncanny. The title of this work comes from an old campfire song for children, which calls up fear, compassion, and comfort.

In a cabin, in a wood
Little man by the window stood
Saw a rabbit hopping by
Knocking at his door
Help me! Help me! Help me! he cried
Wicked hunter shoot me dead
Little rabbit come inside
Safely to abide.

Max Ernst
(French, b. Germany, 1891–1976)

Loplop Introducing a Bird, 1929/57

Plaster, oil, and wood

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1991.25



Max Ernst's alter ego in his paintings was a bird he dubbed Loplop, which was essentially his animal familiar, a mystical spirit guide in animal form. He suggested that this alter ego emerged when a beloved pet bird died just as his sister was born and he confused birds and humans. This work with its rough plaster ground evokes the technique of frottage, which Ernst invented, wherein paper or canvas is laid over a surface and the artist rubs a pencil over it to reveal the contours of the surface on the paper.

A major figure in the Surrealist group, Ernst had also been a member of the Dada movement. This loose affiliation of artists had preceded Surrealism and emphasized anti-establishment provocations and political involvement, tendencies that were also important to the Surrealists. Like many other of the group, Ernst was forced to flee Europe by the outbreak of World War II, and eventually settled in Sedona, Arizona, in the late 1940s with his wife Dorothea Tanning. He had previously been involved with Leonora Carrington; both women are on view in this exhibition.

Max Ernst
(French, b. Germany, 1891–1976)

Red Owl, 1952

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1998.38



Mark Grotjahn
(American, b. 1968)

Untitled (S II Some of us didn't know we were Indian, Painting for RH, Face 41.72), 2011

Oil on cardboard mounted on linen

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Cari and Michael J. Sacks,

2011.53

American painter Mark Grotjahn has adopted a variety of styles over the years. In this recent work, the artist references the influence of “primitive art” on modern artists, and most directly Pablo Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1907). Like Picasso, many of the Surrealists were influenced by a growing exposure to indigenous cultures in Europe; feathers, tribal masks, and other symbolic objects are featured in many Surrealist works. Grotjahn employs many of these strategies—such as the abstract face’s lozenge-shaped eyes and mask-like characteristics—while also playing with the artist’s signature, as if the letters of his name were part of a Surrealist word game.

Philip Hanson
(American, b. 1943)

Rousseau's Lily, 1972

Acrylic on board

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Albert J. Bildner, 1974.3



Jess (Jess Collins)
(American, 1923–2004)

Midday Forfit: Feigning Spell II, 1971

Magazine pages, jigsaw-puzzle pieces, tapestry, lithographic mural, wood, and straight pin
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, restricted gift of MCA Collectors Group, Men's Council, and Women's Board; Kundstadter Bequest Fund in honor of Sigmund Kunstadter; and National Endowment for the Arts Purchase Grant, 1982.30



From a suite on the four seasons, this inventively titled collage displays the poetic mysticism of Symbolism—a late-nineteenth-century predecessor to Surrealism that used symbolic images and indirect suggestion to express mystical ideas and states of mind. It also shows the free-association thought processes of Surrealism. The jigsaw-puzzle pieces provide a key: *Midday Forfit* is composed of fragments whose full meaning can become clear only when viewed as a whole. The punning nature of the title is continued in the work's imagery: on the right, a doorknob permits the viewer to “get a handle on the work.”

After a career as a radiochemist, San Francisco-based Jess, who dropped his surname, took up art making. His work consistently featured a literary dimension, in part through his association with his partner, the poet Robert Duncan.

Jeff Koons
(American, b. 1955)

Lifeboat, 1985

Bronze

Edition 3 of 3

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, Gerald S. Elliott Collection, 1995.56.a-c

In this work from the artist's "Equilibrium" series, a full-sized rubber life raft is cast in bronze and weighs more than 600 pounds. In an ironic twist, the item meant to save lives would plummet to the bottom of the sea, stranding any shipwreck victims. Jeff Koons, one of today's most well-known artists, admits a debt both to Surrealism and to the Chicago School. Professing inspiration from the artist who is perhaps synonymous with Surrealism, Salvador Dalí, Koons has created a number of works featuring lobsters in homage to the master. Additionally, he has cited the work of Chicago-based Jim Nutt and the work and tutelage of Ed Paschke, both represented in this exhibition, as seminal to his development as an artist.

David Kotker
(American, 1961–2005)

Headed Boat, 1985

Bronze, lead, steel, stone, and wood

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, restricted gift of Dr. and Mrs. Peter W.

Broido, Stefan T. Edlis, and Illinois Arts Council

Purchase Grant, 1986.11



Wifredo Lam
(Cuban, 1902–1982)

Annunciation, 1944

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Bergman,
1977.28



The work of Wifredo Lam is marked by his experiences growing up in Cuba. This work takes its cue from a long tradition of Western religious paintings of the same name, which depict an angel announcing to the Virgin Mary that she will be the mother of Jesus. The setting for this scene is tropical, however, and depicts the angels and Virgin Mary as exotic animal-like figures. Fascinated by the rich motifs and earthy spiritualism of the artist's Afro-Cuban culture, the Surrealists welcomed Lam in Paris, where he lived for many years until the outbreak of World War II.

Ellen Lanyon
(American, 1926–2013)

Toulouse Deposee, 2012

Acrylic on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of the Estate of Ellen Lanyon,
2014.28



Ellen Lanyon distinguished herself through a Surrealist-tinged magical realism. An artist of the same generation as Leon Golub, June Leaf, and others of the Monster Roster, Lanyon's imagery and painting style set her apart from this group. She often juxtaposed arcane items with animals or scenes from nature, as can be seen in this work. An antique cork remover, which was from the artist's in-depth collection of obsolete and often puzzling tools and household objects, is imagined as a kind of snipping device. Behind it is a swirl of greens and purples that on closer examination reveals a stylized stork or heron, its long beak mirroring the object's scissors, which has been positioned to accentuate its birdlike form.

June Leaf
(American, b. 1929)

Left to right:

Woman at the Door, 1966

Oil on clay, wood, and glass

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of the Susan and Lewis Manilow

Collection of Chicago Artists, 1993.20

Dancer and Old Man, 1966

Oil on plaster and wood

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of the Susan and Lewis Manilow

Collection of Chicago Artists, 1991.99

Character Yells at Storyteller, 1970

Watercolor on paper with collage

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of the Susan and Lewis Manilow

Collection of Chicago Artists, 1991.98



June Leaf depicts her stand-in, “Character,” in comic book–like panels, enacting scenarios as if illustrations to a story. “Alas he was an artist” is the lament as the lovely young woman tries her best at a relationship but fails. The theatrical quality of the work, partly influenced by Seymour Rosofsky, also on view, is front and center in her sculpture, which depicts stereotypical male-female role-playing with spindly, unflattering figures. In her two-dimensional work, Leaf adapts a similar narrative technique, as if capturing scenes from her own childhood

and young adulthood.

Leaf, one of the circle of artists in immediate postwar Chicago dubbed the Monster Roster—so named by a local critic for their grotesque figuration rendered in somber colors—brought a whimsical liveliness to her figurative paintings and sculptures that balanced the often gloomy and serious work produced by the men of the group. A student at the Institute of Design, Leaf had traveled to Paris in 1947 where the so-called primitive art on display at the Musée de l'Homme captured her imagination. This attraction to unschooled art and to the imaginative theatricality of such local attractions as the legendary, long-shuttered Riverview Amusement Park, inspired Leaf to make unconventional paintings and sculptures.

Nathan Lerner
(American, 1913–1997)

Eye and Barbed Wire, 1939

Gelatin silver print

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Arnold M. Gilbert, 1974.17.3



In this photograph, the disembodied eye, partially buried, along with a section of barbed wire evokes the strange and uncanny qualities of Surrealism. Nathan Lerner took inspiration from the growing exposure of Surrealist art in Chicago; he made this composition while studying under Hungarian artist László Moholy-Nagy at the New Bauhaus School of Design in Chicago.

A longtime professor in Chicago, Lerner would go on to have a strong impact on the development of younger generations of artists in the city, many of whom were similarly influenced by Surrealism. In a strange twist of fate, Lerner was also Henry Darger's landlord—another artist featured in the exhibition—who discovered Darger's work shortly before Darger died in 1973.

Robert Lostutter
(American, b. 1939)

*Forktailed Wood Nymph and Ruby-Topaz
Hummingbird, 1982*

Watercolor and pencil on paper

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of the artist, Dart Gallery,
the Illinois Arts Council Purchase Grant, and
matching funds, 1982.24



René Magritte
(Belgian, 1898–1967)

Les merveilles de la nature (The Wonders of Nature), 1953

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1982.48



For René Magritte, as for many other Surrealist artists, the combination of unlikely yet familiar objects was key to producing a sense of the uncanny. His career was defined by a search for the extraordinary in the ordinary. In *Les merveilles de la nature*, the artist reversed the longheld mythic depiction of the mermaid form, presenting instead creatures with human legs and fish torsos and heads. Painted in a realistic manner, the reversal is perhaps all the more unnerving, especially as one finds the figures to be petrified in stone along the shore. Further disrupting the faux-realism of the painting is the ship that sails in the background, rendered entirely out of waves that creep into the sky. As such, the painting is a signature Surrealist work, and one of the most iconic in the MCA Collection.

Marisol (Marisol Escobar)
(American, b. France, 1930)

Printer's Box, 1956

Painted wood, plaster, and glass

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1992.65

Matta (Roberto Matta Echaurren)
(French, b. Chile, 1911–2002)

Conference, 1957

Bronze

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1992.68

Matta (Roberto Matta Echaurren)
(French, b. Chile, 1911–2002)

Let's Phosphoresce by Intellection #1, 1950

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Bergman,
1976.45



This work by the Chilean-born artist Matta depicts a scene straight out of science fiction that combines both organic and mechanical forms. The atmospheric painterly style further suggests a dreamlike state. In his early writings, Matta discussed environments that would adapt themselves to a person through the use of technology, and this work depicts such a convergent world.

The artist was a core member of the Surrealist movement in Paris, which he joined in the 1920s. Notably, Matta taught in Chicago in the early 1950s as a visiting artist at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His influence on a younger generation of artists certainly contributed to the lasting Surrealist legacy in the city.

Gordon Matta-Clark
(American, 1943–1978)

Untitled, 1971/72

Marker and graphite on paper

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Anne Alpert and Jane Crawford,
1985.31

Born Gordon Roberto Echaurren Matta, Matta-Clark, known for his innovative cutting into buildings to produce what he termed “anarchitecture,” was the son of Matta, one of the founders of Surrealism. Matta had worked briefly in Le Corbusier’s studio and Matta-Clark trained as an architect at Cornell University. Matta-Clark was deeply connected to nature, participating in early Earth Art exhibitions, and to his fellow human, which he expressed by founding the legendary cooperative restaurant Food in Manhattan with a group of like-minded artists. This emphasis on stewardship and community had parallels to Surrealist artists who grouped together to advance their political and aesthetic causes. He also had a strong interest in alchemy, another area of interest to the Surrealists that passed down to him through his father and his father’s circle of friends.

One of Matta-Clark’s little known “energy drawings,” this work renders a tree in a confident and flowing line that can also be seen in his father’s paintings. The work manifests a strong spirituality embedded in the connectedness of all things.

Wangechi Mutu
(Kenyan, b. 1972)

That's my death mask you're wearing, 2004
Ink, collage, and contact paper on Mylar
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Sara Szold, 2014.40



That's my death mask you're wearing summons Surrealism's use of collage and montage to create fantastical scenes. Best known for her collages, Wangechi Mutu's signature style often combines cutouts from printed media with paintings she executes on Mylar—a material often chosen for its metallic, reflective properties. The results are splotchy yet seductive patterns that create psychedelic effects. The resulting figures are mythic female creatures—part humanoid and part plant or animal—that Mutu invents from her imagination, fairytale characters from Western mythology, or stories from her native Kenya.

Gladys Nilsson
(American, b. 1940)

Giant Byrd, 1971

Acrylic on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Herbert Gibbs, 1991.11



Intertwined to form a tapestry of color and form, fantastical creatures, plant-like forms, and elongated figures populate Gladys Nilsson's punningly titled composition. The giant bird of the title seems to be a plucked chicken, the flesh-toned, amorphous form that dominates the center left. One of the original Hairy Who artists—the self-named group that emerged in the mid-1960s—Nilsson's inventive, highly distorted figuration is a shared characteristic of that group. In her often whimsical compositions, the flowing line and cartoonlike style often masks more serious male-female interactions and commentary. A lifelong Chicagoan, like other School of the Art Institute of Chicago graduates Nilsson was influenced by Surrealism, the art of the untrained, and the collections at the Field Museum of Natural History.

David Noonan
(Australian, b. 1969)

Untitled, 2012

Silk screen on linen and collage

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Marshall Field's by exchange,
2012.118



This untitled work collages together different silk-screened images onto frayed linen; the overall effect is one of intrigue and oddity in bringing together myth and realism. Stylistically, the artist references Surrealism and experimental film techniques in this work, “documenting” futuristic performances that remain in the realm of the imaginary. To create them, David Noonan often sources an eclectic array of found imagery—from film stills, books, magazines, and archival photos of theatrical performances from the 1960s and 1970s—to create his own hybrid art form.

Jim Nutt
(American, b. 1938)

Summer Salt, 1970

Acrylic on vinyl and enamel on wood

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Dennis Adrian in honor of

Claire B. Zeisler, 1980.30.1



Painted on the underside of a clear plastic window shade, this work combines small images derived from comic strips and tabloid advertising of the 1940s and 1950s with a completely invented central image. Although bound and mutilated, the cartoonlike nature of the figure changes the impact of the violence depicted. The forms upon which the figure sits are reminiscent not only of surrealist mark making but resemble the manner in which the untrained artist Joseph Yoakum (whose work is on display adjacent) rendered mountains.

Jim Nutt was one of the Chicago-based artists who discovered and admired Yoakum's drawings. The title, a pun on the acrobatic somersault, perhaps refers to the shade on which the work is painted, which can roll up, revealing another scene painted beneath it. Among the best-known of the Hairy Who—the self-named group which emerged in the mid-1960s and used bright colors and often outrageous imagery—Nutt displays a wide range of influences, including Surrealism, in his paintings.

William J. O'Brien
(American, b. 1975)

Untitled, 2008

Mixed media

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Mary and Earle Ludgin by
exchange, 2014.20

Untitled is composed of differently colored thread wrapped and woven tightly, creating a composition of positive and negative spaces. The sculpture recalls the scale and proportion of the human body, which is often a veiled reference in William J. O'Brien's works. Based in Chicago, the artist often speaks of "embracing contradictions" in his work, and he emphasizes both structure and elements of improvisation. As a result, his work has a sense of immediacy or exuberance that can mask his skillful handling of materials and allow for a more playful encounter.

Gabriel Orozco
(Mexican, b. 1962)

Roiseāu 5, 2012

Bamboo branch and bird feathers

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Leah Joy Zell, 2015.19



Roiseāu 5 is a kinetic sculpture similar to other mobile works in the exhibition—such as those by Alexander Calder and Lee Bontecou—yet original in its use of ephemeral materials. Gabriel Orozco collected hundreds of bird feathers and joined them to a bamboo branch in a way that mirrors internal plant and animal structures, like the spreading of capillaries or cellular membranes. Suspended in the air, the wing- and leaf-like form gently twists and turns, also alluding to the ancient Greek story of Icarus, whose attempt at flight with manmade wings was illfated. *Roiseāu 5* elegantly and gracefully alludes to a familiar motif within Surrealist art: the human desire to fly.

Ed Paschke
(American, 1939–2004)

Sunburn, 1970

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Muriel and Albert Newman in
honor of Dennis Adrian, 1982.17



Known for depicting subjects from the fringes of society, Paschke here presents a jarring, surrealistic scene that combines images from a wide variety of popular cultural sources, including Mexican wrestling. In creating his imagery, Paschke rendered first in black and white, and then added layers of brightly colored glazes, a technique that imbues his canvases with unusual precision and clarity.

Inspired by fellow School of the Art Institute of Chicago alumni including Jim Nutt and Gladys Nilsson, whose work he had seen in the *Hairy Who* exhibitions at Chicago's Hyde Park Art Center, Paschke put together his own group known as "The Nonplussed Some." He is now known as one of the leading Chicago Imagists, the unique figurative artists who emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and were influenced by Surrealism and vernacular expressions such as comics and advertising. He was also a mentor to Jeff Koons, whose work is on view in this exhibition.

Tony Phillips
(American, b. 1937)

Hour Came Round at Last, 1983

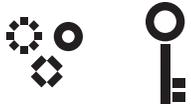
Pastel on paper

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, restricted gift of Ralph I. and Helyn D.

Goldenberg and Illinois Arts Council Purchase

Grant, 1984.12



Jaume Plensa
(Spanish, b. 1955)

Think, Act, Eat, Sleep, 2000

Glass, cotton fabric, and stainless steel

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of the Ruttenberg Foundation,

2010.24.a-e



In recent years, Jaume Plensa has gained notoriety for his large-scale public sculptures—here in Chicago, *Crown Fountain* in Millennium Park. The artist continues to make poetic, smaller sculptural works as well, which speak to our private, inner lives as individuals. The work presented here, *Think, Act, Eat, Sleep*, borrows its title from a quote from British poet and artist William Blake, who was highly influential on the Surrealists. In his poem, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake writes: “Think in the morning. Act in the noon. Eat in the evening. Sleep in the night.” The sculpture evokes these stanzas with four suspended glass bulbs, inviting the viewer to fill their empty voids with the contents of daily life.

Kerig Pope
(American, b. 1935)

Girl in Striped Socks Singing, 1959

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of the artist, 2012.12



A loony, leggy figure made of circles and squiggles demonstrates Kerig Pope's concern with bringing abstract shapes to life. In this whimsical portrait of an eccentric acquaintance, the artist drew leafy and ball-like forms, and limited his pallet to cool blues and greens to perhaps suggest the nature of the song being sung. The striped forms that make up the figure's legs are based on the unusual stockings worn by the individual. The theatricality of the image is enhanced by the grassy expanse rendered as a backdrop.

Having attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the 1950s, Pope was heavily influenced by the leading Surrealist Matta, who had been a visiting artist. Although of the generation dubbed the Monster Roster (including Leon Golub and June Leaf also in this exhibition), and a colleague of H. C. Westermann, Pope is more associated with Chicago Imagism of the 1960s and 1970s because of his brighter palette and embrace of the vernacular imagery. In addition to his painting, Pope was a long time managing art director for *Playboy* magazine.

Christina Ramberg
(American, 1946–1995)

Muscular Alternative, 1979

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, bequest of Sandra Jorgensen, 1999.25



In a portrayal that disturbingly recasts the body's functioning, Christina Ramberg depicted a corset with outsized perspiration guards that seem to prop up the armpits. The musculature on the right follows no known pattern as the organic forms meld with the clothing and transition to geometric structures.

Although associated with Chicago Imagism because she participated with other School of the Art Institute of Chicago graduates, including her husband Phil Hanson (on view to the right), in the *False Image* exhibitions at the Hyde Park Art Center, Ramberg did not consider herself part of a stylistic group. Her surrealist tendencies are particularly strong in works that explore deep psychological and emotional feelings about women's bodies such as *Muscular Alternative*.

Martin Ramírez
(American, b. Mexico, 1885–1963)

Two Bandits, c. 1950

Crayon on paper

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, bequest of Ruth S. Nath, 1998.19

Martin Ramírez, a self-taught artist, grew up in Mexico but spent most of his adult life institutionalized in California mental hospitals. Diagnosed as a catatonic schizophrenic, Ramirez rarely spoke but obsessively drew, working on the floor on sheets of paper that he constructed out of discarded papers, cigarette packaging, and paper cups glued together with a homemade paste. In works characterized by repeating lines and unusual perspectives, Ramírez drew on the emotional and physical landscapes of his life in Mexico. Men on horses brandishing guns were a common motif; the horse and rider suggest Ramírez's pride in his Mexican identity.

The artists who founded Surrealism were great admirers of "primitive art," a catchall term that was used to describe work by self-taught artists, the insane and so-called primitive societies. They cited the raw creativity and direct exploration of the psyche or unconscious that many of these artists displayed as particularly powerful. Ramírez was a particular favorite of Jim Nutt and Gladys Nilsson, also on view in this exhibition, who helped disseminate his work to the larger art world by arranging exhibitions.

Marcos Raya
(Mexican, b. 1948)

Excerpt from *Night Nurse*, 1993/96

Acrylic on canvas, cabinet, surgical instruments,
mannequin, and found objects

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, restricted gift of Roy and Mary Cullen,
1997.81



This work, an excerpt from a larger installation, presents the artist's self-portrait in the centrally placed painting. Marcos Raya lies unconscious in a hospital bed; the doctor who presumably attends him is depicted with an incongruous, happy smile. The yellow wall, reminiscent of a color that might have been found in an institution, sets off actual medical equipment—such as the old-fashioned green oxygen tank—that punctuates the installation. Other elements, however, call up the fantastic. Raya altered a mannequin, covered the face of a classical plaster cast with tacks, and otherwise evoked the distressing state of helplessness and disorientation experienced when ailing, whether physically or mentally.

Raya began his career painting and directing murals in the near South Side Chicago neighborhood of Pilsen where he has long resided. His interest in and study of Surrealism began upon viewing the seminal exhibition *Dada, Surrealism, and their Heritage* at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1968.

Suellen Rocca
(American, b. 1943)

LET HER BE, 1982

Graphite and colored pencil on paper
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Mrs. E. A. Bergman, 1996.17



Paul Rosin
(American, b. 1958)

Billy's Head (from the Voyeur series), 1983

Gelatin silver print

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, restricted gift of Dr. and Mrs. Peter W.

Broido and Illinois Arts Council Purchase Grant,

1984.14



Seymour Rosofsky
(American, 1924–1981)

Operating Room, 1955

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of the Seymour Rosofsky Memorial
Fund and Maremont Corporation, by exchange,
1986.5



In this psychologically penetrating study of incapacitation, attenuated figures are bound by the machines that treat them and keep them alive. Rendered in pale, chalky colors, the disquieting scene evokes a deathlike stillness. In his work of the 1950s, Seymour Rosofsky, who served in World War II, frequently turned to the theme of anonymous men confined to wheelchairs or in hospital settings. Influenced by the work of Jean Dubuffet (also on view), which he saw at the Arts Club of Chicago in 1952, Rosofsky was drawn to the Surrealist's embrace of unfettered imagination.

A lifelong Chicagoan, Rosofsky graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and was considered one of the Monster Roster—so named by a local critic for their grotesque figuration rendered in somber colors. His strange often autobiographical narratives also aligned him firmly with Chicago Imagism as he continued to work into the 1970s.

Barbara Rossi
(American, b. 1940)

Wee Purr, 1972

Acrylic on double Plexiglas, feathers, and
painted wood frame

Collection of Mary Stowell and Jim Streicker



Barbara Rossi's organic forms painted on both sides of a sheet of Plexiglas create what can be viewed as an abstract composition as well as a portrait bust. This technique gives a subtle depth and a light-scattering quality to the paint that supports the artist's aspirations to depict the spiritual and otherworldly. Rossi utilized an introspective process, similar to the Surrealist idea of automatism—the performance of actions without conscious thought or intention. As in many of her works, the image emerged one form at a time from what the artist called her unconscious being.

Attending the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the late 1960s, Rossi was introduced to and deeply affected by the work of outsider artists, including Joseph Yoakum (also on view in this exhibition). Associated with Chicago Imagism through exhibiting in group shows at the Hyde Park Art Center, Rossi's penchant for punning titles, as in this work, also align her with the Chicago school.

Kay Sage
(American, 1898–1963)

Handle with Care, 1943

Oil on canvas

Private collection



A deep window frame, the arch of a courtyard, or a symbolic stage proscenium, all these things apply to the shape on the left in Kay Sage's poignantly titled work. *Handle with Care* is both a plea and a warning. Framed by the dark portal, the delicate draped form is similar to, but worlds apart, from those of fellow Surrealist Kurt Seligmann (also on view in the exhibition) as it stands isolated and vulnerable in the desolate landscape.

For decades the contributions of women Surrealists have been downplayed, and although Sage was one of the group in Paris in the 1930s, she was better known as Yves Tanguy's wife. Their personal and professional relationship was intense and fruitful. She admired Tanguy's abstract, dreamlike style, unique among the Surrealists. At the start of World War II, the couple relocated to the United States, eventually settling in Woodbury, Connecticut, where they had a close friendship with Alexander Calder and his wife.

Doris Salcedo
(Colombian, b. 1958)

Atrabiliarios, 1993

Shoes, drywall, paint, wood, animal fiber,
and surgical thread

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Daryl Gerber Stokols and
Jeff Stokols, 2011.51



In a way that recalls traditional Surrealist practices, Doris Salcedo uses common, readily available materials—for instance, shoes—in uncommon ways, transforming them through her art. In *Atrabiliarios*, worn shoes recovered from victims of mass violence are encased in niches embedded into the wall, covered by a layer of stretched and preserved animal fiber that is affixed with medical sutures. A signature work by the artist, the installation addresses the experience of loss due to political violence, and the importance of remembering and mourning.

Lucas Samaras
(American, b. Greece, 1936)

Transformation: Knives, 1968

Knives, beads, acrylic, adhesive, wood, pins, thread, hair, plastic, yarn, razor blades, photograph, Plexiglas, cotton, wire, coral, and plaster on a Plexiglas base

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Bergman,
1974.11



Lucas Samaras fashioned a fantastical array of knives with common materials that he frequently used in the 1960s, including yarns, beads, and pins. Some seem playful, like the wiggly yarn-covered form. Others are fantastical, like the knife fashioned from feathers. A self-portrait decorates the sole knife that points outward. Some of the items retain their form and utility as knives, whether a utensil or a potential weapon. This double meaning, as well as the idea of transformation as set forth by the title, places this work in the realm of Surrealism.

Perhaps best-known for his manipulated photographic self-portraits, Samaras has worked in a number of mediums, including a wide range of sculptural forms.

Paul Sarkisian
(American, b. 1928)

Night with Raping Wave, 1963

Watercolor, paper collage, and asphalt in
wood and glass frame

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro,
1992.46

In a free mix of time periods and art historical and popular cultural references, Paul Sarkisian fashioned a clever collage out of incongruous elements typical of the Surrealist artists. A clipping of a slice of orange forms the sun. It hovers over the central image, a stunted Cyclops whose body is a decorated pot. A vintage photograph of a nude torso lies in a puddle of asphalt that is used as a ground for the composition.

Born in Chicago, Sarkisian won a scholarship at age sixteen to study at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Not long after he emerged from the legendary Los Angeles Ferus Gallery in the late 1950s, Sarkisian moved through several stylistic periods, including one dubbed his Surrealist period, which typically featured nudes, as in this work.

Joseph Seigenthaler
(American, b. 1959)

The Couple, 1993

Acrylic on ceramic on fiberglass and steel,
fabric, and ottoman

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, restricted gift of Walter F. and
Dr. Mary Pullig Schatz, 1993.12.a-e



Hand built from clay and painted in exacting detail, this work updates ancient myths and legends of magical transformation and demonic possession. An imp-like male figure, covered with skin lesions, reaches out to the young pregnant woman. Horrified, she watches the lesions travel down her outstretched arm. Like Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, their fingers are depicted as not quite touching.

Born and educated in Tennessee, Joseph Seigenthaler perfected his craft by fashioning figures for a wax museum. The high degree of realism he brings to his nonetheless distorted, fantastical creations make them all the more disturbing. Trips to Chicago introduced Seigenthaler to the local Surrealist-influenced artists, inspiring him to relocate to the city.

Kurt Seligmann
(American, b. Switzerland, 1900–1962)

Baphomet, 1948

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro,
1992.72



With swirling, drapery-like forms that navigate a stage set made of boxy steps, Seligmann created a dynamic composition that draws the viewer into the strange ritual depicted: a dance of death as hinted by the title. Baphomet was originally used to describe an idol or other deity, whom the Knights Templar—a wealthy and powerful Christian military order during medieval times—were accused of worshiping. Over time, Baphomet became associated with the devil, and subsequently was incorporated into a number of occult and mystical traditions, which Surrealists, including Seligmann, studied. Seligmann was in fact the Surrealists' expert on magic, and published a history, *The Mirror of Magic*, in 1948.

Seligmann was one of the first of the Surrealists to relocate from Europe to New York in the years before the outbreak of World War II, and was responsible for helping bring many others of the group to safety in the United States.

Cindy Sherman
(American, b. 1954)

Untitled #188, 1989

Chromogenic development print

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, Gerald S. Elliott Collection, 1995.101



Throughout her career Cindy Sherman has acknowledged the influence of Surrealism on her work, particularly fascinated by their forays into the irrational and use of psychologically charged imagery. In this photograph, part of her *Disasters* series, a blow-up doll and shadowy human figure appear to be treated as refuse, cast into a pile of junk. With dramatic lighting and its use of color gels, the work is simultaneously seductive and repellent, while commenting on human desire and despair. In this light, the work of Sherman offers a shifting and fragmented portrayal of the self and the construction of human identity.

Buzz Spector
(American, b. 1948)

Mallarmé, 1987–88

Wooden curio cabinet, gold leaf on glass,
book, and shell

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, restricted gift of LaSalle Bank,
1997.72.a–c

Buzz Spector was a poet before turning to the visual arts, and this foundation in language and the book form pervades much of his artistic production. This sculpture as cabinet of curiosities refers to the work of French poet Stéphane Mallarmé through both its title and use of the excerpted text from Mallarmé's poem *Salut* (1893), which Spector has lettered in the original French in gold leaf. Spector provided this translation:

Solitude, reef, star
To that no matter which worth
The white concern of our sail.

Mallarmé exerted a huge influence on the avant-garde art movements of the early twentieth century—especially Surrealism, with its own roots in literature. The cabinet form of the sculpture also echoes Surrealist vessels that contain the dreams, desires, and fears of humanity.

Evelyn Statsinger
(American, b. 1927)

Large Collage #6, 1982

Drawing, photogram, photocopies, and balsa wood

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, restricted gift of Mr. and Mrs. Martin E. Zimmerman, Mr. and Mrs. Richard A. Lenon, and Illinois Arts Council Purchase Grant, 1984.11

For *Large Collage #6*, Evelyn Statsinger combines a number of art-making strategies—such as drawing, photograms, and printing techniques—to produce a collage that is at once compartmentalized and interconnected. The images of shells repeat across different panels, suggesting both a personal and cosmological investigation: the spiral on many of the shells points to the motion of time, while also conjuring the motion of spiral galaxies.

Statsinger is a longtime resident of Chicago and was deeply influenced by the influx of Surrealist art, especially during the formative years of her education at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is also associated with the Chicago Imagists, a moniker given to an artist group that formed in the 1960s, known for creating colorful and distorted figurative art.

Mary Stoppert
(American, b. 1941)

Mano Lirio, 1983

Wood, enamel, and lacquer

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, restricted gift of Mr. and Mrs. Martin E.

Zimmerman, Phyllis Kind Gallery, and Illinois Arts

Council Purchase Grant, 1984.17

Mary Stoppert
(American, b. 1941)

Velo Hand, 1983

Wood, enamel, and lacquer

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Alyce and Edwin DeCosta and

Phyllis Kind Gallery, 1984.20

Yves Tanguy
(American, b. France, 1900–1955)

Untitled (The Fluidity of Time), 1930

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1998.41

Unlike most of his fellow Surrealist painters, Yves Tanguy is noted for his nonrepresentational subjects. In his work, color and form are used to create amoeba-like shapes that suggest human figures that remain abstract. Here, these forms are presented in an alien landscape, between reality and a dreamlike state. The subtitle for this work, *The Fluidity of Time*, is echoed in the painterly handling of the oil medium, which creates a fluid trace across the canvas's surface. Transfixed with notions of time and space, as well as Freud's exploration of the unconscious, Tanguy tended to depict the human psyche rather than symbolic forms meant to be decoded.

An original member of the Surrealist group, Tanguy moved to the United States where he met his wife—American painter Kay Sage, also presented in this exhibition—after he fled Europe at the onset of World War II. The couple lived in Connecticut near their close friend Alexander Calder, with whom they shared an interest in abstraction.

Dorothea Tanning
(American, 1910–2012)

Angelic Pleasures, 1943

Oil on canvas

Private collection



Dorothea Tanning
(American, 1910–2012)

Sleeping Nude, 1954

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of anonymous donor, 1984.23



Dorothea Tanning was particularly focused on recording the female experience in her art, as can be seen in this depiction of the erotic, disconcerting nature of dreaming. The sleeping woman's form fragments and joins a jumble of shapes that seem to emanate from her head. Born and educated in Chicago, Tanning discovered Surrealism at the monumental exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1936. She eventually met pioneering gallery owner Julian Levy, around whom many of the Surrealists, having fled Europe before the outbreak of World War II, had gathered in New York. Despite her unusual path to Surrealism, she was accepted by the expatriates, and significantly, she became involved with Max Ernst, who had left Leonora Carrington (both are in this exhibition) behind in Spain and in New York taken up with arts patroness Peggy Guggenheim. Tanning and Ernst were married in 1946.

Daryl Trivieri
(American, b. 1956)

Nebula of Creative Desire, 1986

Gouache and acrylic on paper

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Edward Minieka in memory of
Martin Arons, 1990.15



Remedios Varo
(Mexican, b. Spain, 1910–1963)

Exploración de las fuentes del Río Orinoco
(Exploration of the sources of the Orinoco River),
1959

Oil on canvas
Private collection



Remedios Varo's father was a hydraulic engineer and as a child, she accompanied him on jobs, experiences that most likely inform this delicate and haunting painting. The mighty Orinoco River, South America's second-longest, is depicted as arising from a glass chalice, a choice most likely inspired by the artist's Catholic upbringing. This mystical source among a grove of cypress trees is discovered by a genteel lady explorer, whose hat metamorphoses into a cape and then forms the boat in which she primly sits.

Varo received art training in her native country and developed an early interest in Surrealism, which she learned about through the work of her countryman Salvador Dalí. The Spanish Civil War caused Varo to flee to Paris in 1937, where she became an integral part of the Parisian Surrealist group. She married the Surrealist poet Benjamin Péret, a key figure in the movement who promoted the idea of automatism—the performance of actions without conscious thought or intention. Forced into exile again during the German occupation of France, she relocated to Mexico City in 1941, where fellow exile Leonora Carrington, whose work is also on view, was

Ken Warneke
(American, b. 1958)

The Tyranny of Everyday Life, 1990

Oil and acrylic on Masonite

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Lipschultz,

Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Bergman, Nathan Cummings,

Grace and Edwin Hokin, and Mr. and Mrs.

Richard L. Feigen by exchange, 1991.24



H. C. Westermann
(American, 1922–1981)

He Whore, 1957

Plywood, vermillion, oak, maple, walnut, fir,
birch, mirror, paint, chromium-plated brass, cork,
rope, and US dimes

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of the Susan and Lewis Manilow

Collection of Chicago Artists, 1993.35



He-Whore is unabashed in its anxiety about male sexuality; a tiny figure has been literally flushed down the toilet in the work's white-painted interior. A companion piece to a similar laminated wood sculpture that shows a pregnant female form, *He Whore* was made while H. C. Westermann was living in Chicago and interacting with artists of the Monster Roster—so named by a local critic for their grotesque figuration rendered in somber colors—with whom he was loosely associated. This was a turbulent time in Westermann's life; he was involved in a new relationship after the dissolution of his marriage. Los Angeles-born, Chicago-educated, Westermann demonstrated his respect for traditional wood crafting in solidly built and meticulously finished works such as this early sculpture.

A unique figure in American art, Westermann was not directly indebted to Surrealism. But as art historian Robert Storr has written, he “naturalized surrealism and translated its often effete vocabulary into a workmanlike vernacu-

lar." Westermann's emphasis on visual puns, cultural provocation, and a deep exploration of human psychology through the use of figuration further tie him to the movement.

H. C. Westermann
(American, 1922–1981)

The Rascette, 1961

Painted wood

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of anonymous donor, 1982.50

Rascette is a term used in palm reading, or chiromancy, an ancient mystic art that saw a revival in late-nineteenth century Europe. Palm reading was of great interest to the Surrealists, especially through the poet Robert Desnos, one of the inner circle who practiced the ancient art. Specifically the rascette is the line that runs closely parallel to the Line of Life, and can have attributes that signal success and fortune.

This guide to the traditional lines and areas of the palm is incised on a replica of H. C. Westermann's own hand, made clear by the inclusion of the anchor which was essentially Westermann's logo. During the period this work was made, Westermann often signed letters to his wife "the Swami," further signaling his interest in the occult.

Margaret Wharton
(American, b. 1943)

Garden Chair, 1978

Painted wood chair, epoxy, reeds, staples,
and wood dowels

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of the Susan and Lewis Manilow
Collection of Chicago Artists, 1991.73.a-q



John Wilde
(American, 1919–2006)

Homage to Alfred Rethel [sic], 1987

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, restricted gift of Richard Florsheim Art

Fund and gift of Perimeter Gallery, 1994.10



Alfred Rethel was a German painter known for history paintings that seethed with strange imagery, manifestations of the mental illness that eventually enveloped him. This work features a direct quote of Rethel's woodcut, *Death the Avenger*, 1848, in which a skeleton appears at a masked ball, scraping daintily like a violinist upon two human bones. While John Wilde faithfully reproduced Rethel's skeleton, he gave him a robe of scarlet, calling to mind the ecclesiastical garb of Catholic clergy. The checkered floor implies a chessboard, or the playing out of fate on the stage of life, as a diminutive dancing couple embraces in the depths of the vast room.

Although based in Madison, Wisconsin, Wilde frequented the Chicago home of Gertrude Abercrombie, also on view in this exhibition. They shared an interest, guided by Surrealism, in exploring their biographies through fantastical depictions that plumbed their psychological states.

Anne Wilson
(American, b. 1949)

Devour, 1993

Hair and thread on cloth

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift of Ruth P. Horwich, 2000.19



A leading Chicago figure working in fiber arts, Anne Wilson draws on one of the Surrealist's frequent motifs: human hair. In fact, much of the artist's production to date has involved the stitching or sewing of hair at various scales—along with the manipulation of other fiber-based materials—as is the case in the work on view here. *Devour* takes on a slightly more sinister quality, as the hair is amassed to such a degree that it appears to grow forth and consume much of the work's surface. In line with other Surrealist tendencies, this work utilizes commonplace materials in an unsettling way.

Donald Roller Wilson
(American, b. 1938)

The Transformation of Helen's Brother Larry, 1980

Oil on canvas

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of Michael T. and Ann M. Judd,
1985.30



Presented as if on a stage framed by curtains, this work shows an inexplicable, dreamlike tableau. Shadows of dolls loom on either side of the masked figure, who seems to be posing within a latter-day Frankenstein's laboratory. By constructing a detailed set in his studio, Donald Roller Wilson directed a scene that is an illustration in a longer, ongoing narrative. Painted in a classical Renaissance technique featuring a high degree of realism and finish and presented in elaborate, individually designed frames, Wilson's paintings present rich fantasy worlds that align this Arkansas-based artist's work with Surrealism. For a number of years Wilson worked with musician Frank Zappa, who used his paintings as cover art for some of his albums.

Francesca Woodman
(American, 1958–1981)

Right to left:

Boulder, Colorado, 1972–1975, 1972/75

From Angel Series, Roma, September, 1977, 1977

*House #4, Providence, Rhode Island, 1975–1976,
1975/76*

Gelatin silver print
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, gift from The Howard and Donna Stone
Collection, 2002.70, 2002.75, and 2002.71



Francesca Woodman used a long exposure so that her moving body would appear blurred in this photograph, as if a ghost emerging from the decay of the abandoned house. A sense of the uncanny and the askew composition further support the unworldly image, and reflect the Surrealists' beliefs that alternative realities hover alongside everyday experience.

Within settings that seem throwbacks to earlier times, as they reveal few contemporary markers, Woodman enacted rituals of self-discovery, sometimes using models, often photographing herself. In this case she worked in an abandoned house in Providence, where she attended the Rhode Island School of Design. Woodman spent time in Italy, and was deeply influenced by the work of the Surrealists. She was only 22 when, suffering from depression, she committed suicide.

These works were generously given to the MCA by Howard and Donna Stone. The MCA remembers Howard (1930–2015) with fondness and gratitude.

Joseph Yoakum
(American, 1886–1972)

Mt. Thabor near Nazareth, Galilee East Asia, 1968

Andes Mt. Range, La Paz Bolivia, 1967

Both are colored pencil and ink on paper
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, bequest of Sandra Jorgensen, 1999.23
and 1999.22

Joseph Yoakum's art expresses the interconnectedness of the world through his unique depiction of great mountains that seem to expand and grow, even as they are punctuated by groves of trees, bodies of water, and rivulets. His remarkable vision of landscape was fueled by travels during his youth and illustrations in the *National Geographic* magazine.

In his old age, Yoakum began to make landscape drawings under what he called "the force of a dream" that delivered a message from God, and described these works as a "spiritual unfoldment." Discovered by the painters Christina Ramberg and Phil Hanson, whose works are also on view in this exhibition, and others of their circle, the elderly artist was soon adopted as a fellow traveler. They visited him in his South Side home, collected his work, and arranged for exhibitions.

Claire Zeisler
(American, 1903–1991)

Fragments and Dashes, 1978–80

Beads, chamois, cotton, feather, raw wool, shells, stones, wood, and Plexiglas vitrine
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art
Chicago, restricted gift in honor of the artist's
birthday, 1983.36

Fragments and Dashes is composed of numerous small-scale elements including wrapped wooden prayer sticks, stones enclosed in web-like stitching, and delicately finished pieces of chamois. One of the artist's more intimate works, the piece reflects Claire Zeisler's interest in Pre-Columbian and Peruvian textiles, which she collected along with major Surrealist paintings. Although she began her interest in art as a collector, Zeisler studied art-making strategies from non-Western societies early on in her career, as a student of Bauhaus artists Alexander Archipenko and László Moholy-Nagy at the Institute of Design in Chicago. Her delicate and worshipful treatment of common objects is also seen in work of the more traditional female Surrealists, particularly Remedios Varo (also on view in this exhibition).

Mary Lou Zelazny
(American, b. 1956)

Sea Walker, 1986

Oil, collage, and wax on board

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art

Chicago, gift of anonymous donor, 1989.6

a close friend and where she painted most of her best-known works.