

# RÉTROVISEUR

AUTOPORTRAITS SURREALISTES

30 AVRIL - 20 JUILLET

SELECTED WORKS FROM THE SHOW



# RÉTROVISEUR: AUTOPORTRAITS SURREALISTES

Rétrovisseur: Autoportraits Surréalistes, co-curated with Jean-Hubert Martin.

On the 100th anniversary of the publication of Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto*, Olivier Varenne Art Moderne & Contemporain explores what happened when Surrealists turned their eye on themselves.

Self-portraits by Hans Bellmer, Salvador Dali, Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, André Masson, Pierre Molinier and Man Ray will reveal how they chose unconventional means for image-making during an era of awakening self-analysis, exploration of alternative realities and the free creativity of the unconscious mind.

The gallery will also show in its adjacent space self-portraits by contemporary artists, including Johathan Delachaux and Cindy Sherman, for whom central to their practice is the transformation of their image.

## WORKS FROM:

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

HANS BELLMER

SALVADOR DALI

JONATHAN DELACHAUX

MARCEL DUCHAMP

MAX ERNST

LEONOR FINI

RENÉ MAGRITTE

ANDRÉ MASSON

PIERRE MOLINIER

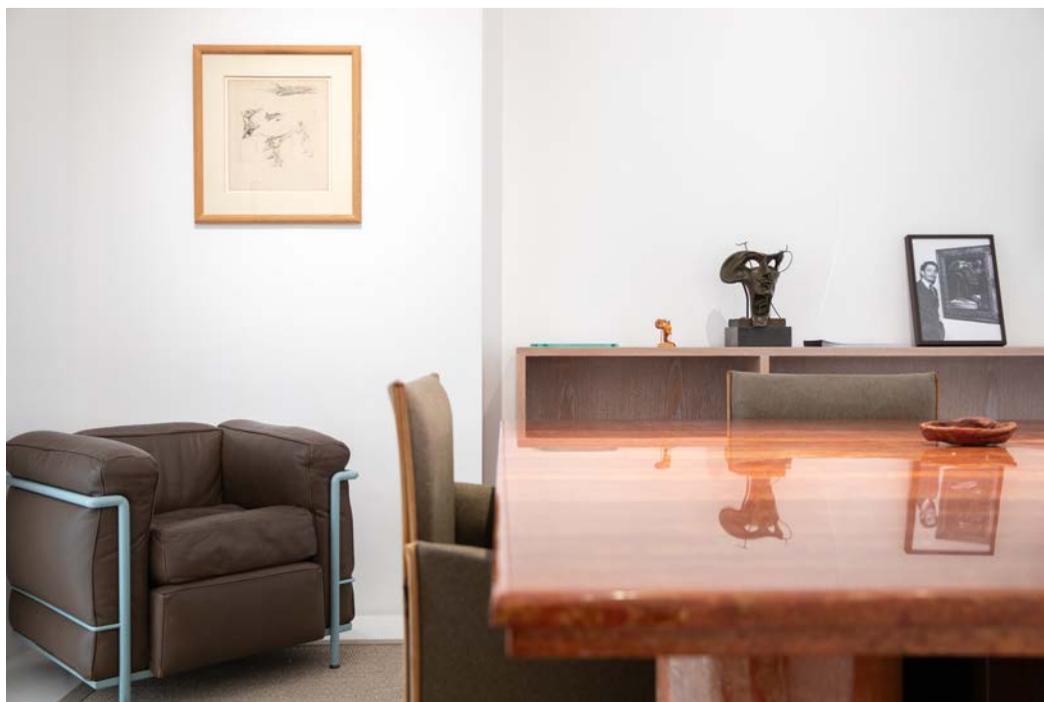
FRANCIS PICABIA

MAN RAY

CINDY SHERMAN









## SURREALISM A DEFINITION

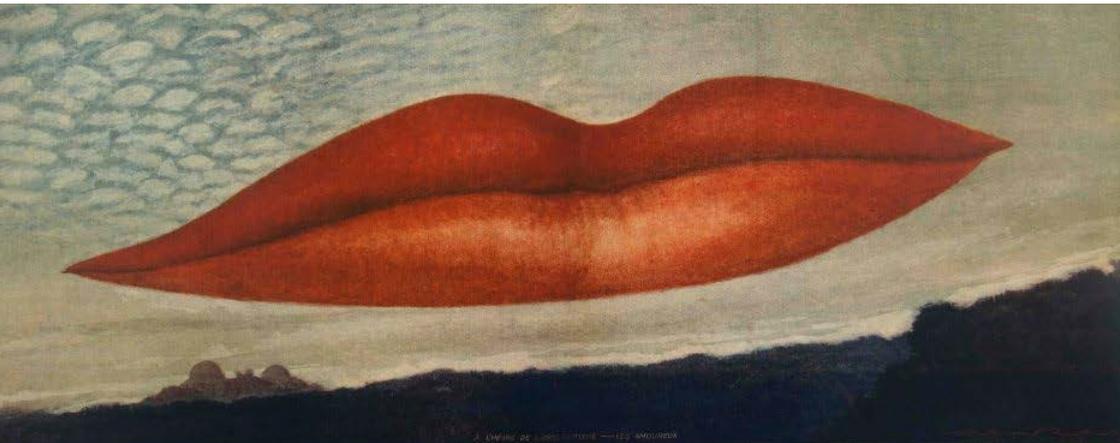
The aim of Surrealism was to re-think human experience. The movement largely emerged out of the aftermath of World War I and the writings of Sigmund Freud. The most important of Freud's theories for Surrealism was the notion of the unconscious as a repository for thoughts and feelings that are generally unavailable to consciousness. In Freud's view, what lies buried in the unconscious are powerful and instinctual drives, often repressed by civilization and rationality.

The movement's artists therefore sought and found magic and strange beauty in the unexpected and the un-real, the disregarded and the unconventional. At the core of their work was a willingness to challenge imposed values and norms, and search for freedom. In the context of this exhibition by using their own image they would have had the ultimate freedom - there would have been no limit in how they chose to depict themselves.

The word 'surrealist' (suggesting 'beyond reality') was first coined by the French avant-garde poet Guillaume Apollinaire in the preface to a play, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, performed in 1917. It was André Breton, leader of a new group of poets and artists in Paris, who, in turn, in his *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924), defined surrealism as: *pure psychic automatism, by which one proposes to express, either verbally, in writing, or by any other manner, the real functioning of thought. Dictation of thought in the absence of all control exercised by reason, outside of all aesthetic and moral preoccupation.*

Many surrealist artists used automatic drawing or writing to unlock ideas and images from their unconscious minds. Others saw dreams as a reservoir of inspiration or sought to depict hidden psychological tensions. They also drew inspiration from mysticism, ancient cultures and Indigenous art and knowledges as a way of accessing alternative realities.

The movement's aspiration towards the liberation of the mind as well as the liberation of artistic expressions also meant seeking political freedom. In many instances, these artists turned to political activism. In this way, the revolutionary concepts encouraged by Surrealism led the movement to be seen as a way of life.



MARCEL DUCHAMP

*“My intention was always to get away from myself, though I knew perfectly well I was using myself. Call it a little game between ‘I’ and ‘me’.”[1]*



# RÉTROVISEUR: INTRODUCTION BY CO-CURATOR JEAN- HUBERT MARTIN

The Surrealists' taste for transgression and transcendence naturally led them to rethink the rendering of their own image. They no longer followed the conventions of classical self-portraiture and the format we have known since the Renaissance where artists capture their image with a sideways glance through a mirror. Instead, their taste for games, and a desire for freedom from the constraints of modern society, lead them to make all sorts of ingenious discoveries.

When Dada came to an end and was torpedoed, André Breton tried to draw writers and artists to his Surrealist movement. In his manifesto Breton laid out his formulation for Surrealism as the actual functioning of thought in the absence of any control exercised by reason. He believed that the unconscious mind held the answer to creativity and to discovering society-changing material. Many artists and writers joined Breton in these beliefs, but some of the radicals, such as Duchamp and Picabia, instead ridiculed his explorations of sleep-walking, dreams and spiritualism.

Despite their attitude Breton maintained a great admiration and respect for these two major artists and Duchamp even curated several Surrealist exhibitions.



PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM OF THE INTERNATIONAL SURREALIST EXHIBITION, LONDON 1936, COMPILED BY ROLAND PENROSE; INSTALLATION SHOT.

The approach by the various Surrealist artists to their self-depiction naturally says much about them as individuals. Perhaps it was when painting themselves that these artists had the greatest freedom to explore their belief in the primacy of the imagination - and to heed Herbert Reed's definition in his introduction to the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition in London, that a work is to be judged by its *"imaginative scope, its intimate revelations, its surprising incoherence, its superreality"*.

André Masson, as one of the first painters to embrace Breton's theories, channelled the subconscious and in addition to exploring the inner workings of his mind, metamorphosis was central to his work. Masson became an avid follower of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who stated *"Out of life, comes death and out of death life... the stream of creation and dissolution never stops"*. The latter explains why the artist morphs his image specifically with that of the Greek philosopher, and also superimposes his face on a female body - by doing so, like Magritte, he also plays with what Dali called 'la double image'.

# RÉTROVISEUR: INTRODUCTION BY CO-CURATOR JEAN- HUBERT MARTIN

Man Ray, depicted himself half-shaven with humour, disguised as a woman, or abstractly through the palm of his hand as a nod to prehistoric mark-making, and primitivism. His choice of title for his 1961 autobiography, *Self Portrait* is also telling.

In common with Man Ray, Dali used transfiguration as his mode. The piece of flayed skin with which Michelangelo represented himself in the Sistine chapel in the Vatican had an influence on Dali as he maintained that the most consistent feature of our representation is not the spirit nor vitality, but the skin.

Duchamp represented himself, on the other hand, with a cast of his face leading to a play on words for the title: *moulé vif* = *brûlé vif* = *mort ou vif* (Moule vive which derives from 'burnt alive', and alludes to 'dead or alive'). This work marks Duchamp's return towards the end of his life to a form of hyperrealism. The varied ways in which Duchamp depicted himself, such as his female alter ego *Rose Sélavy*, reveal his views on the shifting and unstable nature of identity. His production of multiples with a slight variance built into their fabrication, such as *Self-Portrait in Profile*, so that even two editions were rarely identical, also play to this notion.



MAN RAY, ADAM ET ÈVE (MARCEL DUCHAMP ET BRONIA PERLMUTTER), 1924

Duchamp's *Self-portrait as Adam after Cranach* is a derivative work belonging to the approach of mischievous people who play ping pong with works of art they like. The couple was in fact photographed by Man Ray during the 1924 New Year's Eve party organized by Picabia, entitled *Ciné sketch* and directed by René Clair: "A sleeping lady dreams of an earthly paradise and crazy sarabands. The division of the stage into three compartments and the use of ceiling projectors illuminating, like a shower, sometimes the bedroom, sometimes the corridor, sometimes the kitchen allowed this incredible impression of simultaneity."<sup>[2]</sup> The Adam and Eve scene was performed by Duchamp and Bronia Perlmutter, Picabia's mistress before becoming the wife of René Clair.

With *Portrait of the artist*, Picabia commits a double sacrilege in relation to artistic conventions. He uses a portrait of a little-known artist Eggert to monopolize it. He adds glasses, canvases and the figures of Venus and Mars to the original painting, the gender of which he inverts by feminizing them. He appropriates the painting by signing it and thus raises the question of the value of authenticity attributed to the autograph, just as he makes an allusion to bisexuality.

Picabia and Duchamp's closest friend was Guillaume Apollinaire who took part in the famous trip in October 1912 to the Jura sealing their friendship during a crazy car ride led by Picabia. Apollinaire's *Calligram Self-Portrait* is a wonderful testimony to the freedom with which he played with words and images, transcending genres and categories, and which earned him his reputation as the leading impresario of the Paris avant-garde.

# RÉTROVISEUR: INTRODUCTION BY CO-CURATOR JEAN- HUBERT MARTIN

Bellmer chose eroticism as his vehicle; Magritte an ambiguity of images. His self-portrait, faithful to his conventional dress code (hat and tie), is only a disembodied face of which only the sensory features, that are the eyes, nose and mouth remain. *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* generated a wonderful misunderstanding, which only gratified Magritte. The avalanche of commentaries and exegeses focused on the semiological question of the relationship between an object and its image. Or, in slang, a pipe is a fellatio, which is perfectly suggested by Magritte's painting (and several drawings). Even Michel Foucault dedicated his learned book to the famous painting without a mention of the sexual meaning.

Max Ernst created 'Loplop, superior of birds', as a unique combination of symbols to represent his persona. It is not only his personal symbol, but the presenter of the artist's interpretations of his own world. Using Freud's methods Ernst analysed the symbolism of his dreams, cultivated automatic responses and free associations and discovered that for him birds had both a personal and general significance; he is shown as part easel and part human figure with a bird's head.

The 'Sphinx of Surrealism' Leonor Fini's output revolves around her self-image. Not to be categorized, even as a Surrealist, not only as a lover of Ernst, each work reveals different sides of her personality. She was neatly described as: "*dressed eccentrically, with a cat or lioness mask, and a feather wig. A painter of bizarre canvases with figures of metamorphic women, half angel and half skeleton, half plant and half animal, half Amazon and half statue – she incarnated the revolutionary ideal of independence and self-invention.*"

Molinier was obsessed with self-imagery and he consistently created self-portraits from his adolescence onwards. It was not until the early 1950s when he sent some images to Breton that his work came to the attention of the Surrealists. He went on to combine his sexual fetish for transvestism with his skill at photomontage.

Victor Brauner, who is not represented in the exhibition, painted *Self-portrait with a plucked eye* (1931, Center Pompidou, Paris), a premonition of the real loss of his eye a few years later, during a fight with his colleague Dominguez. He thus vindicates the notion of objective chance so dear to the Surrealists.

Dorothea Tanning adopted Freud's explorations of the subconscious mind and dreams into painting through her blurring of reality and fantasy. Her description of her self-portrait can neatly apply to all of the works in *Retroviseur*:

*"The result is a portrait of myself, precise and unmistakable to the onlooker. But what is a portrait? Is it mystery and revelation, conscious and unconscious, poetry and madness? Is it an angel, a demon, a hero, a child-eater, a ruin, a romantic, a monster, a whore? Is it a miracle or a poison? I believe that a portrait, particularly a self-portrait, should be somehow, all of these things and many more, recorded in a secret language clad in the honesty and innocence of paint."* [1]

[1] Duchamp quoted in J.-W. McManus, 'not seen and/or less seen: Hiding in Front of the Camera' in *Inventing Marcel Duchamp: The Dynamics of Portraiture*, ed. A. Collins Goodyear and J. W. McManus, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009, p. 64.

[2] P. Achar, 'Soir de Paris, les derniers moments de 1924', *Paris-Midi*, 3 janvier 1925

[3] Tanning in 1944, in V. Carruthers, *Dorothea Tanning: Transformations*, London, UK, 2020, p. 28.

**RÉTROVISEUR:  
WORKS FROM THE  
EXHIBITION**

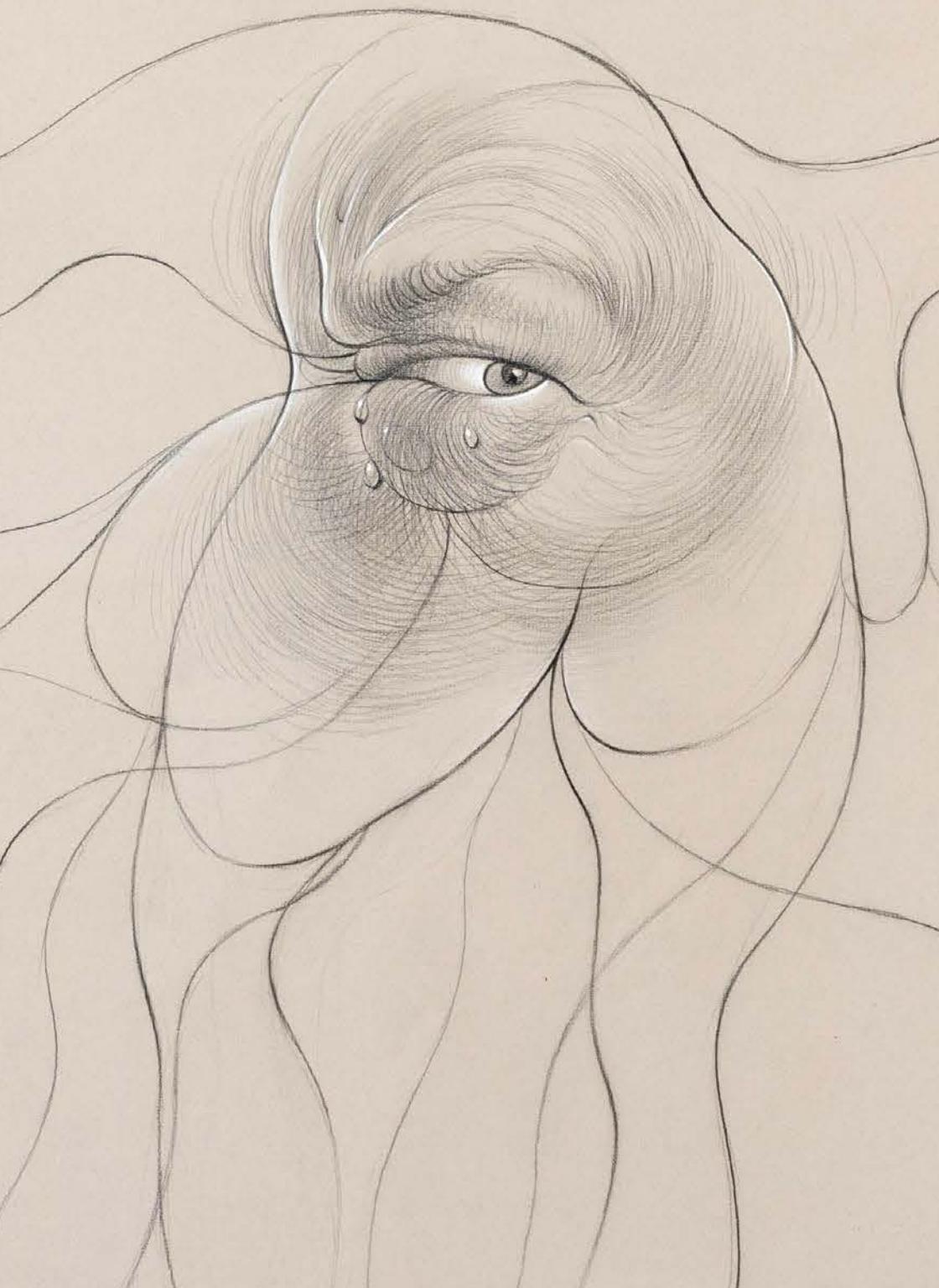
**HANS BELLMER**  
**AUTO-OEIL, 1961**

*Auto-Oeil, 1961*

signé en bas à droite  
64 x 49.5 cm.  
crayon et gouache sur papier

Daniel Filipacchi Collection  
Private Collection Geneva





**HANS BELLMER**  
**(1902-1975)**

*Autoportrait*, 1955

signed lower right and dated lower left  
graphite on paper  
31 x 24 cm.

André-François Petit, Paris  
Jacques Benador Collection, Geneva  
Private collection, Geneva



**CLAUDE CAHUN**  
**(1894-1954)**

*Entre Nous, 1926-1934*

Épreuve gélatino-argentique d'époque  
23.6 x 17.7 cm

Collection Claude Givaudan, Paris- Genève  
Galerie Berggruen, Paris  
Private Collection France





**MAN RAY**  
**(1890-1976)**

*Autoportrait / Self portrait, 1916/1970*

inscribed in the Plexiglas E.A. aside from edition  
of 40; Ed Georges Visat, Paris Sérigraphie sur  
plexiglass

MR 1916 à gauche. Man Ray à droite.  
53.5 x 37 cm

Private Collection France





**MAN RAY**  
**(1890-1976)**

*Autoportrait Man Ray et Emak Bakia Solarisés, 1935*

silver salt print  
tirage Beaubourg c. 1970s  
29 x 21 cm



**MAN RAY**  
**(1890-1976)**

*Autoportrait*, 1933

signed and dated  
mixed media: plaster, newspaper, glass, metal, wood.  
34 x 22 x 9 cm.  
unique

Juliet Man Ray Collection  
Private Collection



**MAN RAY**  
**(1890-1976)**

*Autoportrait*, 1972

signed lower right: *Man Ray*  
inscribed E.A., an artist's proof aside from the edition of 100  
(there was also a numbered edition of 100 on Japan paper)  
photo-lithograph published by Anselmino, Milano  
34 x 28 cm.



MR

**MAN RAY**  
**(1890-1976)**

*Autoportrait, 1929/30*

Epreuve aux sels d'argent, tirage d'époque  
18 x 14 cm

Private Collection France



**MAN RAY**  
**(1890-1976)**

*Autoportrait, ca; 1940*

silver salt print  
later print  
34.2 x 26.8 cm.





**MAN RAY**  
**(1890-1976)**

*Autoportrait*, 1924

Man Ray Paris stamp on verso  
silver salt print  
later print  
24.5 x 16 cm

Private collection France



**JONATHAN DELACHAUX**  
**(b.1976)**

*Autoportraits, 2003-2060*

oil on canvas  
35 x 25 cm.

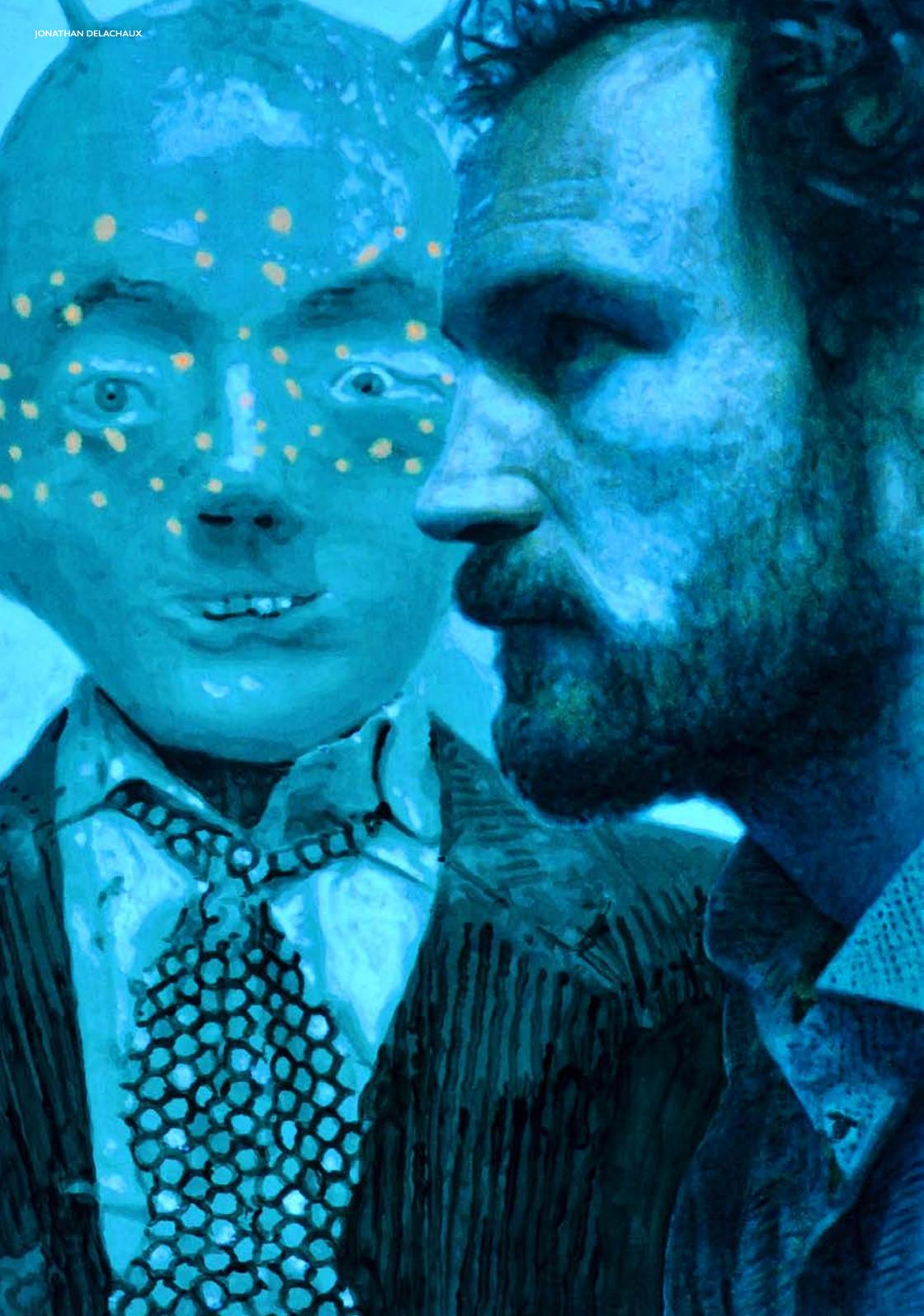
The 22 works form part of and are deemed to be a single work together, the Work. Up to 56 portraits will be produced and form part of this Work.

From the Artists' studio









**JONATHAN DELACHAUX**  
**(b.1976)**

*Brume à deux Faces*, 2024

acrylic, cobalt, photochromic  
phosphorescent pigments on canvas  
40 x 40 cm.

From the Artists' studio



**PIERRE MOLINIER**  
**(1900-1976)**

*Élévation*, 1968-1970

planche 24 du Chaman  
annotated in pencil Do3o 1/4 on verso  
vintage silver gelatin print, on mat, double  
weight photographic paper 24 x 18 cm.  
framed 48 x 42.3 cm.

Private Collection, UK





**PIERRE MOLINIER**  
**(1900-1976)**

*Le Festin de Manès*, 1960

planche 40 du Chaman  
signed and numbered 2/2  
stamp of the photographer 'P. Molinier: photo-  
montage' on verso vintage silver gelatin print  
image 20.1 x 16.3 cm.  
sheet size 30 x 23.7 cm.  
framed 45.5 x 41.2 cm.

Private Collection, UK



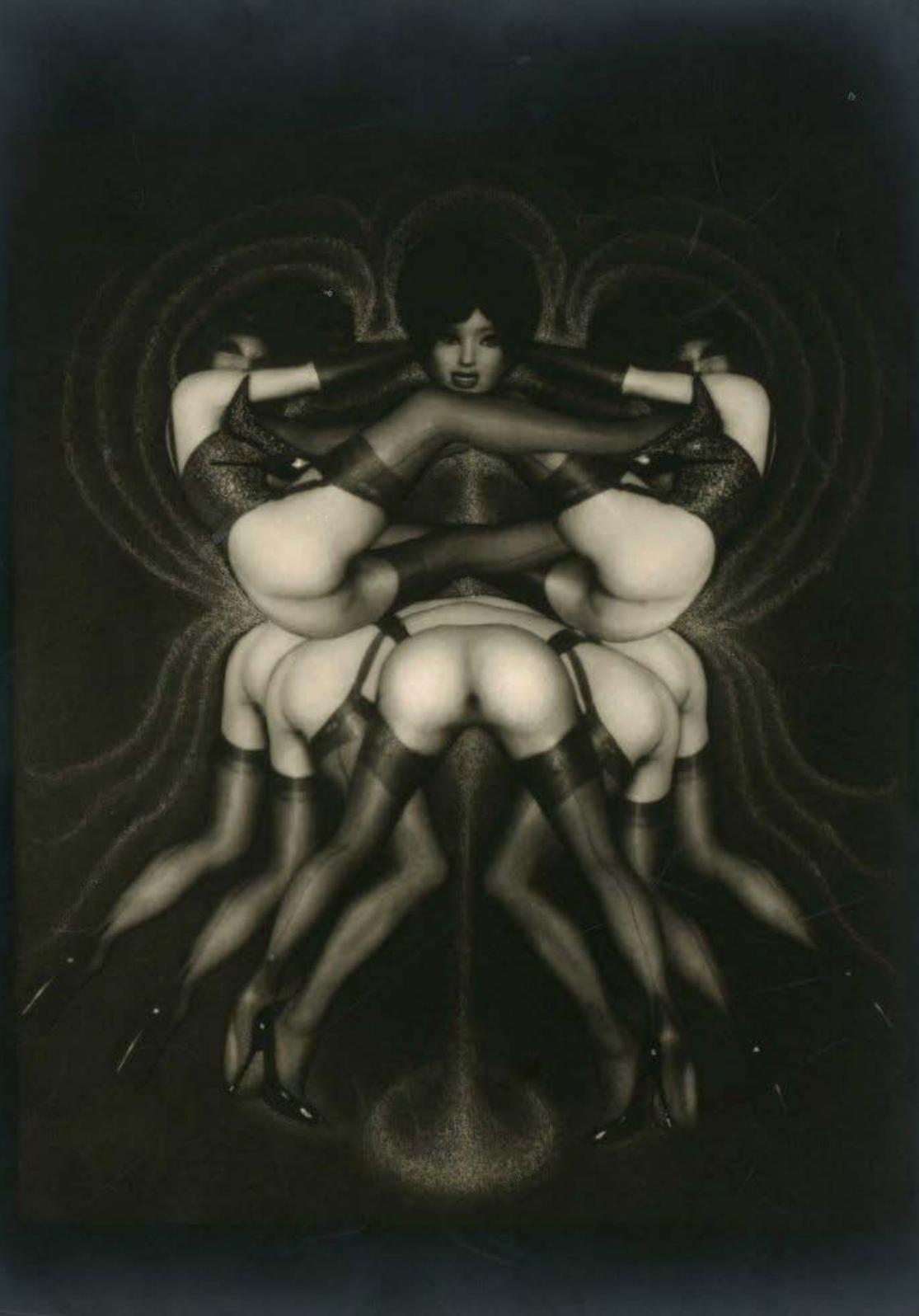
**PIERRE MOLINIER**  
**(1900-1976)**

*Sur le Pavois*, 1968-1970

planche 26 du Chaman  
annotated in pencil Do3o 1/3 on verso  
vintage silver gelatin print, on mat, double  
weight photographic paper 23.4 x 17.6 cm.  
framed 48.2 x 42.5 cm.

Private Collection, UK





**PIERRE MOLINIER**  
**(1900-1976)**

*Autoportrait Allongé avec Godemiché, 1968*

photography N&B  
8.4 x 11.7 cm.

Private Collection, FR





**PIERRE MOLINIER**  
**(1900-1976)**

*Sans titre*

série "*l'oeuvre, le peintre et son fétiche*"

signed and stamped on verso photograph  
N&B 12.5 x 17.5 cm.

Private Collection, FR





**PIERRE MOLINIER**  
**(1900-1976)**

*Portrait d'identité*, circa 1965

annotated in pencil by artist on verso  
vintage gelatin silver print on soft Agfa paper  
12.5 x 8.5 cm.

Private Collection, FR





**CINDY SHERMAN**  
**(b. 1954)**

*Untitled (Artist in her Studio), 1983*

initialled and dated lower right: C.S. '83; and  
numbered lower left 46/125  
chromogenic print on Kodak paper  
39.37 x 26.67 cm. (page)

Private collection France





**FRANCIS PICABIA**  
**(1879-1953)**

*Portrait de l'Artiste*, 1934

dated lower middle: 1934, and  
signed lower right: Francis Picabia  
oil on wood  
116 x 82 cm



**FRANCIS PICABIA**  
**(1879-1953)**

*Autoportrait*, 1923

signed lower left

ink on paper

31 x 19 cm.

58.5 x 49.5 cm. framed measurements

Maurice Van Essche, Antwerp

Leo Dohmen, Antwerp

Ronny Van de Velde, Antwerp)

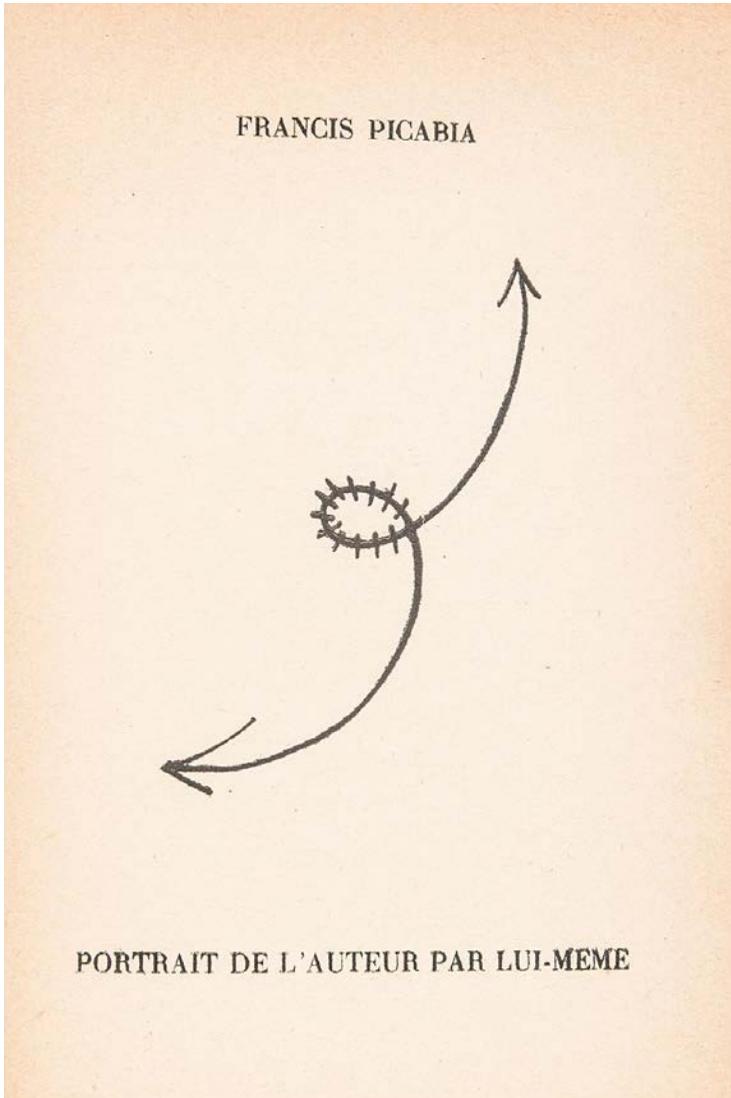
Private collection New York (from 2015)



**FRANCIS PICABIA**  
**(1879-1953)**

*Portrait de l'Auteur par Lui-Même, frontispiece for*  
*EUNIQUE UNIQUE, Paris, 1920*

inscriptions printed: top FRANCIS PICABIA; and  
bottom PORTRAIT DE L'AUTEUR PAR LUI-MEME  
printed illustration  
18 x 13 cm. (page size)



**LEONOR FINI**  
**(1907-1996)**

*Self-portrait*, 1965 (1958-1959)

signed lower right: Leonor ink on paper  
18x12.5cm

Collection of the Artist  
Private Collection France (bought in 1990)





Leona

**ANDRÉ MASSON**  
**(1896-1987)**

*Héraclite*, 1943

signed lower right  
ink, charcoal and pastel on blue paper  
63.5 x 48 cm.

Private collection Belgium



**ANDRÉ MASSON**  
**(1896-1987)**

*Autoportrait dessinant, 1943*

fusain sur toile  
17x24cm.

Collection Diego Masson  
Collection Ghislain Uhry  
Private collection France





**GUILLAUME  
APOLLINAIRE  
(1880-1918)**

*Autoportrait en forme de calligramme*

ink on paper  
255 x 200 mm. (sheet size)

Private Collection France

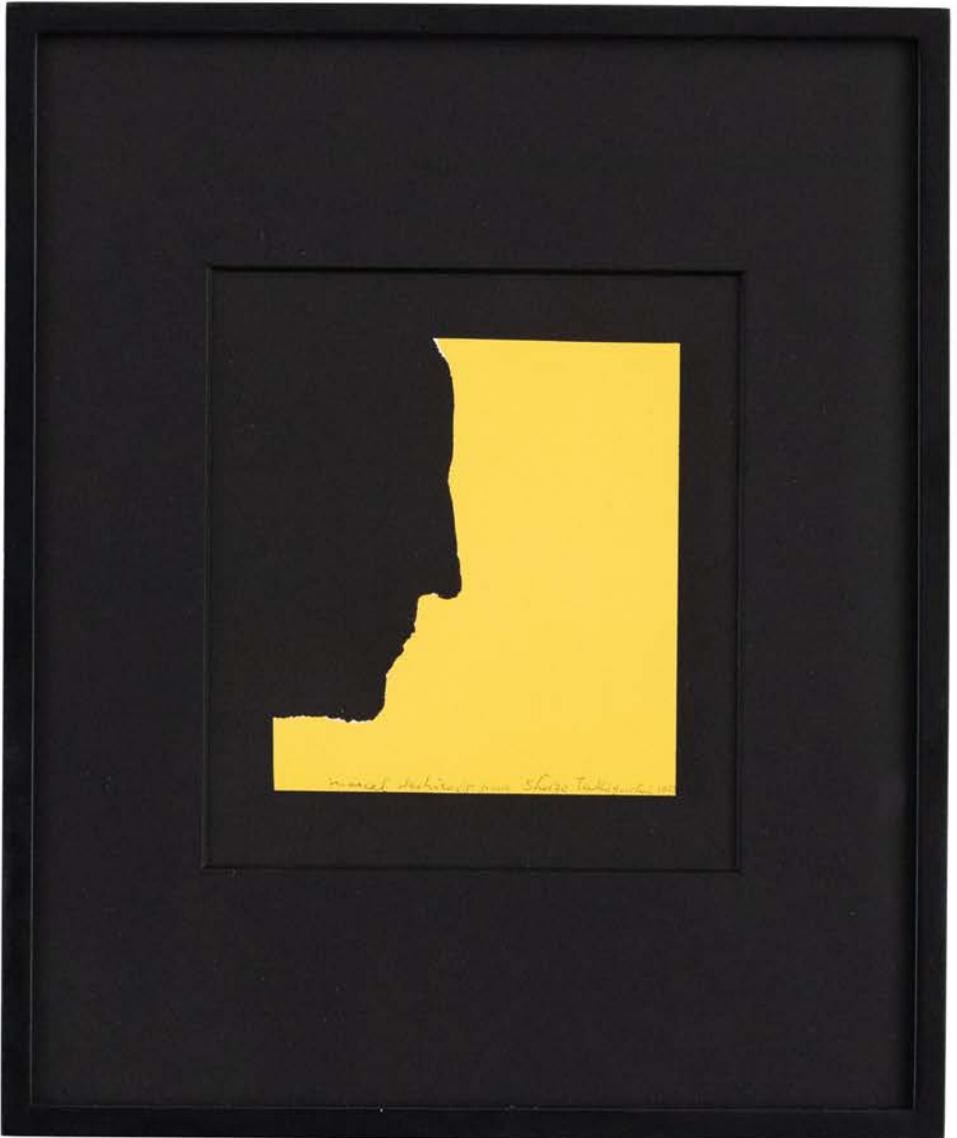


**MARCEL DUCHAMP**  
**(1887-1968)**

*Self Portrait in Profile, from TO AND FROM ROSE SELAVY,*  
1967

silkscreen print  
34.9 x 26.4 cm  
edition of 60

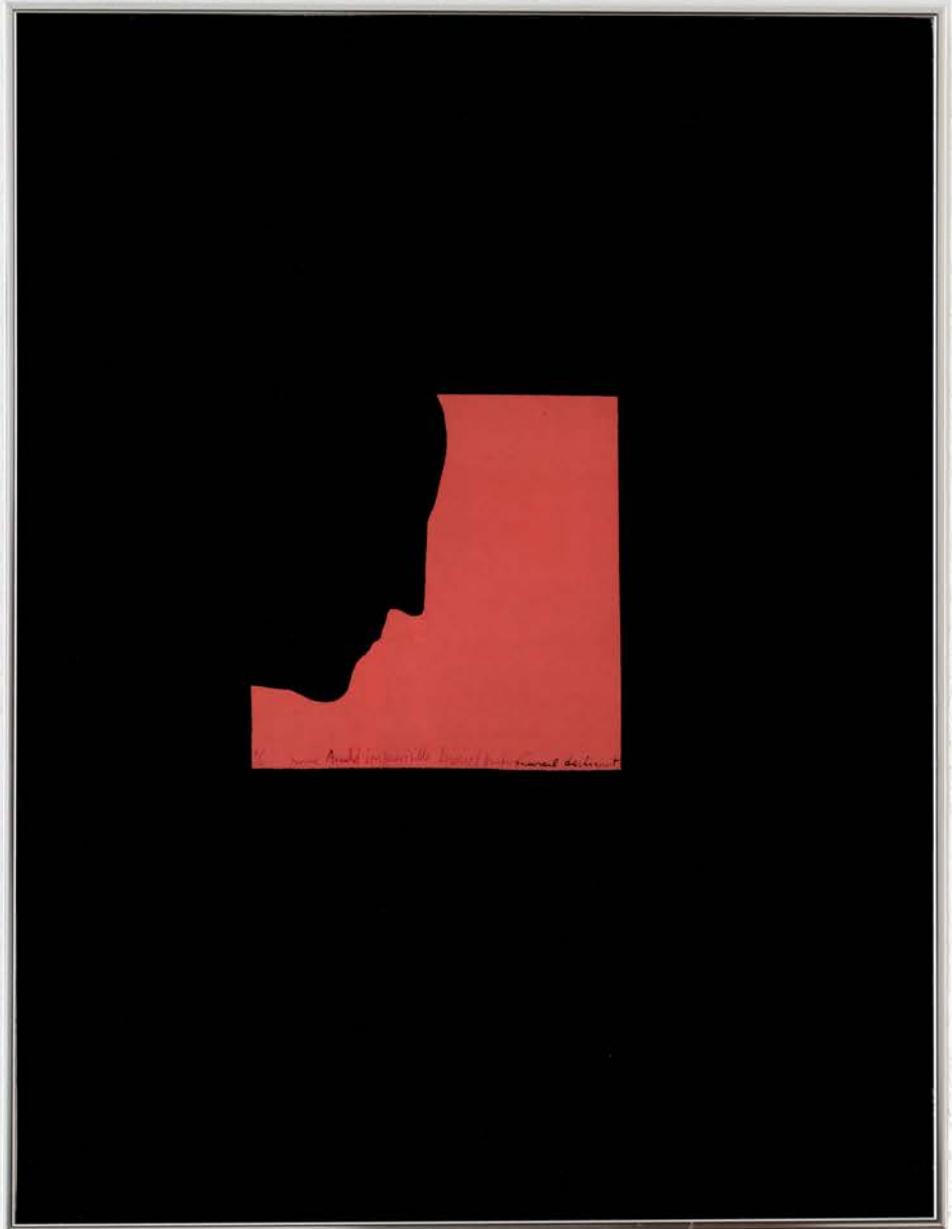
Private collection, CH



**MARCEL DUCHAMP**  
**(1887-1968)**

*Autoportrait de profil, 1959*

signature imprimée en noir dans la plaque, à droite sous le portrait : « Marcel dechiravit »  
sérigraphie originale en rouge tirée sur papier canson noir  
65 x 50 cm.  
épreuve d'artiste 0/0, outside the edition of 40

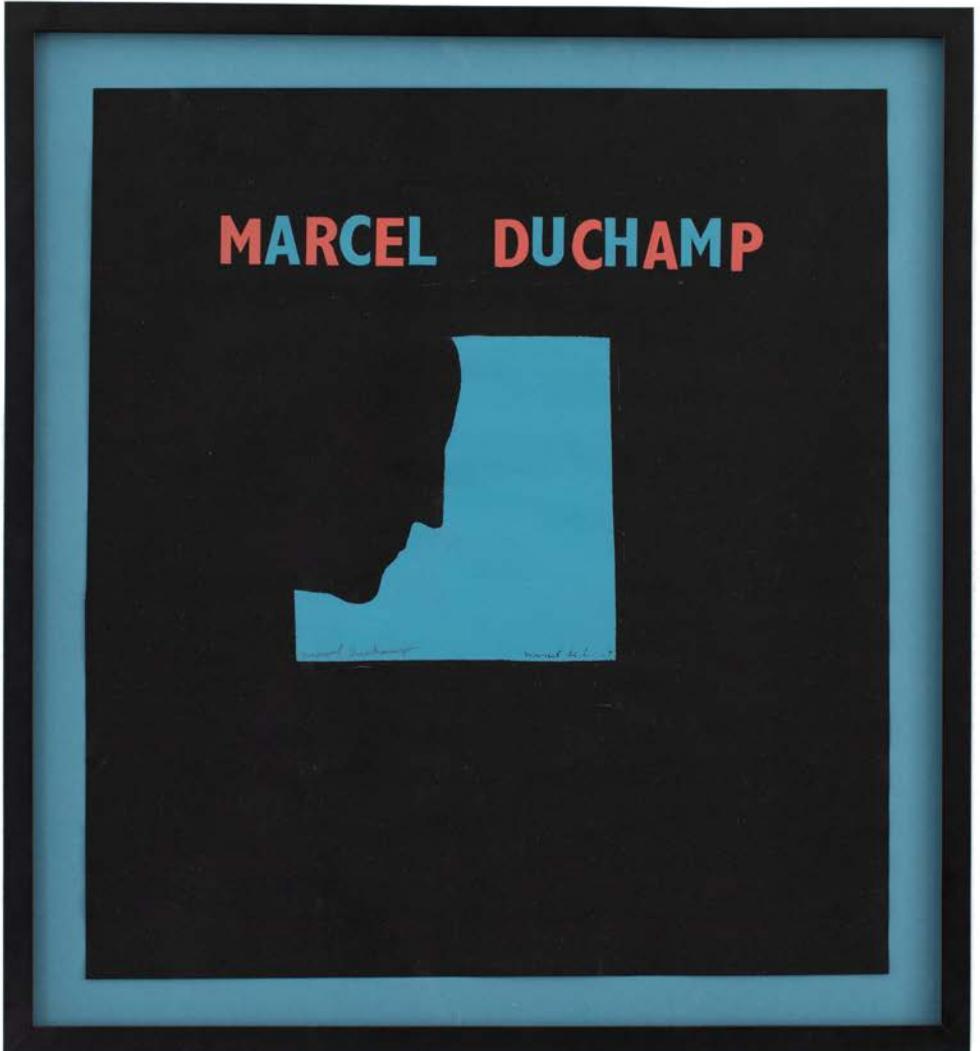


**MARCEL DUCHAMP**  
**(1887-1968)**

*Self Portrait in Profile*  
*from the La Hune Poster, 1959*

print on paper 65 x 50 cm.  
edition of 40

Arnold Fawcus, Paris, France (gift of the artist)  
Julie M. Hollands Fawcus, Paris, France (by descent)  
Private collection, Paris, France



**FLORENCE HENRI**  
**(1893-1982)**

*Autoportrait*, 1928

signed in ink lower right: on the mount *Florence Henri*  
vintage silver print on Record Rapid Agfa paper laid down  
on acid-free cardboard  
25.1 x 15.4 cm.  
ed. 7/50

Galerie Wilde Cologne  
Private collection France



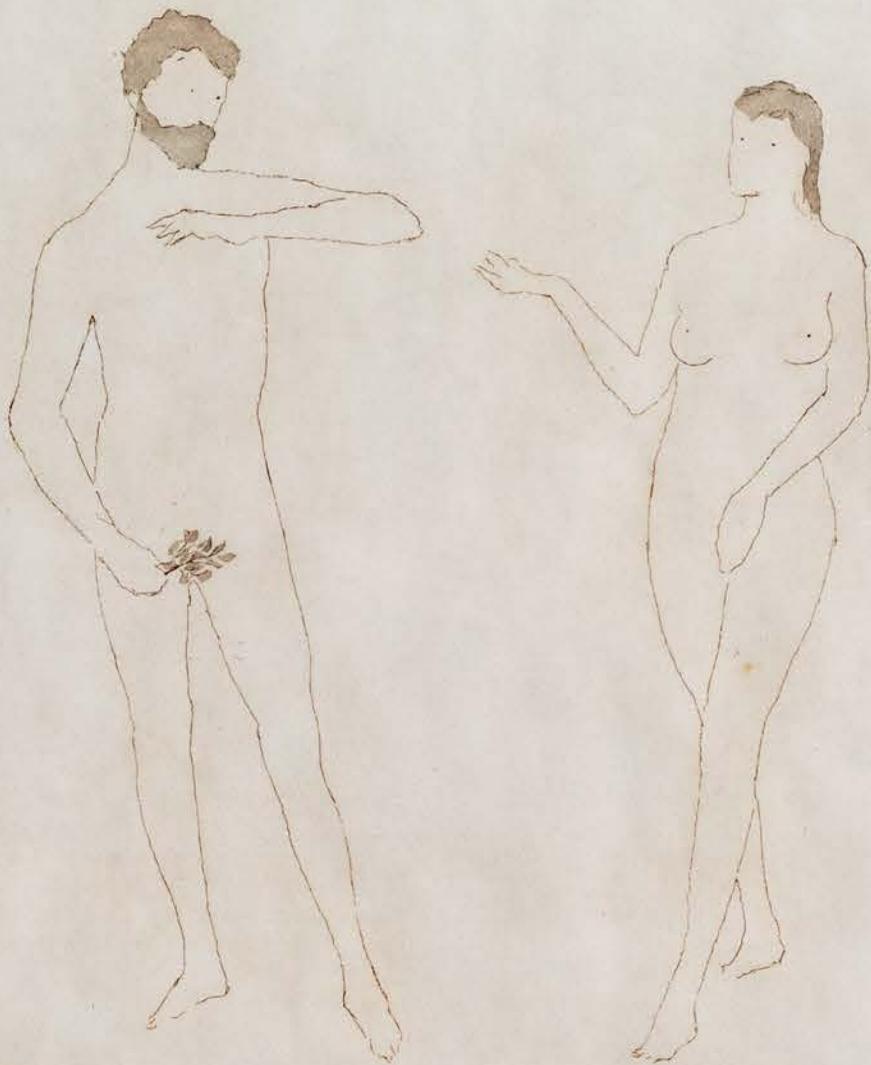
**MARCEL DUCHAMP**  
**(1887-1968)**

*Morceaux choisis d'après Cranach et 'Relache', 1968*

signed and numbered  
etching with aquatint, on cream Japon nacré paper  
50.5 × 32.6 cm.  
edition 13/30

Private Collection, New York, USA (acquired at  
Bloomsbury Auctions, London, UK, lot 170)





M.D.

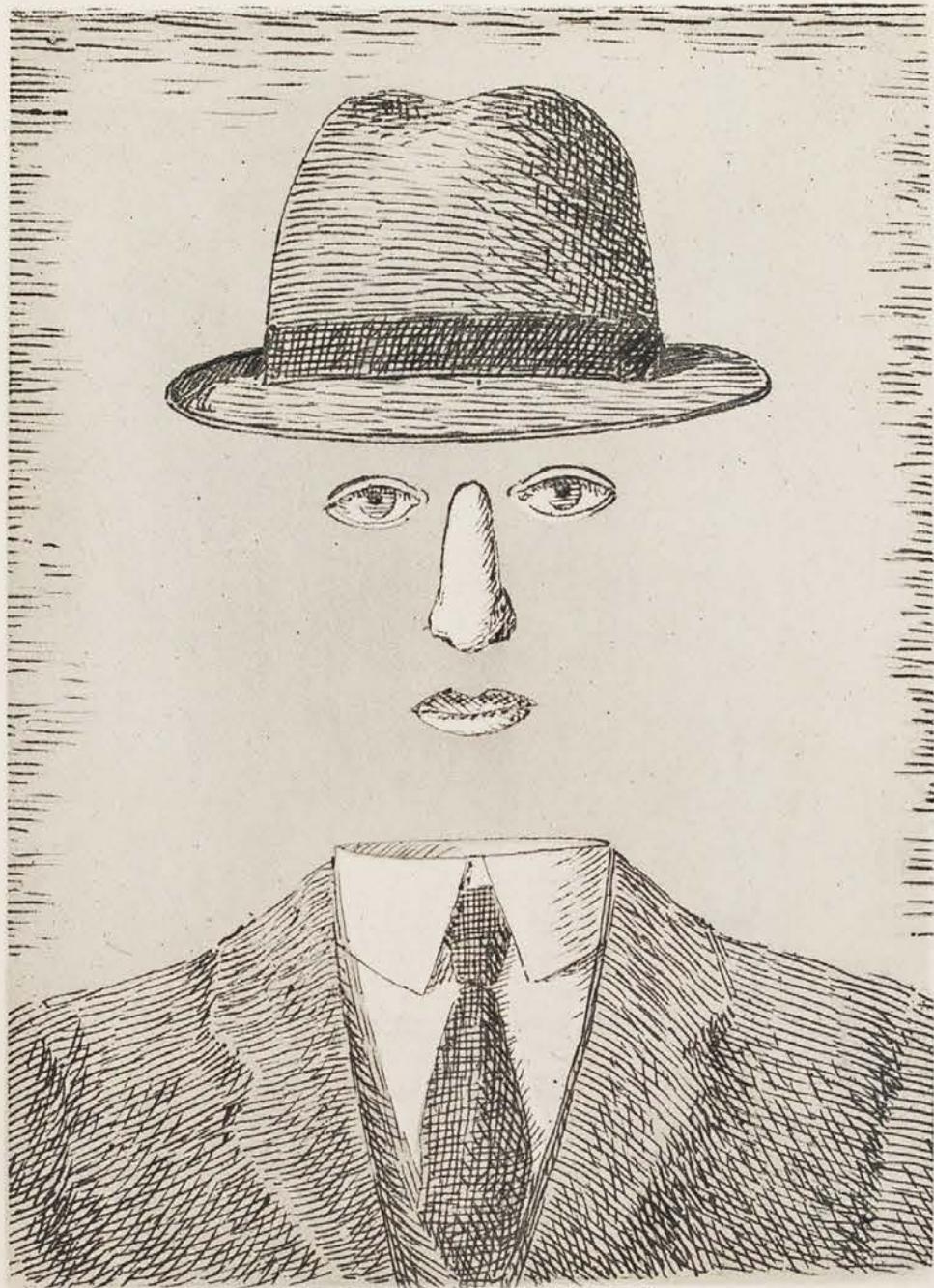
**RENÉ MAGRITTE**  
**(1898-1967)**

*Le Paysage de Baucis (Self Portrait with a Hat)*, 1966

signed lower right; and inscribed lower left: *H.C.*  
etching  
22.5 x 17 cm.  
proof aside from the edition of 100

Private Collection France





H.C.

Magritte

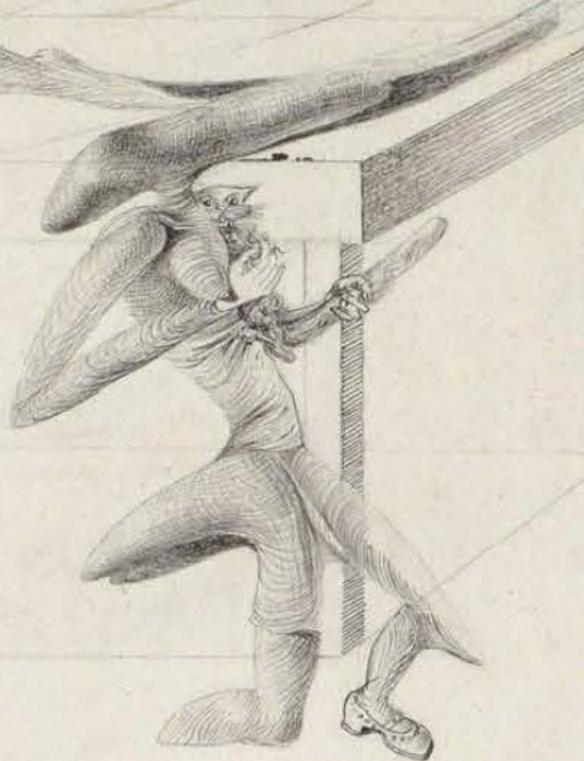
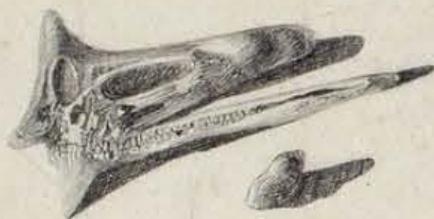
**SALVADOR DALI**  
**(1904-1989)**

*L'Enfant Sauterelle*, 1933

ink drawing on paper and black pencil  
37x34cm.

Private Collection France





**SALVADOR DALI**  
**(1904-1989)**

*Soft sculpture after Self Portrait with Fried Bacon*  
An anti psychological self portrait, "the glove of my inner soul"

11cm.





**SALVADOR DALI**  
**(1904-1989)**

Bronze sculpture after *Soft Self Portrait with Fried Bacon*



**MAX ERNST**  
**(1898-1967)**

*Loplop présente*, 1931

collage  
64.5 x 50 cm.

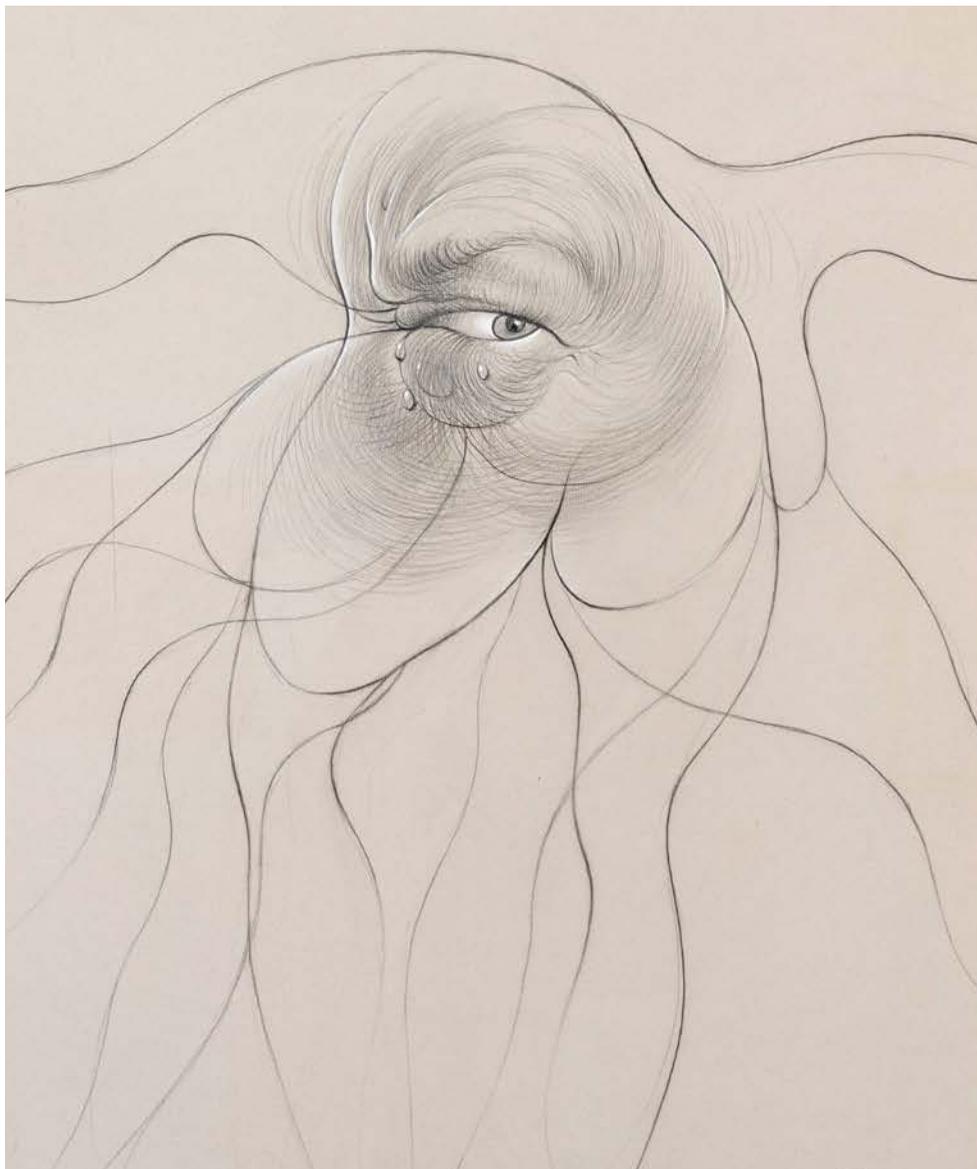
Julien Levy, Bridgewater (Conn.)  
Galerie Dieter Brusberg  
Hannovre Werner Spies Collection particulière  
Private collection France



# RÉTROVISEUR

AUTOPORTRAITS SURREALISTES

30 AVRIL - 20 JUILLET



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