

Introductory Lecture part 2

Modernism

Prior to the 19th century, artists were most often commissioned to make artwork by wealthy patrons, or institutions like the church.

Much of this art depicted religious or mythological scenes that told stories and were intended to instruct a mostly illiterate viewer.

By the mid-1800s, artists began rejecting the themes and styles of traditional art. This move is called Modernism.

While, Modern can mean related to current times, it can also indicate a relationship to a particular **set of ideas** **that, at the time of their development, were new or even experimental.**



CARAVAGGIO, Conversion of Saint Paul, Cerasi Chapel, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, Italy, ca. 1601.
Oil on canvas, approx. 7' 6" x 5' 9".

Class 1: Modernism, DaDa & Surrealism

Introductory Lecture part 2

The birth of modernism and modern art can be traced back to the

Industrial Revolution

During the 19th century, many artists started to make art about people, places, or ideas that interested them, and of which they had direct experience as opposed to religious or mythological themes of the past.

Challenging the notion that art must realistically depict the physical world (as it did since the Renaissance), some artists experimented with the expressive use of color, non-traditional materials, and new techniques and mediums.

We see this in Van Gogh's version of the Starry Night. He used **his imagination to create a more emotional version** of the night sky.

*His use of brushwork too, **emphasized the use of paint**, as opposed to trying to make things look real.*

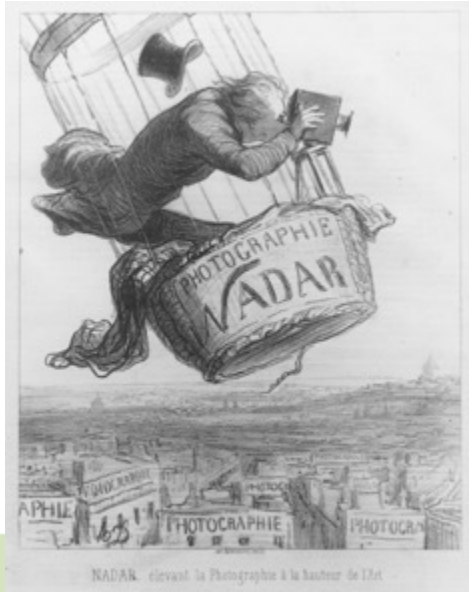


VANGOGH, Vincent, Starry Night, .

Class 1: Modernism, DaDa & Surrealism

Introductory Lecture part 2

One of these new ways was photography, whose invention in the 1830s introduced a new method for depicting and reinterpreting the world. The painting by Manet shows figures flat like they were collaged together from photos.



HONORÉ DAUMIER, *Nadar Raising Photography to the Height of Art*, 1862.
Lithograph, 10 3/4" x 8 3/4". Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



ÉDOUARD MANET, *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (Luncheon on the Grass), 1863. Oil on canvas, approx. 7' x 8' 10".
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Class 1: Modernism, DaDa & Surrealism

Introductory Lecture part 2

**Escaping from the studio,
Impressionist artists
substituted a transient reality
for a stable one.**

Rejecting ideas of the French Academy (the establishment at the time) artists were influenced by:

- Parisian Life
- Color theories of Chevreul about how different colors mix optically when placed in close proximity
- New concepts in Science— about nature
- Obsessive concerns with Time
- Photography
- Writings of Zola
- Japanese Art



CLAUDE MONET, Saint-Lazare Train Station, 1877. Oil on canvas, 2' 5 3/4" x 3' 5". Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Class 1: Modernism, DaDa & Surrealism

Introductory Lecture part 2

Almost all major artists in the early part of the century were active in one or more of these movements.

CUBISM (Paris)

EXPRESSIONISM (France & Germany)

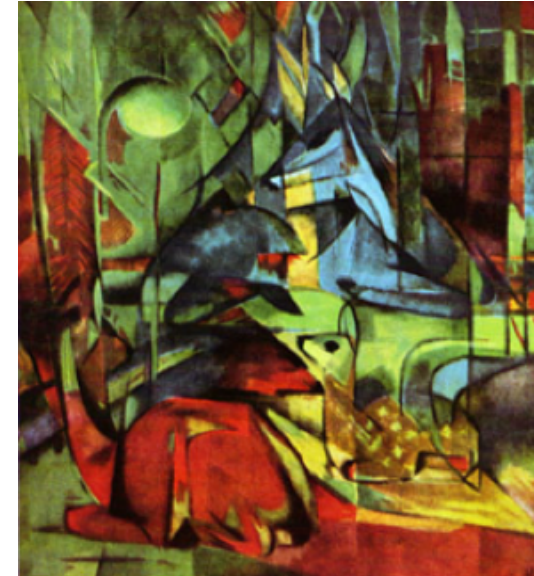
FUTURISM (Milan)

CONSTRUCTIVISM (Russia)

Artists created new forms, experiment with new processes and developed new theories that still affect our ideas about the purpose and value of art.



Pablo Picasso. *Ma Jolie*.
1911–12



Frans Marc. *Deer in the Forest II*. 1914

Introductory Lecture part 2

While modernist movements were based on reimagining Renaissance models in terms of image, space and abstraction, the **most influential of all movements for our purposes is DADA.**

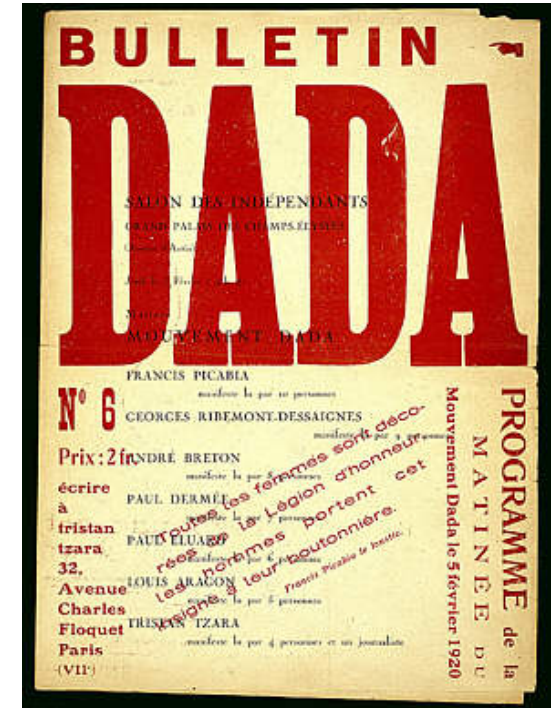
Due to the war, a number of artists, writers and intellectuals, mostly French and German, found refuge in Zurich (neutral Switzerland).

Dada began in Zurich but then moved to Paris, Germany and New York.

Dada ideas transformed the way artist think about and create art to this day.



Hugo Ball at the Cabaret Voltaire, 1916



Cover of the first edition of the publication *Dada* by Tristan Tzara; Zurich, 1917

Class 1: Modernism, DaDa & Surrealism

Introductory Lecture part 2

The most important artist of the movement, and arguably the most important artist of the 20th Century, **was Marcel Duchamp**.

By World War I, he had rejected the work of many of his fellow artists as "retinal" art, intended only to please the eye.

Instead, Duchamp wanted, "to put art back in the service of the mind."

His piece, "Fountain" became important because of ways he talked about it. He argued this urinal, bought at a hardware store was art because he situated it in an art context.



Without a doubt the most infamous Readymade was Duchamp's, "Fountain."

It was art because he, the artist, called it that.

MARCEL DUCHAMP, Fountain, (second version), 1950 (original version produced 1917). Ready-made glazed sanitary china with black paint, 12" high. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

Introductory Lecture part 2

Duchamp began presenting objects as art. He selected mass-produced, commercially available, often utilitarian objects, designating them as art and giving them titles.

He called them, “Readymades.”

Readymades disrupted centuries of thinking about the artist’s role as a skilled creator of original handmade objects.

Duchamp argued, “An ordinary object [could be] elevated to the dignity of a work of art by the mere choice of an artist.”



Marcel Duchamp, Bicycle Wheel, 1913 & (3rd version) 1951.
Metal wheel mounted on painted wood stool, 51 x 25 x 16 1/2"
(129.5 x 63.5 x 41.9 cm)

Class 1: Modernism, DaDa & Surrealism

Introductory Lecture part 2

Duchamp moved back and forth between Paris and New York until WWII forced many intellectuals to leave Europe to evade the Nazis.

Duchamp stated he decided to stop making art and played chess instead because it was more interesting.

In New York he influenced a group of young American artists who came to be associated with Pop.



But before we get to Pop, we have to go back to Europe.

Dada to Surrealism

The exhibition 'Dada Vorfrühling' at the Winter Brasserie in Cologne, 1920, disrupted the lines between fine art and applied art.

The works, placed close to each other, produced the effect of chaos, an echo of contemporary urban reality.

Dada dissolved in Paris around 1922 and many of the artists joined the Surrealist movement.

In 1924, Andre Breton published the *First Surrealist Manifesto*.



"The Dada movement must lead to the explosion of the art market."

Surrealism and Fantasy

Surrealism originated in the late 1910s and early '20s as a literary movement that experimented with a new mode of expression called automatic writing, or automatism, which sought to release the unbridled imagination of the subconscious.

Surrealist who were interested in Sigmund Freud and his ideas concerning the subconscious, believed that through dreams and automatic process of drawing and free association, the subconscious could be made conscious.



Andre Masson, Automatic Drawing, 1924.

Andre Breton

Breton found **Freud's theories of the unconscious a guideline for the liberation of the imagination.**

The main idea was that of the vast untapped reservoir of experience, thought and desire, hidden away from conscious, everyday living.

Breton believed that **through dreams** (from Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*) and **automatic processes** (Freud's free association), we could **access the unconscious.**

"I believe in the future resolution of the two states, apparently so contradictory, of dream and reality, in a sort of absolute reality, of surreality."



Max Ernst used automatic processes to collage magazine images and drawings to create artworks that look and feel more like dreams.

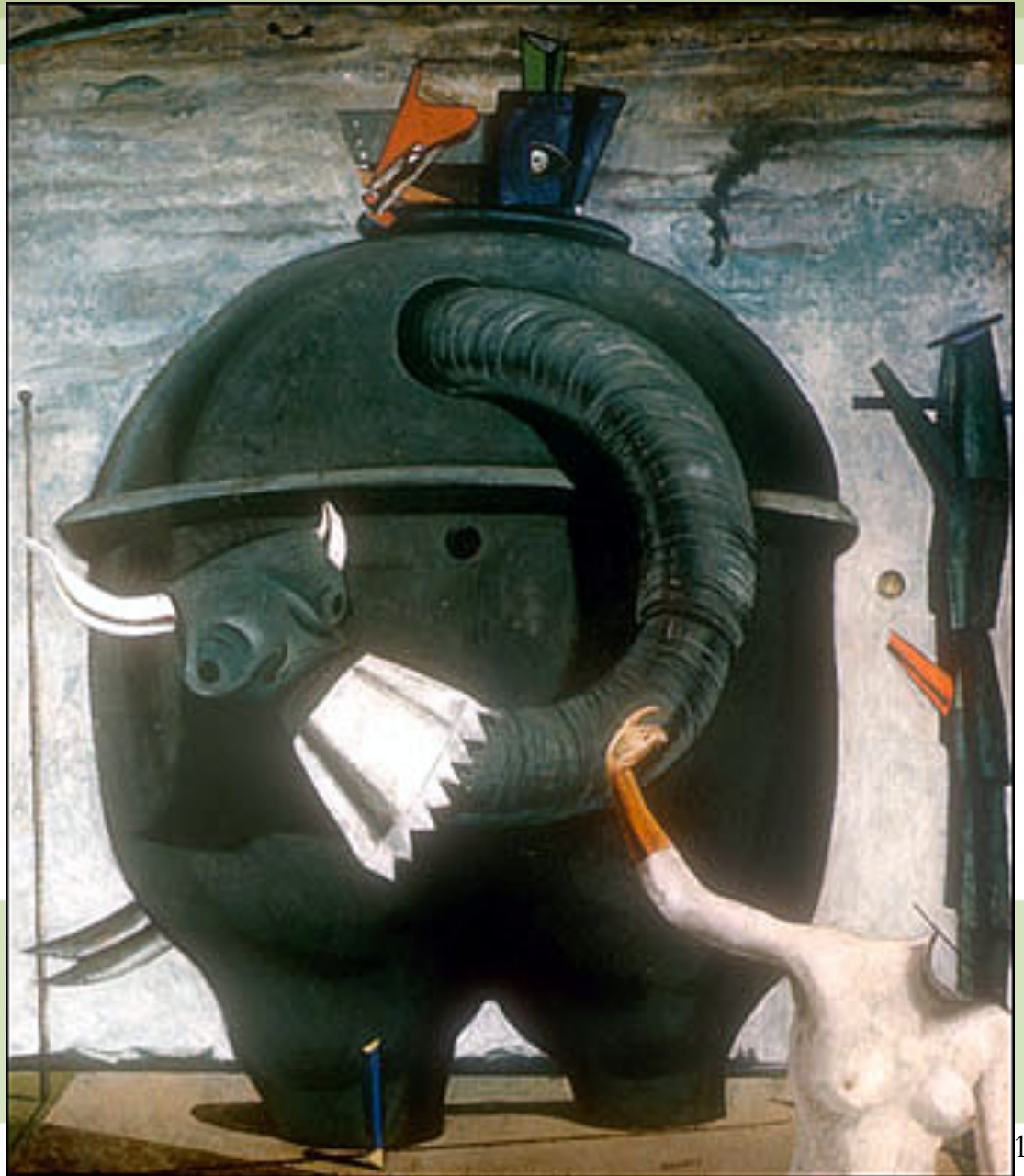
Within Surrealism there were two distinct directions taken.

One was the Automatic processes:

Max Ernst, a former Dadaist, created paintings, drawing and collage that combined seemingly unrelated elements to create irrational, dream like images.



The Elephant of Celebes, 1921 & collage of various magazine photos.



Joan Miro used automatic drawing techniques.

This painting, done after 1924, reflects Miro's interest in Surrealist poetry.

He uses organic forms and twisted lines to create an imaginative world of fantastic figures.



JOAN MIRÓ, Painting, 1933. 5' 8" x 6' 5". Museum of Modern Art, New York (Loula D. Lasker Bequest by exchange).



Masson's free-association drawings of 1924 are curving, continuous lines out of which emerge strange and symbolic figures that are products of an uninhibited mind. Breton considered Masson's drawings akin to his automatism in poetry.

Andre Masson, Battle of the Fishes, 1926, Sand, gesso, oil, pencil, and charcoal on canvas

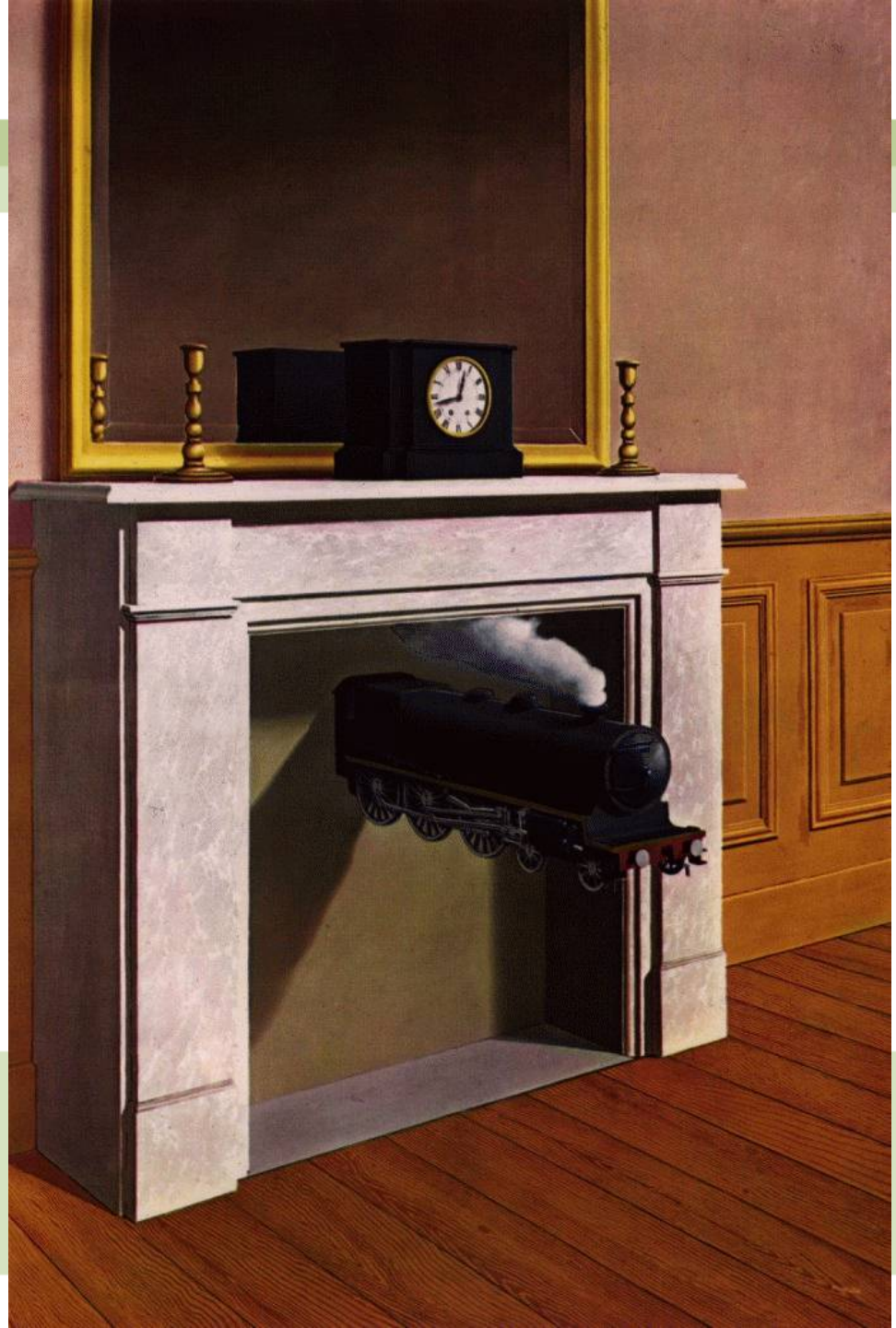
Rene Magritte

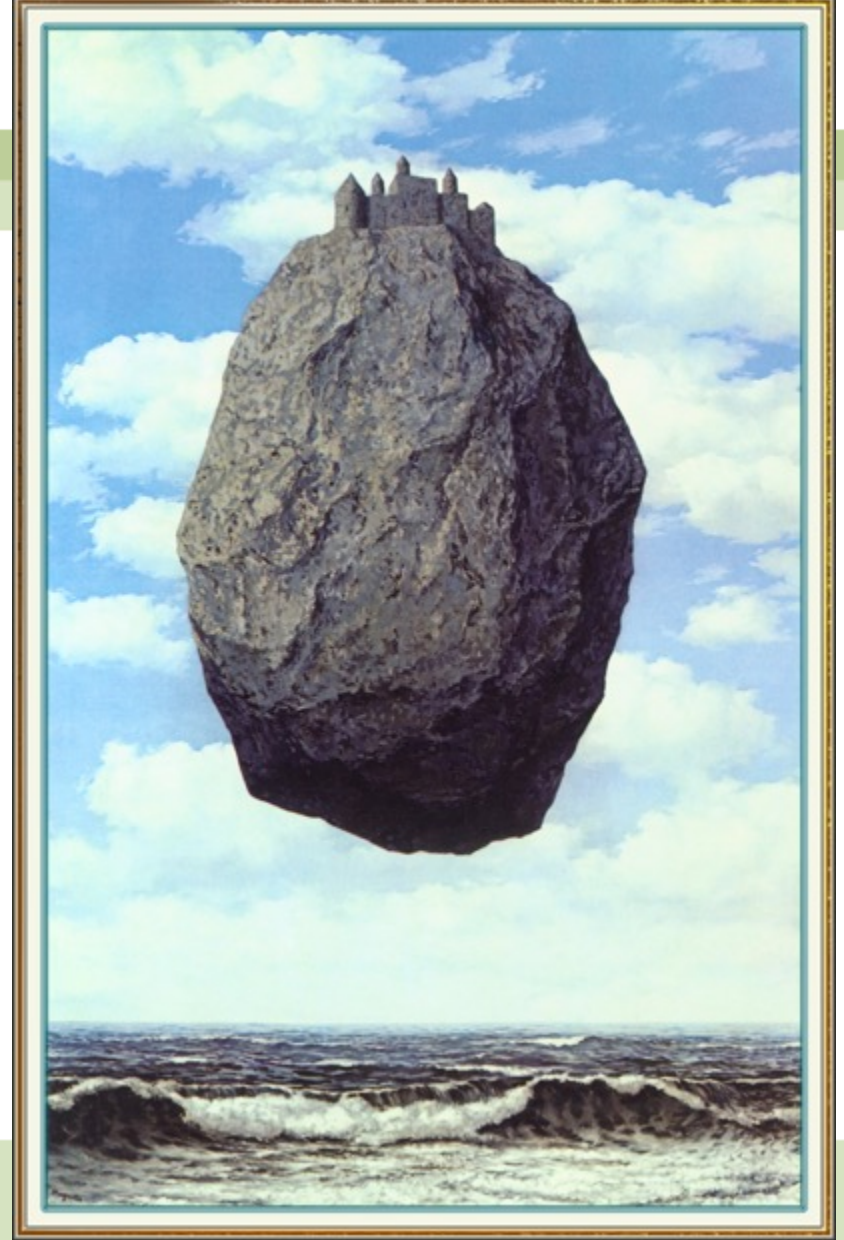
The other direction is disruption of meaning using images in an unfamiliar way — in a kind of dream-like way.

Rene Magritte was one of these.

He described the act of painting as "the art of putting colors side by side in such a way that their real aspect is effaced, so that familiar objects—the sky, people, trees, mountains, furniture, the stars, solid structures, graffiti—become united in a single poetically disciplined image.

Rene Magritte, *Time Transfixed*, 1939





Magritte's work received acclaim as it influenced Pop artists after WWII and has since been used in numerous Advertisements.

Rene Magritte, (Top) *The False Mirror & The Listening Room*. (Right) *The Castle of the Pyrenees*

Salvador Dali

Another artist who preferred the use of technique to create dreamlike imagery was the Spaniard Salvador Dalí.



He expanded on Magritte's dream imagery with his own erotically charged, hallucinatory visions. In *The Accommodations of Desire*, 1929, Dalí employs Freudian symbols, such as ants, egg shapes, hair, and flaccid human forms to symbolize his overwhelming sexual desires.

As opposed to the visual automatism fostered by Masson and Miró, Dalí championed a new form of illusionistic Surrealism.



SALVADOR DALÍ, *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 9 1/2" x 1' 1". Museum of Modern Art, New York (given anonymously).

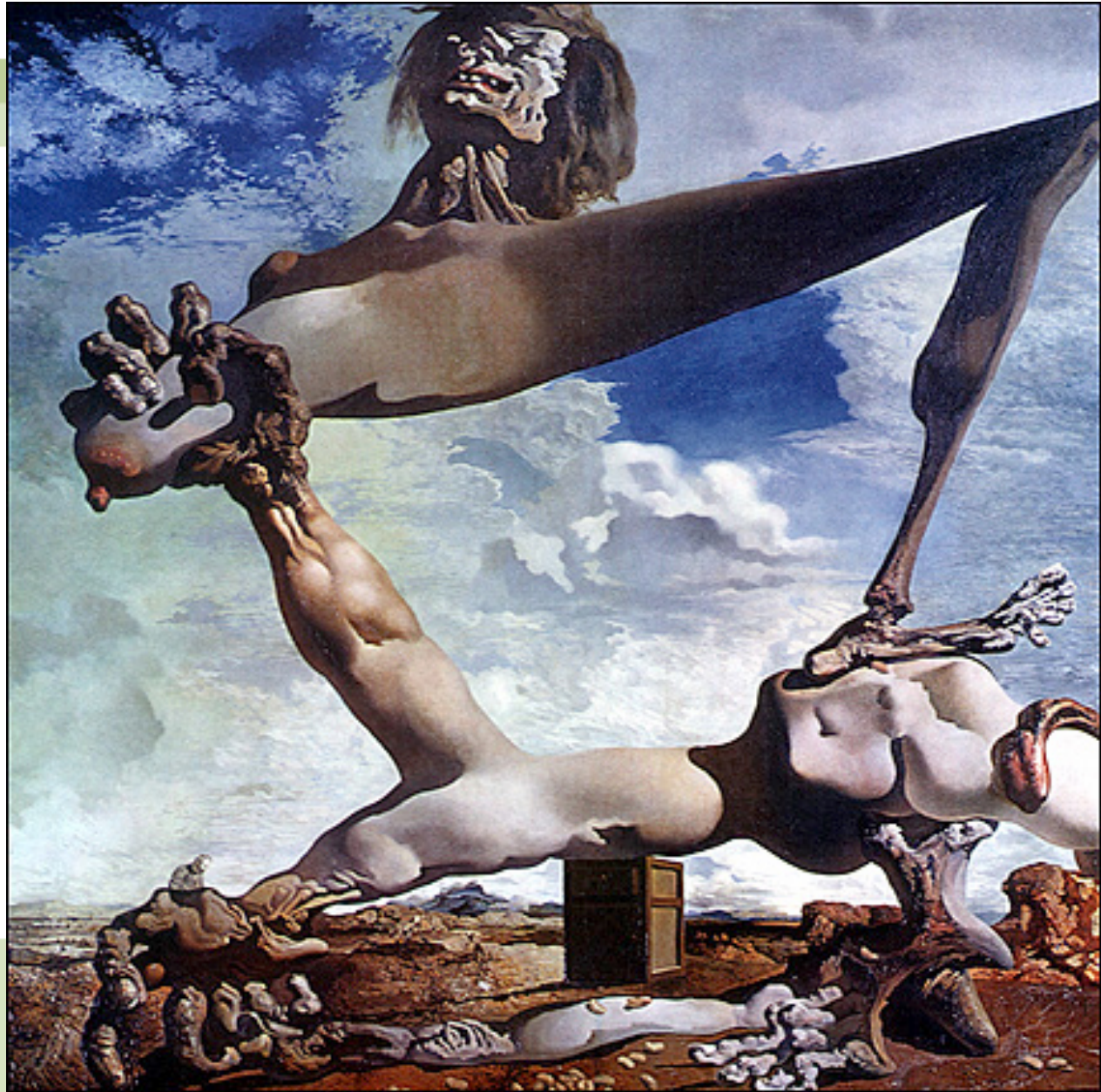
Time is the theme here, from the melting watches to the decay implied by the swarming ants. The monstrous fleshy creature draped across the paintings center is an approximation of Dalí's face in profile.

Salvador Dali

In one of the only overtly political paintings made by Dali, an aggressive monster destroys itself, tearing violently at its own limbs, its face twisted in a grimace of both triumph and torture.

Dalí employs his 'paranoic-critical method' in the painting by contorting the massive limbs into an outline of a map of Spain.

Symbolic objects are used to express sexual obsession and political outrage.



Salvador Dalí, *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War)*, 1936, Spanish, Oil on canvas, 39 5/16 x 39 3/8 inches (99.9 x 100 cm)

Introductory Lecture part 2

The Surrealist direction that came to influence American Art after WWII was the Automatic (unconscious) one.

When WWII was advancing in Europe, artists were displaced as the Nazi army advanced on Paris and other European cities.

They found solace in New York City (and Mexico).

New York became the center of the art world as ideas and artists came flooding into the city from European cities.



ANRE MASSON, Pasiphae, 1924

Introductory Lecture part 2

Review:

This week I gave a brief history of art so you could see earlier influences, including ideas and forms that were reacted against.

I also reviewed DaDa and Surrealism, two movements that influence ideas of artists to this day.

It is essential to understand the ideas of Dada and those of Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp suggested that art was

1. about ideas more so than aesthetics and
2. artists didn't need to make the art, they just had to choose it and change the context.

Next Class:

Next week we move with the artists to America and New York City.

We discuss the ideas and influences leading to the first Important American Art Movement.

That week too is about ideas that predate our book. So I have given you a reading to accompany the lecture.

Let me know if you have questions.

Class 1: Modernism, DaDa & Surrealism