

Ernst created these images by placing paper atop various materials—wood floorboards, wire mesh, leaves, crusts of bread—and rubbing the surface with a pencil or crayon. Inspired by the resulting textures, he added details to transform them into fantastical landscapes, objects, and creatures. Ernst called his process *frottage* (French for “rubbing”) and claimed it as a form of Surrealist automatism, whereby artists let the unconscious guide their hands in the creation of an image. Ernst’s friend and fellow artist Jean Arp wrote an introduction for this portfolio, describing the natural world in unusual ways: “vaccinated bread,” “displays of lava-string,” and a “choir of cells.”

For many Surrealist artists and writers, the Marquis de Sade’s *The 120 Days of Sodom, or The School of Libertinage*, written in 1785 while the author was imprisoned, was a foundational text. Its shocking and transgressive erotic tales were for them both a demonstration of the liberatory possibilities of unrestricted desire and a rebuke of what they saw as religious dogma’s hypocrisy. This copy’s binding was a collaboration between Man Ray, who owned it, and the Surrealist bookbinder Mary Reynolds. Here, she inset a photograph by Man Ray of female buttocks in an upside down cross—a design that emphasizes the volume’s blasphemous marriage of religious symbolism and eroticism.

For Surrealists, collaboration was a key strategy to foster transformation, unpredictability, and chance in their drawings, writings, and bookmaking. One such collaborative activity was a chance-based parlor game called *cadavre exquis* (exquisite corpse). Each participant would draw or paste an image on a sheet of paper, fold the paper to conceal their contribution, and pass it on to the next player for their addition. Taking turns served to disrupt the waking mind's penchant for order and resulted in fantastical composite figures.

This book tells a story of a young girl who fantasizes about a knife being her father and a fork the beautiful cousin he has run away with. (These utensils are visible among the ornamentation on the binding.) René Crevel devised the strange tale to express disgust with bourgeois culture and offer a flight into the fervid fantasies its values suppress. Max Ernst created the illustrations by first making frottages (crayon rubbings) on translucent sheets of paper. Then, advised by the photographer Man Ray, he placed the sheets on light-sensitive paper and exposed them to light—which passed through except where the crayon markings blocked it—in a process known as *cliché-verre*. In the resulting images, the tonal values of the frottages are reversed.

This group portrait showcases collective activity and the playful relationships within Surrealism. Ernst arranged the cut-up photographs—all of members of the Surrealist group—against a background drawn to resemble an easel or sandwich board. Ernst himself appears near the center, next to the mustachioed Salvador Dalí. Paul Éluard is below them in a hat, and André Breton and Man Ray are at the bottom, the former a floating head. The beak-like profile that peers over the top of the board is Loplop, or “the Bird Superior,” which was one of Ernst’s alter egos.

In this portfolio, commissioned by a French power company, Man Ray showcased electricity as both medium and subject. The portfolio features photograms (or “rayographs,” as Man Ray termed them), images produced without a camera. To make them, the artist placed objects on photosensitive paper then exposed it to electric light, resulting in luminous negative shapes emerging from darkness. He also used the photogram process to alter camera-made images. In these compositions, Man Ray combined familiar things to create striking visual associations. Rays pulsating across a female nude visualize its erotic charge, while a power cord floating next to the moon that celestial bodies rely on electricity for their illumination.

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“If my work is found to scandalize,” Bellmer declared, “that is because for me the world is scandalous.” This selection of books features Bellmer’s muses, two life-size dolls that he crafted, posed, and photographed obsessively. They appear contorted, disfigured, and dismembered in disturbing scenes that conflate eroticism, abjection, and trauma. Produced during a period of burgeoning fascism, these images intentionally violated Nazi ideals of racial and sexual purity. Bellmer later wrote, “I wanted to reveal what is usually kept hidden.” The palm-sized German edition of *Die Puppe* was issued privately to evade police attention, while its French translation circulated among Surrealist circles in Paris. The publishing of *Les jeux de la poupée* was delayed until after the war.

Georges Hugnet's interactive binding for *The Air of Water* displays the shapeshifting possibilities of its titular elements. On the front, sandwiched between two sheets of glass, are letters spelling out the book's title and curvy, wave-like shapes, also glass, as well as mercury droplets that move and change as the reader handles the volume. Hugnet decorated the flyleaves, seen through the transparent pane, with green ink using decalcomania. In this process, pigment is applied to a glass panel, then paper is pressed against it; the suction as the sheet is pulled away creates abstract forms. Printed on pearlescent paper, Breton's poems were inspired by his then new wife, the underwater dancer Jacqueline Lamba.

Georges Hugnet was interested in the secretive, voyeuristic, and private aspects of the book, whose structure lends itself to titillating games of concealment and exposure. He designed this binding for his personal copy of *Onan*, a lyrical poem about a biblical figure associated with self-pleasure. The front cover is a working hourglass, and the back consists of a seahorse sandwiched between glass panes. As the book is manipulated, the sand flows up and down, revealing a collage of body parts cut from printed materials, including pornographic magazines, and glued to patterned paper. Dalí's frontispiece further shocks: At the very bottom he reveals that he made the print with his left hand while he masturbated with the right.

In the “Surrealist Manifesto,” André Breton, the movement’s self-appointed leader, defined Surrealism as “pure psychic automatism”—expression unfettered by rational thought and societal or aesthetic norms. The manifesto was published as a paperbound volume together with a selection of automatic writings known as “Soluble Fish.” The copy on view here is no. 1 in a deluxe first edition. Its first owner was René Gaffé, then a principal patron of Surrealism. Gaffé had it preserved in a bespoke binding by Paul Bonet, adding related manuscripts by Breton. Bonet used polished nickel silver to render the book mirrorlike. “I conceived the project of bindings entirely made of metal . . . and in keeping with the character of the work, I wanted it to be absolutely pure,” Bonet wrote.

Twelve years after its publication, Paul Éluard commissioned Paul Bonet to create this unique binding for his and André Breton’s collaborative text *The Immaculate Conception*. To make this binding—one of dozens Bonet produced for Surrealist books—he adhered photographs of a grasping hand looming out of darkness to the front and back covers. He then applied calf leather onlays—the hand’s wounds, larval forms with women’s heads, and stars—onto the surfaces. Bonet used photographs of hands on several other bindings, emphasizing the tactile nature of the book. This copy of *The Immaculate Conception* is an example of a *livre truffé* (literally “stuffed book”), in which a published work is bound together with manuscripts, drawings, and other ephemera related to its production.

Mesemu zoku takes its title and central subject from the *Mesembryanthemum* genus of succulent plants. An avid cultivator of succulents, Shimozato cropped and framed his photographic images to emphasize the plant's wrinkled texture and cloven surfaces. "Rich with Freudian symbolism," Shimazoto writes in the foreword, they evoke phallic and vulvic forms. Publishing this book when Japan was under far-right rule and poised to enter World War II was a subversive and potentially dangerous act. Shimozato alludes to these conditions in the book's postscript, pointing out the unexpected delay in publication and cautioning "what is presented here does not necessarily reflect our present state of mind."

Georges Hugnet was commissioned to design this bespoke binding, which was fabricated by Louis Christy, to house the maquette, or preliminary model, for what became *The Doll's Games* (on view in the adjacent vitrine). The front and back covers are intimate glass windows, through which an arrangement of white lace, black stockings, and a faded-pink garter belt reveal a view of a woman's upper thigh. This voyeuristic perspective alludes to the book's contents. Small hand-colored photographs—of an articulated doll Hans Bellmer turned and twisted into disturbing and suggestive poses—offer an experience akin to peering through a keyhole.

Written during the German occupation of France, Paul Éluard's antiwar poem "Liberté" became a rallying cry of the French resistance. It was included in his poetry collection *Poésie et vérité, 1942* (Poetry and Truth, 1942), published clandestinely in Paris by the underground Surrealist group La Main à Plume (The Hand to Pen). The poem also appeared under the title "Une seule pensée" (A Single Thought) in *La revue du monde libre*, the London-based journal of the French Resistance. This issue was airdropped over France by British air forces in 1943 to spread its rousing message of hope and freedom. In 1953, a deluxe accordion-folded version of the poem illustrated by Fernand Léger was published to memorialize Éluard's role in the Resistance.

Hugnet created this unique hand-painted binding to house four poems that he had originally published as discreet pamphlets, each featuring a contribution from a different artist. (Unbound copies are on view in the adjacent vitrine.) He dedicated this bound volume to his fellow Surrealist and member of the French Resistance, Paul Éluard. Hugnet, Éluard, and other Surrealists established clandestine routes to aid those seeking shelter during the Nazi Occupation and to circulate antiauthoritarian works, including these pocket-size poems. In "Not to Want," Hugnet wrote, "All liberation is in me / I carry my dream / I carry in me all that I await."

Le Surréalisme en 1947 is the catalogue for an exhibition that André Breton organized in Paris to showcase the survival of the movement following World War II. (Other examples of Breton's wartime and postwar efforts on behalf of the movement are on view in the adjacent vitrine.) An anthology of Surrealist thought on the topic of myth, the texts and images were authored by an international cohort. The cover, designed by Marcel Duchamp, features a pink slipcase chemise topped with a foam-rubber breast on the front, and a label reading "Prière de toucher" (Please touch) on the back. An example of the Surrealists' fascination with the taboo, *Le Surréalisme en 1947* invites transgressive engagement, simultaneously fetishizing the female body and implicating the reader in its objectification.

Published in 1969 but incorporating photo-collages created decades earlier, this book exemplifies the French Surrealists' ongoing dedication to witty, inventive, and exquisitely produced volumes. Appropriating the format of the famous Michelin travel guide, it recounts a fictional trip along the coast of Brittany that culminates in the made-up town of Trébaumec—a pun on the French phrase *très beau mec* (very handsome guy). There, Hugnet's protagonist meets the president of the Club de Fureteuses (Busybody's Club), a luxurious brothel. Amorous adventures ensue, as relayed in Hugnet's punning captions and photomontages, most of which feature women, many naked or semi-naked, in suggestive or compromising poses. The original designs for the volume are displayed nearby.

In 1937, the poet Benjamin Péret described Georges Hugnet’s bindings as “ghostly constructions around books.” An artist and poet, Hugnet expanded the possibilities of bookbinding. He often used glass in his bindings, producing translucent portals between reality and dreams, perception and illusion. In this binding, Hugnet sandwiched shattered glass between two additional sheets of glass. He likely achieved the spidery breaks by striking at the center with a nailhead—creating the illusion that a bullet was “fired from within,” as Péret wrote. Hugnet transformed the glass into reflective surfaces by adding metallic endpapers. Inside the volume, Paul Éluard’s poems take up similar subjects of transparency and reflection, among other themes.

Surrealist writers and artists had a special fondness for the nineteenth-century French *beau livre* (beautiful book), in which the book was treated as an aesthetic object in its own right. Features of the *beau livre* include high-quality papers, wide margins, and elegant type, among other carefully considered visual details. This edition of *In Parallel* represents both a culmination of this tradition and a pivot toward new directions in production that would unfold in the twentieth century. Rather than sitting side by side with the text, Pierre Bonnard’s rose-colored lithographs float freely around and overlap with Paul Verlaine’s erotic poems.

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Cancelled Confessions was a genre-defying collaboration between the queer couple Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore. Its prose—composed by Cahun—incorporates fragments of letters, dream journals, marriage contracts, mathematical formulas, fairy tales, and mythology, among other appropriated written forms. The accompanying photomontages, likely assembled by Moore, comprise cut-up photographs of Cahun in various costumes and poses, their body parts recombined into kaleidoscopic forms. Instruments that amplify vision (like mirrors) and objects that disrupt seeing (like masks and screens) appear throughout. Together, the prose and photomontages complicate fixed notions of personhood and gender. “At present I exist otherwise,” Cahun writes.

The Seventh Face of the Die brings together twenty poems by Georges Hugnet and twenty of his collage poems, composed of commercially printed materials. In one, a snippet of text reads “de tout un peu” (a little bit of everything)—a line that might serve to characterize his process. Below, a sequence of printed fragments reads: “Demain / est vivant / dans les glaces” (Tomorrow / lives / in mirrors). Mirrors were a favored Surrealist motif, with their ability to trouble distinctions between reality and appearance, perception and deception, and waking states and dream worlds.

Emilie Comes to Me in a Dream was issued “as a strictly private edition” of sixty-nine copies “to be kept under lock and key . . . so that it does not get into the hands of minors.” The book was the final volume of Štyrský’s clandestine publishing imprint, Edice 69, and comprises ten photographs of photomontages that incorporate elements from British and French pornography. An original cut-and-paste maquette is on view nearby. These erotic compositions were meant to subvert what Štyrský saw as the era’s bourgeois and repressive attitudes around sexuality.

Répetitions was Ernst's first illustrated book—a medium that would become central to his practice over the next fifty years of his career. It also marked the beginning of his close friendship with Paul Éluard, one of the founders of the Surrealist movement and its most lyrical and prolific poet. The book pairs the semantic disjunctions of Éluard's poems with the visual displacements of Ernst's collages. Ernst cut up wood engravings he found in books and magazines and pieced the fragments together to create strange new compositions. The uniform texture of the wood-engraved lines gives these images a disquieting seamlessness. To Ernst's delight, this effect was enhanced when the collages were printed photomechanically.

“As beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table.” This line from *The Songs of Maldoror* became a foundational maxim for the Surrealists. First published in 1869, the fantastical prose-poem was largely forgotten until the Surrealists rediscovered it in the 1920s, hailing the Comte de Lautréamont as their prophet. The text tells the nightmarish tale of a perverse and violent protagonist who renounces God, humanity, and conventional morality. In 1930, when Salvador Dalí was invited to illustrate a new edition of the book, he used a stream-of-consciousness process to access hallucinations and delusions. Rather than respond to specific passages, many of his images explore his own visions of sex and death.

This book combines Paul Éluard's lyrical love poems to his wife, Nusch, a model and artist, with Man Ray's photographs of her nude form. Man Ray's techniques of superimposition, solarization, and double-exposure seamlessly blend the photographs onto the pages. Cropping and image placements in relation to the text serve to unify the whole into a single, dreamlike atmosphere. In one spread, for example, the spine of the book is aligned with that of Nusch's body.

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This special edition of *Mizue* served as an informal catalogue for the 1937 *Exhibition of Foreign Surrealist Works*, which traveled from Tokyo to Osaka, Kyoto, and Nagoya and featured more than forty European Surrealist artists. Organized by the Japanese writers Shūzō Takiguchi and Chirū Yamanaka in collaboration with European advisors Paul Éluard, Georges Hugnet, and Roland Penrose, the exhibition introduced Surrealist practices to a wide Japanese audience and positioned Japan as an important hub within transnational Surrealist circuits. The catalogue included a bilingual bibliography of Surrealist texts and an overview of Surrealism's history.

The Nagoya-based writer Chirū Yamanaka was a key transmitter of Surrealism to Japan. He and his frequent collaborator and fellow poet Shūzō Takiguchi maintained active correspondence with European Surrealists, organized Surrealist activities and journals, and translated key Surrealists texts, including this one. European Surrealists received these Japanese books and magazines with enthusiasm, despite their inability to read the language. They were particularly taken with the volumes' exquisite materiality. Upon receiving a book of Yamanaka's Surrealist poetry, bound with handmade, fibrous-textured Japanese paper, André Breton confessed, "I am brought to the edge of illness with desire for the beauty of this paper."

Pablo Picasso, who had been targeted by the Nazis for his antifascist painting *Guernica* (1937), illustrated this 1942 collection of Georges Hugnet's poetry. It was published by Jeanne Bucher, a Parisian gallerist who was one of the first to exhibit the Surrealists' work and publish their books, beginning in the 1920s. During the Nazi Occupation, she used her gallery and publishing imprint to support the Resistance.

During the Nazi occupation of Prague, the artist Toyen took great risks to hide the Jewish poet Jindřich Heisler. The pair used Surrealist collaboration as a form of political resistance. Working under intense pressure, they clandestinely published books that interweave subversive images and poetry, including this one. Its title positions the dreaming mind as a “stronghold”—a refuge and potential base for attack. Inside, photographs depict tabletop arrangements of everyday objects paired with texts by Heisler. Each tableau is introduced on the preceding page by a title whose impact is heightened by playful lettering. In one example, “I Have Never Been There” introduces a composition of a palm tree rising in the sand—a reminder of Heisler’s confinement.

This publication was the culmination of its three creators’ time together in the Japanese avant-garde artist group Jitsuzai-sha (Real Existence). Masuo Ikeda’s experiments with automatic poetry, in which he wrote rapidly to suppress conscious thought and control, fascinated Hiroshi Manabe, who laid out and illustrated the poems. Manabe’s design combines cutout pages, photographic and printed images, and irregular typography that plays with spacing and alignment. Together, the illustrations and text prioritize sensory experience over narrative logic. For example, the phrase “electric wire of tears’ fat tube’s red flag from a frozen womb” appears alongside an illustration of a hand reaching through a dilapidated ceiling.

“We will always refuse to flee poetry for reality, but we will also always refuse to flee reality for poetry,” wrote the Surrealist collective La Main à Plume (The Hand to Pen) in a 1941 manifesto. The group formed in 1940, in response to André Breton and other Surrealist leaders’ defection from France during World War II. In their absence, the members of La Main à Plume—many of whom were young, Jewish, or immigrants—maintained Surrealism’s mission, despite their political marginality in Occupied France. Their activities included collaborative art making, political education, and a clandestine publication program—including this series of poetry and writing—aimed at bypassing German censorship.

Founded in Prague in 1934, the Czechoslovak Surrealist Group was driven underground by the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1938. It was within this hostile political context that the artist Toyen began collaborating on books with the Jewish poet and photographer Jindřich Heisler. They published this volume illegally in 1939. The rare Czech edition included the following statement: “This book was created in the stifling atmosphere of military commands as a document of Surrealist activity that will not be destroyed by any of the reactionary powers of mobilized Europe.” The forty copies published in German were intended to be “handed out to invading German soldiers as subversive material.”

Charlip drew from his career as a children's book author and illustrator to adapt the Surrealist game *cadavre exquis* (exquisite corpse) into an infinitely variable, interactive artist's book. Each page is divided into three sections—head, torso, and legs—comprising found and collaged representations of a segmented human body. When readers flip through, the results are incongruous and unexpected configurations of the human form. Charlip dedicated the book to members of his artistic circle, including Ray Johnson, who reciprocally dedicated several of his books, on view nearby, to Charlip.

This unique volume is reminiscent of a mid-twentieth century children's book. Johnson gifted it to his friend Remy Charlip, a children's book author. Johnson pasted an array of materials, including newspaper clippings and images likely cut out from magazines, into a blank book. Short passages of text, hand-lettered in black ink, respond to the surrounding imagery. Johnson also reworked the book's structure, cutting leaves into irregular shapes, often following the contours of his collaged elements. He created circular apertures, carefully positioning them so that details—such as the head of a dog—are visible through successive pages. Small and large foldout flaps further contribute to the book's layered, dynamic compositions.

Zürn became involved in Surrealist circles in Paris and Berlin after meeting Hans Bellmer in 1953. Her practice, which had been largely literary, soon expanded to include making drawings and unique books. In this example, she conjured fearsome creatures—alternately animal, human, and hybrid—from dense networks of arabesque lines. She also entwined her anagrammatic poetry, created by rearranging the letters of each line to create subsequent verses, within and around their forms. The poems focus on sensory impressions as well as her longing for a figure she calls the "man of jasmine." She sewed the folios together by hand, taking on the role of bookbinder in addition to author and artist.

An artist and publisher, Ford had played a pivotal role in introducing Surrealism to the United States through his magazine *View*, which was published from 1940 to 1947. It featured the work of many Surrealist artists taking refuge in the US during World War II. He later explained that the force motivating all his endeavors was “Surrealism. . . . Tapping the unconscious, the irrational, the incongruous and the nonsensical.” He called the pages of his book “poem posters,” collaged from cutout snippets of commercial logos, brand names, and taglines that poetically appropriate the language of advertising, which had thoroughly invaded public consciousness.

Beginning in about 1963, the writer William S. Burroughs and the artist Brion Gysin deployed Surrealist principles of collage and collaboration as they passed a ledger book back and forth over several years. Accumulating magazine clippings, photographs, and personal writings, and embellishing them with gridded marks generated by a wallpaper roller, they materialized a roaming, ongoing conversation that was at once intentional and automatic, intimate and open to the world. Materials in the books displayed here reflect places the pair lived or visited, including Tangier and New York City, and include personal items like family photographs.

Claude Cahun is best known for photographic self-portraits in which they assume a variety of personas, including weight lifter, angel, and doll. “Under this mask, another mask; I will never finish removing all these faces,” Cahun wrote. They often produced these images in collaboration with Marcel Moore, Cahun’s lifelong creative and romantic partner.

Connected to its members though not formally part of the movement, Dubuffet shared the Surrealists' interest in irrational language and unconventional methods of art making. The books here were produced during the years when Dubuffet defined his signature idea of *art brut*, which he identified as “anything produced by people unsmirched by artistic culture.” Dubuffet subverted traditional bookmaking conventions in works like *Ler dla canpane*, a story of a rural vacation. In it, he printed images carved into discarded materials such as cheese boxes and wood and combined them with crudely handwritten, phonetically spelled texts. Its coarse renderings and often vulgar prose are traits shared by other books here, which span adventures in the wilderness, excursions in the Paris subway, and sexual escapades.

Goodbye to Copenhagen and *Mémoires* were both collaborations between the French theorist Guy Debord and the Danish artist Asger Jorn. Debord composed their texts using a collage practice he called “détournement” (hijacking or rerouting). This involved combining preexisting elements like newspaper clippings, advertisements, or maps and repurposing them to subvert consumer culture and create new associations. Jorn then spattered colorful inks over the collaged fragments, further encouraging a nonlinear reading experience. He also conceived *Mémoires*' sandpaper dust jacket, which was intended to damage other books it came into contact with.

*Of all the approximate realities here is the
innermost one,
that came out of you, Onan, in you, an
ancestral-like sadness in tow,
from flower to flower marking the path of joy,
from head of hair to head of hair to daggers of
silence,*

.....

*The hourglass worlds reestablish themselves
and when, definitive, you behold the dawn,
it is all the scent of definitive worlds.*

— Translated excerpt from Georges Hugnet,
Onan (1934)

*My presence is not here
I'm dressed in myself
no planet holds together
clarity exists without me.*

*Born with my hand over my eyes
and turning me from my way
shadows prevent me from walking
on my crown the universe
in the great inhabitable mirror
broken mirror turning around
where habit and surprise
create boredom by turns.*

— Translated excerpt from Paul Éluard, *Défense
de savoir* (Knowledge Forbidden, 1928)

*I dream I see your image indefinitely imposed
upon itself
You are seated on the high coral stool
Before your mirror still in its first quarter
Two fingers on the water wing of your comb
And at the same time
You are returning from a trip lingering last in
the grotto
Streaming with sparks
You do not recognize me*

— Translated excerpt from André Breton,
L'air de l'eau (The Air of Water, 1934)

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For Surrealists, miniaturization offered a way to deepen a book's inherent intimacy. Small-scale volumes require tender care in handling and close proximity for reading. Joan Miró's tiny *Là*, published by PAB, an imprint that specialized in unusual book formats, is sized to fit between the thumb and forefinger. This copy has a jewellike binding created by Georges Leroux. Dorothea Tanning's *Tomorrow*, which features organic images that suggest views through a microscope, is encased like a treasure in a leather binding with an ammonite fossil clasp.

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