

# Max Ernst

SELECTED PRESS

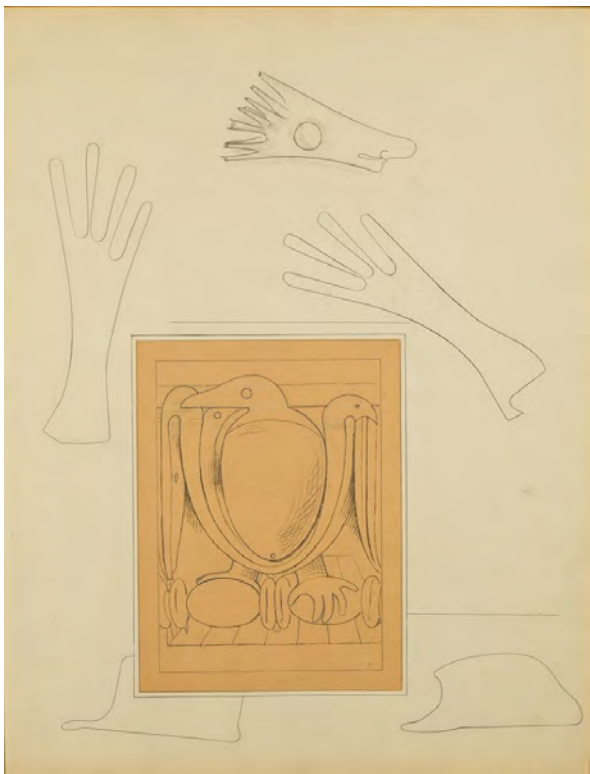
# BOMB

## Loplop Persists: Max Ernst's *Collages* Reviewed by Elina Alter

The imaginary as real

ELINA ALTER

FEBRUARY 26, 2020



Max Ernst, *Loplop présente*, 1931, pencil, ink, and collage on paper, 25.5 × 19.5 inches.

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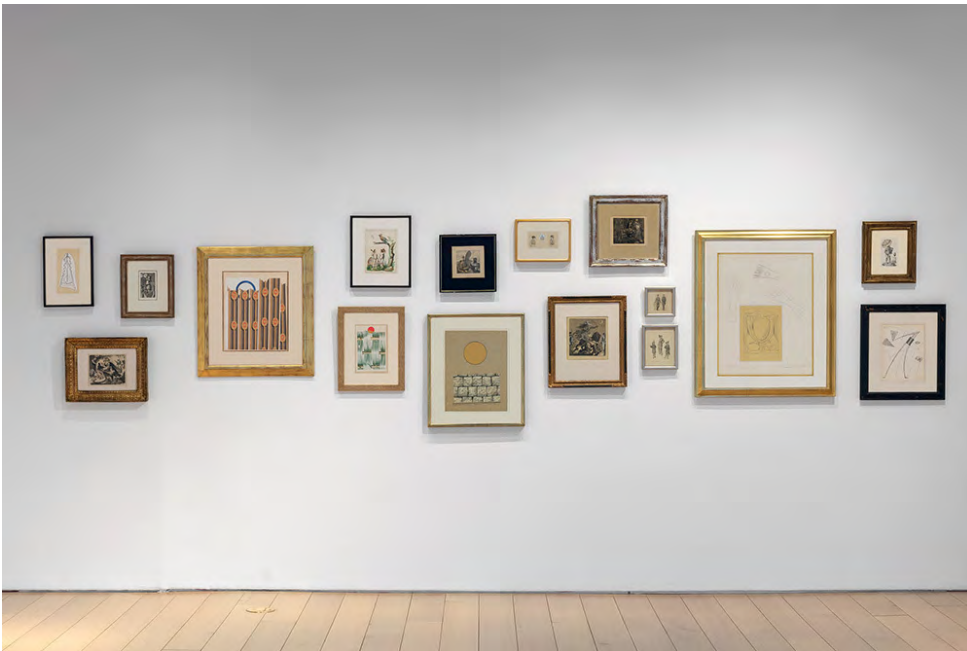
Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery. Photo by Diego Flores.

Max Ernst, an artist whose career spanned nearly three quarters of the twentieth century, liked to say that he took orders from a bird. The bird is called Loplop and appears in several of the forty-five works currently on display in *Collages* at Kasmin Gallery in Manhattan. In two of these, the large *Loplop présente* (1931) and smaller *Loplop présente la mouton mystérieux* (1960), the bird is implied by free-floating heads and feet. In an untitled piece from 1972, a whole and oval bird strides along with a little companion at its side. Part drawing and part pasted cut-out, the bird's companion is almost—but not quite—an egg. Ernst sometimes said he *was* Loplop. And why shouldn't he be?

Born in 1891 in Germany, Ernst was famous in his lifetime: first as the Dada insurrectionist “Dadamax” in Cologne, and then in France as a Surrealist. The earliest of the collages at Kasmin dates to 1920, the most recent to 1975. In

addition to collages, Ernst made paintings, drawings, frottages, sculptures, and three collage novels. A page from the second of these novels, published in 1930, hangs in the show: a woman riding a lion and shooting an arrow. Her shield depicts two men fiddling with machinery; there's also a kneeling monk, a pirate-looking fellow on her right, and part of another man on her left. Ernst's caption beneath reads: "...ou en bas, cette indécente amazone dans son petit desert privé..."—"...or, down there, that indecent Amazon in her little private desert..." in his partner Dorothea Tanning's translation.

As with most of the images he used in his collages, Ernst found this "Amazon" in books that reproduced nineteenth-century engravings. In the process of scrambling these stories, Ernst revealed their unintentional humor (riding a lion) and absurd piety (the monk is patting a plant) while assembling them into images that can't be used to tell a coherent story. Another 1929 collage depicts a man looking despondent before two very large, looming pots. Behind man and pots is part of a whale, with a little harpooner on top. What is the narrative, the chronology, even just the scale which will make sense of this? The collages provoke reactions, but reactions that cannot be put toward any end. They are against harmony and are a rebellion against sense.



Installation view of Max Ernst: *Collages*, Kasmin Gallery. Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery. Photo by Christopher Stach.

In his catalogue essay for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Ernst retrospective in 2005, Robert Storr writes that what survives of Surrealism is its "alienating effect, which feeds on ambiguity and gathers itself into a lust for unfamiliar sensations." Yet despite the exhilarating weirdness of the older collages, there's something slight, or slightly attenuated, about *Collages*. Sixteen of the works on display are very small lettrines: ornamental, collaged letters Ernst made in the 1950s and 1970s for a book and a catalogue raisonné. They are postcards to the self that reach across time. In one from 1958, two hats rest on the crossbar of a capital A as though blown there from 1920's gleefully, robustly absurd *The Hat Makes the Man*, a collage Ernst fashioned while minding his father-in-law's hat factory.

The latter is, sadly, not on display at Kasmin, but it is nearby, in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Also at MoMA is *Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale*, a work of Renaissance blue skies and a tiny background arch, with a three-dimensional little house and gate attached to the canvas. The blues and the architecture gesture at the history of Western art, which Ernst, the son of a painter, knew well. But it isn't a painting; it isn't an assemblage or a collage—you can't wrap your mind around it. Instead there is what Ernst's friend Paul Éluard called, in a poem translated by Samuel Beckett, "the unbroken chain of dawns in the brain."



Max Ernst, *Singe*, 1970, gouache, ink, and collage on paper, 7.25 × 6 inches.

© 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris, France.

Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery. Photo by Diego Flores.

As a child, Ernst had an experience of fever-induced hallucinations in which he saw figures in the wallpaper. Ernst's art was about letting the wallpaper take over, declaring the "imagined" just as valid as the "real." In a biographical chronology he wrote entitled "An Informal Life of M. E.," Ernst described his work best: "Birds become men and men become birds. Catastrophes become hilarious."

Thus, Loplop persists, and it would be a shame to miss his visits and his gifts. There's a delightful late collage at Kasmin from 1970, six years before Ernst's death. A monkey sits on the lintel of a doorway flanked by Corinthian columns. The doorway is subtly offset with a few streaks of green and orange paint, and beyond the doorway is a frond: a forest of sorts, one of Ernst's recurring images.

# *the* PARIS REVIEW

## The Collages of Max Ernst

FEBRUARY 6, 2020



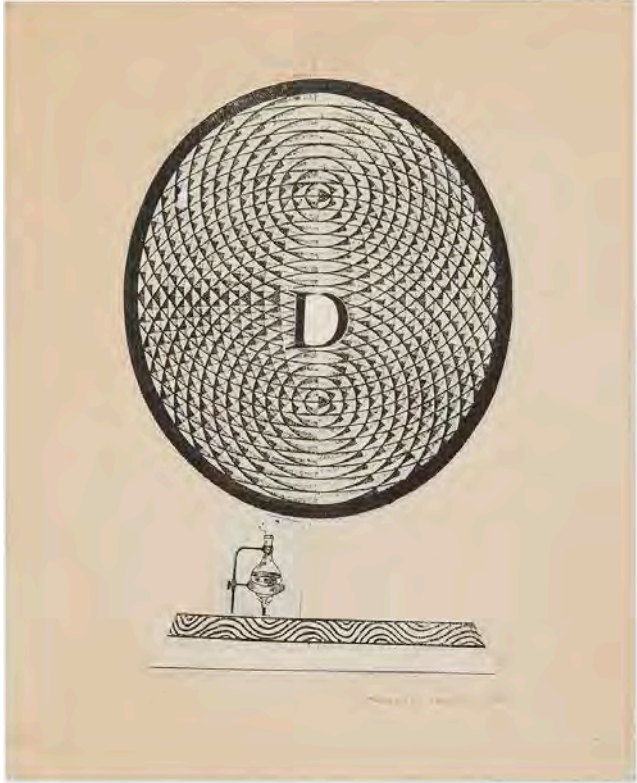
Max Ernst, *Deux Jeunes Dames*, 1972, gouache, pencil, ink, and collage on paperboard, 9 x 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches, framed. Courtesy of Kasmin, New York.

Few bodies of work represent the splintering of the twentieth-century Western psyche like the collages of Max Ernst. Striking and playful, the German surrealist's clipped-together creations, produced throughout his life, attest to a roving eye for materials and a deep curiosity about harmony and dissonance. The art historian Werner Spies has said that "collage is the thread that runs through all of his works; it is the foundation on which his lifework is built." A new exhibition of Ernst's collages (on view at Paul Kasmin's 297 Tenth Avenue location through February 29, 2020) presents approximately forty of them, some of which are being displayed for the first time. A selection of images from the show appears below.





Max Ernst, *Lettrine A*, 1958, pen, ink, and collage on paper, 10 x 11 1/8 x 1 1/4 inches, framed. Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery, New York.



Left: Max Ernst, *Clôture*, 1964-1975, collage and gouache on paper, mounted on cardboard, 10 1/4 x 6 3/4 inches. Courtesy of Kasmin, New York.  
Right: Max Ernst, *Lettrine D*, 1974, collage on paper, 5 3/4 x 4 3/8 inches. Courtesy of Kasmin, New York.

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



## Review: “Max Ernst: Beyond Painting”

Anne Doran

October 30, 2017



Max Ernst, *Woman, Old Man and Flower*, 1923, Photograph: Kate Keller, © 2017 Artists Rights Society, New York / ADAGP, Paris, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Surveying the long career of German-born artist Max Ernst (1891–1976), this exhibition puts emphasis on his engagement with process. MoMA has drawn from its holdings of Ernst’s paintings, sculptures, collages and printed matter to reveal how the techniques he conceived or refined enabled his polymorphous output.

Originally attracted to such artists as Gauguin, Van Gogh and Picasso, Ernst found his tastes utterly transformed by his service in the German Army during World War I. Returning to his hometown Cologne in 1918, he established a branch of the emergent Dada movement with members who, like Ernst, adopted an anti-rationalist, anti-traditionalist approach to art as a response to the carnage of trenches.

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Max Ernst, *The Hat Makes the Man*, 1920, Photograph: Paige Knight. © 2017 Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

The show opens with Ernst's Dadaist works, which he created with a variety of ingenious methods. In *Farewell My Beautiful Land of Marie Laurencin* (1920), he used discarded commercial printing blocks to stamp pictures and letters onto paper, joining them together to produce images of anthropomorphic machines. In *The Hat Makes the Man* from the same year, he similarly transformed illustrations of headgear from a haberdashery catalog into tottering mechanomorphic figures by linking them with colorful columns of paint.



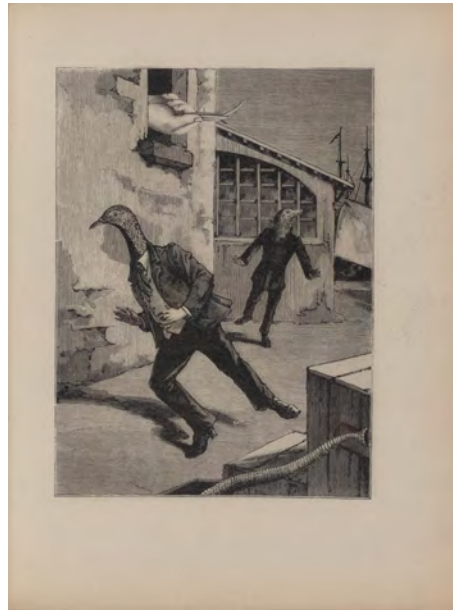
Max Ernst, *Napoleon in the Wilderness*, 1941, Photograph: Thomas Griesel, © 2017 Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

In 1922 Ernst moved to Paris to join the French Dadaists. His work, more integrated and narrative than most Dada art, was partly the inspiration for André Breton's 1924 Surrealist Manifesto, which declared automatism as the only true path to artistic revolution. Ernst's Surrealist phase, which lasted from 1924 to 1927, was marked by his invention of frottage, which involved making rubbings of objects, and grottage, in which layers of pigment were built up and scraped away. The former is on vivid



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display in a suite of prints featuring plants coalescing into animals and insects, and the latter sparks the wonderful *Birds Above the Forest* (1929), an oil featuring stylized trees and round-eyed birds.



Max Ernst, One page from *Oedipus (Oedipe)*, Volume IV, from *A Week of Kindness or the Seven Capital Elements*, 1933–34, Photograph: Robert Gerhardt, © 2017 Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

The 1930s saw Ernst cutting up 19th-century book illustrations for collage “novels” like *A Week of Kindness* (1933–34), which has subjects that include animal-headed men chasing each other down empty streets and women and men wrestling for no apparent reason. In 1941 he escaped to the United States, where he developed his last great innovation, decalcomania: a way of transferring painted designs from one surface to another, as in a landscape populated with fantastic figures called *Napoleon in the Wilderness* (1941).



Max Ernst, *Birds above the Forest*, 1929, Photograph: John Wronn, © 2017 Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

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Were it not for such sculptures as the wholly delightful *An Anxious Friend* (1944), which Ernst created with molds made from existing artifacts, the second half of this show — overly dependent on books and multiples — would be dry. But no matter. Any time is a good time to look at Ernst's work, which prefigures the diversity of materials and approaches that are the trademarks of much contemporary art.

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# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

## THE NEW YORKER

May 1, 2017

### ART

#### GALLERIES—CHELSEA

##### **Max Ernst**

Ernst hit a late-life peak in sculpture, based on the evidence here: an unfamiliar suite of three big bronzes cast from stone, which he carved in 1967. (The German artist died in 1976.) Titled “Big Brother: Teaching Staff for a School of Murderers,” it consists of the eponymous sinister watcher, wearing a flat cap over close-set holes for eyes and a tapering face that is all knife-edged nose, and two “neophytes,” long-headed crouching figures with clownish caps and broad, stuck-out tongues. As often with Ernst, there’s a *longueur* of the “primitive” — vaguely Mayan, in this case. But an unusual formal rigor (was Ernst aware of Minimalism?) infuses the playful works with a menacing might. *Through May 13. (Kasmin, 515 W. 27th St. 212-563-4474.)*

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

## FINANCIAL TIMES how to spend it

March 25, 2017

Max Ernst's monumental late sculptures for sale in New York  
Trio of bronzes includes *Big Brother* and two flanking guardians

BY Christina Ohly Evans



Big Brother, 1967, by Max Ernst, price on request |  
Image: © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.  
Photograph by Christian Baraja

Three enormous bronze sculptures will greet visitors to New York's Paul Kasmin Gallery from March 30 to May 13, with the arrival of the Max Ernst exhibition *Big Brother: Teaching Staff for a School of Murderers*.

With the collective French title of *Corps enseignant pour une école de tueurs*, the works are almost Mayan in their tribal, abstracted simplicity, and comprise three hulking figures. The central one, *Big Brother*, was inspired by George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and plays on the idea that "Big Brother is watching you". Wearing a low-brimmed, flat cap – all the better for covert

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

surveillance – it is flanked by two figures in protective poses (named *Séraphine Cherubin* and *Séraphine le Néophyte*, in reference to Christian iconography), each with a slightly protruding tongue and shrouded head.



*Séraphine Cherubin*, 1967, by Max Ernst, price on request |  
Image: © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.  
Photograph by Christian Baraja

The dadaist conceived the pieces (price on request) in 1967, a time in his life when he became fully committed to sculpture, having dabbled in it throughout his career. Typically Ernstian – he was always a master of provocation – there's a biting sense of humour here, from the wordplay to the overturning of artistic convention. There is also an unsettling, anxious commentary on postwar European society, embodying fears about authority and corrupt political surveillance that are perhaps as relevant now as they were then.

*For more upcoming exhibitions, click here.*

<https://howtospendit.ft.com/art/200413-max-ernst-s-monumental-late-sculptures-for-sale-in-new-york>



# Art in America

January 2016

## MAX ERNST

Paul Kasmin

A Dada pioneer and one of the most influential Surrealist painters, Max Ernst was not well recognized as a sculptor until late in his career, in the 1960s. Ernst (1891-1976) contributed to 20th-century painting a formidable array of technical innovations in collage, frottage, decalcomania and other procedures. These accomplishments often overshadowed his progressive approach to sculpture, which included casting ordinary household objects in bronze. Major Ernst surveys, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 2005 retrospective, contained only a spare selection of his sculptures. For that reason, this gallery show, "Max Ernst: Paramyths, Sculpture 1934-1967," the first U.S. exhibition since 1993 devoted solely to his three-dimensional works, was illuminating and revelatory.

Ernst made it clear that sculpture was always important to him—as the press release reiterates, he considered it “the most simple, most primeval art”—but he worked on it in only periodic bursts. This installation of 14 sculptures in bronze and stone focused mainly on two groups of works: one from the early 1940s, when the German artist, a wartime refugee, lived in New York and had a studio on Long Island, and another from late in his career, after he had relocated to France in the mid-1950s. As in



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his painting, Ernst established in his 3-D works a kind of idiosyncratic mythology. He cast objects like flowerpots and seashells to suggest parts of bodies, plants and animals, which often correspond to imagery in his contemporaneous paintings.

The sculptures are full of wit. The bronze *Âmes-soeurs* (Soul Mates, 1961), for example, at about three feet tall, consists of two bamboolike stalks that are each topped with an irregular disk suggesting a flattened mushroom head. The piece might be convincing as a strange plant form were it not for the facial features—raised eyes, concave mouth—that appear on the disks.

Loplop, a recurring birdlike character in Ernst's paintings, seems present in a number of sculptures, such as *La belle allemande* (The German Beauty, 1934-35), one of the earliest works in the exhibition. A round shield form mounted on two thin bars resembles a face on one side, with abstracted features and a beakish nose. On the opposite side are protruding tail feathers bearing the imprint of scallop shells.

Ernst received his first serious notice as a sculptor for his now-famous chess set, which was included in the show. Dealer Julian Levy invited Ernst along with other artists to design chess sets for a 1944 exhibition at his New York gallery. Ernst's *Chess Figures*, whose abstract wooden shapes were modeled on bits of found objects like spoons and coat hooks, caused a stir.

The largest work on view, *La plus belle* (The Most Beautiful, 1967), is an approximately 6-foot-tall columnar figure in limestone, whose cream tones strikingly played off the dark bronze patinas of the other pieces. Armless, the figure has a disk-shaped head, a narrowing waist and a richly textured base that flares out slightly. In its strident verticality, the sculpture recalls an elongated figure by Ernst's friend Giacometti, and might be seen as an ode to the artist, who had died the previous year. With a quiet grace and dignity, this ghostly beauty commanded the elegant installation.

—David Ebony

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



Max Ernst's Surprisingly Constant Medium: Stone  
10-21-15  
Hilary Moss



Max Ernst's studio at Huismes, in the Loire Valley, 1961. Credit Courtesy of Jurgen Pech/Werner Spies Archives

It's easiest — and sensible, really — to classify much of Max Ernst's artistic output either historically (pre- and post-World Wars I and II), geographically (the French period, the American period, a second French period), by his loyalty to Dada or Surrealism or by his pioneering approaches (frottage, grattage, decalcomania). But Ernst's sculpture, something he turned to throughout his seven-decade-long career, remained a constant and transcends categorization. "He'd finish a body of work and he'd go back to sculpture, and I think he found it interesting to make," speculates the art dealer Paul Kasmin. "He must have thrived off of it, because then he'd leap back into another body of work."

Ernst himself confirms this in the catalog for Paul Kasmin Gallery's "Paramyths: Sculpture, 1934-1967," opening tomorrow, in a sound bite dug up by the scholar Michele Wijegoonaratna: "Whenever

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I reach an impasse in my painting, which happens time and time again, sculpture always offers me a way out.” “Paramyths” brings together 14 of Ernst’s bronze and stone respites from canvas for the first significant solo exhibition of the artist’s sculptures in the United States since 1993 – some, like “La Plus Belle” (1967), his homage to his fourth wife, Dorothea Tanning, are finally on display stateside. “I remember when ‘La Plus Belle’ was finished and delivered to the Iolas Gallery in Paris, and her neck was broken in transit,” says Mimi Johnson, Tanning’s niece. “And Max just laughed,” making an uproarious yet you-had-to-be-there joke. “Everybody else was distraught,” Johnson recalls, “and, of course, the stonemason repaired it, but you could still see” traces of the accidental decapitation.

Johnson didn’t observe Ernst in the studio during her teenage summers spent in the Ernst-Tanning Loire Valley household, though she took note of his routine (breakfast, disappearing until lunch and resurfacing later at 7 p.m. for “Cookie Time,” as they dubbed cocktail hour) and of his reading material that factored into the naming of certain sculptures – for example, “Bosse de Nage” (1959) refers to an Alfred Jarry character. Of the pieces comprising the “incredible breath of air” in Chelsea, Kasmin detects an underlying humor to the titles; in any case, as the gallerist says, the “language is very much Ernst’s own, no matter the medium,” offering a way to unify the artist’s oeuvre.



Max Ernst in Sedona, Arizona, circa 1952, playing with chess figures originally designed for Julian Levy’s 1944 Chess exhibition. Credit Bob Towers, via Benjamin Chapnick

*“Paramyths: Sculpture, 1934-1967” is on view Oct. 22-Dec. 5 at Paul Kasmin Gallery, 515 West 27th Street, New York, [paulkasmingallery.com](http://paulkasmingallery.com).*



# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

## THE ART NEWSPAPER

The Surreal side of sculpture  
10-21-15



Max Ernst's studio at Huismes, 1961. Courtesy of Jürgen Pech Archive/Paul Kasmin Gallery

Surrealism, long studied as a movement in painting and film, is now the focus of two sculptural exhibitions. At the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC, the show *Marvelous Objects: Surrealist Sculpture from Paris to New York* (until 15 February 2016) includes more than 120 works by 20 artists, including Hans Arp, Marcel Duchamp, Alberto Giacometti and even the US Abstract Expressionist artist David Smith, who was influenced by Surrealist work.

Meanwhile, at the Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York, a show of 14 bronze and stone works by the German artist Max Ernst go on view tomorrow (*Max Ernst Paramyths: Sculpture, 1934-1967*, 22 October-5 December). The exhibition spans 40 years of work and includes the sculpture *La Plus Belle* (1967), which was dedicated to his wife, the painter Dorothea Lange. The work has never before been exhibited in the US.



# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

## Wall Street International

Max Ernst: Paramyths, Sculpture 1934-1967



Max Ernst Chess Set

Paul Kasmin Gallery is pleased to announce Max Ernst: Paramyths, Sculpture 1934 – 1967. On view at 515 West 27th Street from October 22 – December 5, 2015, the exhibition will be comprised of 14 sculptures made of bronze and stone, spanning nearly 40 years of the artist's sculptural oeuvre. This exhibition marks the first major solo presentation of Ernst's sculptures in North America since 1993.

Max Ernst turned to three-dimensional materials and sculpture in intense bursts of activity at various moments in his career from his Cologne Dada period in the 1920s onwards. After spending the summer of 1934 in Switzerland with Giacometti quarrying and carving works in stone, he returned to Paris with a serious commitment to sculpture and developed the processes he would utilize for the rest of his career. Paramyths explores several phases of the artist's sculptural output with iconic works ranging from 1934–1967 that emphasize the importance of sculpture within his artistic oeuvre.

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Ernst is known for the inspired development of frottage and decalcomania, process-based methods of artistic production that served to unlock the powers of the imagination. These techniques also infused his approach to sculpture, but resulted in a very different vocabulary of simple forms derived from everyday objects he had on hand. Ernst would often accumulate and recombine these ordinary shapes, initially cast in plaster, to create anthropomorphic sculptures of rare poetry, humor, and symbolic power. *Oedipe I*, 1934 and *La Belle Allemande*, 1934, demonstrate this method of appropriating quotidian objects such as flowerpots, containers, and shells first molded in plaster and later cast in bronze. Ernst assigns new identities to these seemingly mundane, utilitarian forms by configuring them into constructions that embody a new language of modern sculpture. “The sculpture originates in an embrace, two-handed like love itself,” says the artist. “It is the most simple, the most primeval art.”

One exhibition highlight is *La Plus Belle*, 1967, a life-sized, limestone sculpture that pays homage to the artist’s wife Dorothea Tanning. Never before exhibited in the U.S., the sculpture was first shown the following year at the Alexander Iolas gallery in Paris. *La Plus Belle* exemplifies Ernst’s inventive synthesis of tribal and ancient artistic traditions and his playful approach to creating form.

In collaboration with the Destina Foundation, Amy Ernst, and Eric Ernst, the exhibition will be accompanied by a fully-illustrated, hard-cover catalogue featuring an essay by Dr. Michele Wijegoonaratna from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, as well as texts on each sculpture by Dr. Jürgen Pech, Curator at the Max Ernst Museum in Brühl, Germany.