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ASSEMBLING IDENTITY: THE OBJECT-PORTRAIT IN
AMERICAN ART, 1917-1927

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School-New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Art History

written under the direction of

Dr. Joan Marter

and approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

October 2012

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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I examine the social and historical context for the creation of object-portraits in American art in the decade following the First World War. Object-portraits are portraits in which the artist has replaced an image of the subject's face or body with an object or a collection of objects. This phenomenon occurs specifically in the postwar moment when several actual and intellectual assault on selfhood – from the mechanization of the Great War, the effects of the Machine Age, developments in the field of psychology that challenged traditional notions of the self, and the burgeoning consumer culture and national advertising industry – caused artists to reassess the very nature of portraiture. What they were faced with was nothing less than the question of what it meant to be human in the modern age. Their answer to this problem, in the form of the object-portraits, redefined the boundaries between subject and object, human and thing.

There are three main avenues of interdisciplinary inquiry this study has taken in order to determine how the social history of the self is written upon the object-portrait. First, I examine how contemporary shifts in the growing field of psychology impacted the understanding of identity in such a way as to de-center the self away from both the body and from the concept of a unified stable core. Object-portraits responded to this de-

stabilizing of identity by searching for other means of visualizing the subject. Second, I analyze the history of technology and specifically of the body-machine metaphor to consider the various ways the object-portraits evince both a fascination with, and anxiety about, the machine in its myriad forms. And finally, I examine the contemporary advertising industry and consumer culture ideology, fueled by the application of psychology to commerce, and its manipulation of the subject/object relationship. I argue that the object-portraits, particularly the ones that appropriate an advertising aesthetic, participated in and commented on this marketed discourse. Therefore, the object-portraits examined here appear at the intersection of several histories. They anchor a variety of threads, from psychology to technology to advertising, and elucidate the construction of the self in the interwar period.

Acknowledgements

The years spent developing, writing, and finishing this project have provided many challenges, and I would like to take this moment to acknowledge the people and institutions without whom this dissertation would not have been possible. My love for art history was first kindled by the faculty at my undergraduate school, the George Washington University. There, one person especially, Carolyn Betensky, served as a steadfast advisor and nurturing mentor. At Rutgers University I have had the privilege of working with a renowned faculty, whose astute criticism and feedback fueled my continual desire for improvement. This project was developed out of a thought-provoking seminar on portraiture taught by Susan Sidlauskas, who continues to inspire and challenge me to greater depths of inquiry. Andres Zervigon, Carla Yanni, and Jane Sharp provided kind and thoughtful observations. I would especially like to thank my advisor, Joan Marter, who supported me every step of the way.

This dissertation was made possible through the generous financial support of a number of institutions. Rutgers University awarded me several graduate assistantships and teaching assistantships that funded my study. The Art History department and Cowdry funds for pre-dissertation research enabled me to travel to archival collections and begin my initial research. The University and Bevier Fellowship supported a year of writing that was indispensable to finishing the project. Finally, a Pre-Doctorial Fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery provided financial support and access to necessary collections and extraordinary people. I am particularly indebted to Anne Goodyear, my advisor at the NPG, who kindly agreed to serve on my dissertation committee and whose own work on abstract portraiture is an inspiration. My

fellow fellows at the Smithsonian also contributed greatly to the intellectual development of my project through their exceptional feedback during writing groups and presentations.

My friends and fellow graduate students at Rutgers have sustained me and kept me sane over the years. Susannah Fisher, Olivia Gruber Florek, Gretchen Burch, and Erin Benay shared laughs and tears, exaltation and commiseration. To Leslie, whose insights helped me find in myself the brains, heart, and courage to see this through, I am eternally grateful. And finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Wim Sels and Teresa Keller-Sels. None of this would have been possible without their loving support and unwavering faith in me.

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Assembling Identity: The Object-Portrait in American Art, 1917-1927

Kim Sels

Introduction

Consider the following image: a medium-sized, yellowed piece of artists' poster board, vertically oriented. Attached and centered on the lower portion of this board is a rectangular piece of mirrored glass, about the size of a shaving mirror, which has been tarnished with age. Resting upon and glued to the mirror's surface are three objects: a metal spiral thought to come from a clock spring at the lower left, a diagonally-oriented narrow piece of steel wool laid tangential to the curve of the spiral, and a small circular watch spring centered close to the top edge of the mirror's frame. Hovering in the space on the board above the rectangle of mirrored glass is another glass object: a camera lens, affixed convex side out, and discolored in some way, perhaps by smoke. One could hardly conceive an image further removed from the traditional concept of portraiture, and yet in 1924-25 Arthur Dove dubbed this assemblage piece *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz* (Figure 1), referring to his most important patron, friend, and dealer, who was a leading photographer and gallery owner in New York at the time. Bearing no physical likeness to its subject, this work of art deliberately contravenes the conventions of mimetic portraiture.

Dove was one of a handful of New York-based artists who for a short while, in the decade following the First World War, created portraits that pushed the boundaries of the visual representation of the self. In this image, not only did Dove eliminate the body of his subject altogether, but he replaced it with objects in an unusual genre I term

“object-portraiture.”¹ Why these artists broke with centuries of tradition to create these object-portraits is the key question that motivates this study. While these images fall within the broader frame of a turn to abstraction in portraiture, I am particularly interested in the specific phenomenon of the object-portraits for their interrogation of the relationship between subject and object, human and thing. In analyzing this distinct group of portraits, I trace a social history of the construction of the self within the visual and material culture – the objects, if you will – of the late 1910s through the 1920s. I analyze the increasingly blurred line between the subject’s self and the material object seen in the object-portraits within the historical context of the rise of the Machine Age and the burgeoning of America’s consumer culture and advertising industry. In doing so, I reveal the ways in which both visual/material culture and the fine arts responded to the shifting subject/object dynamics of the postwar moment. These object-portraits provide an eloquent insight into a distinct historical period riddled with excitement and anxiety, and colored by a desire to control both, as to how the self related to a rapidly changing world.

Returning to the *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz* by Dove serves to identify the three main avenues of interdisciplinary inquiry this study has taken in order to determine how the social history of the self is written upon the object-portrait. Its non-representational approach, replacing the body with objects, begs the question of how the conceptualization

¹ To clarify, this is not a portrait of an object, but again, an image intended as a portrait of an individual that replaces a likeness of the sitter with an object or more commonly a collection of objects. For the purposes of this study, an object-portrait can be produced as either an assemblage consisting of actual objects (often no longer extant due to its fragility but known only through photographs), or as a painted scene of objects. This term is narrower in focus than “non-mimetic portraiture” or “anti-mimetic portraiture,” which encompasses a larger range of portraits that may be abstractly rendered, but which does not specify a direct link to material objects. For a discussion of this broader phenomenon, see Jonathan Walz, *Performing the New Face of Modernism: Anti-mimetic portraiture and the American Avant-Garde, 1912-1927* (PhD dissertation, University of Maryland, 2010.)

and subsequent visualization of the self moved away from the image of the body as its primary site. To this end, I examine how contemporary shifts in the growing field of psychology impacted the understanding of identity in such a way as to de-center the self away from both the body and from the concept of a unified stable core. Object-portraits responded to this de-centering and de-stabilizing of identity by searching for other means of visualizing the subject.

Dove's portrait's use of metallic, mechanical objects instead of the image of the body as a way to represent identity speaks to the profound impact the Machine Age had on the perception of the body's relationship to technology. Not only was the body seen as newly fragile in the face of technology and the technocrat's efficiency movement, the body itself was increasingly understood through the metaphor of mechanical processes. I analyze the history of technology and specifically of the body-machine metaphor to consider the various ways the object-portraits evince both a fascination with, and anxiety about, the machine in its myriad forms.

Finally, the context of the portrait's first showing, at Stieglitz's "Seven Americans" exhibition inaugurating the second generation of Stieglitz's artistic circle and his newly stated commitment to American art, suggests that Dove's assemblage could be interpreted as having had a certain amount of promotional intent. Though denigrating the world of commercialism, Stieglitz was a master at advertising, which was not coincidentally an industry rapidly growing and nationalizing in the 1920s. I examine the contemporary advertising industry and consumer culture ideology, fueled by the application of psychology to commerce, and elucidate its manipulation of the subject/object relationship. I argue that the object-portraits, particularly the ones that

appropriate an advertising aesthetic, participated in and commented on this marketed discourse.

These three interdisciplinary channels for investigation – the histories of psychology, technology, and advertising – and their impact on the construction of the self and its consequent visualization in the phenomenon of the object-portraits, offer a new intersection of knowledge about identity and subjectivity in the elusive interwar period.² My method throughout has been guided and shaped by the individual object-portraits and the need to explain them both historically and visually. In doing so, I embrace material culture and fine art objects as sites for the understanding of social and cultural change, which I join with an equally important analysis of the visual. Each chapter is different, organized around the aforementioned histories, but in the end they are all rich and distinct variations on the same theme.

Chapter Outline

I begin my study of the object-portraits by examining the historical conceptions of identity proposed by the emerging field of psychology and the dissemination of those ideas through modernist publications and salons. The salon culture of New York allowed modern artists to mingle with intellectuals from a variety of specialties, including several

² The contested terms “identity” and “subjectivity” require explication. I define the term “identity” as the collection of individual characteristics by which a person is known, a collection that is fluid rather than fixed and constructed rather than innate. “Subjectivity” is defined in this study as the state or quality of being a subject, that is, grammatically-speaking in a sentence the noun that is the doer of the action, as opposed to the object that receives the action, or has the action done upon it. This suggests a quality of being that is active, not passive, and also to some degree connotes the ability “to subject” another object, to have power over it. This is particularly relevant here since the desire to control permeates this discussion. For more on the discussion of identity and subjectivity, see Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity in the Margins* (NY: Routledge, 1992).; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (NY: Routledge, 1999).; Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” in *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow, ed. (NY: Pantheon Books, 1984).

prominent members of the psychiatric profession. Through their little magazines and these encounters, artists became familiar with the theories on identity propounded by William James and Sigmund Freud.³ Of most significance to object-portraiture was the idea of the de-centering of the self – the core of James’ theories. This idea was promulgated by both Freud and James who proposed that identity was not located in a secure and stable core self, as had previously been thought. Rather, they suggested that the ‘self’ was an ever-evolving product of external relationships that included both people and the things with which they interacted. Though portraiture had long acknowledged an interiority within the subject, and located it in the core of the body, these developments in psychology de-stabilized both the coherence and the location of the production of the self. In this chapter, I investigate the variety of responses to this problem by both literary and visual artists, whose work can be seen as sources for the later object-portraits. Working in non-mimetic styles, these artists contributed to the artistic context for the phenomenon of object-portraiture. The key artists profiled in Chapters Three and Four then turned to object-portraits as an attempt to align the visual presentation of the self with contemporary advances in thinking about identity in the field of psychology. Their explorations of this problem led them to examine areas where the boundaries between subject and object had been blurred.

The two figures who made the most significant intellectual and artistic contributions to the development of object-portraiture in America were French artists Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia, whom I profile in Chapter Two. Their vision of

³ William James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981); Sigmund Freud, “Wit and its relation to the unconscious,” in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited with an introduction by Dr. A.A. Brill (New York: The Modern Library, 1938).; Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, James Strachey, ed. (London: Random House, 2001).

New York as a technologically-advanced New World inspired both artists to break from cubism and develop new styles indebted to their perception of life in America. The resulting readymades and mechanomorphic imagery proved influential to the creation of object-portraits in two ways.

First, both Duchamp and Picabia explored the body-as-machine metaphor in their work. In this chapter, I examine the origins of this widespread metaphor, and its suggestion that bodily functions were analogous to the function of machines (for example, the analogy between the nervous system and electricity)⁴. These artists took up this metaphor and humorously applied it to human sexuality, often using the repetitive motion of machinery to signify intercourse or masturbation. Duchamp and Picabia used this analogy to enact or project their own equivocal sense of a coherent masculine subject. The relationship thus developed between the merging of the body/machine and the threat to subjectivity was an important precedent for the object-portraits that incorporate machines or mechanical parts into their compositions in order to explore this same problem. Second, by selecting mass-produced commercial objects in retail stores and mass-produced commercial images in contemporary advertising as sources for their art, Duchamp and Picabia replicated the act of purchase or visual consumption, thus equating artist and consumer. This relationship will prove important to the work of artists creating painted object-portraits that appropriate an advertising aesthetic and participate in the branding of artists.

I conclude Chapter Two with a discussion of the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, who serves as a foil to both the French and American artists because her

⁴ This metaphor persists today in idiomatic expressions such as “I need to recharge my batteries,” when referring to feeling tired and needing a vacation.

work took these issues to their extreme conclusions. By donning objects in her readymade outfits, she re-established the body in an active performance of (as opposed to a sublimation of) the anxieties surrounding the machine and consumerism. Her object-portraits mocked the rationality proposed by the Machine Age, and her kleptomania and scavenging to produce the objects that constituted her object-portraits (as well as her self-performance in her attire and lifestyle) subverted the commercial dynamic present in many of the other object-portraits.

Chapter Three examines the group of object-portraits that include machines or mechanical parts in their compositions by considering the variety of ways that the machine historically intruded into people's lives (and bodies). Employing visual culture comparisons, I analyze how artists responded to the mechanized destruction of WWI and the rapid advances in communication technology, the cult of machine efficiency led by Taylor and Ford, and the question of photography as a machine art. The fragility of the body in the face of these forces leads to an ambivalent relationship with the machine. Artists like Jean Crotti, Charles Sheeler, Man Ray, and Arthur Dove responded to these historical circumstances by interrogating the shifting subject/object relationships that developed in response to the ascendance of the machine. Throughout the chapter, I trace the successive disappearance of the body through object-portraits in a variety of media in order to reinterpret and re-contextualize them within the historical context of the post-war Machine Age.

Machine efficiency increased productivity to the point where America began to shift from a producer culture and economy (one in which the goods produced were essential and served primarily as a means of survival) to a consumer culture and

economy. In a consumer economy, production exceeds consumption, so that advertising becomes necessary to ensure continued production and profit. In Chapter Four, I analyze the effects of this consumer culture and the burgeoning national advertising industry on the conceptual relationship between subject and object, in this case, the consumer and purchasable goods. Advertising suggested that things took on a significance beyond their utilitarian function, as they offered their purchaser additional intangible benefits. Through studying the history of advertising in this period, one finds that it was not necessarily the objects themselves that conferred these benefits, but rather the act of purchasing.

Charles Demuth appropriated this kind of advertising aesthetic that called for the act of purchase of the portrait's subject. Placed in the entrance to Stieglitz's exhibition space, Demuth's poster portraits served as a kind of advertisement for the Stieglitz Circle artists they featured. Demuth appropriated the flat color planes and typography of modern advertising to aid in the project of "branding" these artists. The expatriate artist Gerald Murphy similarly uses the sleek aesthetics of modern advertising in his few extant paintings in an effort to brand himself and his art as 'American' among his French cohort. However, in *Razor* and *Watch*, two paintings which have been ascribed as self-portraits, Murphy's advertising aesthetic collides with objects that have taken on a kind of subjectivity, that have acted on him in some way. I utilize Thing Theory to consider how Murphy deconstructs these objects in an attempt to understand his personal connection to them and their effect on his life.⁵ Both artists thus examine the ways in which consumer culture had shifted the relationships between subjects and objects in the early twentieth century.

⁵ For more on Thing Theory see: Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Bill Brown, "Thing Theory" in *Critical Inquiry* 28.1 (Autumn 2001), 1-21.

Final Thoughts

The troubled contemporary reaction to the object-portrait illustrates how deeply the works engage with the issues surrounding the construction of the self in the postwar moment. Returning to Dove's *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz*, I want to consider the critical reception of this assemblage, and in particular the problems the critics had in determining whether or not it was meant to be humorous. I take this cue from T.J. Clark's thoughts on reading and interpreting critical accounts. He states:

"The unconscious is nothing but its conscious representations, its closure in the faults, silences and caesuras of normal discourse.... Like the analyst listening to his patient, what interests us, if we want to discover the meaning of this mass of criticism, are the points at which the rational monotone of the critic breaks, fails, falters; we are interested in the phenomena of obsessive repetition, repeated irrelevance, anger suddenly discharged – the point where the criticism is incomprehensible are the keys to its comprehension."⁶

In reading between the lines of criticism, I found humor to be a point of difficulty that reveals latent anxieties about modern life.⁷

Dove's object-portraits were first exhibited at Stieglitz's *Seven Americans* exhibition in 1925. In the critical reviews of that show, the majority of the focus is, as usual, on the work of Georgia O'Keeffe. The critics occasionally mentioned Dove's assemblages, but rarely had much to say about them. While they universally applauded his relatively straightforward image of a storm, many of the other works, particularly the portraits, gave them pause. They were unsure what to make of them, and a common line of discussion revolved around the question of their humor. There appeared to be some difficulty in determining their tone. They often mentioned an image called *Miss*

⁶ T.J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 12.

⁷ For more on the "anxieties of modern life" see the writings of Karl Marx and George Simmel.

Woolworth, constructed entirely from objects found in the five-and-ten-cent store. The inclusion of this assemblage among other object-portraits meant to represent friends and colleagues seems to have complicated the issue for the critics. Many were willing to take the assemblage portraits seriously, as they were instructed to do in the catalogue, and yet the Woolworth image is so clown-like that they started to wonder whether the other images were intended to have the same tone. The critics also recalled the humorous Dada-portraits from the previous decade, which they considered more clearly intentionally flippant, as per the Dada style. The lack of this easy categorization, therefore, causes discomfort and unease in the criticism on these objects. Witness the following remarks:

Margaret Breuning – New York Evening Post (14 March 1925) review:

“Arthur Dove shows some harmonies in cloud effects that are effective, particularly his storm cloud in silver. The rest of his show is made up of bits of rags and painted materials pasted together in a grand ensemble of bunk. It may be “American”, as per catalogue, but beyond that it would be hard to list it.”⁸

Elizabeth Luther Cary – New York Times (15 March 1925) review:

“Arthur Dove is using anything for his purpose, wood, sticks, stones, shells, glass, glue, and would use kings, surely, if he found he needed one for just the right word, and he finds the right word, in the portrait of Stieglitz himself, for instance. Dove’s is a funny joke and a beautiful joke, but at the risk of being accused of an unsubtle humor, never, for this writer, does it become a serious joke. And it is only the serious, no matter how funny, with which art is concerned. Otherwise it will die tomorrow, and Arthur Dove is not really merry.”⁹

Helen Appleton Read – Brooklyn Daily Eagle (15 March 1925) review:

“Self-consciousness and lack of humor are what ails these artists, that is some of them.... The visitor, too, who reads the catalogue is affected with self-consciousness. If one could enter the gallery and have a good laugh at Arthur Dove’s ingenious arrangement in the shape of a woman, made up of a mask,

⁸ Barbara Buhler Lynes, *O’Keeffe, Stieglitz, and the Critics, 1916-1929*, (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 225.

⁹ Ibid, 230.

stockings, gloves, all Woolworth store purchases, and which when placed in a frame he calls 'Miss Woolworth,' it would be all right. Far be it from us to think that an artist cannot be witty."¹⁰

Forbes Watson – The New York World (15 March 1925) review:

"It is a little over ten years since Crotti's wire portrait of Marcel Duchamp was exhibited at the Montross Gallery, and if Mr. Dove could remember that portrait and could cultivate a little sense of humor he might perhaps have a clearer idea of his own aims."¹¹

Again, most of the discourse on these assemblages revolves around this question of their humor; it is the point at which the critics falter. Rarely, if ever, do they move beyond this deliberation to really consider the pieces. Following the logic of T.J. Clark, I would argue, then, that one of the ways to assess these works of art is to investigate the moment when criticism founders. In order to discover what is so striking, or perhaps halting, about these assemblages, this inquiry will begin to uncover the anxieties that lie beneath the laughter, and the unconscious disquiet that is witnessed only through the cracks.

How does humor function in these works, and where does it break down? One theory of humor, known as the Relief Theory, is expressed primarily in Freudian terms. It suggests that humor serves as a kind of release valve for the unconscious. Sigmund Freud, whose ideas were introduced to the United States in the early twentieth century, interpreted this release on a psychological rather than physiological level. For Freud, joking (like dreaming) was a way of expressing inhibited feelings in a safe way, thereby releasing the energy usually needed for the repression of those feelings.¹² Though Freud believed that these feelings were necessarily of the hostile or sexual sort, I would argue

¹⁰ Ibid, 233.

¹¹ Ibid, 235.

¹² Sigmund Freud, "Wit and its relation to the unconscious," in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited with an introduction by Dr. A.A. Brill (New York: The Modern Library, 1938).

that they could also be feelings of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. Similar to the way Clark looks at the caesuras in criticism in order to discover hidden worries, so too can the humor of these portraits reveal underlying anxieties regarding the construction of the self in the postwar decade. In the following chapter, I explore the impact the theories of prominent psychologists William James and Sigmund Freud had on de-centering and destabilizing the notion of the self away from the body.

Chapter One

Precursors to the Object-Portraits: Contemporary Psychology and the Modernist

Salons

Introduction

An exploration of the sources for object-portraiture must consider the ways in which the historical conceptions of identity played a role. In this chapter, I examine the intellectual influence of the two primary contemporary figures in the field of psychology, William James and Sigmund Freud, on the artists working towards non-mimetic portraiture.¹³ James and Freud both postulated that identity was not located in a secure and stable core self, as had previously been thought, but rather they de-centered the concept of identity by suggesting that the ‘self’ was an ever-evolving product of external relationships and situations.¹⁴ This de-centering of the self had radical implications for the picturing of identity in artistic production, for if the self was no longer located in the core of the body, and was constantly changing, how might portraiture even begin to capture the essence of a subject? This chapter investigates the variety of responses to this question by both literary and visual artists, whose work can be seen as sources for the later object-portraits. I also demonstrate that the concepts from the field of psychology were disseminated not only in publications, but also through the personal connections

¹³ William James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981); Sigmund Freud, “Wit and its relation to the unconscious,” in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited with an introduction by Dr. A.A. Brill (New York: The Modern Library, 1938).; Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, James Strachey, ed. (London: Random House, 2001).

¹⁴ For more on 19th century precedents of these concepts, see: Jonathan Crary. *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*. (MIT Press, 1999).

made with prominent psychoanalysts in modernist salons. Therefore, the history of psychology is here woven together with the historical context of salon culture.

William James

The late nineteenth-century scholar William James, author of the *Principles of Psychology* (1890) and first president of the American Psychological Association, provided a number of groundbreaking insights into the concept of the “self” that would influence producers of abstract portraiture in the early twentieth-century. It is important to note that James’ method of analysis was based on the phenomenological frame, on personal experience that could be empirically studied, rather than on the old rationalist approach to “the soul” as a unified, autonomous unit. Thus he argued that this kind of ego/soul, since it was not accessible through experience, was a conjecture not useful to empirical study. In doing so, James moved away from the idea of a centralized and unchanging self to a much more de-centralized notion of the self as transitory and ever-evolving since it is contingent upon experience. This shift proved monumental to the concept of identity and to the genre of portraiture. If the self is no longer a single and coherent unit, how could and should the identity of a subject be portrayed? With interest fading in physiognomy and phrenology, the body and the face could hardly be considered the locus of the expression of identity anymore. And if that self was no longer a tangibly fixed or constant entity, the ability to capture it in a face or body would be completely futile. American modernists consequently took up the experiment of abstract portraiture, looking for a way to express or depict this new sense of self.

Further inquiry into James’ conception of the self is revealing in relation to some of the ways in which modernist artists attempted to forge identity through portraiture. In

the *Principles* chapter titled “The Consciousness of Self” James began by distinguishing “between the experiencing *I* [subject] and the empirical self or *me* – the self as the object in reflexive self-consciousness.”¹⁵ His concept of the experiencing *I* was substantially informed by the preceding chapter called “The Stream of Thought,” which meant that “for psychological purposes, he asserted, the *I* is the momentary, passing thought in the stream of consciousness, which, as it occupies the center of the stage, appropriates with a sense of identity memories of the preceding thoughts in the stream, looks ahead to the future, and *is* the thought of the present.”¹⁶ The notion that the subject *I* is not a fixed and coherent position of subjectivity, that the *I* which thinks, acts, and feels is but a momentary blip in a continuing and ever-changing consciousness, poses a radical challenge to artists attempting to depict a subject. The object-portraits attempt to resolve these instabilities by removing figural representation from the genre of portraiture, thereby avoiding the conceptual and pictorial problem of a singular bodily depiction that would suggest a fixed self.

James’ account of the *me* proves even more disruptive to pictorial practices of portraiture. The *me* is the experienced self, the object of the subject *I*’s consideration of him or her-self. Also termed the ‘empirical self’, the *me* was divided into three interrelated aspects: the material, the social, and the spiritual. James, therefore, broadens the terms of the self well beyond what had been considered the unified “soul.” He states, “in its widest possible sense, however, a man’s Self is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and

¹⁵ M. Brewster Smith, “William James and the Psychology of Self,” in *Reinterpreting the Legacy of William James*, ed. Margaret E. Donnelly (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1992), 175.

¹⁶ Smith, “William James,” 176. It is unclear how much of his thinking in this regard comes from Henri Bergson.

children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his land and horses, and yacht and bank account.”¹⁷ The body, for James, is no longer the boundary of the self, which can include things and people outside of it. The key is “emotional feeling: Individuals *feel* the material dimensions of their selves, including those dimensions that extend *beyond* the borders of their bodies.”¹⁸ When a person close to us dies, for example, James argued that we feel “a part of our very selves is gone.”¹⁹ Additionally, if something a person has worked on or collected were suddenly taken away, there would be “a sense of the shrinkage of our personality, a partial conversion of ourselves to nothingness.”²⁰ Interestingly, the people and things that can comprise the self, in James’ conception, are those which the subject perceives it owns, i.e. the “mine” of my family, my work, my property, etc. These all make up the material self of James’ *me*.

The essence of the social self, according to James, is the “recognition which he gets from his mates.”²¹ To put it more clearly, the social self does not “really exist in other people’s recognition, but in the person’s own regard for it.”²² As James famously noted, “properly speaking, a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind.”²³ The concept that a person is a different self to different people, or different groups of people, lays the groundwork for a theory of multiple, situational selves. This, in turn, makes the notion of a single and permanent self ever more improbable. Later, James would use the research on multiple

¹⁷ William James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981): 279-280.

¹⁸ David E. Leary, “William James on the Self and Personality: Clearing the Ground for Subsequent Theorists, Researchers, and Practitioners,” in *Reflections on The Principles of Psychology: William James After a Century*, eds. Michael G. Johnson and Tracy B. Henley (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1990), 108.

¹⁹ James, *Principles* (1890/1983d): 280.

²⁰ James, *Principles* (1890/1983d): 281.

²¹ James, *Principles* (1890/1981): 281.

²² Smith, “William James,” 177.

²³ James, *Principles* (1890/1983d): 281-282.

personalities to further this thought, asserting “all these facts have brought the question of what is the unifying principle in personality to the front again. It is certain that one human body may be the home of many consciousnesses, and thus, in Locke’s sense, of many persons.”²⁴ This further divorces the site of personality or consciousness from the body.

Finally, James’ spiritual self came the closest to the notion of a unified central core, but he specifically argued that he meant “a man’s inner or subjective being, his psychic faculties and dispositions, taken concretely; not the bare principle of personal Unity, or ‘pure’ Ego.”²⁵ He labeled this self ‘spiritual’ not to suggest a soul, but to acknowledge that we are able “to think of subjectivity as such, *to think ourselves as thinkers*.”²⁶ In this case, the *I* and the *me* develop a reciprocal and circular relationship to the point of re-fusing the subject and object. According to Leary, “in the absence of any experience of a *thinker* apart from *thoughts*, we can do no better than to surmise, or at least accept as a reasonable theoretical postulate, that ‘*thought is itself the thinker*.’”²⁷ As Sara Ford notes, “James closed the gap between subject and object, making it impossible to delineate one completely from the other.”²⁸ The idea that subject and object mutually constitute each other has been taken up by “Thing Theory” in the twentieth century, and forms an important ideological point of interest for the object-portraits that will be discussed more extensively in Chapter four.

²⁴ James (1895/1983e): 320-321.

²⁵ James, *Principles* (1890/1981): 283.

²⁶ James, *Principles* (1890/1983d): 281.

²⁷ James, *Principles* (1890/1983d): 379.

²⁸ Sara Ford, *Gertrude Stein and Wallace Stevens: The Performance of Modern Consciousness* (New York & London: Routledge, 2002), 10.

The shift modern notions of consciousness underwent, from a stable and unchanging core to a de-centered self determined by its experiences and its external relationships, problematized the agency of the modern artist, whether verbal or visual. This shift also affected the kinds of artistic expression thought possible. As Sara Ford notes in her study of the work of expatriate author Gertrude Stein, “if poetic consciousness is necessarily determined, either completely or even to a significant degree, by its relationships, then how can the poet ever inhabit a position from which to challenge those relationships?”²⁹ One method was to de-center the voice of the author as a rationalizing and organizing construct, and to open up artistic expression to the stream of sensations or stream of consciousness that “was regarded as a kind of repository for aspects of experience that we habitually ignore.”³⁰ Gertrude Stein applied this technique to word-poems that provided an abstract portrait of an individual. Rather than organizing the poem around a description of the subject’s physiognomic appearance or even distinct character traits, Stein’s portraits are composed of sensory and experiential associations. Stein studied psychology with William James himself at Radcliffe, and therefore had been exposed early in her career to the questions the psychologist posed about the nature of the self.

Stein’s word-portraits, as she termed them, were introduced to the New York art community when two of them were published by Stieglitz in a 1912 issue of *Camera Work*. Her homages to Matisse and Picasso, whom she had patronized early on, presented a radical departure from traditional poetry and portraiture. Often these exceptionally hermetic references were consciously private, and the poetry instead relied

²⁹ Sara Ford, *Gertrude Stein*, 13.

³⁰ Ibid.

on “alliteration and repetition to achieve an overall abstract beauty of sound and rhythm.”³¹ Through these early published works, Stein is credited for inspiring or helping to inspire the experiments in abstract portraiture taken on by the visual artists associated with the Stieglitz Circle.³² In return, several of these artists produced their own abstract or object-portraits of her, many of which were featured in the recent exhibition *Gertrude Stein: Five Stories* at the National Portrait Gallery.³³

The word-portrait of Picasso, begun in 1909 and published three years later, characterizes Picasso as “one who was working,” and indeed the repetitive quality of her poem creates a rhythm that suggests the forward working circular motion of the wheels of a steam locomotive. Stein often equated her literary innovations with Picasso’s artistic innovations. Picasso’s canonical 1906 portrait of Stein is considered a forerunner to his cubist works. (Figure 2) This painting hung in Stein’s salon for many years and numerous photographs of her were taken with it, cementing the mutually-useful friendship they had developed and her status as a pioneer collector of modern art. Giving her features an Iberian mask-like quality, Picasso begins to loosen the relationship between portraiture and likeness.³⁴ As his engagement with cubist principles developed, this relationship would unravel even further. His 1910 *Portrait of Daniel-Henry*

Kahnweiler, a prominent Paris gallery owner and art dealer, relinquishes mimesis to a

³¹ Wanda Corn and Tirza True Latimer, *Seeing Gertrude Stein: Five Stories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 163.

³² Dove also liked Gertrude Stein’s word-portraits, several of which were published in *Camera Work* in August 1912. Mention of the *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz* in Dove’s letters to Stieglitz further suggests a similarity to Stein’s word-portraits: “The one of you was on vellum with a smoked lens. Suggesting what I saw about you when you were speaking of your mother to Bloch [Ernest] the musician at your brother’s house.” Quoted in Ann Lee Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz Dear Dove* (Newark: University of Delaware Press). Stein’s symbolic word portraits often took the form of a particular incident that captured Stein’s feelings about the subject at that time.

³³ Wanda Corn and Tirza True Latimer, *Seeing Gertrude Stein: Five Stories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

³⁴ For an extended discussion of this portrait, see Robert Lubar, “Unmasking Pablo’s Gertrude: Queer Desire and the Subject of Portraiture,” *Art Bulletin* 79.1 (March 1997), 56-84.

much greater degree yet still retains the suggestion of a figural presence through elements that can be read as facial features and hands.³⁵ (Figure 3) The artistic line between figure and ground and figure and object, however, are increasingly blurred. A cubist collage made in 1914 completes this process. (Figure 4) In *Dice, Packet of Cigarettes, and Calling Card*, Picasso displays a calling card featuring the names “Miss Stein and Miss Toklas” (referring to Stein’s partner Alice Toklas) and “27 rue de Fleur,” the address at which they lived together and held Saturday evening salons. Toklas’ brand of cigarettes is featured in the center of the composition alongside a pair of dice. As Tirza True Latimer notes, “that Picasso would have saved the debris from Stein and Toklas’s visit and constructed from it what amounts to a double portrait suggests the closeness and reciprocity of the three-way relationship at this time.”³⁶ In this early object-portrait, Picasso uses indexical things, objects his subjects have owned and touched, to stand in for the lesbian couple.

Latimer argues that Stein’s openly gay relationship attracted to her salon many up-and-coming artists who were also gay or bisexual.³⁷ One of these men was the American painter Marsden Hartley, whom she met in 1912. She took an interest in him, however brief, and was the one to introduce him to Alfred Stieglitz, who would become one of Hartley’s main dealers in New York. Stein wrote a word-portrait of Hartley titled *M-NH* after letters taken from his name, which was subsequently published in the brochure for his 1914 exhibition at Stieglitz’s 291 Gallery and later in *Camera Work*.

³⁵ For more on this work of art see: Yves Alain Bois, “Kahnweiler’s Lesson,” *Representations* 18 (Spring 1987): 33-68; Marcia Pointon, “Kahnweiler’s Picasso; Picasso’s Kahnweiler,” in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, Joanna Woodall, ed (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).

³⁶ Latimer, *Seeing Gertrude Stein Five Stories*, 124. For an excellent discussion of conceptions of homosexual identity in the early twentieth century, see Jonathan Katz, et al. *Hide/Seek: difference and desire in American portraiture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2010).

³⁷ Latimer, 139.

Hartley responded by painting a portrait of her that evokes, through a mixture of abstraction and objects, the experience of having tea with this important mentor of young artists. Sitting on the other side of the table from “moi” (possibly referring to Hartley or the viewer), the bright mandala shape featured in *One Portrait of One Woman* of 1916 suggests the aura of an almost holy figure bounded on either side by (enlightening) candles.³⁸ (Figure 5)

In the same year, Hartley exhibited his Berlin painting series at 291. Painted primarily during his second trip to Berlin in 1914-1915, this series responded to the start of the war in its arrangement of German military motifs. In the fall of 1914, however, the death of his friend and lover, Karl von Freyburg, a Lieutenant in the German army, caused the grief-stricken Hartley to create several abstract portraits commemorating his friend. The largest of these is *Portrait of a German Officer* of 1914, in which the motifs are arranged to most closely suggest a distinct figure-ground relationship. (Figure 6) Composed of tassels and flags, Freyburg’s Iron Cross medal, the initials K v. F, and other numbers referring to Freyburg’s military units, this portrait, like his portrait of Stein, evokes an experiential memory of the fallen officer.

Hartley introduced another young homosexual American painter, Charles Demuth, to Stein in the winter of 1912-13. Demuth renewed their acquaintance again in 1921 when he next visited Paris, and from there developed a correspondence that would continue for the next ten years.³⁹ Demuth was also an aspiring modern writer, and was not only smitten with Stein’s word-portraits, but with her plays as well. Stein’s plays have been seen as attempting to grapple with the Jamesian de-centering of selfhood by

³⁸ For further discussion of the motifs in the painting see Latimer, *Seeing Gertrude Stein*, 165-66.

³⁹ Ibid., 166.

articulating consciousness as a performance: “by positing a staged or performed self, [Stein] negotiates some degree of agency for the artistic voice which must discover itself through its external relationships at the same time that it creates itself anew by challenging and renewing those determining forces.”⁴⁰ It is not surprising, then, that Demuth’s poster portrait homage to Stein recalls a theatre poster, and indeed it was listed as *Design for a Broadway Poster* in the catalogue when it was exhibited at Stieglitz’s gallery.⁴¹ Edith Halpert of the Downtown Gallery later titled it *Love, Love, Love: Homage to Gertrude Stein*, initiating a controversy over its subject, but evidence suggests that it was in fact a portrait of Stein.⁴² (Figure 7) The repetition of the word “Love” echoes Stein’s literary style, and the numbers 123 could refer to the number of acts in a play or to the titles of some of Stein’s works like *Three Lives* and *Four Saints in Three Acts*.⁴³ The mask is a common motif in the theatre, but it was also a signifier of homosexuality, referring to the problem of hiding one’s sexual orientation from public view.⁴⁴ Additionally, the mask motif furthers the concept of a performed self or selves, typical of Stein’s work no matter the subject’s sexual orientation.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Ford, *Gertrude Stein*, xiii.

⁴¹ Latimer, *Seeing Gertrude Stein*, 167.

⁴² Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 224.

⁴³ Latimer, *Seeing Gertrude Stein*, 168.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁴⁵ Florine Stettheimer, another patron of modern art in New York and an artist in her own right, did the stage design and costumes for Stein’s *Four Saints in Three Acts* when it was first performed in the US in 1934. Stettheimer was known for her unshakable public persona that masked her private artist self. In a figurative portrait she painted of Marcel Duchamp in 1923, Stettheimer acknowledged Duchamp’s similar play with the performed self. (Figure 8) Here she portrays Duchamp’s two selves: one the sleek and put-together artist-businessman in a suit, the other an image of Duchamp’s altar ego, Rose Selavy, a woman possibly modeled on Stettheimer herself. Duchamp articulated an awareness of Jamesian principles of the self when he later asserted, “My intention was always to get away from myself, though I knew perfectly well that I was using myself. Call it a game between ‘I’ and ‘me.’” Quoted in Barbara Bloemink, “Florine Stettheimer: Hiding in Plain Sight,” in *Women In Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity*, ed. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 481.

Wanda Corn argues that Demuth's portraits of his homosexual friends tended to be even more hermetic and elusive than his portraits of heterosexuals.⁴⁶ The masking required was ideally suited to the abstract portrait genre, as was the performance of "normalcy" to the related notion of a performed self. Demuth's choice of Bert Savoy, a vaudeville star famous as a female impersonator, for a subject in the poster portrait known as *Calla Lillies* (1926), takes this concept of masking and performance to another level. (Figure 9) Possibly the most elusive of all the poster portraits, *Calla Lillies* appears at first to be a still life, and features no word-play whatsoever. Two calla lilies and their leaves grow out of a shell that seems to either float on water or lie cradled in a dark blue cloth against a midnight ground. With no lettering to highlight the surface of the image, the still life seems to exist in a much deeper space than many of Demuth's posters. At nearly four feet square, it is also significantly bigger than most of the other posters, including Demuth's *Figure Five in Gold*. The intimate still life is larger than life. As a female impersonator, Bert Savoy performed with his partner Jay Brennan, who played a straight man. This well-known gay couple literally performed heterosexuality on the stage, a satirical allusion to the performance homosexuals often had to put on for mainstream culture. It is hard not to see the gently caressing calla lilies, with their phallic spadix just barely showing, as an intimate and touching portrait of homosexual love.⁴⁷

Sigmund Freud

Flowers' capacity for the representation of sexuality was certainly not unknown to the Stieglitz Circle. Georgia O'Keeffe's floral still lifes, often to her chagrin, were

⁴⁶ Corn, *Great American Thing*, 226.

⁴⁷ Corn asserts that the shell is on a wave, which could refer to the beach on which Savoy died in 1923 when he was suddenly struck by lightning. The calla lilies would then serve as funeral blossoms as well as a signifier of homosexuality. Corn, *Great American Thing*, 228.

repeatedly characterized as symbolic of female genitalia and sexuality by Stieglitz and his circle of critics. Marcia Brennan has termed this discursive tendency “embodied formalism,” which she defines as “a type of circular logic whereby gender provided critics with a means to discuss actual and symbolic bodies, and in turn such conceptions of embodiment enabled writers to ascribe gendered characteristics to abstract painterly forms.”⁴⁸ In this way, Stieglitz could explain abstract painting in sexualized and gendered terms that were influenced by the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and his followers.

Freud’s psychoanalysis was yet another blow to the concept of a unified and stable core self.⁴⁹ Like James, Freud’s theories suggested that identity was the product of external relationships, though Freud asserted that the child/parent relationship was the primary one that shaped the development of the self. Though he postulated inner drives as motivating forces, Freud argued that it was how those drives were managed that formed identity. Repression of drives led to an unhealthy self, while sublimation of drives was necessary for an individual to function in society. Understanding these forces was key, and Freud argued that accessing the unconscious, a part of the self hidden from itself, through his methods could treat the unhealthy issues caused by repression.

Freud first presented his theories to an American audience in 1909 when he was invited to lecture at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. English translations of his writing followed, and by 1918 his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* was in

⁴⁸ Marcia Brennan, *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: the Alfred Stieglitz Circle and Formalist Aesthetics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 8.

⁴⁹ Freud was the first to propose the idea of “psychic energy,” suggesting that the human personality is an energy-system that functions according to Helmholtz’s principle of the conservation of energy.

its third English edition.⁵⁰ As Nathan Hale, Jr. observes in *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States*, by 1919 psychoanalysis had outstripped every other theory of psychology in the popular press.⁵¹ Psychoanalysis was widely popular among the lay intelligentsia, like the Stieglitz Circle and other salons promoting modern artists. Brennan notes that “early in 1914 the society hostess Mabel Dodge invited Freud’s American colleague and translator, Dr. Abraham A. Brill, to discuss Freud’s theory of the unconscious at one of her evening salons.”⁵² It is important to acknowledge, though, that the American modernists were very eclectic in their appropriation of psychoanalytical theories, often conflating Freud with other like-minded theorists such as Havelock Ellis, a British researcher who wrote a series of essays called *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* from 1897-1910 (a collection that Stieglitz owned).⁵³ This kind of selective adaptation of these theories to their purposes suggests the modernists were not rigid or even precise in their use of psychoanalytical ideas, but rather saw in them another possibility of defining the self.

Paul Rosenfeld relied heavily on a selective appropriation of these psychoanalytical theorists in writing *Port of New York* (1924), a collection of prose portraits of authors and artists associated with the Stieglitz Circle. In his portrait of Arthur Dove, Rosenfeld compared both the artist and his paintings to those of Georgia O’Keeffe: “For Dove is very directly the man in painting, precisely as Georgia O’Keeffe is the female; neither type has been known in quite the degree of purity before. Dove’s manner of uniting with his subject matter manifests the mechanism proper to his sex as

⁵⁰ Brennan, *Painting Gender*, 104.

⁵¹ Nathan Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917-1985* (London: Oxford University Press, 1995), 6.

⁵² Brennan, *Painting Gender*, 104.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 103, 105.

simply as O’Keeffe’s method manifests the mechanism proper to her own.”⁵⁴ Dove, he argued, understood the world around him by penetrating it, while O’Keeffe (as a woman) did the same by incorporating it into herself.⁵⁵ Rosenfeld thus brought an understanding of contemporary psychology to the criticism of art, an idea which was present in the work of Ellis as well, in his 1923 *The Dance of Life*. In this text, “Ellis posited a direct link between sexual and artistic impulses when he identified subconscious sexual energy as the basis for all artistic pursuits.”⁵⁶

O’Keeffe responded to these interpretations of her nature-based still lifes by painting a series of (inorganic) New York skyscrapers, one of which has been interpreted by Vivien Fryd as an emblematic portrait of Stieglitz.⁵⁷ (Figure 10) O’Keeffe’s image features the Radiator Building, completed in 1924 by Raymond Hood, lit up at night. To the left of the building she painted a red sign that reads “Alfred Stieglitz,” though originally it read “Scientific American.” Fryd argues that O’Keeffe took up the imagery of the skyscraper (of which she completed around twenty works from 1925-1930) in defiance of the sexualized art criticism Stieglitz promoted for her paintings. In fact, Stieglitz had told her not to paint skyscrapers, presumably because the phallic objects would subvert the rhetoric he had carefully constructed about her work.⁵⁸ Fryd utilizes the writings of a contemporary psychoanalyst, Joan Riviere, to posit a Freudian reading of the work. Riviere argued that “New Women” (like O’Keeffe) were particularly attracted to father-figures as mates, and often felt the desire to symbolically castrate

⁵⁴ Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1924), 170-71.

⁵⁵ I think it is interesting to note here that Rosenfeld uses the term ‘mechanism’ to describe sexual processes, thereby conflating the body with the machine, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

⁵⁶ Brennan, *Painting Gender*, 106. Ellis cites Freud.

⁵⁷ Vivien Green Fryd, “Georgia O’Keeffe’s ‘Radiator Building’: Gender, Sexuality, Modernism, and Urban Imagery,” in *Wintherthur Portfolio* 35.4 (Winter 2000): 269-289.

⁵⁸ Fryd, “Georgia O’Keeffe’s ‘Radiator Building,’” 281.

them.⁵⁹ Therefore, Fryd postulates that O’Keeffe may not have wanted to “castrate her husband per se but desired to cut off his power to shape her public identity and empower herself.”⁶⁰ This symbolic castration is suggested in the image in the way that the light hollows out the base of the phallic skyscraper, making it unstable in appearance.⁶¹ As a controlling and difficult person, Stieglitz inspired a number of equivocal portraits including one by Picabia, which will be discussed in the next chapter, and several by Marius de Zayas.

Marius de Zayas credited Stieglitz for indirectly inspiring his experiments with abstract caricature. The artist had already exhibited his figurative caricatures twice at Stieglitz’s 291 Gallery, and had contributed essays to *Camera Work*. In 1909 he had created a portrait of Stieglitz as a connoisseur, carefully examining a small photograph. (Figure 11) But in 1911 a trip to the British Museum, and an encounter with an ethnological object there, sparked his development of a new theory. In an essay entitled “How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York,” de Zayas recalled this moment:

“Studying the ethnographical collection at the British Museum, I was impressed by an object invented by an artist from Pukapuka or Danger Island in the Pacific. It consisted of a wooden stick to which a few circles made of some vegetal material were fixed by pairs right and left to the stick. It immediately impressed me particularly because it reminded me of the physical appearance of Stieglitz. I say “physical” because the resemblance was also spiritual. The object, said the catalogue, was built as a trap for catching souls. The portrait was complete, and it caught my soul, because from it I developed a theory of abstract caricature.”⁶²

In the final image, the soul catcher forms the vertical axis, with two of the circles darkened to suggest Stieglitz’s peering gaze through his spectacles, the key caricatured

⁵⁹ Ibid., 283.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 287.

⁶¹ Ibid., 286.

⁶² Quoted in Wendy Wick Reaves, *Celebrity Caricatures in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 97. from Marius de Zayas, “How, When, and why Modern Art Came to New York,” with introduction and notes by Francis M. Naumann, *Arts Magazine* 54.8 (April 1980): 96-126, pg 114.

trait in de Zayas' earlier image. (Figure 12) In de Zayas' theory, the material self was represented by geometrical equivalents. Physical features such as Stieglitz's eyes and characteristic moustache, depicted as a striated triangular form, are still visible but reduced to geometric essentials. In addition, de Zayas believed that the spiritual or psychological self could be represented abstractly in the form of algebraic formulas.⁶³ The more intelligence de Zayas associated with his subject, the more complex the formula. Finally, the dynamism of the lines in the composition represented the subject's "initial force" or trajectory, their dynamic progression through life.

These abstract caricatures, which he termed "absolute" caricatures, were exhibited at 291 in the spring of 1913, and several of them appeared as photogravures in the April 1914 issue of *Camera Work*. By this time, however, de Zayas had become frustrated with the slow progress Stieglitz was making in the selling of modern art. With Stieglitz's initial blessing, he started another magazine named *291*, and opened a new, more commercially-focused, space called the Modern Gallery. Agnes Meyer and Paul Haviland were its main supporters. De Zayas had produced an abstract caricature of Meyer for the 1914 *Camera Work* issue. (Figure 13) Dominated by a sweeping and graceful curve, Meyer's portrait was enhanced by a complex algebraic formula, which signaled de Zayas' respect for her intelligence.⁶⁴ This is further supported by his collaboration with her on a psychotype, "which, like Apollinaire's poetic experiments, were composed of a free-floating text arranged in an expressive format...[and] made as

⁶³ For more on de Zayas' methods, see Willard Bohn, "The Abstract Vision of Marius de Zayas," *Art Bulletin* 62.3 (Sept 1980): 434-452.

⁶⁴ Reaves also notes that the image presents her broad brow and prominent chin. Reaves, *Celebrity Caricature*, 97.

portraits, meant to capture ‘the expression of thoughts’ and ‘the states of the soul.’”⁶⁵ In what could be considered a self-portrait, Meyer’s and de Zayas’ collaboration *Mental Reactions*, published in 291 in April 1915, features a poem written by Meyer recalling her emotions when briefly tempted to have an affair. (Figure 14) She determines by the end, however, that her marriage to the wealthy banker Eugene Meyer, Jr., which had given her the means to become an influential patron of modern art, was more important than sexual attraction.⁶⁶

Marius de Zayas was also an advisor and good friend to Walter and Louise Arensberg, whose open house salon and patronage in New York paralleled that of Gertrude and Leo Stein in Paris. Inspired by the Armory Show in 1913, they began serious collecting of modern art and artists from 1915 until 1921, when they moved to California. Their salons, like many others of this period, were populated by artists, literary figures, and other intellectuals. Frequently present was one of Walter’s friends from his studies at Harvard, Elmer Ernest Southard, a psychiatrist and the director of the Boston Psychopathic Hospital. Man Ray recalled Southard’s interest in Freudian analysis and his habit of asking guests at the salon to describe their dreams.⁶⁷ Thus Freudian theories were disseminated and discussed within this circle of intellectuals. This is further supported by the fact that Walter Arensberg himself wrote a book called the *Cryptography of Dante*, published in 1921, which used Freudian analysis and cryptography to analyze the Divine Comedy.⁶⁸ In addition, in an earlier poem titled

⁶⁵ Francis M. Naumann, *New York Dada 1915-23* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994), 59.

⁶⁶ Willard Bohn, “Visualizing Women in 291” in *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity*, ed. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), 248.

⁶⁷ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 28. Noted on page 226: Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (Boston: Little Brown, 1963), 70.

⁶⁸ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 31.

“Autobiographic,” which appeared in his 1916 collection *Idols*, Arensberg displays an awareness of Jamesian principles, particularly those in which the self is seen as contingent upon external relationships. One verse of the poem reads:

And at the eternal
 Instant
 I look –
 The eye-glassed I
 At the not I, the opaque
 Others,
 Eye-glassed too.
 And I who see of them
 Only the glasses
 Looking,
 See of myself
 In looking-glasses
 Faces
 Distorted.⁶⁹

Here he acknowledges that seeing himself through the eyes of others, shown in the motif of seeing his reflection in their glasses, he appears distorted. This poem was noted for its literary similarity to Cubism, but an awareness of contemporary theories of the self are perceptible. When the Arensbergs left for California, they sold Duchamp’s *Large Glass* to Katherine Dreier, who also took on responsibility for some of their artists and the cause of Modern Art.

Dreier was one of the major patrons of New York Dada. She was a charter member of the Society of Independent Artists, founded in the fall of 1916, and it was probably at these meetings that she first met Duchamp.⁷⁰ A few years later, with his help, Dreier founded the Société Anonyme, which was dedicated to the promotion and exhibition of modern art. Dreier was an avid collector of Duchamp’s work and became

⁶⁹ Quoted in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 29.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

one of his primary patrons, eventually owning many of his most important pieces, including, as noted, the *Large Glass*.

In addition to her patronage and her efforts in spreading the word of modern art (and I use this phrase deliberately to convey what many have described as a messianic character in her promotional efforts), Dreier was also a painter, taught primarily by private tutors. Given her affinity for Duchamp's artistic production, it is surprising how little resemblance her work bears to his.⁷¹ In the last two years of the 1910s, Dreier created portraits (one of them abstract) of Marcel Duchamp, who had captivated her and the New York art world with his radical break from traditional modes of art making. Her *Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, of 1918 was no doubt inspired by this break with representation, for it exhibits no trace of Duchamp's physiognomy, which one might expect from a traditional portrait. (Figure 15) Instead, Duchamp's likeness has been replaced by a painting of abstract geometrical forms.

The most obvious resemblance the Dreier portrait bears to a work by Duchamp is his *Tu m'*, commissioned by Dreier in 1918 as a mural to be placed above her bookcase.⁷² (Figure 16) However, the resemblance ends at its elongated format and its abstract geometric forms. What Dreier's work more closely resembles in its bright primary colors and texture is the work of the Blaue Reiter. The composition features a central yellow circle bounded by two triangles of red and blue and intersected by a long, thin triangle or cone. And, in fact, this work has been linked to the writings of Wassily Kandinsky.

⁷¹ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 161. . In fact, Naumann suggests she was ignorant of the true meaning of Duchamp's art, stating, "Certainly she did not understand the more profound implications of Duchamp's work."

⁷² Ibid, 159. This was commissioned before she painted the portrait. Dreier's portrait's "internal components are vaguely reminiscent of the geometric forms in *To be looked at*, the small work on glass Duchamp completed in Buenos Aires and which he eventually gave to Dreier." Naumann, 159.

In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, a canonical text widely read during his lifetime, Kandinsky describes the life of the spirit in terms of a triangle.⁷³ The triangle, divided into three sections horizontally, represents the three levels of spiritual awareness. At the apex is the genius, who generally can't be seen or understood by residents of the lower levels, and it is to this apex that all artists must strive.⁷⁴ Kandinsky's text is understood to have been heavily influenced by Theosophical beliefs. Naumann explains the tenets of the Theosophical society as,

“an organization founded in the late nineteenth century that professed the existence of a deeper spiritual reality, one that could be achieved only by those in possession of higher psychic states, which either came naturally – as in the case of certain clairvoyants – or which could be attained by common individuals through years of dedicated study and meditation. In accordance with their beliefs, theosophists claimed that this special state of being came through a deepened spiritual knowledge, which could be garnered only from feelings transmitted physically through the senses.”⁷⁵

Dreier is known to have been a strong believer in Theosophy, and the triangular forms in Dreier's composition have often been associated with the centrality of the triangle in Kandinsky's writing. Naumann and others speculate that, “she might have regarded Duchamp as one who naturally, though unknowingly, possessed a heightened spiritual awareness, and perhaps, she might have felt that through his example, she too could come closer to achieving an enlightened spiritual state.”⁷⁶ This suggestion is supported by another portrait Dreier painted of Duchamp, this time containing a more representational likeness. In this image, Duchamp sits atop a stool (not unlike the stool used in his assisted readymade *Bicycle Wheel*). The two legs comprising each side of the

⁷³ It was first published in German in 1912, and in English in 1914.

⁷⁴ Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, translated with an introduction by M.T.H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1977), 6-9. Also quoted in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 157.

⁷⁵ Naumann, 157.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

stool form a kind of triangle, one which is divided into three segments, at the apex of which Duchamp is located.

Though Dreier may have seen Duchamp as the genius at the apex of the spiritual triangle, as some suggest, her focus on Theosophically-significant geometric forms in her *Abstract Portrait* is still perplexing in its disregard for Duchamp's beliefs. While some scholars have postulated an early interest in Theosophy by Duchamp, the general understanding of his Dadaist view of art is significantly different from this kind of belief system.⁷⁷ As Ruth Bohan notes, "[Dreier's] desire to return art to a central position within the framework of society bore little resemblance to his [Duchamp's] mockery of both the seriousness of high art and the folly of accepted bourgeois conventions. Not least, her emphasis on the spiritual and transcendent quality of modern art differed markedly from his probing yet playful intellectualism."⁷⁸ The use of abstract geometric forms that may have roots in her own Theosophical beliefs, then, positions this work as an image reflective more of Dreier herself than of Duchamp.

Man Ray, a fellow collaborator on the *Société Anonyme*, seems to have had a more complicated relationship with the collector. Duchamp had involved Man Ray in the *Société Anonyme*, but Dreier was less interested in his assistance. Man Ray, likewise, seemed to be more critical of her imperfect understanding of their more advanced ideas. In *Catherine Barometer* of 1920, Man Ray constructed an object-portrait that has been interpreted as a satirical image of Dreier. (Figure 17) The four-foot-tall assemblage consists of a washboard at its base, with glass tubing and wire forming a central axis

⁷⁷ See, for example, Linda Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁷⁸ Ruth L. Bohan, *The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition: Katherine Dreier and Modernism in America* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982): 11.

around which colored paint strips are arranged. From a distance it looks like a large barometer, an identification supported by the title written on the washboard, “Catherine Barometer.”⁷⁹ Also affixed there is a sticker that reads “Shake Well Before Using.” If a barometer were shaken, it would act erratically, and Naumann postulates that Man Ray was referring to a perceived character flaw of Dreier’s: “If Dreier were shaken up by some avant-garde object she did not understand, for example, then the well-intentioned though uninitiated collector was likely to act irrationally.”⁸⁰ However she might have been perceived by her male critics, as the driving force behind the Société Anonyme Dreier was responsible for bringing together a number of artists whose work was influential to, or who experimented with, abstract portraiture.

Though the Stieglitz Circle and New York Dada are often characterized as antipathetic towards one another, there was in fact a certain amount of communication and collaboration between the two groups that oversimplified accounts of early twentieth-century modernism often ignore. For example, Marsden Hartley gave several lectures for the Société Anonyme and exhibited works with them in 1920 and 1921. The Stieglitz Circle artists were also included in the Société Anonyme’s *International Exhibition of Modern Art* at the Brooklyn Museum (19 Nov. 1926 – 9 Jan. 1927), for which Stieglitz was invited to give a lecture.⁸¹ Furthermore, when Duchamp infamously exhibited *The Fountain* in 1917, it was Stieglitz who photographed the urinal in the 291 Galleries, creating one of the best-known images of the original work.

⁷⁹ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 91. Naumann suggests that the mis-spelling of Katherine’s first name was to mask the identity of his subject. He also suggests that her last name, Dreier, is obliquely referenced in the fact that the function of a barometer is to tell whether the atmosphere is humid or dry.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁸¹ Robert L. Herbert, et al, *The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest at Yale University: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1984). For lists of lectures, programs, and exhibitions, see pages 773-779.

Two artists associated with the Société Anonyme whose work in the late 1910s was likely to have been influential to some of the assemblage object-portraits include Jean Crotti and John Covert. Jean Crotti was only in New York from 1914-16. During this time he shared a studio with Duchamp, whose mechanomorphic imagery he quickly assimilated into his own work. Crotti's *The Clown* of 1916 is an abstract assemblage of lead wire, glass eyes, and colored paper attached to glass. (Figure 18) However, it is unclear whether *The Clown* is a portrait of a specific individual, or like some of Dove's constructions, it is meant to caricature a personality type. Crotti's *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* will be discussed in Chapter Three. John Covert, who was Walter Arensberg's first cousin, also had a short-lived career in New York from 1915-1923. Access to the Arensberg's collection and circle of artists inspired him to create several constructions in 1919 in which he incorporated three-dimensional elements such as wooden dowels, carpet tacks, and string into the surface of his paintings, none of which appear to be portraits. (Figure 19) Crotti and Covert were both frequently exhibited by the Société Anonyme, and therefore their assemblages would have been accessible to artists from both the New York Dada and Stieglitz camps.

Another artist whose work was exhibited at the Société Anonyme, though he never made it to New York himself, was the German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters. His cubist-inspired collages analyze the fragmentation of German life during the war, as well as anxiety over the burgeoning mass media. (Figure 20) His erratic compositions of a variety of pasted found objects in paper form, exhibited with the title *Merz* that became something of a brand name for Schwitters' work, hold the conviction that anything and everything can be material for the artist. It has been documented that Schwitters's work

was certainly influential to Joseph Stella, who in 1920 took up collage that combined fragments of printed materials and other ripped and crumpled papers he picked up off the street.⁸² (Figure 21) These artists' incorporation of the detritus of a throwaway consumer culture, though not modeled into portraiture, would serve as intellectual fuel for some of the abstract portrait experiments.

These artists, working in non-mimetic styles, contributed in a variety of ways to the artistic context for the phenomenon of object-portraiture. Combining abstract portraits with the concept of the readymade and the collage/assemblage aesthetic, an important group of American artists turned to object-portraits as an attempt to align the visual presentation of the self with contemporary advances in thinking about identity in the field of psychology. The de-centering of the self in psychology and the linking of identity to external relationships, not only with other people but with things, inspired artists to seek sources for the depiction of identity in areas where the relationships between subject and object had been blurred.

⁸² Naumann, *New York Dada*, 146.

Chapter Two

Artistic Impacts: Duchamp and Picabia

Introduction

When Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia landed in New York during World War I, the two Frenchmen each proclaimed they had found a new direction for art. Their painting style prior to their arrival had been indebted to the reigning influence of cubism, but upon experiencing the comparatively technologically-saturated environment of New York City they both radically altered their artistic production in response to the new stimuli. They developed what would later be known as New York Dada, and issued a challenge to the American art community to join them in their obsession with the machine. Though American artists were sometimes hesitant to embrace their vision, Duchamp and Picabia were feted by local patrons who championed their readymades and mechanomorphic imagery as the latest achievement in modern art.

There is a multitude of literature on this pair and the many ways in which they impacted the course of art history. However, this study focuses specifically on the aspects they had in common that were immediately relevant to the phenomenon of object-portraiture. Duchamp and Picabia's two most influential aesthetic concepts for the object-portraits were their treatment of the body/machine metaphor and their appropriation of readymade consumer objects and images. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, who serves as an interesting foil to both the French and American artists. Her work takes the concepts introduced by Duchamp and Picabia to their logical (or perhaps illogical) extremes, thereby elucidating

the degree to which the social and historically contextual concerns discussed here impacted the production of these artists.

With a wry sense of humor, Duchamp and Picabia appropriated the widespread metaphor that the body's processes were analogous to the workings of machinery.⁸³ This metaphor suggested that the nervous system could be related to electricity, the digestive system to plumbing, etc. In characteristically witty ways, the New York Dadaists applied this theory to human sexuality. Their works from this period are rife with the mechanized sexual act. They also often focused their attention on the mechanized and sexualized female, an ambivalent response to the New Woman they found in New York and the liberated sexuality of the post-war period. The humor in their works was not only in this coupling (so to speak) of the body and the machine, but in the depiction of body-machines as inoperative. It is in the drollery of their failed sexual mechanisms that the Dadaists reveal their sublimated anxiety about machinery's rationalizing assault on the body and on masculinity.

The Body and the Machine

Although the metaphor of the body as machine dates back to Aristotle, the Industrial Revolution and the inventions of the steam and internal combustion engines fueled a renewed sense of analogy between the body and the motor-driven machine as both working on self-generated power rather than being powered from an outside force.⁸⁴ The laws of thermodynamics developed by Hermann von Helmholtz and Rudolf Clausius in the mid-nineteenth century stated that all forces "(mechanical, electrical, chemical, and

⁸³ Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

so forth) are forms of a single, universal energy, or *Kraft*, that cannot be either added to or destroyed,” and that a certain amount of energy is lost in a conversion or transfer of energy, known as *entropy*.⁸⁵ If all forces responded to these laws, then both the energy of the body and the energy of the machine/motor were governed by the same basic models. These theories about the sources and effects of energy provided nineteenth-century thinkers with a new framework to apply to all kinds of social and cultural issues. As historian Anson Rabinbach notes,

“both Helmholtz and Marx conceived of the body as a field of forces capable of infinite transformation and conversion, simultaneously linking the cosmos to the body and to the productive order of work. This body mediated the laws of nature with the laws of production; *it dissolved the anthropomorphic body as a distinct entity* and made the industrial body subject to a sophisticated analytics of space and time.”⁸⁶

Thus ironically the very theories that helped renew the metaphor between the body and machine were also in part responsible for the imaginative dissolution of the body as a concrete and stable concept.

The intersection between these physiological theories and art can be found in the work of Etienne-Jules Marey, a physiologist best known in the art world for his chronophotographic studies of human and animal motion. Marey was also known for using the metaphor of the machine to redefine the life sciences by inventing more sophisticated (i.e. mechanical) means of measuring bodily function.⁸⁷ As Marey noted in *Animal Mechanism: A Treatise on Terrestrial and Aerial Locomotion*, “modern engineers have created machines which are much more legitimately to be compared to animate

⁸⁵ Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 3.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 87. emphasis mine.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 90.

motors.”⁸⁸ Bodies and motors were both capable of producing their own force, and Marey concluded that the “animal organism is no different from our machines except for their greater efficiency.”⁸⁹ The only difference, then, was that the human machine suffered from fatigue, whereas the man-made machine could work indefinitely.⁹⁰

In order to combat fatigue and to better understand the workings of the body, Marey invented instruments for measuring bodily functions. His development of graphic inscription (similar to today’s electrocardiogram) attempted to systemize and rationalize the interior movements of the body, especially the heart and circulatory system, thereby removing observation from the subjectivity of the physician to the objectivity of the machine.⁹¹ Later in his career he began to also measure the exterior motion of the body. For this he turned to the new technology of photography to document locomotion across space and time. Among his experiments in motion-capturing was one in which Marey dressed his subject in black clothes and affixed metal strips down the arms and legs which would create a linear graph of movement when photographed. The resultant image dissolves the body of the subject into the background, while the indexical record of his movement remains visible through a series of dots and lines. (Figure 22) The effacement of the body in Marey’s attempt to mechanically capture its motion is even more

⁸⁸ Etienne-Jules Marey, *Animal Mechanisms: A Treatise on Terrestrial and Aerial Locomotion* (New York, 1874), vii. [English translation of *La Machine animale, locomotion terrestre et aérienne* (Paris, 1873).] and Etienne-Jules Marey, *Du mouvement dans les fonctions de la vie: Lecons faites au Collège de France* (Paris, 1868), 69-70.

⁸⁹ Etienne-Jules Marey, *Du mouvement*, 69-70. Quoted in Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 90.

⁹⁰ A powerful appeal of the body/machine metaphor was that it revealed a desire for the perfectibility of the human body by fusion with the machine. The concept of a cyborg super-human, however, seems to be a far cry from the aesthetic and ideological sensibilities of the work of either Duchamp or Picabia, or the American artists working on object-portraits. For more on the cyborg, see the seminal work, Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991): 149-181.

⁹¹ Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 97.

disquieting in his still photograph of the subject wearing the hooded black suit that completely obscures his identity. (Figure 23)

Duchamp

It is widely acknowledged that Marcel Duchamp was influenced by these Marey photographs when he painted the infamous *Nude Descending a Staircase, No.2*, in 1912. (Figure 24) The cubo-futurist painting, which elicited an uproar at the 1913 Armory Show in New York, reveals its debt to Marey in the sequential representation of the figure in motion (ie. descending the stairs) and in the arcs of small white dots which connect the repeated figure at the very center of the composition. Such a clear link to Marey's experiments in rationalizing movement suggests that Duchamp was probably also familiar with Marey's magnum opus *La Machine animale* and his use of the body-as-machine metaphor.

Duchamp's *Nude* seems like a serious consideration of Marey's studies within a cubist aesthetic. Yet it is not long after that Duchamp begins to parody Marey's other ideas, including associating repetitive (loco)motion with sex or masturbation, and the body with the machine. He starts in this vein after the *Nude* is rejected from the Indépendant's Paris exhibition of 1912, and after that painting and three others were included by Walter Pach in the Armory Show in New York in 1913, all of which sold.⁹² Though it would be another two years before Duchamp would land in America, we can surmise that his success in New York in 1913, and the rampant *Americanisme* in Paris, inspired both a sense of freedom from the Paris art world and an interest in the kind of art, from the readymades to the sexual-mechanical paintings, that would characterize his

⁹² Naumann, *New York Dada*, 34.

production in the United States.⁹³ As Naumann suggests, “it would have been natural, consequently, for Duchamp to identify Pach as the principal source of his liberation, the one person in America who could perhaps be most effective in helping to remove him from the stifling, entrenched art scene of Paris.”⁹⁴ Perhaps the energy, efficiency, industry, and engineering France stereotypically associated with America was seductive enough even before experienced in person to instigate a radical shift in Duchamp’s art making. Duchamp was famous for making statements that lamented, “if only America would realize that the art of Europe is finished – dead – and that America is the country of the art of the future,” and proclaimed, “the only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges.”⁹⁵ Duchamp found Marey’s theories of motion and the mechanical somehow exaggerated in the imagined New World, and with a mix of interest and farce turned to an artistic production as rebellious against the Old World as it was stimulated by the New.

Just before his arrival in New York, Duchamp sent Pach both versions of his *Chocolate Grinder* (1914) to be shown in a March 1915 exhibition at the Carroll Galleries.⁹⁶ (Figure 25) Though he had already constructed his first readymade, the *Bicycle Wheel*, in 1913, these canvases were among his first painted departures from cubism. As Barbara Zabel notes, the *Chocolate Grinder* as a hand-manipulated mechanism requiring repetitive motion signified for Duchamp male masturbation.⁹⁷ She asserts that as such it is a kind of self-portrait, quoting Duchamp’s statement that “the

⁹³ For more on Americanism, see Wanda Corn, *Great American Thing*, Chapter 1.

⁹⁴ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 35.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Corn, *Great American Thing*, 52 and 49.

⁹⁶ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 37.

⁹⁷ Barbara Zabel, *Assembling Art: The Machine and the American Avant-Garde* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 92.

bachelor grinds his chocolate himself.”⁹⁸ Thus the paintings that beat him to New York by a few months already began to exhibit the satirical association of the sexual body with the mechanical, even if that connection was understated.

The *Chocolate Grinder* would make another appearance in Duchamp’s epic exposition of mechanized sexuality, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* or *The Large Glass*.⁹⁹ (Figure 26) Though notes and studies for it were begun in France, construction on the actual piece commenced in New York in 1915.¹⁰⁰ Duchamp published a selection of these notes in 1934 in *The Green Box*, and they give us some clues as to the narrative that is meant to go along with the mysterious mechanical imagery. Naumann decodes it:

“According to the notes, it is the Bride’s desire that stimulates the Bachelors, which causes the flow of ‘illuminating gas’ into their moldlike bodies. They, in turn, seem to receive a constant source of energy from the flow of an ‘imaginary waterfall,’ which descends upon the blades of a water-mill wheel within a ‘glider’ or ‘sleigh’ attached to the base of the chocolate grinder in the immediate central foreground. While emitting a monotonous litany, this glider slides back and forth, inducing the gas to flow through a series of ‘capillary tubes’ to the base of seven conic-shaped ‘sieves.’ As the gas passes through these sieves, it solidifies into ‘spangles of frosted gas,’ before being transformed into a liquid substance that descends into the area of the ‘splash’ (in the lower right corner of the Bachelors section). The drops from this liquid substance are then ‘dazzled,’ propelled upward at great speed through the centers of the Oculist Witnesses and a magnifying glass before reaching the domain of the Bride. These drops scatter into ‘nine shots’ (one for each Malic Mold or Bachelor), but none of these shots – whose positions were determined by the chance firing of matches from a toy cannon – actually strikes the body of the Bride (only one penetrates her ‘cinematic blossoming,’ the large cloudlike formation at the top).”¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Quoted in Zabel, *Assembling Art*, 92.

⁹⁹ For an extensive discussion of this work of art, see Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *Duchamp in Context: Science and Technology in the Large Glass and Related Works* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁰ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 38.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

The mechanization of courtship signified here in an allegory of a blue print and instructions for this love-making machine parodies the methods of Marey and Taylorism (almost synonymous with Americanism) to rationalize the body. Automating the process, however, leads not to increased efficiency but rather to futility and failure. It is another example of the Dada conviction that rationality taken to the extreme leads to irrationality. The pairing of intricately detailed mechanical drawings with the elements of chance like the shots and the broken glass further suggests that a rational or systematic definition of art is equally elusive.

Picabia

Francis Picabia arrived in New York in the spring of 1915 just days before Duchamp. This was his second trip to the United States, and like his fellow Frenchman, it would prove to be one that marked a profound shift in his art making.¹⁰² Picabia's production for the rest of 1915 was very similar to the kinds of sexual-mechanical drawings that were included in *The Large Glass*. Moving away from his earlier cubist style, Picabia also turned to the body-as-machine metaphor as a newfound source of inspiration. In an interview for the New York Tribune that year, the artist proclaimed,

“Almost immediately upon coming to America it flashed on me that the genius of the modern world is in machinery and that through machinery art ought to find a most vivid expression.... The machine has become more than a mere adjunct of life. It is really a part of human life...perhaps the very soul.... I have enlisted the machinery of the modern world, and introduced it into my studio.”¹⁰³

¹⁰² Ibid., 58. Picabia was still a member of the French military and had received orders to go on a mission to the Caribbean, a trip which stopped first in New York. His first trip to America had been in 1913. As Naumann notes, “Just as Picabia's first visit to New York had crystallized his thoughts on abstraction, the second trip was destined to mark an equally momentous change.” (60).

¹⁰³ Quoted in Caroline Jones, “The Sex of the Machine: Mechanomorphic Art, New Women, and Francis Picabia's Neurasthenic Cure,” in *Picturing Science, Producing Art*, Caroline A. Jones and Peter Galison, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 145. From “French Artists Spur on American Art,” New York Tribune Oct 24, 1915, part IV, 2.

Working with Marius de Zayas on the new magazine *291*, named after Stieglitz's famous gallery, Picabia produced a series of machine portraits of his colleagues involved in the venture for the July-August 1915 edition. These portraits utilize drawings of machinery, often parts of the automobiles with which Picabia was obsessed, to express something about the individuals represented and their role in the project.

Picabia's portrait of Alfred Stieglitz graced the cover of that edition, titled *Ici, C'est ici Stieglitz / Foi et Amour* (Here, This is Stieglitz / Faith and Love). (Figure 27) In his mechanical, graphic style he created a machine composite, featuring a camera juxtaposed over automobile gearshifts. The lens of the camera focuses on the word IDEAL in script, while the bellows lag below. The gearshift stands in neutral with the brake engaged.¹⁰⁴ As Corn notes, "representing Stieglitz as a driving and seeing machine, a visionary, Picabia also represented him as aging and exhausted, the phallic bellows of the Kodak camera having lost its erection."¹⁰⁵ In the line-up of machine portraits, Stieglitz begins the series as a passé figure, handing over the reins of *291* to the magazine and de Zayas' new Modern Gallery.

Though Corn and others have suggested that this image was a not-so-implicit insult to Stieglitz and his concern with artistic ideals and the sublime, Picabia directed the same impotent imagery at himself and others.¹⁰⁶ The next image in the series is a self-portrait called *Le Saint des saints / C'est de moi qu'il s'agit dans ce portrait* (The Saint of Saints / This is a Portrait About Me). (Figure 28) Though Picabia's automobile horn, juxtaposed on some kind of automobile cylinder or crank shaft, is certainly more erect

¹⁰⁴ Wanda Corn, *Great American Thing*, 23.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 91.

than Stieglitz's bellows, Amelia Jones points out that like all of Picabia's machine portraits it is disconnected from any power source, effectively making it impotent as well.¹⁰⁷ This is further reinforced by the sarcasm of the title; *The Saint of Saints* hyperbolically portrays Picabia as the most spiritual/superior/virtuous of the group. I would argue that this impotence could also be exhibited in the sardonic possibilities of the word CANTER, which is located at the top of the diagram in the same position as IDEAL is in Stieglitz's portrait. Canter, on the other hand, may contradict that. To canter, in English, is to ride a horse at a slow gallop. On this level the word can be associated with intercourse in the repetitive motion of the action, which would be consistent with Picabia and Duchamp's coding of mechanized sex. Translated into French, however, canter is *petit galop*. This term has several connotations, including someone who is a tramp or a bum, and someone who is a hypocrite, or who speaks hypocritically. Describing himself in these terms, then, Picabia employs his impotent horn to tout his own self-criticism.¹⁰⁸

Amelia Jones further suggests that the misogynist female machine images Picabia produces are enactments of his own compromised masculinity, and can therefore also be seen as self-portraits expressing an ambivalent if not downright disparaging sense of himself.¹⁰⁹ Unlike Caroline Jones, who sees his female machine images as projections of anxiety regarding the "femme nouvelle" and his problems with neurasthenia, Amelia Jones states that she "would like to read them here less as projective fetishizations of women's bodies than as identificatory visualizations of the lack and loss of masculinity

¹⁰⁷ Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 148.

¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, I have yet to be able to corroborate this interpretation with textual evidence.

¹⁰⁹ Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 91.

defining the wound culture surrounding the war.”¹¹⁰ According to both authors, masculinity was being compromised from every direction. The men at the front were being brutalized by technological warfare, which feminized the male body through its penetrating and dismembering blows. Men who stayed home from the front, on the other hand, were considered unpatriotic and emasculated. Industrialization and the Taylorization of bodies threatened the coherent and individual masculine subject, while the New Woman challenged gender norms. I agree with Amelia Jones’ tactic then to insist that the New York Dada machine works,

“can most productively be viewed as incomplete negotiations of the violent challenges to the masculine subject in urban industrialism. The works, then, are as much *enactments* of the exploded, compromised masculinity experienced by the male artists as they are attempted (and failed) *projections* of anxiety onto the female ‘other’. Viewing them this way, we avoid dismissing them as simply misogynistic, or seeing them as somehow congealing into conscious or fully formed statements against these violent changes. Like all of the cultural effusions of this period of New York’s avant-gardes, they become complex – and to some extent not fully legible – maps of an ongoing process of negotiating, rather than making final sense of, the radically new social and cultural terrain of machine-age New York.”¹¹¹

Viewed as a negotiation of the forces compromising not only masculinity but the coherent self, the mechanomorphic imagery of both Duchamp and Picabia can be seen as enactments *and* projections of their anxieties regarding, among other things, the relationship of the body and the machine and specifically the attempts to rationalize the body by connecting it both figuratively and literally to the machine. As Amelia Jones argues, “not only is the body a machine or part of a machine, then; machines are also understood as bodies.... The machine images and objects of New York Dada (including

¹¹⁰ Caroline Jones, “The Sex of the Machine” and Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 91.

¹¹¹ Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 125. emphasis hers.

the readymades) can thus be understood as reciprocally determined and determining *mappings of the male artists' own equivocal experiences of masculine embodiment.*"¹¹²

Picabia's next image in the July-August 1915 edition of *291, Portrait d'une jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* (Portrait of a Young American Girl in a State of Nudity), then, can be read multiply as a portrait of Agnes Ernst Meyer, a commentary on American women and the New Woman, and a portrait of the artist himself and his equivocal masculinity. (Figure 29) Agnes Ernst Meyer was a wealthy collector who assisted with the publishing expenses for *291*. Though she, unlike the rest of her cohorts, is not explicitly named in the image or title, William Innes Homer has argued that she was considered an "initiating force (colloquially speaking, 'spark plug') behind de Zayas' efforts," and would therefore have been included in the series with the portraits of de Zayas and Haviland.¹¹³ As a spark plug portrait of a young American girl, this image also combines the machine, America, and the New Woman in a way that signals what Caroline Jones terms "male hysteria" over the New Woman and her emasculating power.¹¹⁴ Amelia Jones, however, would argue that since the spark plug is unconnected to a source of power, it is rendered impotent— an impotence Picabia associated with himself and with his neurasthenia.¹¹⁵ This second reading opens up an important avenue with which to consider how the male artist viewed the relationship between the machine and his own body.

¹¹² Ibid., 118.

¹¹³ William Innes Homer, "Picabia's *Jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* and Her Friends," in *Art Bulletin* LVII, no.1 (March 1975), pp 110-15. Quote in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 61. The portraits of de Zayas and Haviland both feature imagery that signifies illumination.

¹¹⁴ Caroline Jones, "The Sex of the Machine," 152.

¹¹⁵ Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 148.

While neurasthenia was a name given to a disorder that encompassed many deviations from social and cultural norms, it was generally regarded as nervous exhaustion experienced by the male subject due to the over-stimulating effects of industrialized warfare or modern life. Picabia suffered from this ailment -- most likely due to his New York lifestyle of sex, jazz, drugs, and alcohol -- and went frequently for treatment, including the famed rest cure. As Caroline Jones has suggested, his *Fille Née sans Mère*, a book of poetry and drawings published in 1918, was probably produced during one of these neurasthenic cures and was dedicated to his doctors.¹¹⁶ Interestingly, one of those doctors was Dr. George Beard, who invented the term neurasthenia and whose treatise on nervous disorders based his explanation of the nervous system on an analogy to electro-mechanical models.¹¹⁷ He also associated sexual and electrical impulses and believed that repeated orgasm, particularly from masturbation, exacerbated or even led to nervous disorders.¹¹⁸ Here, even in his medical treatment, Picabia's association between the body and the machine, as well as the sexual and the electrical/mechanical, would have been reinforced. Additionally, the stigma that neurasthenia held suggested that it was socially and culturally seen as a feminization, an unmaning, or a childish problem of the weak male subject; this would have certainly impacted Picabia's thinking about the body/machine and its mechanical failures.

This intersection of conflicting ideas can help us better understand the possible multiplicity of motives/meanings/readings for Picabia's female machines. Could he be coupling the female with the machine in order to assert masculinity and control over both

¹¹⁶ Caroline Jones, "The Sex of the Machine," 160-61.

¹¹⁷ Caroline Jones, "The Sex of the Machine", 162. and Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 153. Beard also believed that the condition was unique to America and the American lifestyle.

¹¹⁸ Caroline Jones, "The Sex of the Machine," 163.

and/or is this a way to sublimate (consciously or unconsciously) his anxieties over the feminizing diagnosis of neurasthenia, the New Woman, and the power of the machine? Does the fact that the machines are non-functional serve as a code for Picabia's own mal-functioning body?

Fille Née sans Mère (Girl born without a Mother), a gouache and paint on paper composition produced c. 1916-1918 and probably part of the same-titled collection published in 1918, is one of many images by Picabia of a female non-functioning machine which we can use to consider these questions. (Figure 30) One of the first drawings exhibiting this theme with the same title had been featured in the June 1915 edition of *291*. (Figure 31) The later version was painted over a diagram for a railway machine, highlighting certain mechanical elements with green paint and covering the rest with gold.¹¹⁹ If the machine were set into motion, the large wheel in the center would cause a shaft to the left to move up and down in the kind of repetitive mechanical motion the Dadaists associated with sexual intercourse.

Naumann suggests Picabia's intentions were clear: "sexual intercourse may have produced man, but man created the machine. And having created the machine in his own image (as God created him), the machine naturally emulates his actions."¹²⁰ The girl born without a mother, then, is the man-made machine itself. This interpretation echoes an editorial statement Paul Haviland, one of the financial backers of *291*, wrote for the September-October 1915 issue:

"We are living in the age of the machine. Man made the machine in his own image. She has limbs which act; lungs which breathe; a heart which beats; a nervous system through which runs electricity. The phonograph is the image of

¹¹⁹ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 72.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

his voice; the camera the image of his eye. The machine is his ‘daughter born without a mother.’”¹²¹

Directly referencing Picabia’s earlier drawing, Haviland’s misogynistic statement suggests that the pairing of machine and female is a way to reassert male subjectivity. With technology, and the engineers who create and control that technology, coded as male and individual machines coded as female, the male subject retains mastery over both. By creating a dysfunctional female machine, one that cannot operate without some external source of power (presumably only supplied by the male engineer), the threat of both is contained. Yet the very desire or need to actively assert or reassert this control suggests a lack of control exists. As discussed earlier in the chapter, masculinity was taking hits on a number of fronts. Picabia, as a male subject whose virility had been compromised by his AWOL military status and his bouts of neurasthenia, may have projected or enacted his own dysfunctional and feminized masculinity onto or with these dysfunctional female machine images.¹²²

This lack of control or domination is rendered to a greater extent in *Machine Tournez Vite* of c.1916-1918, which depicts two gears explicitly labeled *Femme* and *Homme*. (Figure 32) On the one hand the male gear dwarfs the female gear in size. On the other hand, the smaller female gear would rotate much more quickly than its slower larger male counterpart. Furthermore, in specifying the female gear as #1 and the male gear as #2, Picabia implies that the first gear controls or turns the second gear. Though the teeth of the male gear penetrate the female gear, the action is reciprocated tooth for tooth. Overall, the female gear “wins” the power struggle.

¹²¹ Quoted in Naumann, 61-62. Paul B. Haviland, untitled editorial statement, 291, nos.7-8 (September – October 1915).

¹²² Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 176.

Most of Picabia's machine images replicate this dynamic of equivocal masculine power. Freud proposed in his *Civilization and its Discontents*, that making art functions as a mode of sublimation, of channeling instincts or anxieties into more acceptable modes of communication.¹²³ He also suggested that humor functions in the same way.¹²⁴ These mechanomorphic images are thought to be humorous, but wherein does the humor lie? Is the humor in the jarring juxtaposition or coupling of the body and the machine? In the Bergsonian theory that laughter is the result of the mechanization of the body? Or in the parodied dysfunctional machine, in their failure as functional objects? One way to approach this problem is to consider the contemporary reception of the works.

The critical reaction to an exhibition of his machine works at de Zayas' Modern Gallery suggests that the critics were also uncertain whether Picabia's art was meant to be humorous or serious. Viewing the art by itself, several reviewers attempted to identify their sources in "drawings of engines or illustrations to patent office reports," or "plans for plumbing or steam pumps or something of the sort."¹²⁵ Naumann notes, however, that "when attempting to decipher the elaborate titles, a good number of critics concluded that the show should not be taken seriously."¹²⁶ They wrote that "the war makes many artists serious, but not Picabia," and that "the inscriptions are immensely funny, and a really very clever artist is making fun of those who take him seriously."¹²⁷ This suggests that contemporaries located the humor of the works in the juxtaposition of the human

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Wit and its relation to the unconscious," in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited with an introduction by Dr. A.A. Brill (New York: The Modern Library, 1938).

¹²⁵ Quoted in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 65.

¹²⁶ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 65.

¹²⁷ Quoted in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 65.

titles with the machine images, and therefore singled out the body-as-machine metaphor as the force to be sublimated.

Thus the body-as-machine metaphor, popularized by science, serves as a lens with which to view the mechanomorphic imagery of Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia. This metaphor, and its anxiety-producing analogies, broadens our conception of the relationship these artists had to the machine beyond celebrations of its beauty or reactions against its threat. The intimacy with which the body and the machine were seen to share structural anatomy, and the ways in which these French artists used this analogy to enact or project their own equivocal sense of a coherent masculine subject, are important precedents for the object-portraits created by American artists.

Shopping for the Readymade

Another important precedent set by Duchamp and Picabia was their use of readymade objects and images chosen from retail stores and the advertising pages of popular and trade magazines. Duchamp, of course, is well-known for his game-changing invention of the readymade sculpture, in which the artist confers fine art status on mass-produced items by extracting them from their functional capacity and placing them in the sphere of art. It is essentially the artist's choice of the object and his declaration of its new status that designates the readymade as art. Duchamp's first readymade creation in New York was a snow shovel he bought in a hardware store on Columbus Ave.¹²⁸ He inscribed "In Advance of the Broken Arm" on the shovel and hung it from the ceiling of his studio. (Figure 33)

¹²⁸ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 39.

While this posed a serious challenge to the artistic values of handcraftsmanship and originality, the act of selecting the objects replicated quite literally the act of purchasing. In this way, Duchamp equated the artist and the consumer. It is significant that this transformation of the artist's role occurs concurrently with the transition of the American economy from a producer culture to a consumer culture.¹²⁹ The shift in national advertising mirrored this transition by creating advertisements that highlighted the act of purchase as the entity which conferred the idea of intangible benefits rather than the purchased object itself. Duchamp's artist, likewise, is no longer a producer, but a consumer, and it is the act of selection rather than the object selected that is important. In fact, Duchamp stated explicitly that his readymades were chosen without aesthetic consideration, and in a 1946 interview the artist recalled that at the time he "was interested in ideas, not merely visual products."¹³⁰ While the use of everyday objects in art was certainly significant for the assemblage object-portraits of the American artists, Duchamp's artistic participation in American consumer culture would have been equally relevant to the concerns of the artists painting object-portraits in an advertising aesthetic, which I analyze in Chapter Four. As Amelia Jones notes, Duchamp's readymades "point to the fact that any artistic practice is necessarily embedded in the same value systems (economic or otherwise) that structure bourgeois capitalism."¹³¹ Even in his attempt to subvert the idolization of the art object by collectors, Duchamp failed to extract himself from the processes of the marketplace and inevitably was left with humor-driven analysis as his only recourse.

¹²⁹ These concepts will be examined and explained further in Chapter Four.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 43. From: James Johnson Sweeney, ed, "Eleven Europeans in America," Bulletin 13, nos.4-5 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946), 20.

¹³¹ Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 140.

While Duchamp was appropriating readymade objects, Picabia was doing the same with readymade, mass-produced images selected from advertising. A review of his machine portraits comprising the collection submitted to the July-August 1915 edition of *291*, for example, reveals that they all have identifiable sources in contemporary marketing campaigns. Picabia simplifies and often elongates the depictions, adding text and composites of other mechanical devices to some. Like the advertisements, Picabia's series was meant for mass publication, though the circulation of *291* was comparatively miniscule. The objects themselves were not chosen at random, as Duchamp's purportedly were, but served a symbolic purpose for the person represented and/or their role in the production of the journal.

The image of the camera featured in Picabia's portrait of Stieglitz, *Ici, c'est ici Stieglitz / Foi et Amour*, (Figure 27) could have been taken from the pages of Stieglitz's publication *Camera Work*. First appearing in the January 1913 issue, the advertisement for the 'vest pocket Kodak' camera provided a source for Picabia's composite machine portrait.¹³² (Figure 34) The artist collapses the phallic bellows of the camera to signify Stieglitz's exhausted efforts in the promotion of modern art. He also elongates the image, stretching it towards the IDEAL Stieglitz sought.

The automobile horn in the next image of the series, *Les Saint des saints*, (Figure 28) most closely resembles the Stewart Warning Signal, an advertisement for which appeared in the June 23, 1915 issue of *Horseless Age*.¹³³ (Figure 35) The horn is rendered vertically and juxtaposed over an unidentified schematic drawing. Homer attributes the symbolism of this device to Picabia's 'noisy' personality and his obsession

¹³² Homer, "Picabia's *Jeune fille americaine dans l'etat de nudite* and Her Friends," 111.

¹³³ Ibid.

with cars. However, the purpose and the meaning of the horn sound is to alert pedestrians and other cars to get out of the way, to warn that an automobile is oncoming and hence that danger is present. Since this is a self-portrait, perhaps Picabia is warning of his own advancing status in the New York art world, exemplified in his collaboration in the production of *291*.

Homer has identified the source for the spark plug portrait of Agnes Ernst Meyer in *Portrait d'une jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* (Figure 29) as an advertisement in the December 1914 issue of *The Motor*, featuring a Red Head Priming Plug from the Emil Grossman Manufacturing Company.¹³⁴ (Figure 36) As Homer notes, “the word ‘For-ever,’ printed on the side of the plug with machine-like precision, comes from the text of the Grossman ad: ‘Every part so good that we can guarantee them forever.’”¹³⁵ This deluxe model spark plug could signify Meyer’s role as a catalyst in the production of *291* and her reliable commitment to modern art. The author also points out that this particular spark plug was especially sleek and elegant and that Meyer was known for driving her own car at a time when a woman driving would have been an unusual sight.¹³⁶

The portraits of Marius de Zayas (*De Zayas! De Zayas!*) and Paul Haviland (*Voilà Haviland*) both suggest that their subjects are illuminating presences. (Figures 37 and 38) William Camfield noted that the line drawing in the de Zayas portrait featured two automobile headlights at the bottom and compared it visually to a diagram of a Delco

¹³⁴ Ibid., 115.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

starting and lighting system published in *The Gasoline Automobile* in 1915.¹³⁷ (Figure 39) Camfield also traces the portable electric lamp in the Haviland portrait to an advertisement by the Wallace Novelty Company, and Homer locates the advertisement in the February 1915 issue of the popular magazine *Vanity Fair*.¹³⁸ (Figure 40) The portability of the lamp was meant to suggest the fact that as a wealthy collector Haviland often traveled back and forth to Europe.

By selecting mass-produced commercial objects in retail stores and mass-produced commercial images in contemporary advertising as sources for their art, Duchamp and Picabia set the stage for the object-portraits produced by American artists. That many of these readymade images were machines or mechanical parts, and that the artists used these to suggest an analogy to the body or even as portraits is indicative of the pervasive presence of the body-as-machine metaphor and its relevance as a source of artistic inquiry to both the French and American modernists.

The Exceptional Exception of the Baroness

In *Irrational Modernism*, Amelia Jones posits the Baroness as a figure who exists at the far end of the continuum of irrationality evinced by the work of the Dadaists.¹³⁹ As a woman who was “the only one living anywhere who dresses dada, loves dada, lives dada,” the Baroness challenged the New York Dada artists in her exploration of the limits of avant-gardism.¹⁴⁰ In taking the issues surrounding both the machine and consumer

¹³⁷ William Camfield, “The Machinist Style of Francis Picabia,” in *The Art Bulletin* v.48 n.3-4 (Sept-Dec 1966): 309-322: 314.

¹³⁸ Homer, “Picabia’s *Jeune Fille*,” 111.

¹³⁹ Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 126.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 5. from Jane Heap, “Dada”, *Little Review* 8.2 Spring 1922, 46)

culture to their extreme conclusions, the Baroness acts as a foil to the other artists working in this time period.

The Baroness seemed to have been uniquely free of the anxiety associated with the machine. She openly scorned the love/hate-affair America and the other Dadaists had with technology. With a deliberate double-meaning, she wrote that Duchamp, “came to *this country* – protected – carried by fame – to use its plumbing features – mechanical comforts.”¹⁴¹ Her relationship to technology was not one of anxious fascination, but of dismissal and contempt. It was part of what she saw as the gleaming surface shallowness of new America, in contrast to what she believed she offered: the emotionally-driven depth of old Europe. In a letter to Peggy Guggenheim, the Baroness parodied the efficiency-crazed American mindset by asserting that God had better get up to speed in order to keep up with the glorified Henry Ford:

“All know – [God] is tinkerer – limitless of resources.
But why so much tinkering?
He better fordize – learn from America – start expert machi-
neshop – Ford can supply experience – funds – is rumored –
for as yet he is clumsily subtle – densely – intelligent – ineffici-
ciently – immense – (Lord not Ford – of course).”¹⁴²

In her assisted ready-made sculpture, *God* (1917), she mocks the way modern conveniences like plumbing had been placed on a pedestal.¹⁴³ (Figure 41) Attaching a plumbing trap to a carpenter’s miter box and giving it the title of a deity, the Baroness graphically foregrounds the materiality of human waste in all its ugliness, as well as what she considered the hypocrisy of the bourgeois suppression of it as a reality of life. Living in abject poverty must have radically shaped her relationship to the efficient machinery of

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 157. from letter to Jane Heap.

¹⁴² Quoted in Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity: A Cultural Biography*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 229. Letter to Peggy Guggenheim, ca. August 1927.

¹⁴³ Gammel and Naumann attribute it to Baroness instead of Morton Schamberg in NY Dada.

plumbing so readily available to her more well-off colleagues. A description of her Fourteenth street apartment, where she lived from around 1917-1919, by William Carlos Williams gives a striking picture of this difference: It was “the most unspeakably filthy tenement in the city. Romantically, mystically dirty, of grimy walls, dark, gaslit halls and narrow stairs, it smelt of black waterclosets, one to a floor, with low gasflame always burning and torn newspapers trodden in the wet. Waves of stench thickened on each landing as one moved up.”¹⁴⁴ In these conditions, sharing one bathroom on a floor, it would have been impossible to ignore the fact of the body and its functions, so easily contained and concealed in the private porcelain washrooms of the middle and upper class. Her contempt of the love of technology extended along class lines, for she also railed against Duchamp, Williams, and other modernists for creating art “in their spare time” while leading relatively bourgeois lives.¹⁴⁵ She saw herself, in contrast, as living her art in a full-time self-performance of dada.

Her object-portraits of Duchamp, one of which survives through a photograph while the other exists only in a written description, reveal her occasionally disparaging vision of him as too fragile and cold (as opposed to her Teutonic strength and heat), in ways that are related to machinery.¹⁴⁶ George Biddle, an artist and admirer of the Baroness, provides the only description of the lost work in his autobiography:

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 232. Original: William Carlos Williams, “Sample Prose Piece: The Three Letters,” *Contact* 4 (Summer 1921):11. Though this evocative tale is perhaps a bit biased due to his feud with her, there is a certain amount of truth in it. A shared bathroom, “one to a floor,” was part of the tenement in which she lived. Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 232.

¹⁴⁵ Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 8.

¹⁴⁶ Admittedly, these reactions and statements are often contextualized as her frustrated response to her unrequited attraction to him. Often quoted is an incident where she stated “Marcel, Marcel, I love you like hell, Marcel!,” and then rubbed her body down with a clipping of Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase*. Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 101.

It was painted on a bit of celluloid and was at once a portrait of, and an apostrophe to, Marcel Duchamp. His face was indicated by an electric bulb shedding icicles, with large pendulous ears and other symbols.

“You see, he is so tremendously in love with me,” she said. I asked,

“And the ears?” She shuddered:

“Genitals – the emblem of his frightful and creative potency.”

“And the incandescent electric bulb?” She curled her lip at me in scorn.

“Because he is so frightfully cold. You see all his heat flows into his art. For that reason, although he loves me, he would never even touch the hem of my red oilskin slicker. Something of his dynamic warmth – electrically – would be dissipated by the contact.”¹⁴⁷

The warmth of Duchamp and his creativity comes only in the form of electricity. This idea of Duchamp’s coldness and the fragility of his creative powers (which would dissipate if he touched her) and himself (as a glass light bulb) was also repeated in a poem the Baroness published in *The Little Review*:

“Thou now livest motionless in a mirror!

Everything is a mirage in thee – thine world is glass – glassy!

Glassy are thine ears – thine hands – thine feet and thine face.”¹⁴⁸

Charles Sheeler, who was the one to preserve her other object-portrait of Duchamp in a photograph, also described the Dadaist as “built with the precision and sensitiveness of an instrument for making scientific machinery.”¹⁴⁹ Here Duchamp’s famous detachment is emphasized, for he is a machine that makes other machines, and is thus displaced from any direct contact with humans.

Her other object-portrait of him, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (c.1920, Figure 42), was first shown in the literary magazine, *The Little Review*, in which a number of the Baroness’ poems were also published. As noted, the assemblage is now lost and known

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 101-102.

¹⁴⁸ Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, “Love – Chemical Relationship,” *Little Review* 5, no.2 (June 1918), 58-59.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 187.

only through a photograph by Charles Sheeler.¹⁵⁰ Given this limited vantage point, descriptions of this piece vary remarkably in the list of objects associated with it: Naumann lists, “feathers, a ring, a detached gear and wound-up clock spring, a long metal coil surmounted by a fishing lure, the whole supported within a wine glass.”¹⁵¹ Amelia Jones additionally lists, “fabric, a bit of rubber or kelp, a shred of polkadot fabric,”¹⁵² and Barbara Zabel adds “chicken bones” to the mix.¹⁵³ The diversity of objects collected together into one portrait is unlike Duchamp’s canonical readymades, or even assisted readymades, in that Duchamp’s works generally consist of only one or two found objects.¹⁵⁴ In some ways she out-readymades Duchamp himself. The use of both natural and metallic objects and the number and diversity of objects used in the portrait suggests that unlike many of her fellow Dadaists, she doesn’t privilege the machine over the organic in any sort of hierarchy. If anything, the appearance of the whole is reminiscent of the fragility evinced in the description of the other object-portrait. Precariously balanced on a thin-stemmed wine glass, the portrait resembles an industrial weed growing out of the detritus of the urban landscape, in imminent danger of being crushed by an errant footfall.

As a collection of a large variety of objects, this object-portrait seems significantly more formally related to her living conditions and her constructed costumes

¹⁵⁰ Including a poem thought to be dedicated to her love for Duchamp, “Love – Chemical Relationship”. It is widely acknowledged that she had a strong but unrequited infatuation for Duchamp, writing him poems, and even collaborating with him on a film (in which she stars in the act of shaving her pubic hair.)

¹⁵¹ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 171.

¹⁵² Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 119.

¹⁵³ Barbara Zabel, “The Constructed Self: Gender and Portraiture in Machine-Age America.” in *Women in Dada: essays on sex, gender, and identity*, Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, c1998), 36.

¹⁵⁴ One such readymade, the bicycle wheel, can be seen in an earlier portrait of Duchamp by the Baroness, which features an African mask-like face smoking a pipe, next to a bicycle wheel and a chess piece. If anything, the portrait is much more closely allied to some of Duchamp’s later work, such as *Why Not Sneeze, Rrose Selavy?* of 1921.

than to the work of Duchamp.¹⁵⁵ Having moved to New York in 1913 at the age of 39, she lived an eccentric life, usually in poverty, for which she is known as the “living embodiment of Dada.”¹⁵⁶ The majority of the anecdotes about the Baroness, the snippets of information about her culled from the biographies of people she was close to such as Djuna Barnes, William Carlos Williams, and Margaret Anderson (one of the founders of *The Little Review*), focus primarily on her wardrobe and her kleptomania. Naumann quotes one description of her studio by George Biddle:

“It [her studio] was crowded and reeking with the strange relics which she had purloined over a period of years from the New York gutters,” Biddle remembered. “Old bits of ironware, automobile tires, gilded vegetables, a dozen starved dogs, celluloid paintings, ash cans, every conceivable horror, which to her tortured, yet highly sensitized perception, became objects of formal beauty.”¹⁵⁷

Several other anecdotes note that she was frequently jailed for shoplifting, as well as for some of her more eccentric (and revealing) outfits. (Figure 43) Margaret Anderson recalls what she looked like when she first came to the office of *The Little Review*:

“She wore high white spats with a band of decorative furniture braid around the top. Hanging from her bust were two tea-balls from which the nickel had worn away. On her head was a black velvet tam o’ shanter with a feather and several spoons – long ice-cream-soda spoons. She had enormous earrings of tarnished silver and on her hands were many rings, on the little finger high peasant buttons filled with shot.”¹⁵⁸

The Baroness’ use of her body as a Dada assemblage brings the issue of the vanishing body in object-portraiture around full circle. Here she re-establishes the body in an active performance of (as opposed to a sublimation of) the anxieties surrounding the machine

¹⁵⁵ Anne Goodyear notes that some of the forms may, however, allude to works by Duchamp: “The portrait embodies rather than depicts Duchamp, suggesting subtle references to the artist and his work. As Michael Taylor has observed, the feathers may invoke Rose Sélavy, Duchamp’s newly minted feminine alter ego, while the wine glass evokes Duchamp’s playful and fun-loving personality, as well as his Large Glass. In an ironic inversion of the narrative of the Large Glass, the Baroness nursed an unrequited love for Duchamp, who rejected her frequent romantic overtures.” Goodyear, *Inventing Marcel Duchamp*, 144.

¹⁵⁶ Naumann, *New York Dada*, 168.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 170.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 172.

and consumerism. Through her daily outfits of accumulated objects, she performed a Dada self by animating the assemblage of inanimate things with her own body. By giving life to things, the Baroness refuses the category of object for both items and women artists.

Furthermore, in the object-portraits as well as her ever-changing self-imaging, the kleptomaniac Baroness serves as an example of excessive and compulsive consumerism. She disrupts the normal relationships established by advertising and consumer culture between subject and object, purchaser and seller, by subverting the capitalist underpinnings of exchange. Instead, she “appropriates” (steals or picks up from the streets) found objects without participating in a commercial transaction. Her assemblages, then, bypass the interest in advertising that Demuth’s poster portraits, for example, exhibit. She “brands” herself, or is branded as, Dada, yet unlike advertising’s false promises, she actually lives it. By enveloping herself in the detritus of consumer culture, she highlights the extremity of the consumerist impulse.

The image that brings all of this together is the story of the Baroness finding a working taillight (presumably from an automobile) on the street, and attaching it to the backside of her outfits.¹⁵⁹ Still electrically sound and blinking, the taillight image collapses and mocks the categories of the metaphor of women as machines and the body-as-machine metaphor, as well as subverts the consumer excesses of the bourgeois. Walking down the New York City streets, the Baroness embodied and performed the extreme limits of the impulses that fueled the postwar interest in object-portraiture.

¹⁵⁹ Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, 155.

Chapter Three

Object-Portraits in the Machine Age

Introduction

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the omnipresence of the machine began to make a real impact in every aspect of daily life. The effects of the machine were so widely acknowledged that the era was dubbed “The Machine Age.” As we have seen, French artists Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia’s images were informed by the body-as-machine metaphor that pervaded contemporary thinking. By acknowledging the machine as an appropriate subject for modern artistic practice and by linking it to the body, these artists opened up the field of possibility for American artists to interrogate the shifting subject/object relationships that developed in response to the ascendance of the machine.

This chapter examines the deep impact the Machine Age had on the imaging of the self in object-portraits that include machines or mechanical parts. Employing visual culture comparisons, I analyze how artists responded to the mechanized destruction of WWI, the rapid advances in communication technology, the cult of machine efficiency led by Taylor and Ford, and the question of photography as a machine art. Throughout the chapter, I trace the successive disappearance of the body through object-portraits in a variety of media in order to reinterpret and re-contextualize them within the historical context of the post-war Machine Age.

Responses to the Machine Age ranged from fascination and celebration to fear and revulsion. Two exhibitions appeared later in the period to celebrate the beauty of “machine art.” Though avant-garde artists such as Duchamp and Picabia, as noted in the

previous chapter, had been working with machine forms since the mid-1910s, it was only in 1927 that the first exhibition juxtaposing modern art and machines emerged. It was organized by the *Little Review*, a magazine co-edited by Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap that was known for presenting modern art and literature to its public. In fact, the *Little Review* had become infamous for publishing James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1920, for which the editors were taken to trial on charges of obscenity by the Society for the Suppression of Vice.¹⁶⁰ Heap was the main organizer and wrote the catalog entry for the show. Her vision was to "show actual machines, parts, apparatuses, photographs and drawings of machines, plants, constructions etc., in juxtaposition with paintings, drawings, sculpture, constructions, and inventions by the most vital of the modern artists."¹⁶¹ Rather than a show of anxiety toward the Machine Age, this exhibition celebrated the engineer and the beauty of the machine. Heap wrote:

"A great many people cry out at the Machine as the incubus that is threatening our 'spiritual' life.... Who could expect [the public] to see beauty in a thing not made for beauty: the Machine.... We will endeavor to show that there exists a parallel development and a balancing element in contemporary art. The men who hold first rank in the plastic arts today are the men who are organizing and transforming the realities of our age into a dynamic beauty.... The aim of the Engineer has been utility...[but] utility does not exclude the presence of beauty.... The experiment of an exposition bringing together the plastic works of these two types of artist has in it the possibility of forecasting the life of tomorrow."¹⁶²

In relating the artist and the engineer as simply "two types of artist," Heap sought to raise both in the esteem of the public. As Zabel notes, the Engineer had replaced the cowboy as the new American hero, and had become "the model for the autonomous artist as a

¹⁶⁰ Margaret Anderson, ed., *The Little Review Anthology* (New York: Horizon Press, 1953), 297.

¹⁶¹ Jane Heap, "Machine Age Exposition," in *The Little Review Anthology*, Margaret Anderson, ed. (New York: Horizon Press, 1953), 341.

¹⁶² Heap, "Machine Age Exposition", 341-343.

constructor of artistic realities.”¹⁶³ Artists became engineers and engineers became artists, unwittingly creating beautiful utilitarian machines. If machines were made beautiful, or rather shown to be beautiful by Heap and her cohorts, they would no longer be a source of fear or a threat to “spiritual life.”

The second exhibition to celebrate the beauty of the machine was a show entitled *Machine Art* at New York’s Museum of Modern Art from March 6 to April 30, 1934, only five years after the museum initially opened. (Figure 44) Lenders to the exhibition were companies like Carnegie Steel Co., Corning Glass Works, Ford Motor Co., and the Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Co. This is because, unlike the *Little Review*’s Machine Age Exposition, MoMA’s show was devoted exclusively to machine objects, and not to other forms of modern art. Each object or set of objects was photographed for the catalog as a still-life that emphasized what Barr’s forward called “the abstract beauty of ‘straight lines and circles.’”¹⁶⁴ Barr was referring to a quote from Plato presented on the facing page:

“By beauty of shapes I do not mean, as most people would suppose, the beauty of living figures or of pictures, but, to make my point clear, I mean straight lines and circles, and shapes, plane or solid, made from them by lathe, ruler and square. These are not, like other things, beautiful relatively, but always and absolutely. Plato: *Philebus* 51c.”¹⁶⁵

As curator, Barr presented the machines as intrinsically beautiful. He noted, “Good machine art is entirely independent of painting, sculpture and architecture. But it may be noted in passing that modern artists have been much influenced by machine art.”¹⁶⁶ The list of objects was divided into six categories: industrial units, household and office

¹⁶³ Zabel, *Assembling Art*, xvi.

¹⁶⁴ Alfred H. Barr, Jr., “Forward: Machine Art and Geometrical Beauty,” in *Machine Art* (New York: MoMA, 1934).

¹⁶⁵ Barr, *Machine Art*, np.

¹⁶⁶ Barr, *Machine Art*, np.

equipment, kitchenware, house furnishings and accessories, scientific instruments, laboratory glass and porcelain. Each form was presented as simply as possible, and photographed in black and white against a monochromatic ground. In many ways, MoMA had re-appropriated the ready-made, elevating the machine object to high art.

While these exhibitions celebrated the sleek modern design of the machine, they both felt the need to address the negativity to which the machine had been subjected. Heap mentions the perceived threat of the machine to ‘spiritual life’, and Philip Johnson, in his essay for the MoMA catalog, acknowledged the objections to the machine mounted by the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement. But both attempted to alleviate these fears and anxieties through their exhibitions of beautiful machine parts.

These anxieties were also played out in early cartoons like the “Oswald the Lucky Rabbit” series by Ub Iwerks and Walt Disney which debuted at the Colony Theatre on Broadway in 1927.¹⁶⁷ Oswald’s body has no integrity and is often subject to dismemberment. In *Trolley Troubles* of 1927, for example, Oswald takes off his own foot, presumably a lucky rabbit’s foot, and rubs it on his own head or on other objects for

¹⁶⁷ Oswald was a precursor to Mickey Mouse, whose *Steamboat Willie* feature debuted the next year. An interest of mine is looking at machine humor, particularly in the cartoon film medium, to investigate how it too encodes some of the concerns present in the works of art discussed in this chapter. While there is much work that can be done on this topic, I’d like to briefly give some examples and suggest some avenues of further examination. While much of this technology developed after my stated time frame and after many of the artists in this study had given up their work in object-portraiture, it serves as an interesting analogy within popular culture. The two most striking features of this medium are the animation and anthropomorphization of inanimate objects and the violence done to the body. In the early “Felix the Cat” cartoons, created from 1919-1924, director/animator Otto Messmer anthropomorphized the cat, who acts and responds as a human. This made it particularly disconcerting when on several occasions, as in Felix’s debut *Feline Follies*, his tail detaches and turns into linear symbols like a question mark. *Trolley Troubles* and many of the other Oswald adventures also included the motif of the animated inanimate object that becomes iconic in Walt Disney’s later work. Not only were these inanimate objects animated, they were given anthropomorphic subjectivity. In *Trolley Troubles*, the trolley machine itself seems nearly human. It asks to have oil applied to its wheels, and it runs on its wheels as if they were legs. Later in *Great Guns* of the same year, planes box like humans. Both automobiles and planes are given facial features which show a wide range of emotion.

luck. (Figure 45) While the pun here seems humorous at first, it is only the beginning of the violence done to Oswald's body. It is in *Great Guns*, also of 1927, that Oswald's body suffers the most damage. Clearly meant to recall the battlefields of the First World War, the cartoon vividly depicts both trench warfare and air battles. During the fight, Oswald accidentally gets blown to bits. A nurse or medic comes to collect the pieces and carries them off the field. Back at the first aid station, the medic pours the pieces of Oswald into a cocktail shaker, gives it a good shake, and out comes Oswald fully re-integrated and reshaped into a very lucky rabbit.

The First World War

Not so lucky, of course, were the real soldiers who had fought in the trenches of Europe's first truly mechanized war. Military technology had outpaced medical technology; the large-caliber guns and shrapnel of artillery warfare had the power to explode the body into unrecoverable fragments, to not only break, but shatter, bones. As Caroline Alexander notes in "Faces of War," "the very nature of trench warfare, moreover, proved diabolically conducive to facial injuries."¹⁶⁸ She quotes an American surgeon working in France, Dr. Fred Albee, who lamented that "the soldiers failed to understand the menace of the machine gun. They seemed to think they could pop their heads up over a trench and move quickly enough to dodge the hail of bullets."¹⁶⁹

England's response to this phenomenon was to create a special unit in March of 1916 called the Masks for Facial Disfigurement Department, headed by Francis Derwent Wood, an artist-turned-medic in the war. His contribution was to create metallic masks that were custom designed to depict the prewar portrait of the soldier in need. Soon after

¹⁶⁸ Caroline Alexander, "Faces of War," *Smithsonian* 37.11 (Fall 2007): 72-80.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in Alexander, "Faces of War," 72.

hearing about Wood's work, American Anna Coleman Ladd opened up a similar studio run by the American Red Cross in Paris.¹⁷⁰ She fashioned each mask of very thin galvanized copper, molding it to a plasticine cast of the soldier's face. Depending on the injury, the mask would cover all or part of the face, and was usually held on by spectacle-like ear hooks. (Figure 46) She then painted the mask with enamel paint to match the soldier's skin tone, and finished it with eyebrows, eyelashes, and mustaches made either from real hair or, at Wood's studio, slivered tinfoil. Though each studio made approximately 200 masks, none survive, and this number pales in comparison to the estimated 20,000 facial casualties.¹⁷¹ The masks were only for the most desperate cases. As Wood himself noted, "My cases are generally extreme cases that plastic surgery has, perforce, had to abandon."¹⁷² He argued that the masks, though immobile, helped the wounded soldier return to his life and his family.

This defacement, literally speaking, or dismemberment of soldiers had profound implications for the relationship of the body to identity, and, I would argue, identity's consequent disembodiment in the object-portraits. As Amelia Jones has noted in *Irrational Modernism*, the artists residing in New York uniformly avoided wartime service and the shock of the contact between bodies and technology that characterized the conflict. However, the psychic effects of the war and its assault on the (masculine) subject, she argues, could not be escaped.

¹⁷⁰ Her papers are held in the collection: Anna Coleman Ladd papers, 1881-1950, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

¹⁷¹ Preceding description based on information in Caroline Alexander, "Faces of War", in *Smithsonian Magazine* 37.11 (Feb 2007): 72-80. She also discusses the work of Sir Harold Gillies, who was a pioneer during WWI in the art of facial reconstruction. His landmark text, *Plastic Surgery of the Face*, shows a series of before-and-after pictures of his remarkable procedures, which primarily used skin flaps and grafts rather than metal plates to reconstruct the face.

¹⁷² Quoted in Alexander, "Faces of War", 76.

One still remarkably mimetic abstract portrait by Jean Crotti is a haunting map of the progressive effacing of the body in this unusual genre. (Figure 47) Crotti's *Portrait de Marcel Duchamp sur mesure* (1915-16) is a sculptural image of Duchamp's head that captures his likeness using only lead wire to outline the lower face and mouth, and a forehead composed of a thin metallic cast complete with wire hair and suspended glass eyes. Tracing the shell or surface of Duchamp's features, the portrait complicates the relationship of exterior to interior identity. As the subject's exterior features seem to be melting away in front of us, we are left with the emptiness of the interior. Thus the object questions whether this kind of mimetic portrait likeness can successfully convey the richness of interiority, and in fact seems a critique of the very idea of interiority. It is a similar question tragically posed by the extreme facial injuries mechanized warfare inflicted on soldiers: What is the importance of the face to identity? Does the erasure of the face signify the erasure of identity? The coincidental resemblance of Crotti's tin forehead to the masks created to re-face these soldiers only adds to the poignancy of the question.

And yet, contemporary critics as well as current art historians have considered the sculpture an artful likeness, both mimetically and in terms of Duchamp's personality and interests. The portrait was first exhibited at the *Four Musketeers* exhibition at the Montross Gallery in April 1916.¹⁷³ Crotti, who shared a studio with Duchamp in 1915-16 while Duchamp was working on the *Large Glass*, received a great deal of attention at

¹⁷³ The "four musketeers" were Crotti, Duchamp, Gleizes, and Metzinger. The portrait was originally purchased by Walter and Louise Arensberg, but was subsequently lost or destroyed at an unknown date. There is, however, an extant photograph of the work by Peter A. Juley, which was published in *Vanity Fair* in 1916 (Goodyear, *Inventing Marcel Duchamp*, 130).

the show for this work in particular.¹⁷⁴ It was both derided and hailed as a “climax of empty-headedness” and a “skillfully done” likeness.¹⁷⁵ Naumann further notes that, “the emphasis on only two details of the artist’s facial features – his forehead and eyes – is a clear illustration of the artistic dichotomy that was of such great concern to Duchamp in these years: namely, the intellectual or cerebral quality of the mind, versus the retinal or purely visual properties of the eyes.”¹⁷⁶ In some ways, this dichotomy parallels the dichotomy between the exterior (the retinal) and the interior (the cerebral) with which the portraits grapple. Crotti himself asserted in interviews he gave in 1916 that his sculpture encapsulated both the exterior and interior Duchamp:

“It is an absolute expression of my idea of Marcel Duchamp. Not my idea of how he looks, so much as my appreciation of the amiable character that he IS. How may such an appreciation be visualized without making it conventional and commonplace? I have used soft metal and fine wires for this characterization of Marcel Duchamp. To me, the character of my friend is most strikingly shown in the forehead and eyes, so I have carefully modeled these in detail, in the solid metal, and my likeness is already achieved. But as half a head, detached, would look odd and prejudice the portrait as a whole, I have completed the lower part of the face in bent wire outline. This is pure detached line drawing, in its way. Note how perfectly it conveys the expression of the mouth, harmonizing with that of the eyes.”¹⁷⁷

Crotti’s confident words aside, one can’t help but see the portrait as embodying or illustrating something of the anxiety surrounding portraiture in the post-WWI moment.

Though it retains a strong anthropomorphic resemblance to its subject, its use of unusual

¹⁷⁴ The studio was in the Lincoln Arcade Building at Broadway and 67th Street. Crotti was a Swiss artist who, like the other Europeans in New York, had come to escape the war. His work radically changed with his entry into the New York art scene and acquaintance with Duchamp from a primarily Orphist painting style to Dadaist assemblages and humor-laden titles. He arrived with his first wife Yvonne, but on a trip to Paris in 1916 he met Duchamp’s sister Suzanne and subsequently divorced Yvonne and married her. (Naumann, *New York Dada*, 101.)

¹⁷⁵ Quoted in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 103.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in William A. Camfield, “Jean Crotti and Suzanne Duchamp” in *Tabu Dada: Jean Crotti and Suzanne Duchamp 1915-1922* (Kunsthalle Bern, 1983), 12. Taken from interviews in *World Magazine* and *The Soil*.

non-art metallic materials and its partial erasure of the face speak to a deep questioning of the portrayal of identity in the postwar era. The portrait explicitly critiques the ability of a likeness to represent a subject and that subject's interiority, thereby aligning with advances in contemporary psychological theories, discussed in Chapter One, which contradict the concept of a stable and unified core self.

Communication Technology

The machine not only threatened the human body as a physical entity, but also, because of rapid advances in technology and its accessibility, threatened human subjectivity on a number of fronts in the post-WWI decade. One of the more uncanny experiences was the advent of human communication as mediated by or through the machine.¹⁷⁸ Fifteen years after its controversial invention in 1876, there were 5 million telephones in America (roughly 6% of the population had one). In the 1920s, that number climbed to 16%.¹⁷⁹ A telephone ad from the 1920s for the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) likened the telephone to the magic of Aladdin's lamp. (Figure 48) Part of the text below reads: "By it the human voice – the truest expression of personality, ability, and character – is carried from place to place instantly and accurately. And human powers are thus extended as if by magic." The language in this passage is especially intriguing because it places the locus of one's personality and character in the disembodied voice rather than the face – a point I will return to.

¹⁷⁸ Sigmund Freud, in his 1919 essay "The Uncanny," defines the term as a feeling or experience of something that seems both familiar and unfamiliar. The familiarity of the human voice would have been undermined by the unfamiliarity of the wires and machines through which it comes across. Freud associates the uncanny with sexuality, but also in terms of literary criticism. In this second sense, the uncanny refers to the aesthetics of anxiety.

¹⁷⁹ On radio see: Richard Guy Wilson, Dianna H. Pilgrim, Dickran Tashjian, *The Machine Age in America 1918-1941* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1986). The first radio station opened in Pittsburgh in 1920, and by 1925 there were over 500 stations and nearly 3 million receivers. By the 1920s, families nationwide attended the movies at least once a week.

Furthermore, the treatment of the telephone as akin to magic serves to highlight the uncanny nature of this kind of disembodied communication in which an object, a machine, serves as the avatar of the human body. I use the word ‘avatar’ here purposefully, because it is important to recognize that the telephone shaped communication as dramatically in the early twentieth century as computers and the internet have changed communication in our time. The interest in, and uncanny experience of, avatars in our own systems, whether they be online, in video games, or in the movies, has captured the collective imagination in the same way the telephone and its possibilities did in its time.

In 1915, the first coast-to-coast telephone call was made from New York to San Francisco, a highly publicized event inaugurated by Alexander Graham Bell himself. In 1926, the first two-way communication across the Atlantic was achieved. In another telephone ad from 1927, entitled “From the Far Corners of the Earth”, the telephone marches towards us, ushering in a parade of peoples from around the world. (Figure 49) And yet the term “uncanny” is useful in describing this experience because it connotes both a magical/mystical sense, and a connotation of anxiety. Even today, the image of the telephone on parade among the peoples of the world seems odd, as if this thing, this machine, has come to life. As in the early cartoons, the inanimate becomes animate and attains its own subjectivity. Suddenly the possibilities of technology take a turn for the troublesome. The machine is now used to mediate the human exchange, and somehow takes on a life of its own. While the telephone is a wonder that makes previously impossible communication possible, it also serves to replace face-to-face conversation, and becomes a source of isolation rather than interaction.

In Charles Sheeler's *Self-Portrait* drawing from 1923, this same candlestick telephone appears as the subject of the work.¹⁸⁰ (Figure 50) Prominently displayed on a table or ledge in the foreground, the telephone replaces the image of the self in the artist's self-portrait. The words "Audubon 451-" sketched on the number plate of the mouthpiece identifies it with Sheeler as Sheeler's own phone.¹⁸¹ Though we expect to see the phone reflected in the darkened window behind it, like the window shade cord, instead we find a faint reflection of Sheeler himself. His torso mirrors the position of the phone; both are facing the right edge of the frame, turned in a traditional portrait's three-quarter view. This positioning highlights the telephone's anthropomorphic qualities. The shaft and earpiece appear as torso and arm, while the mouthpiece suggests a head.¹⁸² Since the image of the head is cut off in Sheeler's reflection, the mouthpiece not only suggests but actively replaces Sheeler's face in this portrait. This replacement coincides with the advertisement's assertion that the voice, instead of the face, is the locus of personality and expression. This disembodiment of personality is furthered in the drawing. The mute image transfers this locus from the voice to the object itself. The solidity and presence of the telephone in contrast to the shadowy and dim reflection of the figure signals the disembodiment (and possibly disappearance) of the self and its replacement by the machine.

¹⁸⁰ This appears to be the Western Electric Model 20AL or possibly the 40AL. While some phones were still nickel plated, the majority of the 20AL phones produced were painted with a black "japan" finish. "Japans" were asphalt-like varnishes that are baked on the brass to produce a durable surface. After World War I, the 40AL was introduced. This candlestick is identical in appearance and function to the No. 20AL, but the base and the tube shaft were made of steel. The steel parts were not "japaned" rather it was given a chemical finish produced by oxidizing the surface in the presence of steam and oil leading to a hard dark gray appearance. See website: <http://www.antiquetelephonehistory.com/we20b.html>.

¹⁸¹ Susan Fillin-Yeh, "Charles Sheeler's 1923 'Self-Portrait'", *Arts Magazine* 52 (January 1978), 106-9: 108. And yet it further reduces him to a number.

¹⁸² Fillin-Yeh, "Charles Sheeler," 107.

Though Sheeler is often deemed the poster-child for the celebration of the machine-age aesthetic of Precisionism, this intimate drawing, and especially the ghostly figure in the reflection, reveals a far more ambivalent view of technological progress and its impact on human subjective experience.¹⁸³ The disappearing vestige of the human image appears extraordinarily fragile in the face of technology. The darkness of the windowpane suggests it is nighttime and that the interior is lit with electric light. What's left of the already-decapitated figure could be easily extinguished completely simply by pulling down the shade or turning off the light.¹⁸⁴ This echoes the terrifying vulnerability of the body when exposed to the mechanized warfare of WWI.

Mark Rawlinson has also argued that Sheeler's imprecision in his drawing of the shadows of the telephone's cords suggests a subtle distortion that comments on the new method of communication as a distortion of communication itself, "an alienating, rather than liberating, experience."¹⁸⁵ Since the light source is coming from the space of the viewer and from the left side of the image, it is unclear where the shadows of cords that appear on the table come from. I would reinforce his argument by noting that the telephone, the main object here, is itself off balance since part of its cord is stuck under the right side of the base. This instability, almost hidden by the hypnotizing stillness of the image, adds further emphasis to the fragility of the whole.

Similarly, the promise of communication seen in the telephone advertisements is absent from this image. Rather than an image of radiant progress, the telephone in this eerily still and quiet image speaks more to the isolation and loneliness of modern

¹⁸³ As suggested by Lucic and Rawlinson. Karen Lucic, *Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). Mark Rawlinson, *Charles Sheeler: Modernism, Precisionism and the Borders of Abstraction*, (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2007).

¹⁸⁴ Lucic, *Charles Sheeler*, 131. Rawlinson, *Charles Sheeler*, 88.

¹⁸⁵ Rawlinson, *Charles Sheeler*, 87.

existence.¹⁸⁶ First titled *Nature Morte-Telephone*, the dead and lifeless still life gives us pause when we consider how much more solid and alive it appears in comparison to the flickering faintness of the human reflection.¹⁸⁷ Since the reflected figure is faceless and without hands, it cannot communicate, either by voice or expression. Also reflected in the window is the presence of an empty chair, suggesting the absence of human face-to-face contact that the telephone replaces. As William Carlos Williams noted in his introduction to a Sheeler exhibition at MoMA in 1939, “More and more alone as time goes on, shut off from each other in spite of facile means of communication we shrink within ourselves.”¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, the way the table enters into the viewer’s space suggests that the reflected image could also be our own, implying that this isolation is one we share. In this way, the headlessness of the figure suggests that it is an image not only of the artist, but of the everyman. As Rawlinson notes, it “alludes to the possibility that there is no longer a tangible self to portray.”¹⁸⁹ This is precisely the question that the object portraits seek to explore, and a large part of their work considers how the machine is implicated.

Taylorism and Fordism: the melding of man and machine

It was not only the machines themselves that threatened human subjectivity, but also the celebration of the cult of machine efficiency that threatened to reduce the human to an unthinking machine. Frederick Winslow Taylor, the father of scientific management and a leader of the Efficiency Movement, became the bane of labor unions

¹⁸⁶ More like an Edward Hopper.

¹⁸⁷ The drawing was first exhibited in Paris at the Durand-Ruel galleries in November 1923 under the title *Nature Morte – Telephone*, and in January 1924 at the Whitney Studio Galleries as *Audubon 451-*. A letter of April 16, 1931, from Edith Gregor Halpert in the Museum of Modern Art’s files is the first known mention of the drawing as a self-portrait, noting its acquirement by Mrs. Rockefeller.

¹⁸⁸ William Carlos Williams, introduction to Sheeler exhibition at MoMA, 1939. page 7.

¹⁸⁹ Rawlinson, *Charles Sheeler*, 77.

when he implemented time and motion studies in order to assess the efficiency of individual workers. The other figurehead of this movement was, of course, Henry Ford who introduced assembly lines to allow for mass production of the Model T automobile. These two men worked to change labor from a system of skilled workers who completed entire tasks to a regimented system of individual rote actions, repeated endlessly, which were eventually combined with others to produce a whole. In doing so, Taylor and Ford succeeded in separating the skill from the labor, the mind from the body. As Barbara Zabel has noted, they also “worked to better coordinate the movements of the body and machine, [and in consequence] many began to see the danger of making men and women into machines, into nonthinking robots.”¹⁹⁰

The 1927 German expressionist film *Metropolis*, released in the U.S. in 1928, serves as a visual exploration of this fear. (Figure 51) The metropolis is split between laborers and the management who rule from above. The laborers in Fritz Lang’s epic are brainless automatons, walking and moving in unison, their bodies just cogs in the Machine. That is, of course, until they are incited by the robot disguised as their leader, Maria, to revolt. The real Maria, however, argues for patience while waiting for the great Mediator, the heart who will mediate between the mind (management) and the hands (labor). Freder, the son of the autocrat who rules Metropolis, and who falls in love with Maria, becomes that mediator in the end. His mediation, however, does nothing to resolve the problem that this kind of factory work presents, as it necessarily divorces mind and body, not only in terms of management and labor, but more insidiously within the laborers themselves.

¹⁹⁰ Zabel, *Assembling Art*, 5.

While nearly everyone working on the Machine Age mentions the Charlie Chaplin film *Modern Times* of 1936, referring to the well-known image of him trapped in the gears of the machine, few discuss the effect working in the factory has on his body. (Figure 52) Chaplin, characterized generically as “a factory worker,” works on an assembly line tightening nuts onto bolts as they come down the conveyor belt. Since the pace is so fast, anytime Chaplin is distracted by a fly or a sneeze, he gets behind on his work. In other parts of the film, however, we see Chaplin relieved of his work on the line. Though he no longer has the wrenches in his hands, he cannot stop making the motion of turning the nuts. Later, when the president of the company orders the conveyor belt to be set at maximum speed, is when Chaplin gets caught in the gears of the machine. When he is finally retrieved, he has a nervous breakdown, taking the wrenches and twisting everything in sight, including the foreman’s nipples and nose and women who have nut-shaped buttons on their dresses. He is eventually caught by the police and taken to an insane asylum. The next title card reads: “Cured of a nervous breakdown but without a job, he leaves the hospital to start life anew.” It was the job, however, and the pressures of Taylor and Ford’s machine efficiency, that put him there in the first place.

This efficiency craze and the ambivalence it inspired was not only confined to the sphere of the factory. In 1913, Christine Frederick wrote an international bestseller entitled, *Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home*, which advised women to transform their kitchens into efficient factories.¹⁹¹ Many implements were newly designed and promoted in the early twentieth-century as time-savers for women,

¹⁹¹ Nancy Ring, *New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity: Man Ray, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp in the United States, 1913-1921*. (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1991), 27-28.

among them the electric iron (1903), the electric vacuum cleaner (1907), and the electric toaster (1909).

Interestingly, Man Ray photographed one of these household devices, the handheld egg beater, as a kind of self-portrait, titling it *Homme* (French for Man, referring to his name) in 1918.¹⁹² (Figure 53) He then sent the photograph to Tristan Tzara in Paris, where it was his first exhibited work in Paris at the Salon Dada in 1921.¹⁹³ Man Ray had carefully lit the eggbeater in order to create a shadow on the surface on which it rests. This shadow duplicates the bulbous end of the instrument, resulting in the appearance of dual hanging orbs. This, combined with the angle of the crank handle, makes the whole look remarkably like male genitalia.¹⁹⁴ Like Sheeler's drawing of the telephone, Man Ray has deliberately anthropomorphized this machine, and/or mechanized his 'self'. Unlike the Sheeler, however, Man Ray has eliminated his explicit physical presence in the image. So while the image still remains anthropomorphic in quality, it ventures toward another degree of the disappearance of the subject. Here, instead of man being overshadowed by the machine, there is a confluence of man (the very essence of manhood) and machine, suggesting the very thing feared by those opposed to Taylor and Ford's methods.

The question then becomes: is this image of convergence one of power (suggesting the cyborg super-human), or one of impotence, as in Duchamp's mechanized bachelors in *The Large Glass*? Nancy Ring has noted that Man Ray's work resists the

¹⁹² Formulated in 1870, the eggbeater remained handheld and hand-manipulated until 1919 when the KitchenAid electric stand mixer was introduced to the market

<http://www.ideafinder.com/history/inventions/mixers.htm>.

¹⁹³ Mason Klein, *Alias Man Ray: The Art of Reinvention* (The Jewish Museum NY. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 60. Tzara then apparently reversed the names of *Homme* and *Femme* for the exhibition. This is why there is another copy of the image entitled *Femme*.

¹⁹⁴ For further discussion see Naumann, *New York Dada*, 84.

impotence suggested by the incorporation of a female-identified household device, since the object is a hand-manipulated one that can be associated with male masturbation.¹⁹⁵ Barbara Zabel, on the other hand, asserts that this gender ambiguity suggests an “anxious positioning of the self in relation to the dominant and highly mechanized worldview.”¹⁹⁶ Yet the mechanical had infiltrated the domestic sphere, so the blurring of gender boundaries was not necessarily an anti-machine gesture. Arturo Schwarz has noted that the photograph was taken during a difficult time in the artist’s marriage, which is confirmed in Man Ray’s autobiography *Self-Portrait* of 1963.¹⁹⁷ His wife, Donna, had during this time openly conducted an affair against his wishes. This autobiographical detail could weigh the balance in favor of impotence. I’m not sure I have the answer. But it is this very ambiguity written into the object-portraits, which makes them such powerful embodiments of the anxieties surrounding the depiction of identity, as posed by contemporary psychology, and the ascendance of the machine in the post-WWI moment, as manipulated into a cult of efficiency by Taylor and Ford.

Man Ray’s earlier assemblage entitled *Self-Portrait* (1916), which was exhibited at his second one-man show at the Daniel Gallery in January 1917, can be seen as a precedent for the concerns of this work.¹⁹⁸ (Figure 54) Like many of the fragile assemblages, this one is now lost and is only known in a photograph.¹⁹⁹ As in *Homme*, Man Ray has deliberately anthropomorphized machine parts, melding man and machine

¹⁹⁵ Ring, *New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity*, 28-31.

¹⁹⁶ Zabel, *Assembling Art*, 92.

¹⁹⁷ In 1977, Arturo Schwarz in *Man Ray: The Rigour of Imagination* (NY: Rizzoli, 1977) suggested another reading of the image that reinforces the idea that this is a portrait. He states, “He chose the egg (ie. woman) beater when he was having trouble with his wife Donna (Donna is ‘woman’ in Italian). The title of this Readymade Man could then refer not only to the genus but directly to his own name.” Schwarz, 159. This reading, however, seems like a stretch, even if Man Ray did mention that he beat his wife in his autobiography.

¹⁹⁸ Klein, *Alias Man Ray*, 29. Klein states that this was his first publicly exhibited assemblage.

¹⁹⁹ A Gelatin silver photograph, 3 ¾ x 2 ¾ in. at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

into one image. The artist describes the work in his 1963 autobiography as a panel with black and aluminum paint, though Nancy Ring suggests that, in fact, “the foundation of Self-Portrait is a vertical canvas covered with an aluminum sheet; the surface of this sheet is striped with incisions made by a metal tool, [and] coated with broad areas of black and white paint.”²⁰⁰ Upon this reflective background, Man Ray affixed two actual electric bells at the top and a push button below. This alignment has been interpreted as either a face, with the bells as eyes and the push button as mouth, or, more provocatively by Barbara Zabel, as female breasts and genitalia, where the outlines of the violin sound holes become hips.²⁰¹ In the center, the artist placed a hand-print as a kind of signature.²⁰² As many have noted, the indexical handprint serves as a pun on the artist’s name (much like *Homme*) in that the French word for hand is “main”, a homophone for the English word “man”, referring both to the artist’s name and his gender.²⁰³

In juxtaposing this primitive gesture of the hand-print with the mechanical parts, Man Ray sets up a striking tension between man and machine, old art and new. The hand-print alludes to the artist’s touch, to the very idea of an expressive art that the inclusion of Duchamp-like readymades resists.²⁰⁴ The hand signifies the remnant of what Duchamp termed “retinal” art based on craft, discarded in favor of conceptual idea art. As George Baker asserts, the hand also serves as a “gesture of interdiction...[signaling]

²⁰⁰ Man Ray, *Self-Portrait* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1963), 71. Nancy Ring, *New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity*, 125.

²⁰¹ It has also been suggested that the image looks like a kind of door with doorbells, and with the archways and jambs scratched into the paint. Naumann, in Tate, 2008, 66.

²⁰² Man Ray, *Self Portrait*, 71.

²⁰³ Klein, *Alias Man Ray*, 31. // Naumann in Tate, 2008, 66. // Ring, *New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity* 125.

²⁰⁴ Naumann, Tate, 2008, 67. // Schwarz, *Man Ray: The Rigour of Imagination*, 136. // Ring, *New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity*, 125.

the closure of the conception of the art object as an interior or ‘expressive’ space.”²⁰⁵ It provokes the question so pertinent to this moment: Is art a function of the hand or the head? And by making this object a self-portrait, Man Ray also seems to be asking the question: Is identity, or “the self”, a function of exterior expression or interior thoughts? If the mechanically-influenced idea art triumphs over the primitive expressive art, does that suggest then that the machine triumphs over man? In many ways the artistic leaps made by the Dadaists put a lot more at stake than just the definition of art, and the object-portraits, the manifestation of these ideas in terms of identity, seem to convey an anxiety or tension about the stakes of their experiment.

Zabel, however, sees the handprint as a gesture of “male mastery of technology as well as of the domains of the primitive and the feminine.”²⁰⁶ The hand, for her, symbolizes control over the female body (as she sees it, the female breasts and genitalia) as conflated with the mechanical.²⁰⁷ However, it is not just the female body in New York Dada that is conflated with the mechanical, but all sexuality. Therefore, the gender play and ambiguity in the work is more likely to stem from that source rather than a specific rhetoric of control. In fact, like the sexually frustrated bachelors in Duchamp’s *Large Glass*, visitors to the exhibition were frustrated by the non-functioning mechanical parts because the bells did not ring as expected when the button was pushed. Man Ray later

²⁰⁵ Baker continues, “expelling its operations outward into the world, attaching readymades to its surface like excrescences or cancerous growths. In this, Self-Portrait presented the art object as a model of subjectivity, a ‘public’ subject built around the collapse of the art-work’s metaphorical interiority, a personhood built from the outside, all surface, imprint, and exterior.” George Baker, “Man Ray’s Culture Industry,” in Klein, ed. *Alias Man Ray*, 154.

²⁰⁶ Zabel, *Assembling Art*, 94.

²⁰⁷ Zabel argues that the New York Dadaists often conflated primitive and mechanical imagery as a way of asserting their power over both. “In their search for identity, Man Ray and the New York Dadaists borrowed not only from the domain of the mechanical and the domestic but also from the ‘primitive’.... This association of the handcrafted and ‘primitive’ with the mass produced and mechanical served the avant-garde not as a means of retreating from modern civilization but rather as a way of asserting a human dimension within it, and in doing so coming to terms with the world of the machine.” Zabel, *Assembling Art*, 93.

recalled to Arturo Schwarz that, “They were furious, they thought I was a bad electrician.”²⁰⁸ However, the artist resisted other critical efforts to chalk this up to Dada humor: “I was called a humorist, but it was far from my intention to be funny. I simply wished the spectator to take an active part in the creation.”²⁰⁹ Part of the intention of the work, then, was for the viewer to participate in activating the machine, only to be disappointed in its failure (or by its resistance to control). The work serves as an interface between man and machine, and therefore as a site on which their dysfunctional relationship is played out. Man Ray’s unaccommodating object, then, critiques the success and efficiency imagined by the merging of machine and body promoted by Taylor and Ford.

Members of the Stieglitz Circle explicitly conceived of the mechanical and theoretical underpinnings of the Dadaists’ work as antithetical to their focus on the intuitive and embodied generation of artistic production. Dove’s assemblage, *The Intellectual*, serves as a caricatured personality type that pokes fun at the excessively analytical. (Figure 55) The image can be read as a figure, whose head is composed of a magnifying glass as a large skull and forehead, a chicken bone as a face with eye sockets and an aquiline nose, and a mossy rock that could signify a bearded mouth and chin.²¹⁰ Below, a fish scale mounted on a wooden panel suggests a torso. These are assembled on a ground of yellowed cloth striped vertically by hand and mounted in a two-inch deep wooden box under glass.

The disproportionately large head resembles stereotypical images of aliens, early descriptions of which appear in the literature of H.G. Wells. (Figure 56) In *The War of*

²⁰⁸ Schwarz, *Man Ray: The Rigour of Imagination*, 136.

²⁰⁹ Man Ray, *Self Portrait*, 71.

²¹⁰ The bone has alternatively been identified as a fish bone or a chicken’s breast bone.

the Worlds of 1898, Wells described the Martians as having developed an overly large brain which increased their intelligence but diminished their emotional and physical capacity, thus leading to their complete and violent disregard for human life.²¹¹ In an 1893 essay for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Wells suggested that the evolution of the human brain could cause the same imbalance, turning humans into thinking machines without the tempering qualities of emotional intelligence.²¹² Excessive rationality, typified by the measuring instruments like the scale and the magnifying glass in the Dove image, could lead to the kind of irrational destruction of life seen in Wells' novel and in the First World War.

In the interwar years, this anxiety was alternatively expressed in machine humor, or humorous machines. The irrationality resulting from excessive rationality is epitomized by the cartoon *Inventions* of Rube Goldberg. Reuben Lucius Goldberg was born on July 4, 1883 into a world where the boat and the horse were the primary means of transportation. By the time he published his first *Invention* in the *Evening Mail* on November 10, 1914, the world had changed dramatically.²¹³ In his *Inventions* and throughout his other cartoon series, the four machines that Goldberg spoofed the most were the telephone, the camera, the radio, and the automobile.²¹⁴ Goldberg's fictional inventor, Professor Lucifer Gorgonzola Butts, responded to this hectic new world by participating in the craze to invent gadgets that would make life simpler and more efficient. Yet in their quest for simplicity and efficiency, the gadgets achieve this goal through the most complex means possible.

²¹¹ H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (London: Heinemann, 1898).

²¹² H.G. Wells, "The Man of the Year Million," *Pall Mall Gazette* (1893).

²¹³ Peter Marzio, *Rube Goldberg: His Life and Work* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 179. Goldberg would produce one *Invention* every two weeks for the next twenty years.

²¹⁴ Marzio, *Rube Goldberg*, 151.

Far from rational, Goldberg's *Inventions* rely on animals, plants, dwarfs and other people, and natural forces such as the sun to work in precisely the manner proscribed in order for the contraptions to work. Goldberg's biographer, Peter Marzio, called the *Inventions* "artificial exaggerations of the natural rigidity in real machines. They consist of totally incongruous parts which unintentionally follow a rigid chain of unlikely events."²¹⁵ Even in form, Goldberg's cartoons mocked the zeal for inventing by mimicking the style of government patent application drawings. Goldberg had originally obtained a degree in engineering at UC Berkeley, and his drawings imitate the seriousness of the A to B to C explanation of an engineering diagram. This deadpan approach adds to the humor of the inventions by juxtaposing the absolute solemnity of the diagram with the absurdity of the plan. As Goldberg himself noted, the *Inventions* were "symbols of man's capacity for exerting maximum effort to accomplish minimum results."²¹⁶

On occasion, Goldberg slyly acknowledges the improbability of the success of his *Inventions*. In one scene, titled "Simplified Pencil Sharpener," the inventor eschews the electric or manual sharpener for a complicated system that involves moths, an opossum, and eventually a woodpecker who chews the wood from the pencil, thereby sharpening it. (Figure 57) He notes at the end, however, that "Emergency knife (S) is always handy in case opossum or the woodpecker gets sick and can't work." This is humorous not only because it implies that the opossum and woodpecker might not cooperate, but that the rest of the contraption – involving flying a kite, moths eating flannel, and an iron burning through pants – is failsafe.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 197.

²¹⁶ Maynard Frank Wolfe, *Rube Goldberg's Inventions*, 53.

Although the *Inventions* are meant to be comical, many of them are remarkably violent. They often involve inflicting pain, causing tears, or scaring one of the innocent beings, whether animal or human, involved in the sequence. (Figure 58) In “Simple Way to Carve a Turkey”, the beginning instructions call for one to “Put bowl of chicken salad (A) on window sill (B) to cool. Rooster (C) recognizes his wife in salad and is overcome with grief. His tears (D) saturate sponge (E), pulling string....” Many other scenes require guns, arrows, and occasionally molten metal, like “Our Special Never-Miss Putter,” one of many golf-themed *Inventions*. (Figure 59) For this contraption, “(A) Action of arm upsets molten metal on ball. (B) Ball is attracted to magnet. (C) Metal splashes on caddie, causing him to scream. (D) Caddie’s scream awakens sleeping mole – mole dives into hole, dragging magnet and ball behind him!” The magnet, of course, has been tied to the mole’s tail with a string. Again in this image, the caddie being splashed (and presumably severely burned) by molten metal is integral to the success of the putter.

The danger of the hyper-rationality of machines and its potentially violent effect can also be seen in the film medium. Goldberg knew Charlie Chaplin and called him “the greatest entertainer in the world.”²¹⁷ And they were certainly men of similar minds. In *Modern Times*, Chaplin also spoofs the enthusiasm for inventions that improve efficiency. In the factory president’s office, a salesman presents the Bellows Feeding Machine, “a practical device which automatically feeds your men at work. Don’t stop for lunch. Be ahead of your competitor. The Bellows feeding machine will eliminate the lunch hour, increase production, and decrease overhead.”²¹⁸ (Figure 60) Naturally,

²¹⁷ Marzio, *Rube Goldberg*, 91.

²¹⁸ Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times*, 1936.

Chaplin is the chump chosen to test out the machine, and he is strapped in. At first all seems well; Chaplin is successfully served soup and meat without needing to use his hands. But soon the machine starts to malfunction. The corn on the cob feeder goes crazy and they can't stop the machine as it begins to harm him. The soup returns and spills boiling hot broth on him twice, after which he gets a pie in the face. Then, the wiping mechanism beats him senseless until the salesman finally manages to turn the machine off. Showing no concern for his beleaguered worker, the president dismisses the sales pitch with the concern that "It's no good – it isn't practical." Chaplin's super-efficient machine is both inefficient and results in pain and violence, thus echoing Goldberg's cartoons. Through analyzing and satirizing Taylor and Ford's attempts to meld man and machine into an efficient ideal, these artists envision the problems of excessive rationality and its impact on the body. But in the next section, the machine takes over the body altogether, leaving no trace behind.

Photography as Machine Art

In another object-portrait, this time an assemblage by Arthur Dove entitled *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz* from 1924-25, the body of the subject is eliminated altogether. (Figure 1) In its place, Dove has affixed a watch spring, clock spring, and piece of steel wool to a glass plate, with a camera lens above. No hint of the anthropomorphic remains.²¹⁹ Dove first exhibited this portrait at Stieglitz's "Seven Americans" exhibition at the Anderson Galleries. Serving two functions, "Seven Americans" both commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the opening of Stieglitz's acclaimed 291

²¹⁹ Even though some have suggested that the camera lens could be a head or an eye and that the piece of steel wool may refer to Stieglitz's bristling mustache. I think this may be a stretch, but if they are, then they interestingly correspond to de Zayas' image that only retains Stieglitz's eyes and moustache.

Gallery (aka “The Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession”), and served as the inaugural exhibition of what was to become known as the Second Generation Stieglitz Circle.²²⁰

With his new Intimate Gallery, which emerged out of the “Seven Americans” exhibition, Stieglitz now focused on establishing a specifically American modernism which he hoped would serve to revive the spiritual energy of the country in the wake of World War I and the rampant materialism of the 1920s.

This assemblage (like the twenty-four others to come in the next three years) was an unusual departure from Dove’s oeuvre, both in its inclusion of non-traditional materials and in the subject of a portrait. Introduced to Stieglitz in 1909, Dove’s early works like *Abstraction No.3* 1910-11 and *Nature Symbolized No. 2* 1914 (Figure 61) developed a personal style of abstraction from nature dominated by biomorphic forms that would underlie his artistic production until his death in 1946. First exhibited at the “Seven Americans” show, Dove experimented with this alternative form only during the early years of the Second Generation circle, roughly 1924-28. Much of the scholarship on Dove’s *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz* reads the assembled objects incorporated into the composition as one would read attributes in traditional portraiture. In this interpretation, the narrative thus equates the objects and the well-known physical or personality features of Stieglitz to which they correspond. The object termed a “photographic plate” correlates to Stieglitz’s position as one of the leading photographers of the time, as does the smoked camera lens, which may also be his eye or view of the world. The watch spring suggests the precision of Stieglitz’s mind, while the coiled clock spring characterizes his energy. The bit of steel wool may refer to his abrasive personality or to

²²⁰ Term “Second Generation Stieglitz Circle” coined by Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing*, 16-17.

his bristling moustache.²²¹ I intend to argue, however, that the symbolism of the objects in this portrait functions on more than one level. Not only do they refer to external attributes, they also collectively signify abstract internal beliefs and ideologies that are consistent with Stieglitz's search for the expression of a higher spiritual level of reality in his life, art, and gallery – a goal which Dove shared.

Upon investigation, the form that many have termed a "photographic plate" is actually a mirrored glass plate. Rather than, or in addition to, signifying Stieglitz's profession as a photographer, the mirror may allude to Stieglitz's vision of the relationship between a work of art and its viewer, as exemplified in his layout of the Intimate Gallery. As Kristina Wilson has noted, "at the Intimate Gallery, the sensuous art and small, crowded space encouraged visitors to be aware of their embodied existence and, in turn, of their place in a larger physical and spiritual universe."²²² Stieglitz believed that American modern art could resuscitate the spiritual substance lacking in modern life, and his role as gallery owner was to "guide visitors down the path that he perceived was the correct route to spiritual enlightenment."²²³ He once boasted, "I'm not sure about being as much an artist as one of the leading spiritual forces of this country."²²⁴ In the announcement for the inaugural exhibition, Stieglitz insisted that the Intimate Gallery was dedicated to quiet "Intimacy" and "Concentration." The room measured only about twenty by twenty-six feet, and it was dominated by Stieglitz's voice as he sermonized on the art. Herbert Seligmann, author and journalist, recounted in his

²²¹ These descriptions were taken from Ann Lee Morgan, *Arthur Dove: Life and Work, with a Catalogue Raisonné* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 51, and Dorothy R. Johnson, *Arthur Dove: The Years of Collage* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland Art Gallery, 1967), 14 – but they represent the majority of interpretations.

²²² Kristina Wilson, "The Intimate Gallery and the *Equivalents*: Spirituality in the 1920s Work of Stieglitz," *Art Bulletin* 85/4 (Dec 2003), 746-68: 747.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 752.

²²⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 752. In a letter to Paul Rosenfeld.

diary, “For hours Stieglitz talked this afternoon, Sunday, with sometimes as many as fifteen or eighteen people standing in a semi-circle listening.” Seligmann also noted the spiritual rhetoric of the sermons, writing that “more than one person found their faith renewed in a spirit which they had hoped existed in the world but seemed to have been lost from view.”²²⁵

The hanging of the Intimate Gallery was more modern than the traditional institutions of its time. Often hung in a row, at eye-level, the works were presented with a kind of neutrality that did not privilege one work over the other. They were treated as “unique creations demanding undistracted attention.... By removing the traditional trappings of fine art [such as elaborate frames and hierarchical presentation, Stieglitz] wanted viewers to respond to the art independently, based on their emotional reality.”²²⁶ The name “Intimate Gallery” not only described the small size of the space, but also fostered the idea of an intimate physical interaction with the works of art. This is in accordance with Stieglitz’s view of spirituality as linked to the awareness of embodied existence.²²⁷ To Stieglitz, a work of art should be a catalyst for enlightenment, by “calling on the viewer to empathize with both its subject matter and the body of the artist who created it...thereby encouraging the viewer to participate in the same spiritual transformation that the artist has ostensibly experienced.”²²⁸

If hung at eye level, Dove’s *Portrait of Stieglitz* would reflect back to the viewer an image of his own face, thus heightening the viewer’s experience of embodiment, and

²²⁵ Quoted in Sarah Greenough, *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and his New York Galleries* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, and National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 2000), 316.

²²⁶ Wilson, “The Intimate Gallery,” 753, 754. This was, of course, as long as their experience corresponded with his vision.

²²⁷ See Brennan, *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory*.

²²⁸ Wilson, “The Intimate Gallery,” 755.

his intimate connection with the work of art, out of which he was meant to experience a connection with the spiritual. Furthermore, the photographic lens at the top of the composition is convex, as if looking out onto the world. In light of Stieglitz's interpretation of the function of a work of art, the lens might also suggest the connection of the viewer with the work. Through the lens, the art (and ostensibly Stieglitz as its subject) interacts with the viewer to help him achieve the sense of embodiment that leads to spirituality. Its position above the plate, as well as the circular/ovoid shape, seems to suggest a connection to the higher spiritual plane. Their use of the word 'higher' implies that they perceived a sort of vertical ascension of planes, or perhaps an upward spiral. The watch spring, right below the lens but still on the mirrored plate, might also suggest the spiraling link between the terrestrial and spiritual worlds, and/or between the 3rd and 4th dimension.²²⁹ This belief in the role of art as a conduit to a higher plane of consciousness stems from the contemporary scientific and spiritual theories with which Stieglitz and Dove were acquainted.

For spiritual theorists such as Claude Bragdon, who socialized with both Stieglitz and Dove in the mid-1920s, contemporary scientific advances, such as Albert Einstein's mathematical discoveries of the fourth dimension, gave empirical proof of an unseen, spiritual reality.²³⁰ Several authors have tried to reconstruct the general spiritual environment that may have informed the beliefs of Stieglitz and Dove.²³¹ It seems as though their interests lay in an amalgam of various forms of Eastern thought, mysticism, Romanticism, Symbolism, Transcendentalism, and theosophy without necessarily

²²⁹ For more information on the Fourth Dimension, see Linda Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

²³⁰ Sherrye Cohn, *Arthur Dove: Nature as Symbol*. (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985), 66-67.

²³¹ Among many: Sherrye Cohn, Linda Henderson, and Kristina Wilson.

adhering to the particulars of any one. What many of these theories shared, and what seems to have been the basis for the spirituality of men like Stieglitz and Dove, was a belief that above the earthly plane of existence there was located a spiritual plane of existence that connected all things in a kind of universal harmony.²³² Stieglitz and Dove believed that this unified spiritual plane was evinced in nature, particularly in the mathematical perfection of biological forms (such as the spiral).²³³ It is important to note, however, that they did not perceive of their spirituality as part of any organized religion that recognized a personified God as the unifying force. Instead, their spirituality was insistently individualistic; they believed that the spiritual plane could only be accessed through individual contemplation (often of nature, sometimes of art). They used phrases such as “the fourth dimension” and “higher plane of reality” as a kind of code or shorthand for this spiritual plane, and I use these same references throughout this essay.²³⁴

In the theoretical conversations that occurred amidst the Stieglitz circle, spiritually-oriented philosophies were seen as intertwined with, and supported by, the emerging scientific advances in biology and physics. The theories of the fourth dimension and nth-dimensional geometry were widely popular concepts which “acquired philosophical and mystical meanings.... Because it signified an ideal, invisible level of

²³² For example, the American Transcendentalists “believed that any given object [particularly those found in nature] symbolized both material and spiritual existence, which meant that the material world could always be read as an indication of the existence of a spiritual realm.” The Theosophists believed that “enlightenment was achieved when an individual, through study and meditation, became aware of her place within a larger whole of united religions and humanity. Accompanying this epiphany would be a sensation of oneness with a divine universe.” Kristina Wilson, “The Intimate Gallery and the *Equivalents*: Spirituality in the 1920s Work of Stieglitz.” *Art Bulletin* v.85 n. 4 (Dec 2003): 746-68): 748, 751.

²³³ What’s interesting about Dove’s assemblages is that he melds this sensibility with the mechanical, using a metallic clock spring as his spiral form.

²³⁴ He would have also found many of these ideas in a variety of essays and excerpts published in Stieglitz’s journal *Camera Work*, which include, among many, the excerpt of Kandinsky’s “The Spiritual in Art” (July 1912), Max Weber’s “The Fourth Dimension from a Plastic Point of View” (July 1910), and Maurice Aisen’s “The Latest Evolution in Art and Picabia” (June 1913).

reality which exists beyond the known, three-dimensional world, it inspired artists to abandon traditional methods of representation.”²³⁵ Many artists of this generation, like Kandinsky, turned to abstraction in order to express this higher and more “real” plane of reality.²³⁶

Dove believed that evidence of this higher realm could be found in nature. The discovery and popularization of the idea of ‘organic form’ in the field of biology intrigued the artist.²³⁷ The spiral, especially, became the focus of aesthetic theories.²³⁸ Pervasive in nature, “the spiral formation gives dramatic demonstration of natural growth based on enduring mathematical laws.”²³⁹ The spiral can be seen throughout Dove’s oeuvre as a natural form that expresses the vital force of nature and the evidence of a higher spiritual plane to be found there.²⁴⁰

The spiral in his *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz*, is seen in the form of the dominating presence of the clock spring. Dove’s perception of the spiral may also derive from the discussion of the form in Claude Bragdon’s theories. Bragdon, a theosophist and well-known writer on the fourth dimension, was friends with and neighbor to Stieglitz. He was a frequent visitor to Stieglitz’s Intimate Gallery, and he became an outspoken proponent of abstract art.²⁴¹ Bragdon believed that “geometric forms like the ovoid and

²³⁵ Cohn, *Nature as Symbol*, 39.

²³⁶ Albert Einstein’s Special and General Theories of Relativity of 1905 and 1916 respectively, were available in the United States at that time, and he had gone on a lecture tour around the country in 1920. In a letter to Stieglitz, Dove included Einstein in a list of great men: Jesus Christ, Albert Einstein, Alfred Stieglitz, and Newton Weatherly. Dec 9, 1934. Morgan, *Arthur Dove: Catalogue Raisonné*, 319.

²³⁷ The concept of organic form, and its application to the fine arts, goes back at least as far as the mid-19th century, when, for example, Christopher Dresser in “The Art of Decorative Design” 1862 demonstrated how original designs could be derived by abstracting the underlying patterns of leaves and plants. Barry Bergdoll, *European Architecture 1750-1890*. Oxford History of Art, University Press, 2000.

²³⁸ For example, Theodore Cook, *Spirals in Nature and Art*, 1903.

²³⁹ Cohn, *Nature as Symbol*, 32.

²⁴⁰ Cohn, in *Nature as Symbol*, has extensively investigated the spiral in Dove’s paintings, but did not discuss them in terms of his assemblages.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 53- 54.

the spiral [were] the archetypes of nature, which should be used as the basis of art to ‘unveil the hidden spirituality of life;’ for ‘the language of form is the symbolical expression of world order.’”²⁴² He used the spiral as the frontispiece to his *Primer of Higher Space* as an emblem of the fourth dimension and the personal achievement of a higher spiritual awareness.²⁴³ (Figure 62)

Dove would have been aware of these connotations and associations that the spiral form engendered.²⁴⁴ Therefore, the use of the spiral in his *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz* may suggest something more than Stieglitz’s “energetic nature.” It might signify the higher level of spiritual reality that he believed Stieglitz strove for, and perhaps attained. By using the spiral form in this abstract composition, Dove was able to express not only the spirituality to which his mentor aspired, but also the spirituality they believed to be accessible through an intimate connection with the work of art.

The other prominent element of the composition is the central diagonal of steel wool that is placed on a diagonal tangent to the spiral.²⁴⁵ This seems to be an especially fine grade of steel wool, as the strands are as thin as strands of hair. It is not surprising, then, that some scholars have suggested that it represents Stieglitz’s characteristic moustache. However, its deliberate placement at a diagonal suggests an additional

²⁴² Ibid., 59. From Bragdon’s *The Frozen Fountain* 1932 pg 6. Furthermore, In Bragdon’s theoretical writings, which combine the scientific and the spiritual, the conic spiral became an image that represented time and temporal development. A quote from Dove shows that he too conceived of the spiral in relationship to time: “The future seems to be gone through by a spiral spring from the past. The tension of that spring is the important thing.” (Letter to Stieglitz August 1925. Morgan, *Dear Stieglitz, Dear Dove*, 117.)

²⁴³ “By 1925, when Bragdon wrote *Old Lamps for New*, his belief in the fourth dimension had been corroborated by the important role it played in Einstein’s physics.” Cohn, *Nature as Symbol*, 67.

²⁴⁴ Cohn has made a lengthy and convincing case of this in relation to Dove’s paintings, but does not consider the implications for Dove’s assemblages.

²⁴⁵ More on the history of steel wool can be found at <http://www.brillo.com/relations/history.asp>. I have yet to determine what the use of steel wool (as steel wool) has to do with the rest of the forms and the theories, but it nevertheless is consistent with Dove’s interest in texture and the juxtaposition of linear and circular forms seen throughout his oeuvre.

interpretation. Bragdon's publications often acknowledge the influence of Jay Hambidge, editor and author of *The Diagonal*, "a monthly magazine devoted to the explanation of the rediscovered principles of Greek design, their appearance in nature and their application to the needs of modern art."²⁴⁶ He believed that the "basic principles underlying the greatest art so far produced in the world, may be found in the proportions of the human figure and the growing plant."²⁴⁷ Hambidge asserted that the diagonal was the basis of his theory of "dynamic symmetry." (Figure 63) The artist was to strive for dynamic symmetry, found in nature as the "type of orderly arrangement of members of an organism such as we find in a shell or the adjustment of leaves on a plant.... The dynamic is a symmetry suggestive of life and movement. Its great value to design lies in its power of transition or movement from one form to another in the system."²⁴⁸ Dove, and others like Bragdon, would have interpreted this movement as part of the upward spiral to higher dimensions of consciousness.²⁴⁹

However, as an artist who emphasized intuition, Dove is not likely to have followed Hambidge's directives to the letter, though he may have incorporated the concept of the diagonal as a dynamic form akin to the spiral.²⁵⁰ Rather than a literal application of mathematical laws and organic forms, Dove's intuitive use of these shapes

²⁴⁶ Jay Hambidge, *The Diagonal* 1 (Nov 1919): front cover.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 1.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 10-11.

²⁴⁹ The diagonal of steel wool also could possibly be seen to have phallic connotations, particularly with its placement next to the spiral. Whether that phallus is erect or not, and whether it is a response to Picabia's image of Stieglitz, is hard to say. Though I do not believe that this was Dove's intention, it is not outside of the realm of possibility given the often strong sexual content in Stieglitz's work. Dove's later work often has marked phallic references, as well as an interest in the juxtaposition of line and circle. Another possible visual reference the steel wool might make is to Stieglitz's *Equivalents*, photographs of clouds that he started around 1920 and continued through the decade.

²⁵⁰ Cohn states, however, that occasionally Dove did seem to incorporate in his paintings specific shapes literally taken from texts. She notes that as an experienced illustrator of books, often illustrating passages of texts, there was some precedent for Dove's possible illustration of philosophical texts. Cohn, *Nature as Symbol*, 72-77.

– the spiral and the diagonal, as well as the mirror and the lens – is for their perceived ability to illustrate the higher levels of spiritual consciousness that he believed represented the essence of his friend and mentor, Alfred Stieglitz. In exploring both a medium and genre atypical of his oeuvre, Dove turned to these forms as a way of creating an abstract portrait that reflected his and Stieglitz’s beliefs in the spiritual power of art.

And yet, given Stieglitz and Dove’s penchant for natural forms and spiritual motifs, there is one glaring aspect of the *Portrait* that remains problematic: the fact that Dove uses these man-made, metallic, mechanical scraps to construct his image.

Although the 1920s were hailed as a “Machine Age” in art, Dove and Stieglitz were among those who fought avidly against the effects of the machine.²⁵¹ In fact, Stieglitz’s proselytizing at the Intimate Gallery about the spiritual power of art was often offered specifically in order to assuage and redeem those wearied by modern life. Sherwood Anderson, American novelist of *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) fame, wrote of Stieglitz as the polar opposite of Henry Ford, in an article for *The New Republic*. He noted, “Against the Ford car and the vast Ford factories out in Detroit I would like to put for a moment the figure of Alfred Stieglitz as the craftsman of genius, in short the artist. Born into a mechanical age and having lived in an age when practically all American men followed the false gods of cheapness and expediency, he has kept the faith.”²⁵² To Anderson, Stieglitz was a beacon of primitive manhood as an artist craftsman who remained true to his tools and materials. And as such, Stieglitz was able to subordinate the machine (in his case, the camera) to his will. As Anderson asked, “For has he not fought all of his life to

²⁵¹ Richard Guy Wilson, et al. *The Machine Age in America 1918-1941*. New York: The Brooklyn Museum, with Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1986. By the late 1920s the art world recognized this phenomenon, and began holding exhibitions on the subject. One of the earliest was the *Machine-Age Exposition* of 1927, organized by *The Little Review*. Another was the Museum of Modern Art’s *Machine Art* show in 1934.

²⁵² Sherwood Anderson, “Alfred Stieglitz,” *The New Republic* 32 (25 October 1922): 215-17.

make machinery the tool and not the master of man?” Perhaps Dove’s use of mechanical materials conveys just this: that Stieglitz is master of his materials and is able to manipulate them, to bend the machine into submission, in order to service his view of art. They address their fears and ambivalence about the machine by committing violence against it, by disassembling it and using the pieces rather than a functioning mechanism. What better way to show Stieglitz’s transcendence of the material and mechanical than to use those materials to express his connection to the spiritual?

A traditional portrait of Stieglitz, one that depicted his face and torso, could not have portrayed his personality so thoroughly as to almost take his place as a guide to spiritual enlightenment. Given the emphasis on the viewer’s embodiment in their rhetoric, it is poignant that only the disembodiment of Stieglitz in Dove’s abstract object-portrait could successfully have facilitated the viewer’s engagement. So in the end, the disembodiment in the Dove can be seen as a triumph or transcendence over the machine, rather than a surrender to it.²⁵³

It is through the rhetoric surrounding the question of photography as a machine art that we can understand the artistic choices Dove made. Another portrait assemblage, this time of the photographer Paul Strand, *Painted Forms, Friends* (also known as “Portrait of Rebecca and Paul Strand”), forms a visual link to the *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz* in that Dove’s images of the two photographers are the assemblages that contain the most metallic, mechanical pieces.²⁵⁴ (Figure 64) Unlike the portrait of Stieglitz, in

²⁵³ Or perhaps it shows that the spiritual and the mechanical are not incompatible.

²⁵⁴ This assemblage has variously been titled “Painted Forms, Friends” (in the original 1925 catalogue and in Morgan’s catalogue raisonné) or “Untitled” or “Untitled: (Portrait of Rebecca and Paul Strand)” in the PMA database. It was a gift to the PMA by Paul Strand, so it is likely that it was a portrait of him and his wife. Dove would have known Paul and Rebecca Strand well, but their friendship is not documented in the same way that Dove’s relationship to Stieglitz is.

this work the objects are painted in a manner that is strikingly similar to many of Dove's paintings. Concentric circles of radiating hues and darkly-colored diagonals and lines are typical of Dove's oeuvre. Yet the objects in this composition, a metal disk, a spring, screws, and a piece of wood, are mostly man-made found objects.

Compare the portraits of the photographers to Dove's only other completed assemblage portrait named for a specific individual, the *Portrait of Ralph Dusenberry* (1924, Figure 65). This is also the only portrait for which Dove provided any sort of explanatory narrative:

"Apropos of the hymn in the 'Ralph Dusenberry,' the Dusenberrys lived on a boat near us in Lloyd's Harbor. He could dive like a Kingfish and swim like a fish. Was a sort of foreman on the Marshall Field Place. His father was a minister. He and his brother were architects in Port Washington. He drove in to Huntington in a sleigh one winter and stayed so long in a café there they had to bring a wagon to take him home. He came home to his boat one day with two bottles, making his wife so mad that she threw them overboard. He dived in right after them and came up with one in each hand. When tight he always sang "Shall we gather at the river."²⁵⁵ [the song printed in the assemblage]

A wooden ruler makes up the frame of this image, which includes two pieces of driftwood and a printed piece of the hymn referred to in the narrative on a painted ground. The driftwood resembles a fish jumping and diving, as Dusenberry does in Dove's tale, and the painted yacht club flag flying in the background evokes the harbor.

All three assemblages were made in the same year and were all exhibited at the "Seven Americans" exhibition. It's striking, then, that the images of photographers Stieglitz and Strand differ so markedly in the use of machine-like imagery from Dusenberry's primarily wooden materials and nature-based imagery. I would argue that

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Frederick S. Wight, *Arthur G. Dove* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), 51.

an explanation for this lies in the discourse surrounding photography as a machine art and Stieglitz and Strand's dedication to straight photography in particular.²⁵⁶

On Valentine's Day, 1921, Paul Strand wrote a review of an exhibition featuring the work of fellow photographer Alfred Stieglitz.²⁵⁷ This come-back show was held at the Anderson Galleries where Stieglitz would house his next two gallery projects – The Intimate Gallery and An American Place. Strand titled his piece “Alfred Stieglitz and a Machine,” and it paid homage to the way straight photography embraced its medium, the camera machine. He praised Stieglitz for bringing together science and expression, and much of his phrasing is peppered with scientific language used to describe Stieglitz's expressive work. He says of Stieglitz, “He has examined our world of impulse and inhibition, of reaching out and of withdrawal, in a spirit of disinterested inquiry suffused by a wistful love. These photographs are the objective conclusions of that inquiry.”²⁵⁸ Strand ascribed to Stieglitz the same convergence that the camera could accomplish, between the scientific and the spiritual. Stieglitz, he said, “fought for the machine and for its opportunity to channel the impulses of human beings...for its unique potentiality of registering the objective world directly...beyond the reach of any human hand.”²⁵⁹ The camera was presented as a new way to express the human spirit, and Stieglitz supported it as much as he had supported modern painting.

²⁵⁶ “The term straight photography probably originated in a 1904 exhibition review in *Camera Work* by the critic Sadakichi Hartmann, in which he called on photographers “to work straight.” He urged them to produce pictures that looked like photographs rather than paintings—a late-nineteenth-century approach known as Pictorialism. To do so meant rejecting the tricky darkroom procedures that were favored at the time, including gum printing, the glycerine process, and scratching and drawing on negatives and prints. The alternative demanded concentrating on the basic properties of the camera and the printing process.” <http://www.moca.org/pc/viewArtTerm.php?id=36>

²⁵⁷ I'm reasonably sure this is the same show where Stieglitz debuted his series of portraits of Georgia O'Keeffe.

²⁵⁸ Paul Strand, “Alfred Stieglitz and a Machine,” printed privately in New York, February 14, 1921: p3.

²⁵⁹ Strand, “Alfred Stieglitz and a Machine,” 2.

But Strand also described Stieglitz as in control of his machine. He asserted that the work “reveals a conscious guidance of the machine, an acceptance of its implications, a mastery of its technique.”²⁶⁰ The rhetoric of control, guidance, acceptance, and mastery begins in the first paragraph and runs throughout the text. This language is presumably necessary to counter a fear of the machine, for the camera “was a despised, a rejected thing... facing a world and social system which fears and thwarts and destroys.”²⁶¹ Photography had not been considered “art” because it was made by a machine. It seemed imperative to Strand that he refute both claims and allay both fears by asserting that the photographer was in control of his machine and that it was he who created the art with its help. The camera was merely an extension of the photographer, and he noted that Stieglitz, “instinctively found in it something that was a part of himself, and loved it.”²⁶²

In order to support his claim that the camera as machine was not to be feared, Strand frequently refers to Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon*.²⁶³ He states that the assertion that photography is not art was “in reality the defense mechanism of an Erewhon of art, no less fantastic than the land of Samuel Butler’s imagination: Erewhon feared the machine.”²⁶⁴ At the end, Strand argues that this “exhibition offers an opportunity for the painters to realize that there are no Erewhons, that Erewhon is always a defense mechanism.”²⁶⁵ What is Erewhon? It’s a land that Butler’s protagonist Higgs discovers, and as Strand notes, the Erewhonians are afraid of machines and therefore machines do not exist in Erewhon. Higgs translates for us, in chapter 23, a text that reveals why.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Samuel Butler first published his Victorian satire *Erewhon* anonymously in 1872. Since it had been a very successful printing, Butler printed another edition in his own name in 1901, with a sequel, *Erewhon Revisited*. “Erewhon” is mentioned six times, on all three pages of Strand’s text.

²⁶⁴ Strand, “Alfred Stieglitz and a Machine,” 1.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 3.

The writer of “The Book of the Machines” uses Darwinian theory to assert that machines might develop consciousness and subjectivity through a form of natural selection. Higgs states that this book led to the destruction of machinery throughout Erewhon. In it, the author passionately argues that “There is no security against the ultimate development of mechanical consciousness.” He also argues that when this happens man will become mere servants of machines and that man is too dependent on the machine already, therefore “we should destroy as many of them as we can possibly dispense with, lest they should tyrannize over us even more completely.” Those who have ever had computer or car problems can sympathize with the author’s claims that “even now the machines will only serve on condition of being served, and that too upon their own terms; the moment their terms are not complied with, they jib, and either smash both themselves and all whom they can reach, or turn churlish and refuse to work at all.” Better to eliminate them than to subject Erewhon’s descendants to the bondage of machines.²⁶⁶

Higgs notes that the destruction of machines occurred thereafter, and that there was only one serious attempt to argue against it. Interestingly, this second unnamed author makes a case for machines that is not unlike the one Strand makes for the camera. He contends that “machines were to be regarded as a part of man’s own physical nature, being really nothing but extra-corporeal limbs.... A machine is merely a supplementary limb.” Strand similarly argues that the camera is merely an extension of the photographer, and like other machines, is therefore not to be feared because it is under man’s control.

²⁶⁶ Samuel Butler, *Erewhon*.

In this and other critical commentary on Stieglitz's 1921 "comeback" exhibition, the camera was not only described as in control, but actually as an extension of Stieglitz's body. However, Stieglitz Circle critics like Paul Rosenfeld and Waldo Frank who praised Stieglitz the photographer for his power over the machine were some of those who most feared its threat. Rosenfeld's *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen Modernists* of 1924, concluded with his essay portrait of Stieglitz. In it he writes, "During a century and a half, the race of machines has been enslaving man and impoverishing his experience. Like Frankenstein's invented by the human brain to serve it, these creatures have turned upon their master, and made prey of him."²⁶⁷ Echoing the apprehension articulated in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, Rosenfeld fears the monstrous machine that could obtain its own subjectivity. It's possible, then, that their rhetoric of control and transcendence is merely a bravado designed to quell their own anxieties.

These two texts reveal anxieties about the machine, and in Strand's case its relationship to art, that run throughout the object-portraits. First, there is the fear of the extra-human power of machines, and secondly, is the fear that machines as inanimate objects will attain both consciousness and subjectivity that would present a threat to human subjectivity and human uniqueness. Though *Erewhon* was written in 1872, it is clear through Strand's repeated reference to it that these issues remained just as present in America in 1921 as they were in an earlier industrial era.

This chapter analyzed how these concerns were threaded through the work of artists who produced object-portraits which included machines or mechanical pieces. It traced a progressive disappearance of the body in the development of object-portraits.

²⁶⁷ Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen Modernists* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1924), 245

Artists faced with the renewed fragility of the body in the face of the machine -- through the mechanized conflict of WWI, the advances in communication technology, the cult of machine efficiency promoted by Taylor and Ford, or the camera as a machine art -- each dealt with their anxieties in a different way. Their efforts have in common an effort to control both their fear and fascination, whether through diffusing the impact of the machine by making it the butt of a joke, or by disassembling it to remove its power. The object-portraits, then, enact a struggle between man and machine that may never be resolved.

Chapter Four

“No Ideas but in Things”: Advertising and the Object-Portrait

“No Ideas but in Things”

-- William Carlos Williams

In 1928, the Vice-President for Publicity at the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) proposed a plan to change the public conception of the telephone from a bare necessity to a convenience and a luxury item. One method he suggested was to offer a variety of colored hand sets, from which customers could choose as “outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace.”²⁶⁸ This exchange suggests a number of themes that will run throughout this chapter. First, the plan to change the concept of the telephone highlights the way that people’s perception of purchasable items changed as the United States was shifting from a producer economy, one in which goods were produced primarily out of necessity, to a consumer economy, in which mass production exceeded demand and goods were produced as luxury items in a commercial environment that thrived on planned obsolescence.²⁶⁹ Advertising played a critical role in this dynamic and during the 1920s nationwide advertising in major national publications flourished. Second, by creating a link between differently-colored hand sets as outward signs of personality, industrial designers and advertisers worked to transform the way people related to the things they purchased. Things took on a significance beyond their utilitarian function, as they offered their purchaser additional intangible benefits. Artists producing object-portraits as painted still lifes, particularly

²⁶⁸ Quoted in Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985), 117.

²⁶⁹ This shift begins in the late 19th century, but reaches a new level at the advent of national distribution and national advertising in the first decades of the 20th century.

Charles Demuth and Gerald Murphy, looked to the graphic effects of advertising and the branding campaigns of products to interrogate the developments in subject/object relationships in the post-WWI era.

Through studying the history of advertising in this period, one finds that it was not necessarily the objects themselves that conferred these benefits, but rather the act of purchasing. The objects were actually slippery signifiers, 'in' one day and out the next in order to make room for the newest thing off the assembly line. It was the act of purchasing that both established the sign of personality and provided the consumer with a sense of subjectivity (a sense of choice and personalization within a plethora of mass-produced goods) in a world where the individual's sense of personal and bodily wholeness was rapidly deteriorating. If things conferred personality signifiers or status upon their purchaser, that purchaser would still be the object of that transaction. By making the act of purchase the conferring entity, advertisers restored subjectivity to the purchaser, for the purchasing *subject* must do the act of purchase to the object in deciding which object should be acquired.

It is not merely the actual things in object-portraits that replace the human subject, the face and body of portraiture, but a kind of advertising aesthetic that calls for the act of purchase of the portrait's subject. In appropriating this kind of visual rhetoric, the artist places his subject in the object position, to be purchased by the consuming viewer. Thus the artist equates his subject with a commercial, material thing, and confers to the viewer/purchaser the active subject position. This is especially true in the poster portraits created by Charles Demuth for Alfred Stieglitz's gallery. Placed in the entrance to Stieglitz's exhibition space, these poster portraits served as a kind of advertisement for

the Stieglitz Circle artists they featured. Demuth appropriated the flat color planes and typography of modern advertising to aid in the project of “branding” these artists.²⁷⁰

Stieglitz himself was a master of using commercial advertising techniques to manage and publicize his gallery, despite his adamantly anti-commercialism rhetoric. He expertly employed some of the advertising strategies discussed below, effectively according to the purchase of the works of art the intangible benefits of emotional and spiritual sustenance and revitalization.

The expatriate artist Gerald Murphy similarly used the sleek aesthetics of modern advertising in his few extant paintings in an effort to brand himself and his art as ‘American’ among his French cohort who were avidly interested in *Americanisme*.²⁷¹ However, in *Razor* and *Watch*, two paintings which have been ascribed as self-portraits, Murphy’s advertising aesthetic collides with objects that have taken on a kind of subjectivity, that have acted on him in some way. This is the very scenario modern advertising wished to avoid for multiple reasons. On the one hand, if objects act, then once they are acquired the need is fulfilled. If the purchase is the conferring entity, then the need can only be fulfilled by continual purchasing, which is the basis of a consumer economy. On the other hand, there is also the fear of being acted upon by a thing, thus reversing the subject/object relationship and removing the person from the position of subjectivity. In these images Murphy deconstructs the objects in an attempt to understand his personal connection to them and their effect on his life.

²⁷⁰ According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the verb “to brand” took on the meaning to apply a trade mark or brand to (a product) for the purpose of promotion in 1909. “Branding” as a noun signifying the application of a trade mark or brand to a product, or the promotion of consumer awareness of a particular brand of goods or services, came into being in 1913.

²⁷¹ For discussion of *Americanisme* see Wanda Corn, *Great American Thing*, Chapter 1.

To see where this begins and how twentieth-century advertising evolved into the kinds of images and aesthetics these modern artists appropriated, I will first trace a brief history of advertising.

The History of Advertising

As Jackson Lears argues in his book on the history of advertising, *Fables of Abundance*, advertising in America began with the itinerant peddler: the performance of hawking his wares served as a kind of primitive oral advertising.²⁷² The mobility of the peddler made him both exotic (and reviled) and exempted him from participating in the legally-defined relationships that characterized merchant-consumer standing. Dealing in cash rather than the emerging credit system, the peddler could fluidly and unstably price his goods, moving on quickly before the purchaser became the wiser. In 1848, Hunt's Merchants' Magazine warned that with the peddler, "trade becomes a trick, and mercantile enterprise a game."²⁷³ Early in the nineteenth century, laws were passed to try to regulate the peddling trade.²⁷⁴

The most dubious of the peddler's wares, and the most popular and profitable, were the myriad of elixirs that promised miraculous cures and transformations. This tradition, started by the peddler but soon corporatized, continued through the nineteenth century, only marginally dissipating with the 1906 passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act. According to Lears, "patent medicine companies were the earliest and most successful national advertisers, the biggest spenders, the best clients for the advertising

²⁷² Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (NY: Basic Books, 1994).

²⁷³ Quoted in Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 80.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

agencies that began to form in the 1860s and 1870s.”²⁷⁵ The patent medicine was the peddler’s item most associated with the magic of self-transformation, and unlike the other exotic wares like silks and jewelry, the elixir drew on the double authority of the occult and the scientific.

Lears sees this early appeal to dual authority and the promise of transformation as the basis of modern advertising psychology. He notes that “despite their disdain for the patent medicine era, national advertisers remained wedded to its principal strategy: the promise of magical self-transformation through the ritual of purchase.”²⁷⁶ This strategy, as Lears observes, continues through early twentieth-century advertising. I demonstrate that Stieglitz used a similar strategy for marketing art by promising the customer that the abstract art produced by his circle of artists could inspire spiritual transcendence.

The development of agencies and the professionalization of advertising

According to Michele Bogart in *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, the role of advertising and advertising agencies changed dramatically in response to the transformations “from local to national markets and from a producer economy (one in which the goods produced were essential and served primarily as a means of survival) to a consumer economy (one in which production exceeded consumption, so that advertising became necessary to ensure continued production and profit).”²⁷⁷

The earliest advertising agencies began to appear in major cities during the 1850s and 1860s near publishing districts. These were merely middlemen who bought ad space

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 43.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 139.

²⁷⁷ Michele H. Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 5.

from newspapers and then resold it to manufacturers. George P. Rowell, who created *Rowell's American Newspaper Directory* in 1869 and founded the trade journal *Printer's Ink* in 1888, played a major role in shaping the modern advertising agency.²⁷⁸ He acknowledged in his 1906 autobiography, *Forty Years as an Advertising Agent*, that advertising was “one of the easiest sorts of business in which a man may cheat and defraud a client without danger of discovery.”²⁷⁹ In his efforts to divorce advertising from its unsavory patent medicine past, he studied circulation figures, established ‘objective’ procedures for setting advertising rates, and standardized the relationship between publishers, advertisers, and merchants. He shifted the focus of the ad agency away from simply selling space to the primary task of advising the buyer how and where to spend his money.²⁸⁰

Another early and prominent advertiser, Francis Wayland Ayer, established the first full-service advertising agency, N.W. Ayer & Son. In the 1880s, it conducted marketing surveys (one of the first to do so), worked increasingly with national corporations and national publications, and – significantly – shifted the burden of copy preparation from the client to the agency.²⁸¹ He developed a close relationship with Curtis publications such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies' Home Journal*.

The reformist victory of the 1906 passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act was the beginning of the end of the patent medicine era. While elixirs began to dwindle, however, the promises of regeneration and transformation were shifted onto packaged food products which were becoming increasingly branded and nationally-distributed.

²⁷⁸ Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 90. Rowell started his own agency in Boston in 1865 and moved to New York in 1867, where he worked to legitimize the profession.

²⁷⁹ Quoted in Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 90.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 92. Lears likens this to the ‘media consulting’ provided by modern advertising agencies.

²⁸¹ Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 94.

Advertising for everything from Coca-Cola to Quaker Oats promised a kind of revitalization similar to the claims of patent medicine, while further linking their products to “wide-awake consciousness, dynamic movement, and urban modernity.”²⁸² In a 1922 ad for Coca Cola, the drink is associated with a modern young woman in the act of water-skiing. (Figure 66) The bright red background and stylized waves suggest dynamism and energy. But the hand holding the product is a man’s, complete with buttoned cuff and suit jacket sleeve. The ad, then, asserts that drinking Coca Cola provides the urban businessman the refreshment, excitement, and feeling of youthful water sports. A more subdued Quaker Oats advertisement from 1925 suggests that health and strength and rosy cheeks come from eating a hot breakfast of Quaker Oats, an assertion not too far removed from the patent medicine ads of the previous century. (Figure 67)

Professional advertisers seized the opportunity provided by the Pure Food and Drug Act to further distance themselves from their past and from reformer’s criticism by establishing in 1911 the Associated Advertising Clubs of America and launching the Truth in Advertising Movement. They re-characterized themselves as educators and espoused the rhetoric of using their power for good. Advertisers saw themselves as essential to the stability of the economy. They argued, however, that their main service was in educating the public, for example, in disseminating a modernized standard of sanitation. Ads themselves shifted from a didactic display to a tone which assumed the role of coach and confidante, as if in league with the consumer. In an advertisement for Ipana toothpaste, featured in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1936, the text reads “Fortune’s Favorite [Until She Smiles].” (Figure 68) The narrative that develops asserts that the promise suggested by the beautiful woman’s face is hindered by poor dental hygiene, “a

²⁸² Ibid., 158-159.

penalty she could have avoided.” Instead, the advertisement coaches its reader to consult the professional opinion of her dentist, who will certainly prescribe Ipana toothpaste. These narratives take the tone of a concerned friend whose advice will save unnecessary and avoidable problems.

While shifts in strategy were important, it was advertising’s participation in the ideological mobilization for World War I that had most significantly worked to legitimize advertising in the public eye. Advertisers had played a major role in the Committee on Public Information, headed by George Creel, who with Charles Dana Gibson (producer of the famed ‘Gibson Girl’ ads) created the Division of Pictorial Publicity.²⁸³ In a November 1917 issue of *New Republic*, a contributor acknowledged that “a nation is forced to advertise its needs in order to win recruits, just as a manufacturer is forced to advertise his promises in order to gain purchasers.”²⁸⁴ Advertisers were thus accorded the role of securing patriotism through commercial techniques of persuasion. They campaigned to sell war bonds, enlist recruits, enhance morale, and promote conservation at home. *Printers’ Ink* noted that wartime advertising had shown that “it is possible to sway the minds of whole populations, change their habits of life, create belief, practically universal, in any policy or idea.”²⁸⁵ When it was all over, *Printers’ Ink* announced to advertisers’ collective self-satisfaction that “the war has been won by advertising, as well as by soldiers and munitions.”²⁸⁶ Advertising posters like Howard Chandler Christy’s *I Want You for the Navy*, or R. F. Babcock’s *Join the Navy*, both from 1917, featured common advertising strategies to win recruits. (Figures 69 and 70) A 1918 photograph

²⁸³ Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, 61.

²⁸⁴ Quoted in Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 219.

²⁸⁵ Quoted in Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 6.

²⁸⁶ Quoted in Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 220.

depicting Fatty Arbuckle putting up a Liberty Loan poster in Times Square shows the involvement of celebrities in championing the war effort and its advertising. (Figure 71) Note a similar image to the Christy poster in the lower right hand corner.

The war not only provided legitimacy for advertising, but also favorable economic conditions. A wartime excess profits tax classified advertising expenditures as exempt business costs.²⁸⁷ This resulted in a veritable boom in advertising in the postwar years, breaking all previous records in volume. Roland Marchand notes a study that estimates US advertising to have increased from “\$682 million in 1914 to \$1,409 million in 1919 and to \$2,987 million in 1929.”²⁸⁸ Where advertising dollars were concentrated also shifted: according to Marchand, “national magazine advertising had increased 600 percent in the decade since 1916, and newspaper advertising had doubled.”²⁸⁹ An example of this increase can be seen in the figures for the *Saturday Evening Post*, which by 1926 began to carry an Index of Advertisers alongside its index of articles since approximately 50% of the magazine’s pages consisted of advertisements.²⁹⁰

As advertising experienced this vast increase in volume, its practitioners also began to change their principal strategy. Up to this point, ads had largely been product-oriented, providing what advertisers called a “reason-why” approach by offering objective information about the object itself. Having to compete for viewer attention in a now overwhelming superfluity of visual barrage, advertisers increasingly moved from text-heavy layouts that expounded on the attributes of the product to image-centered designs that were consumer-oriented. This consumer-oriented strategy focused less on

²⁸⁷ Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 6.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 7.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

the product itself in favor of the wishes and anxieties of the consumer and the promise of transformation through the act of purchase. Rather than representing facts about the product, the ads spoke to the emotional needs of the consumer, selling the intangible benefits rather than the tangible product.

By the mid-1920s, articles in trade journals typically characterized the transformation of advertising in the following way: “it began with ads depicting the bewhiskered founder and his factory, then moved to illustrations of the housewife pushing a vacuum cleaner or otherwise using the product, and finally arrived at scenes of fulfillment – the housewife’s friends blinded by her gleaming floor or her children enjoying her company on an outing to pick wildflowers,” since presumably she had, with the aid of the product, quickly finished her housework and now had more time to spend with her children.²⁹¹ This description not only illustrates the transformation in advertising’s strategy, but also gives a picture of the change in its visual layout. People rather than products began to dominate advertising illustration, as its focus shifted from the product itself to the scenes of fulfillment prompted by, or humiliations avoided by, its use. While text still appeared in most ads, the content often took the form of human-interest stories. As Marchand notes, “sometimes the ads recapitulated the layout of the magazine or newspaper so perfectly that the reader might become thoroughly immersed in the ad before discovering that it was not an editorial feature.”²⁹² Advertisers thereby took advantage of the layout to grant to their products the authority of the magazine.

The Emergence of the Psychology of Advertising

²⁹¹ Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 24.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 17.

This transformation in ad design and strategy was prompted by two key advances: market research and the emergence of advertising psychology. Research into consumers included surveying their types, preferences, influences, and buying motives. More and more frequently this insight began to affect copy. As Lears suggests, “by the 1920s, market research was being hailed as a major achievement of the national advertising agencies.”²⁹³ The most prominent form of market research on the effectiveness of advertising copy consisted of “keying” ads with a coupon. Marchand describes the process: “Agency researchers tabulated the returned coupons, each keyed by means of a special post-office box number or similar device, to evaluate the relative ‘pulling power’ of various media and appeals. Identical ads were inserted in different magazines; ads with different copy and art work were tested against each other in the same media.”²⁹⁴ By offering such ‘objective’ research and feedback to their clients, advertisers could reassure them of results.

In the early years of the twentieth century, new ideas in psychology, from psychoanalysis to behaviorism, began to be adopted and applied to advertising. One of the earliest and most influential books, *The Psychology of Advertising* by Walter Dill Scott, appeared in 1908. Many similar works followed.²⁹⁵ These texts often focused on the notion of “suggestion,” in which opulent layouts worked with vivid images to influence consumer emotions rather than appeal to their intellect. Scott insisted that “the

²⁹³ Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 225.

²⁹⁴ Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 75.

²⁹⁵ Walter Dill Scott’s text started as articles published as early as 1903. His book continued to be published in editions throughout the twentieth century. Other texts include: Albert Theodor Poffenberger’s 1925 *Psychology in Advertising*, Edward Kellogg Strong’s 1925 *The Psychology of selling and advertising*, Harold E. Burt’s 1938 *Psychology of Advertising*.

actual effect of modern advertising is not so much to convince as to suggest.”²⁹⁶ Alfred Poffenberger’s 1925 *Psychology in Advertising* argued that while text stimulated thought and perhaps skepticism, images appealed to fundamental emotions and inspired belief. Furthermore, pictures could convey several messages at once, including those that would be too exaggerated when put into words.²⁹⁷

Returning subjectivity to the consumer

In re-focusing their attention on consumers and their desires, advertisers provided consumers with a powerful and seductive means of asserting a perceived subjectivity in a world that was treating individuals more and more like impersonal objects. Advertising not only sought to guide their customers through the minefield of faux pas associated with modern urban life, they also sought to alleviate the toll of anxiety that rationalization and depersonalization had taken on the individual. The act of choice and the act of purchase returned to consumers a sense of being able to take control of their surroundings. If, in product-oriented advertising, the product is acting on the consumer, then the product becomes the subject while the consumer becomes the object of its action. On the other hand, if, in consumer-oriented advertising, the act of purchase is more important than the product itself, the consumer can retain his/her subjectivity by acting on the object by purchasing it, thus maintaining the rights and control of the subject. The change to consumer-oriented advertising layout and design reinforced this dynamic. As Marchand notes, “people rather than products dominated illustrations as advertisers sought to induce the potential customer to play a vicarious, scripted role as the

²⁹⁶ Quoted in Stephen Fox, *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and its Creators* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 70.

²⁹⁷ Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 236.

protagonist in the ad.”²⁹⁸ Remember, for example, the Ipana toothpaste advertisement. In this image, the (female) customer is meant to identify with the woman portrayed, and in the text she is directly addressed.²⁹⁹ (Figure 68)

In addition to supplying a temporary sense of subjectivity, consumer-oriented advertising, by refocusing the appeal away from the object itself and towards the act of purchase, participated in promoting planned obsolescence, a cornerstone of consumer culture. By investing ordinary things with style and color that could be quickly outmoded, manufacturers and advertisers stimulated repeat and continued purchase of all manner of goods. In the burgeoning throwaway culture of the 1920s, these shifting signifiers, in which a thing could suggest stylishness one day and backwardness the next, were created by advertisers and industrial designers and necessitated their consumer-oriented strategy. Rather than the thing itself providing emotional satisfaction, it was now the act of purchasing that took on that role. Bruce Barton, head of the J. Walter Thompson agency, articulated this dynamic in a 1929 address: “The American conception of advertising is to arouse desire and stimulate wants, to make people dissatisfied with the old and out-of-date and by constant iteration to send them out to work hard to get the latest model – whether that model be an icebox or a rug, or a new home.”³⁰⁰ In this way advertisers soothed their consciences by asserting that consuming more didn’t lead to decadence or disaster, but rather induced people to work harder than ever.

²⁹⁸ Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 12.

²⁹⁹ For more on this dynamic, see: Bill Brown, “Now Advertising: Late James,” *The Henry James Review* 30.1 (Winter 2009): 10-21.

³⁰⁰ Quoted in Lears, *Fables*, 227.

Advertising's appropriation of modern art³⁰¹

Over the course of the 1920s, advertising began to appropriate some of the formal aspects of modern art in order to confer on their products the sensation of being ultra new and in sync with urban modernity. They borrowed most frequently from cubism, futurism, and vorticism, utilizing sharp angles, zig-zagging diagonal lines, geometric forms, centrifugal images, and asymmetry to connote dynamism. Additionally they mined from surrealism odd juxtapositions and montages. As Marchand notes, “modern art, in particular, offered the aura of both rarefied esthetic quality and an up-to-date tempo.”³⁰² He lists five characteristics of modern styles that were particularly adaptable to advertising: 1) a dominance of diagonal line, 2) off-center layout, 3) deliberate discontinuities, 4) expressive distortion, especially elongation, and 5) the simplicity of the

³⁰¹ The main difference between artists who create avant-garde fine art and artists who create advertising is the issue of artistic autonomy so important to the modern avant-garde artist. Romantic ideals of artistic individuality and autonomy necessarily clashed with the realities of working collaboratively in an advertising agency where an artist's vision was subordinate to the demands of executives, clients, publishers, and the all-important market. While artists have always worked on commission and even within workshops, working at an ad agency and creating art whose sole purpose was to sell a product, rather than edify, was seen as too close to the dirty business of commerce. Furthermore, as Michelle Bogart remarks, “Imagery was problematic in advertising because it forced artists, publishers, advertising people, and businessmen to contend with art's duality as both valued, marketable property and intangible truth.... Together, the disagreements over art and commodities raised basic questions about the nature and purpose of artistic representation.” (Bogart, 8) How would an artwork's status as a purchasable commodity challenge the artistic ideals of truth that were used as evidence for fine art's superiority over advertising art as a practice mired in commercial exchange? Later in the chapter, I will discuss how Stieglitz and his circle in particular struggled with this duality. The audience, and the status of the audience, for commercial art was another key point of contention. As advertising made national publications cheaper and more accessible to a wider public, the ‘public’ was no longer the wealthy and educated elite of the little magazine but the masses. Therefore, there was even more incentive to elevate the status of fine art over commercial art, and to limit access to fine art, in order to maintain class and cultural authority. On the one hand, left-wing artists liked the idea of reaching a broad audience, and “artists had hoped to create an art that was popular among ordinary people, but not necessarily a popular art.” (Bogart, 11) They bought into advertisers' rhetoric of advancing public taste. On the other hand, most ad men wanted art not to edify, stimulate, or challenge their consumer, but to please and cater to the lowest common denominator. The third angle in this debate was the question of using fine art in advertising, hoping it would confer cultural status onto the product it was selling.

³⁰² Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 140.

abstracted form.³⁰³ All of these, he argues, served to attract attention to the ad amidst the chaos of visual stimuli. Furthermore, advertisers hoped that using modern aesthetics would lend to the product the cultural status of fine art. In a 1927 advertisement for Lux laundry soap, angular and elongated women lounge in the outdoors. (Figure 72) Their clothes, “chiffons and printed silks” from Paris, display vibrant colors and dynamic patterns that associate the customer with the height of fashion.

The modernist aim, according to Lears, of both art and advertising, “was not to tell a story but to create a cluster of images that would resonate with a reader or viewer.”³⁰⁴ Appealing to emotions rather than intellect, advertisers used imagery and aesthetics to create the feeling of modernity. They did so either by associating “the product pictorially with such symbols of modernity as the skyscraper, the airplane, the dirigible, or the angular, elongated ‘modern woman.’ Or they defined the product as modern by placing it in a visual field, sometimes photographic, which was characterized by diagonal or zig-zag lines and geometric or streamlined shapes.”³⁰⁵ A photograph by Paul Outerbridge featuring a white collar floating on a checkered background that tilts up diagonally in a dramatic fashion dominated the full-page advertisement for Ide Collars in the November 1922 issue of *Vanity Fair*. (Figure 73)

Not surprisingly, advertisers added the title of “missionaries of modernity” to their list of services to society. Marchand notes that “Earnest Elmo Calkins, the profession’s foremost spokesman for beauty in advertising, hailed the advertising agency as the potential savior of beauty in the age of mass production. In a machine age, he

³⁰³ Ibid., 144-148.

³⁰⁴ Jackson Lears, “Uneasy Courtship: Modern Art and Modern Advertising,” *American Quarterly* 39.1 (Special Issue: Modernist Culture in America, Spring 1987), 133-154: 137.

³⁰⁵ Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 155.

pointed out, the workman had become a machine-tender who could no longer create beauty in the product through his craftsmanship.”³⁰⁶ In appropriating and disseminating modern aesthetics to the masses, advertisers believed they were returning to workers the very beauty taken away by the mass production of their products.

Modern art’s appropriation of advertising

At the same time that advertising was appropriating aesthetic strategies from modern art, American painters were re-appropriating modernist advertising and combining it with a Cubist twist to create a distinctively American painting style. Stuart Davis is the artist most associated with this style in the 1920s. In 1921 he began a series of tobacco product-themed paintings, for which he is best known. In these paintings, Davis copied the packaging of tobacco products, meticulously painting their logos and other brand signifiers to look like collaged elements. Following in an American tradition of trompe l’oeil still life, and melding it with a synthetic cubist collage aesthetic, Davis utilized the flat and overlapping two-dimensionality of the papered surfaces to quote both the packaging and the advertising posters of the tobacco products. As Barbara Zabel observes, Davis himself extolled “the beauty of [this kind of] packing. Where a few decades ago everything was packed in barrels and boxes, they are now packed singly or in dozen or half-dozen lots as the control over distribution increases. This symbolizes a very high civilization in relation to other civilizations.”³⁰⁷

Bull Durham (1921, Baltimore Museum of Art) and *Lucky Strike* (1921, MoMA) typify Davis’ tobacco works. (Figures 74 and 75) In *Bull Durham* Davis copied the

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 130.

³⁰⁷ Quoted in Barbara Zabel, “Stuart Davis’s Appropriation of Advertising: The Tobacco Series, 1921-1924” in *American Art* vol.5 no.4 (Autumn 1991), 56-67: 64.

Durham label and the drawing of the bull directly from the package. He added the paper medallion that was attached to the muslin sack of each package and hangs it from a trompe l'oeil string that appears to puncture the vertical band and twist at the end. The muslin sack was featured in Durham advertising as a distinguishing feature of the product, as opposed to others which came in tins, and Davis magnifies and replicates this branding signifier in a patch directly under the bull.³⁰⁸ In the lower right, brown flecks on a white ground appear to be loose tobacco on cigarette rolling paper, and a French logo (Zig Zag) is depicted in the upper left. The date of 1917 legible on the band refers to America's entry into WWI.

In *Lucky Strike*, Davis flattens the roll cut tobacco package against a white ground. He copies the various typographies of the packaging, including that of its parent company, The American Tobacco Co.³⁰⁹ Its overlapping edges -- notably towards the bottom where the word "Roll" is cut off and in the blue bands of the center which overlap and crease -- resemble cubist collages, while the subject matter hearkens to the Merz collages of Kurt Schwitters, who often included actual cigarette packaging. But Davis' painting doesn't have the tone of detritus that Schwitters' works establish. Rather, they suggest the bright future and possibility of the advertisement and pre-purchase package, instead of Schwitters' post-consumed refuse.³¹⁰

As Barbara Zabel notes, Davis' choice and depiction of tobacco products as subject matter was significant both politically and socially. In 1920, on the heels of a

³⁰⁸ Mariea Caudill Dennison, "Stuart Davis: Standard Brands and Product Identities in Some Paintings of the 1920s," in *The Burlington Magazine* 145.1207 (Oct 2003), 696-704: 698. Barbara Zabel, on the other hand, contends that this patch is reminiscent of the large burlap bags that tobacco used to be sold in before individual pre-packaging.

³⁰⁹ Who, incidentally, gave the painting to MoMA in 1951.

³¹⁰ Zabel, "Stuart Davis's Appropriation of Advertising," 60.

Prohibition victory, the Anti-tobacco movement launched a campaign against tobacco use. Davis' multiple tobacco canvases of 1921-24 are a not-so-subtle subversion of the conservative movement.³¹¹ Additionally, Mariea Caudill Dennison has suggested that in selecting the Bull Durham brand, Davis featured tobacco that was made exclusively in the United States, thereby highlighting specifically American products.³¹² His choice of a brand like Lucky Strike is also significant since its ads focused on American modernity, as opposed to others like Camel, whose ads depicted exoticism and orientalism.³¹³ In his notebooks from 1920-22, Davis regarded his tobacco series as "really original American work."³¹⁴

Furthermore, in choosing to depict the packaging of only loose tobacco and tobacco rolling papers as opposed to pre-rolled cigarettes, cigars, or chewing tobacco, Davis identifies himself socially as a manly urbanite. Pre-rolled cigarettes were being marketed more to women and were therefore considered feminine. Cigars and chewing tobacco were viewed as rural. But rolling your own cigarettes was deemed in advertising as a sign of masculine independence.³¹⁵ This was different from pre-WWI rhetoric which denigrated cigarettes as unmanly, but this view changed during the war when the federal government commissioned the entire output of Bull Durham cigarette tobacco for the troops and quickly made cigarettes both a sign of military-based masculinity and American patriotism.³¹⁶

³¹¹ Ibid., 61.

³¹² Dennison, "Stuart Davis: Standard Brands," 700.

³¹³ Zabel, "Stuart Davis's Appropriation of Advertising," 64.

³¹⁴ Quoted in Patricia Hills, *Stuart Davis* (Washington, D.C.: The National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution with Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1996), 65.

³¹⁵ Zabel, "Stuart Davis's Appropriation of Advertising," 63. Zabel also quotes social critic Michael Schudson who states that "Cigarette tobacco outsold pipe tobacco for the first time in 1919; it passed cigars in 1921 and it outsold chewing tobacco for the first time in 1922."

³¹⁶ Dennison, "Stuart Davis: Standard Brands," 700.

The choice of tobacco subjects was also arguably personal for Davis, who was himself a lifelong heavy smoker. Karen Wilkin asserts that “he particularly liked a brand called ‘Stud’ whose emblem was a rearing stallion,” and whose name furthers the association with virile masculinity.³¹⁷ Thus, while Zabel suggests that Davis’ use of advertising was impersonal, that he sought to focus on objective things rather than subjective feelings and supplant the artistic café or studio context of the cubist collages with the commercial context of American advertising, I would contend that though the tobacco paintings do not amount to portraits, they do affirm a certain kind of identity for Davis.³¹⁸ Indeed, Davis once stated, “I do not belong to the human race but am a product made by the American Can Co. and the New York *Evening Journal*.”³¹⁹ Here he nods to the power of advertising by claiming to be a product of ads and the news media.

Many American artists saw the transformation in their visual and material culture as a source of inspiration for their art. Like Davis, artists Charles Demuth and Gerald Murphy incorporated an advertising aesthetic into their work, one which focused on the pre-purchase ideal or promise of the advertisement rather than the post-consumption detritus of an artist like Kurt Schwitters. However, Demuth and Murphy brought this aesthetic into the realm of portraiture.

Charles Demuth’s Poster Portraits

Charles Demuth imitated commercial advertising’s sleek design, hard lines, and bright, eye-catching colors. Melding this style with a cubist aesthetic, and applying these

³¹⁷ Karen Wilkin, “Becoming a Modern Artist, the 1920s,” in Lowery Stokes Sims, et al. *Stuart Davis American Painter* (NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991), 49.

³¹⁸ Zabel, “Stuart Davis’s Appropriation of Advertising,” 58-60.

³¹⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 66.

concerns to the genre of portraiture, he celebrated and analyzed the modern consumerist desire by interrogating how modern art and artists were branded and consumed.

Charles Demuth's *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold* of 1928 serves as both a visual equivalent of William Carlos Williams' poem "The Great Figure" as well as a portrait of the poet himself, who was one of Demuth's closest friends. (Figure 76) The men met in Philadelphia in 1905, and as Williams recalled, "The first time that we saw each other we just looked at each other and were friends instantly."³²⁰ Demuth's illness, diagnosed as diabetes, also drew him and Williams, who was a doctor by training, together. In the late teens and early twenties, both modernists frequented Walter and Louise Arensberg's New York salon. When the painting was first exhibited at Alfred Stieglitz's Intimate Gallery in 1929, Williams claimed that it was "the most distinguished American painting that I have seen in years."³²¹

The story of the origin of the poem, told in Williams' autobiography, reveals the visceral experience:

"Once on a hot July day coming back exhausted from the Post Graduate clinic, I dropped in as I sometimes did at Marsden [Hartley's] studio on Fifteenth Street for a talk, a little drink maybe and to see what he was doing. As I approached his number I heard a great clatter of bells and the roar of a fire engine passing the end of the street down Ninth Avenue. I turned just in time to see a golden 5 on a red background flash by. The impression was so sudden and forceful that I took a piece of paper out of my pocket and wrote a short poem about it."³²² That poem reads:

Among the rain
and lights
I saw the figure 5
in gold

³²⁰ Quoted in Robin Jaffee Frank, *Charles Demuth: Poster Portraits, 1923-1929* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1994), 73.

³²¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 75.

³²² William Carlos Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: Random House, 1951), 172.

on a red
 firetruck
 moving
 tense
 unheeded
 to gong clangs
 siren howls
 and wheels rumbling
 through the dark city.

Line for line, Demuth translates Williams' poem and experience into painting.

Using a cubist and futurist aesthetic and vibrant color, Demuth captures the sound and speed of the fire engine. Futurist force lines surrounding the central image denote fast movement, as the repeated golden number 5 gets ever larger and ever closer. The fire truck is implied in the saturated red-colored details of the axle along the bottom, the foreshortened ladder on the right, and in the two orbs of light that signify both truck headlights and streetlamps. As the truck rushes towards us, the skyscrapers in the background are parted on dynamic diagonals. It has even been argued that the two glowing orbs at the very top of the composition, and the arch of gold in the upper right paired with a sliver in the lower left, suggest that the truck has overtaken the viewer, that we see just the edges of a fourth number 5 as it enters our space.

More than simply a tribute to a poem, however, the painting serves as a kind of celebratory portrait of Williams himself. Using the sans serif typeface so popular in advertising, Demuth emblazons the nickname BILL in red at the top of the composition. On the side of a building, he spells out CARLO in lightbulb lettering typical of the lighted signs on the theatre marquees of Broadway. If the story of the painting is the poem, Williams is still its main character. Alongside his own initials, C.D., again in the sans serif typescript, he includes W.C.W. as a co-creator. They work together in a

collaboration that is humorously recorded on the right in the lettering of a store window that reads “Art Co.” It is curious, however, that this tribute to – and portrait of – Williams depicts neither his face nor his body. Instead, Demuth has substituted an abstracted image that centers on a visual translation of one of his poems and on the billing (if you’ll forgive the pun) of the poet’s name.

Charles Demuth first exhibited his poster portraits at Alfred Stieglitz’s 1925 “Seven Americans” exhibition.³²³ Serving two functions, “Seven Americans” both commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the opening of Stieglitz’s acclaimed 291, and served as the inaugural exhibition of what was to become known as the Second Generation Stieglitz Circle.³²⁴ With his new Intimate Gallery, Stieglitz now focused on establishing what he conceived of as a specifically American modernism. We know from contemporary critical reviews that Demuth’s portraits of Georgia O’Keeffe, Arthur Dove, and a study for one of Marsden Hartley were hung in the entrance hallway to the exhibition. In this way, they served as a kind of advertising for some of the “Seven Americans” whose work was included in the show. As a reviewer for the New York Evening Post noted, “These are posters, placards, to notify the public, in symbol certainly, of something very true pertaining to each of the artists he portrays.”³²⁵

For example, in Demuth’s homage to Georgia O’Keeffe, the first completed poster portrait, abstracted plants and fruit common to O’Keeffe’s work make up the main forms. (Figure 77) The flame-like leaves of the sansevieria plant recalls Demuth’s

³²³ For an excellent discussion of all of the poster portraits, see Wanda Corn, “In the American Grain: The Billboard Poetics of Charles Demuth” (Vassar College Publication, 1991) and Robin Jaffee Frank, *Charles Demuth: Poster Portraits, 1923-1929* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1994).

³²⁴ Term “Second Generation Stieglitz Circle” coined by Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing*, 16-17.

³²⁵ Margaret Breuning, “Seven Americans”, *New York Evening Post*, March 14, 1926, sec.5, 11. Quoted in Frank, *Charles Demuth: Poster Portraits 1923-1929*.

description of O’Keeffe’s art as “flowers and flames” in his introduction to a catalogue of her work. He was also aware of the characteristics of this popular houseplant, which was a hearty evergreen that was both regenerative and resilient, just as the Midwestern artist it represented. The apple and pears often appear in still lifes painted by O’Keeffe in the 1920s. Her painting *Alligator Pears* (1923) displays the fruits as explicitly feminine forms akin to the abstracted portraits her husband, Alfred Stieglitz, took of her, like his *Breast and Hand* of 1919. The plant and fruits, then, refer not only to her body of work, but also to her actual body and personality.

Demuth pairs these natural forms with highly stylized black and blue surfaces, and with the careful stenciling of the artist’s name in his typical sans serif typeface on a blank background. He spells out her last name in the shape of a cross, rising in inverted order. Abstracted light rays are emitted by O’Keeffe, blinking like an electric sign. The initials of her first and last name frame the plant and spell “GO”, an imperative often found in advertising.

Arthur Dove was seen as the male equivalent of Georgia O’Keeffe in terms of his artistic production and sensibilities, so it’s not surprising that Demuth’s poster for him resembles O’Keeffe’s in a number of ways. (Figure 78) Dove’s oeuvre had been largely characterized by abstraction based in natural forms. He was also personally considered to be a very “salt of the earth” kind of guy, who spent the late teens and early twenties supporting himself and his family on a farm in Connecticut. Demuth refers to both his nature-based art and life in his poster portrait by incorporating an abstracted landscape along the water, dominated by a farm implement (a sickle), and grapes and a pinecone. The sickle not only references Dove’s life on the farm, but also the revolutionary quality

of his biomorphic abstraction. The red bow on the handle is likely a symbol of Dove's second wife, Helen Torr, whose nickname was "Reds" and to whom Demuth dedicated the painting. Dove's work was well-known for its agrarian roots, and one critic noted, "there is not a pastel or drawing or painting of Dove's that does not communicate some love and direct sensuous feeling of the earth."³²⁶

Above the landscape floats Dove's name in celestial white against a blue sky, stenciled again in Demuth's customary sans serif lettering. Like contemporary advertising, Demuth displays the "brand name" in clear and easily readable fashion, pairing it with a scene that symbolizes the product. The product here is both Dove's artistic output and the artist himself. Even though Demuth utilized an advertising aesthetic in his posters, as portraits they subvert advertising's symbolic merging of the subject and object by relating each artist not to consumer goods (like some of the assemblage portraits discussed in the previous chapter), but to the art they created.

And yet, one cannot help but read a little cynicism in his use of advertising's aesthetic. Though Stieglitz's gallery and the "Seven Americans" show were specifically billed as a space outside of commercialism, there was no mistaking that the gallery was a place for the buying, selling, and advertising of art work. Demuth backhandedly points to this in his arrangement of the letters in O'Keeffe's name, which horizontally spell "Fee." And in his portrait of Williams Carlos Williams, the text of Art Co appears as though it could have the added letter T, making it Tart Co, and referring to the symbolic link between artists selling their art, and prostitution.

³²⁶ Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York*, 1924, quoted in Frank, *Charles Demuth: Poster Portraits 1923-1929*, 32.

Several art historians have pointed out the problematic discord between Stieglitz's idealized rhetoric of anti-commercialism and the more practical realities of running a commercial gallery.³²⁷ Stieglitz's own response to this conflict was to conflate the spiritual value of a given work of art with its material value. He believed that modern art, and particularly the modes of American modernism espoused by his circle of artists, provided a path to spiritual enlightenment and resuscitation. And he heavily marketed the art in his gallery as uniquely designed to aid in an individual's transcendence of materialistic modern society in order to achieve spiritual awareness and sustenance.³²⁸ This was a direct response to a perceived need in both mainstream and elite circles to search for a form of revitalized spiritual expression in the face the increasing mechanization and isolation of daily life. As Kristina Wilson notes in her book *The Modern Eye: Stieglitz, MoMA, and the Art of the Exhibition, 1925-1934*, these popular trends helped to shape his discourse on modern art as he tried to find a market for American modernism. Though she sees this rhetoric as using the "emotion and theatrics of the numerous mystical theories circulating in the early twentieth century," I argue that it equally derives from the techniques used in modern advertising.

In appealing to an audience interested in the spiritual, Stieglitz showed himself to have mastered the art of business and advertising he so vocally despised. In my analysis, like modern advertising's claims that the purchase of a given product could provide desirable but intangible benefits beyond the utilitarian function of the object itself, so Stieglitz suggested that the consumption and purchase of art in his gallery would not only yield a work of art, but also a transcendent spiritual experience. A patron purchased the

³²⁷ Among them, Kristina Wilson, Wanda Corn, Sarah Greenough.

³²⁸ Kristina Wilson, *The Modern Eye: Stieglitz, MoMA, and the Art of the Exhibition, 1925-1934* (New Haven: Yale U Press, 2009), 45.

spiritual encounter just as much as he/she purchased the object itself. Stieglitz boasted that he “judged potential buyers on the sincerity of their desire for the art and would sell only to those he felt would appreciate the work in an appropriate manner.”³²⁹ He claimed to have turned down a sale to Abby Rockefeller and to have sold a painting for fifty dollars to a young woman who was a true believer. Purchasing was also, therefore, a form of initiation into a kind of insider status, a welcome into the cult of Stieglitz. Additionally, by bragging that he would not sell to just anyone, Stieglitz maintained a veil of exclusivity that only enhanced his claims to his art’s intangible benefits.

Like any good advertiser, Stieglitz was also a master of controlling how his product was viewed. His screening of buyers for their agreement with his beliefs made sure that those who purchased his artists’ work would disseminate his interpretation of it. Furthermore, as Wilson has argued, “Stieglitz carefully orchestrated every aspect of a visitor’s experience at the Intimate Gallery, ranging from the specific art seen on the walls and interpreted in Stieglitz-sponsored pamphlets to the way in which sales were made in the gallery, and ultimately to the deployment of the architectural space.”³³⁰ She also notes that Stieglitz was in constant attendance at his gallery, preaching in a continued monologue on the themes of spiritual transcendence of material reality. Since “his voice was an inseparable part of the gallery experience, and his opinions could not but influence visitors’ interpretations of the art,” not only was Stieglitz able to control how the objects were viewed, but in some ways serve as a kind of hawker or marketer of the art.³³¹

³²⁹ Ibid., 44.

³³⁰ Ibid., 35.

³³¹ Ibid., 49.

Wanda Corn, in *The Great American Thing*, even notes how Stieglitz and company succumbed to boosterism rhetoric, seen in the full title for the exhibition: “Alfred Stieglitz Presents Seven Americans 159 Paintings Photographs & Things Recent & Never Before Publicly Shown.”³³² The Stieglitz Circle included writers, from critics like Paul Rosenfeld and Elizabeth McCausland to authors Sherwood Anderson and Hart Crane, all of whom wrote extensively on the artists Stieglitz promoted. In fact, Stieglitz was an expert at branding his artists, from photographing them himself, to encouraging Rosenfeld to write prose portraits of all of them in his 1924 book *Port of New York*.

Demuth, however, wasn’t included in Stieglitz’s inner circle, and only formed the +1 to the circle’s six main artists. The fact that his paintings ended up in the entrance hallway instead of in the gallery proper only attests to his marginal position within the group. Therefore, he wasn’t accorded the kind of critical attention Stieglitz reserved for his more dedicated followers. His use of the advertising aesthetic, then, can be seen as both an attempt to develop a truly American form of modernism, and a commentary on the gallery culture that forced artists to sell themselves as well as their work through elaborate advertising campaigns.

Gerald Murphy

The dynamic developed by contemporary advertising, which sought to provide subjectivity to customers by making the act of purchasing confer character traits, can also been seen as a way to assuage the fear that the ascendance of consumer culture gave the things one desired and purchased too much power. As Bill Brown notes in his study on Thing Theory, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature*, “after the

³³² Corn, *Great American Thing*, 19.

century turned, Americans lived in an ‘age of things’.... ‘We realize that we do not possess them; they possess us.’ The point wasn’t just that Americans were ‘stifled with the sense of things’, but that they now lived life peculiarly possessed.”³³³ Here he’s quoting an anonymously written article from the May 1906 issue of *Atlantic Monthly* entitled “The Contributor’s Club: The Tyranny of Things.” This tyranny, as Brown asserts, began to be felt after the Civil War, in “an era when the invention, production, distribution, and consumption of things rather suddenly came to define a national culture.”³³⁴

In his search for the “thingness” of things, Brown looks to literary texts that consider how objects organize meaning and how we use objects to sublimate our fears.³³⁵ He interrogates the capacity of objects to be both physical things and signs or symbols of something else.³³⁶ In doing so, he examines the quality of a thing “as what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects – their force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems.”³³⁷ Advertising took advantage of this phenomenon to purposefully transform a commercial object (or rather the purchase of the object) into a signifier of personality and selfhood.

Brown goes on to discuss theorists George Simmel and Walter Benjamin, who argued that the value of an object was located not in the labor to produce it, but in the desire of customers to consume it, seen particularly clearly when the object itself falls out

³³³ Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 5.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

³³⁷ Bill Brown, “Thing Theory” in *Critical Inquiry* 28.1 (Autumn 2001), 1-21: 5. I would add the magic by which objects become art.

of fashion.³³⁸ Similarly, it is when the normal course of the use of objects gets interrupted through events like breakage or sentimental recollection spurred by the object, that the object becomes a thing.³³⁹ Thing Theory, according to Brown, involves “new thoughts about how inanimate objects constitute human subjects, how they move them, how they threaten them, how they facilitate or threaten their relation to other subjects.”³⁴⁰ Essentially, Thing Theory posits how objects attain subjectivity by acting upon us.

The following work by Gerald Murphy, a transatlantic American expatriate living in Paris, exemplifies these concerns. Although he uses the sleek aesthetic associated with advertising and Americanness, his paintings, while situating him with the rhetoric of *Americanisme*, fail to completely subvert the tyranny of things as advertising seeks to do. Instead, in certain still lifes, Murphy painted objects that had had an effect on him - that had somehow acted upon his life.

Gerald and Sara Murphy were well-known socialites who were friends with French and fellow American intellectual elites from F. Scott Fitzgerald, who modeled the characters of Dick and Nicole Diver on them in “Tender is the Night,” to Cole Porter, and artists Pablo Picasso, Natalia Goncharova, and Man Ray. Only seven of Murphy’s paintings survive, but they reveal an unusual look at an amateur artist grappling with his identity as a painter of things American.

Though they appear to be simple still lifes, Gerald Murphy’s paintings *Watch* and *Razor* have been interpreted as self-portraits because the objects portrayed refer directly

³³⁸ Brown, “Thing Theory,” 13.

³³⁹ Bill Brown, March 4, 2010 interview “The Nature of Things”

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 7.

to his family life.³⁴¹ (Figures 79 and 80) Murphy utilizes the cubist interest in still life coupled with the postwar vogue for realism, but rather than painting anonymous objects, he makes his paintings personal. And yet, both *Watch* and *Razor* can be seen as embodying typical American values of efficiency, innovation, and entrepreneurial spirit.

Set against a cubist and purist-inspired background, Murphy's safety razor, fountain pen, and matchbox form a kind of heraldic coat of arms. In fact, Murphy's father owned the Mark Cross Co., and the crossed pen and razor could serve as an emblem for the business.³⁴² Furthermore, the safety razor, namesake of the painting's title, was one that Murphy himself had designed for the company, though Gillette ended up beating them to the market. Thus the anonymous objects turn out to have personal significance to the artist, and speak to a moment in time when he felt he had let down his father. In ascribing personal significance to this still life, Murphy participates in associating himself and his identity with a consumable object. At the same time, the safety razor and the fountain pen were seen as specifically American objects, and Murphy certainly was aware that they would signify American values to his Paris audience. For these still lives, Murphy was termed "the only true American artist working in Paris."

With *Watch*, Murphy doubled the 3 foot-by- 3 foot *Razor*, to an enormous 6 foot square canvas. Painted in primarily metallic hues, Murphy records the inner workings of a pocket watch. Like *Razor*, the watch recalls both personal and American iconography. Murphy's father had designed and marketed a railroad watch for the Mark Cross Co,

³⁴¹ Deborah Rothschild, ed., *Making it New: The Art and Style of Sara and Gerald Murphy* (Williams College Museum of Art, 2007), 59

³⁴² Jocelyne Rotily. "A Picture of America by Gerald Murphy," in *A Transatlantic Avant-Garde: American Artists in Paris 1918-1939*. Sophie Lévy, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 60.

which had Roman numerals on its face like those in the upper right of the composition.³⁴³ This again links him to his father, whose business savvy supported him and his elaborate expatriate lifestyle. But the watch may also refer to a small gold pocket watch given to him by his daughter Honoria. She notes that he especially loved this watch, and kept it propped on a table near him with the mechanism showing. In this way, Murphy recorded a thing that Brown would argue had acted upon him and therefore has attained a level of subjectivity.³⁴⁴ By exposing the watch's inner workings, Murphy attempts to discover its interiority, the quality of subjectivity that allows it to both act on his emotions and gain non-functional but sentimental value. Again using the cubist purist aesthetic so popular in France in the 1920s, Murphy creates an image that is both personal and distinctly American. Managing time, efficiency, and speed were all hallmarks of modern America, and figures like Frederick Winslow Taylor, father of scientific management and leader of the Efficiency movement, gained celebrity status.

Both artists, working on different sides of the Atlantic, aimed to discover a truly American art. They turned to the world of business and advertising to find an aesthetic that could be considered national. They used this form to identify both themselves and their friends and fellow artists as Americans, and to analyze the ways in which consumer culture had shifted the relationships between subjects and objects in the early twentieth century. They examined the subtle tensions surrounding the methods with which advertising attempted to force upon the consciousness of consumers the idea that the act of purchasing objects served as a way to control the formation of one's identity. The advertising industry appropriated the developments in psychology that had proposed that

³⁴³ Jocelyne Rotily. "A Picture of America by Gerald Murphy," 60.

³⁴⁴ This subjectivity is only attained, however, through the human engagement with the object that causes us to imaginatively invest it with subjectivity.

external relationships with not only people but things constituted the self. Turning these theories into practical applications in consumer manipulation, advertisers sought to provide consumers with the illusion of choice (and therefore the possibility of maintaining the subject position) of which objects they wanted to buy in order to receive the intangible benefits of certain traits. Artists like Charles Demuth and Gerald Murphy appropriated this advertising aesthetic in their object-portraits to explore how objects (often the creative products of the subject) served to “brand” the image of the portrait’s subject.

Conclusion

The object-portraits examined here appear at the intersection of several histories. They anchor a variety of threads, from psychology to technology to advertising, that deal with the construction of the self in the interwar period. They give shape to an elusive subject-object dynamic, one that plays with a push-pull tension between fascination with and anxiety about modern life. These complex, contradictory pieces articulate a desire to contain the increasingly intangible self by clinging to the tangible world of things. The relatively small works filled with objects of a controllable scale attempt to counter the magnitude and power of technological industrialization and the nationalization of consumer culture. Reassessing the genre of portraiture in response to the developments that had complicated notions of the self and identity, the artists in this study were faced with nothing less than the question of what it meant to be human in the modern age. Their answer to this problem, in the form of the object-portraits, interrogated the relationship between subject and object, human and thing.

And yet, the phenomenon of object-portraiture was short-lived. Most of the artists studied here only worked in this genre for a distinctly defined period before either moving on or reverting back to their signature styles. Arthur Dove, again, was emblematic of this shift, since he had abandoned portraiture altogether by the end of the 1920s. In the heady climate of the postwar decade, these artists had searched for a form that could reconcile new definitions of the self and its relation to the world. Perhaps they discovered that too much had changed, and that the project to pin down identity through objects was doomed to be a failed experiment.

Nevertheless, and I believe most importantly, this study, with its focus on both fine art and visual/material culture, offers insight into an historical moment that is as indefinable as the object-portraits themselves. Termed the interwar period or the post-WWI decade, this time in American history (and art history) lacks even a clear designation apart from the fact that it occurred between or after major world events. Object-portraiture began as the Great War ended and had all but died out by the 1929 economic crash that triggered the Great Depression. But a study of the object-portraits reveals the fraught relationship between people and their things. In closely examining the phenomenon of this unusual genre within the social and historical context of this specific moment, I hope to inspire further research into this fertile era.

Illustrations:



Figure 1. Arthur Dove, *Portrait of Alfred Stieglitz*, 1924-25, mirrored glass plate, smoked camera lens, clock spring, watch spring, steel wool, on board, 40.3 x 30.8 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, New York



Figure 2. Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Gertrude Stein*, 1906, oil on canvas, 100 x 81.3 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 3. Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Daniel Henry Kahnweiler*, 1910

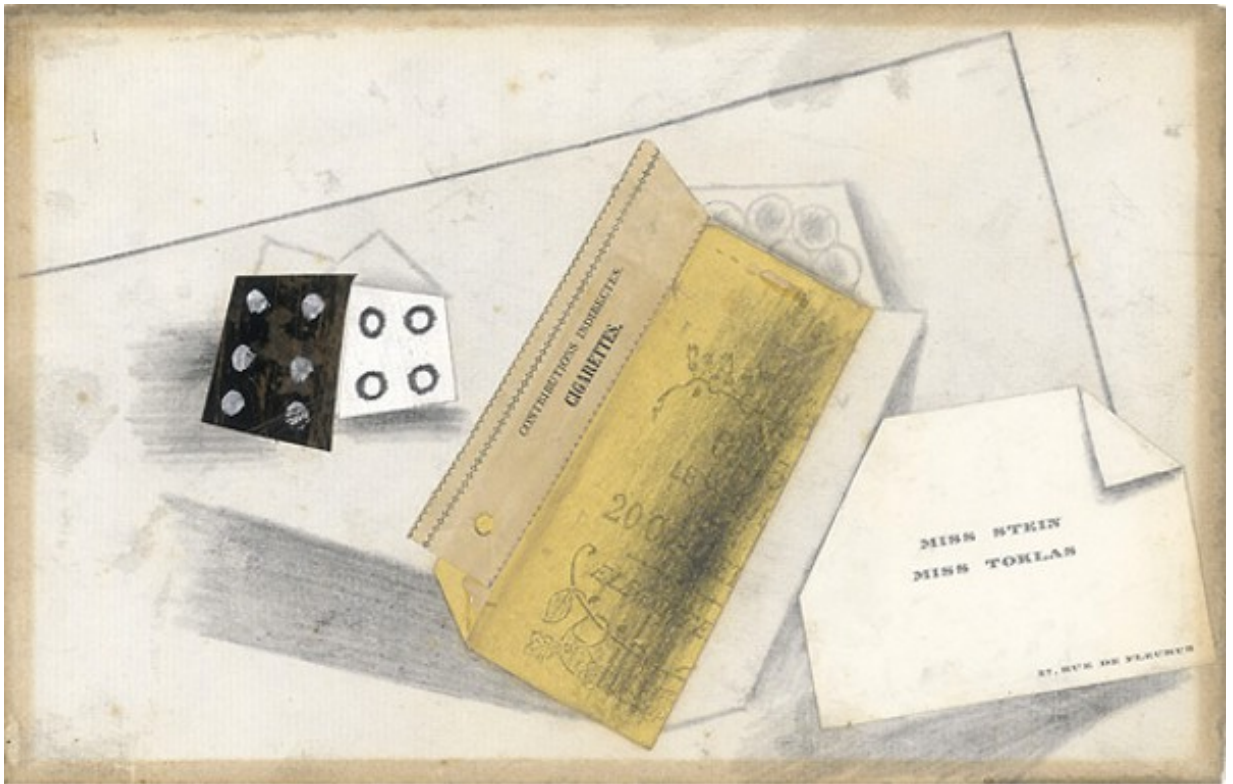


Figure 4. Pablo Picasso, *Dice, Packet of Cigarettes, Calling Card*, 1914, Painted and printed paper, graphite, and watercolor, 5 ½ x 8 ¼ in, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University

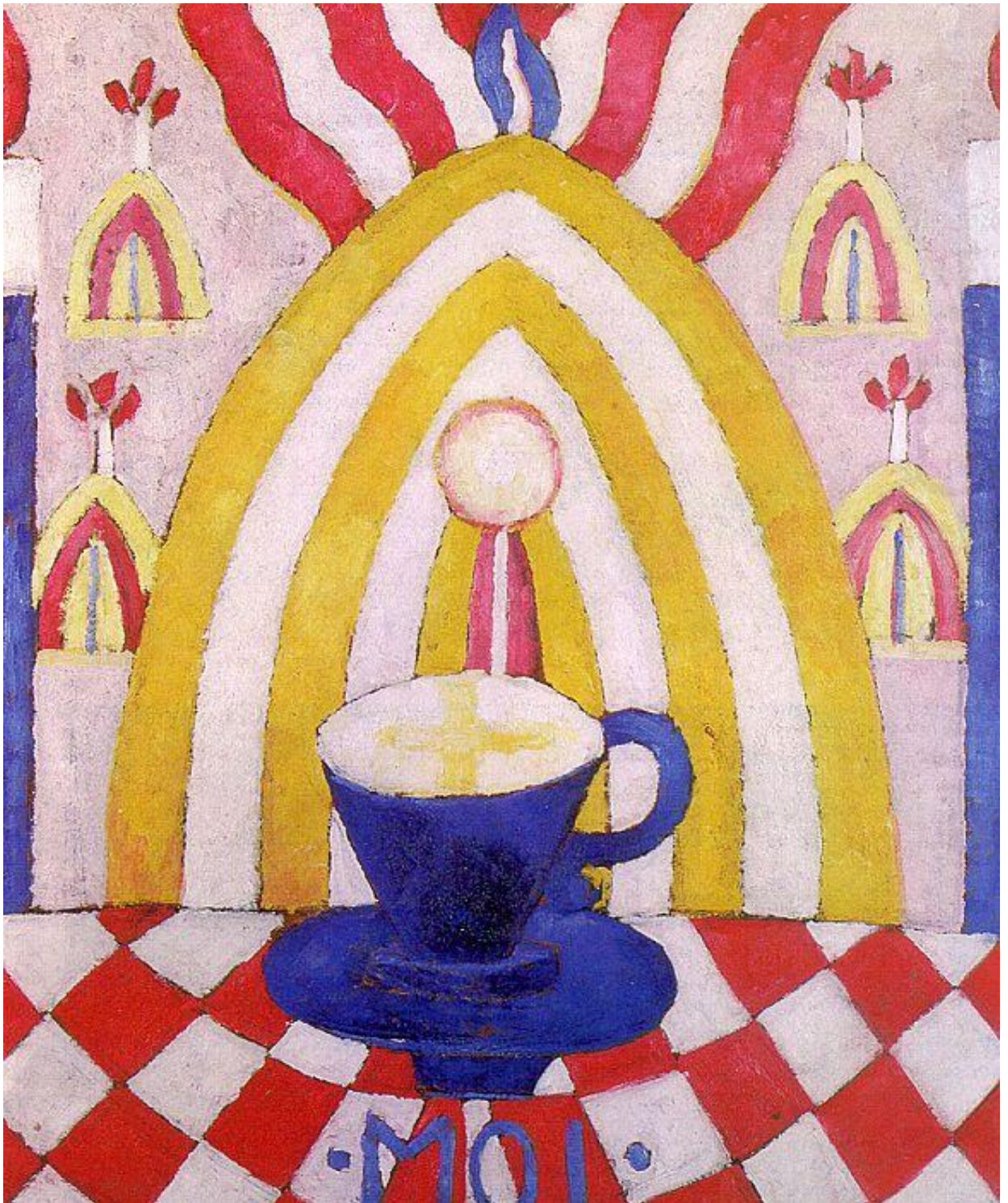


Figure 5. Marsden Hartley, *One Portrait of One Woman*, 1916, oil on fiberboard, 30 x 25 in, Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota



Figure 6. Marsden Hartley, *Portrait of a German Officer*, 1914, oil on canvas, 68 ¼ x 41 3/8 in, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 7. Charles Demuth, *Love Love Love: Homage to Gertrude Stein*, 1928, oil on panel, 20 x 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ in, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid



Figure 8. Florine Stettheimer, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, 1923



Figure 9. Charles Demuth, *Calla Lilies*, 1927



Figure 10. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Radiator Building at Night*, 1927, oil on canvas, 48 x 30 in, Fisk University



Figure 11. Marius de Zayas, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 1909, Charcoal on paper, 63.5 x 48.2 cm, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

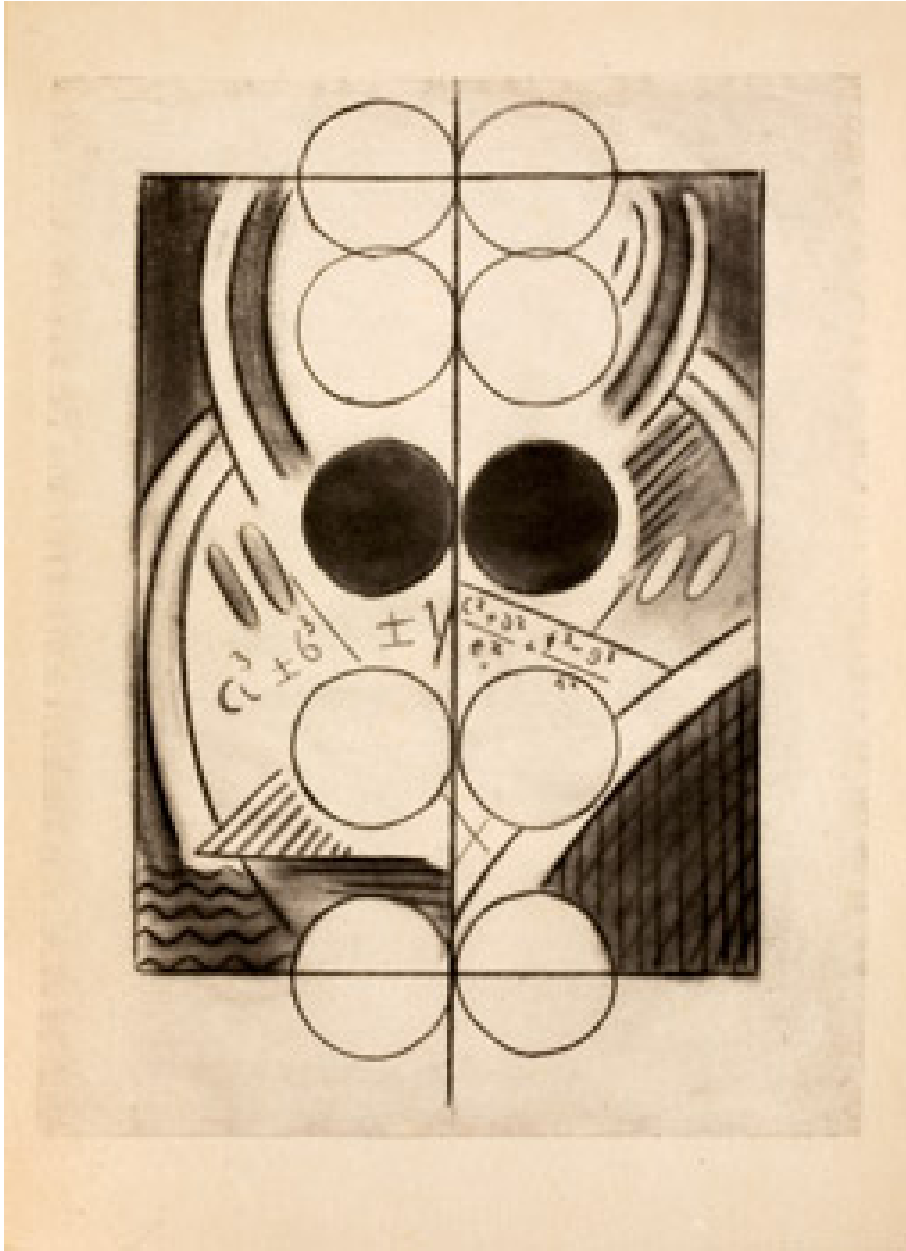


Figure 1. Marius de Zayas, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 1911, Charcoal on paper, 61.6 x 47.7 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

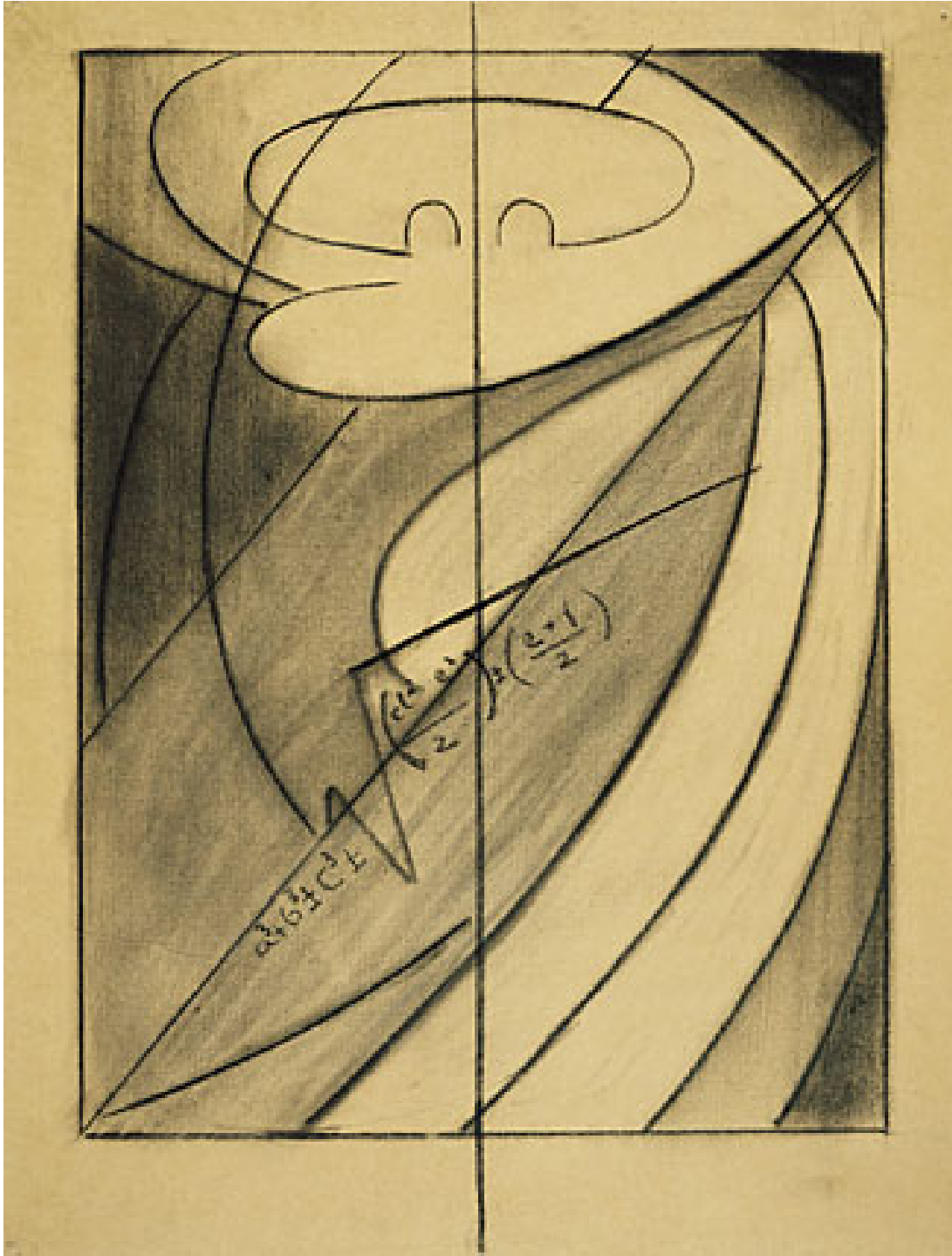


Figure 13. Marius de Zayas, *Agnes Meyer*, 1914, Charcoal on paper, 62.2 x 47 cm, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution



Figure 15. Katherine Sophie Dreier, *Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, 1918, oil on canvas, 45.7 x 81.3 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

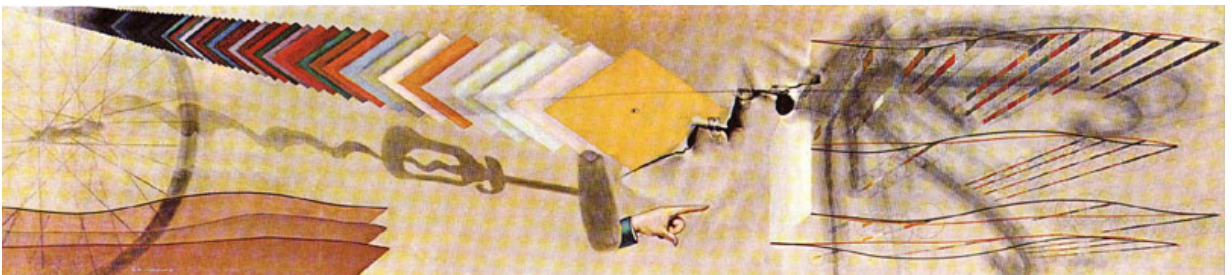


Figure 16. Marcel Duchamp, *Tu m'*, 1918

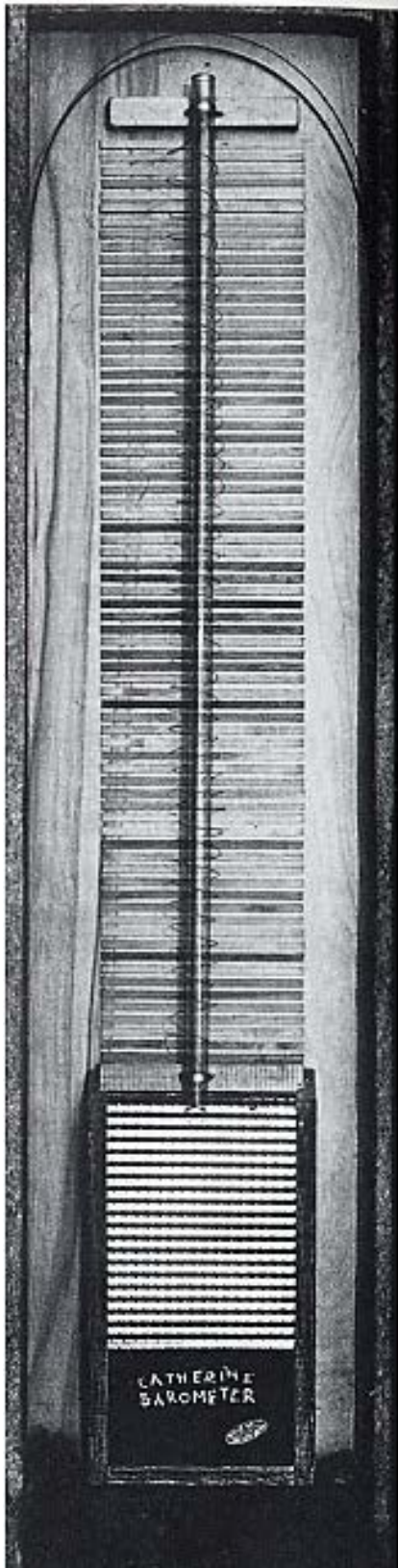


Figure 2. Man Ray, *Catherine Barometer*, 1920

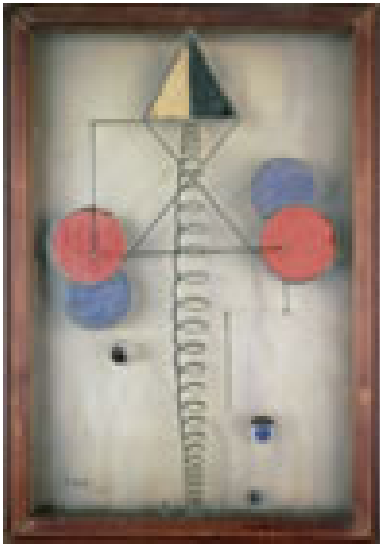


Figure 3. Jean Crotti, *The Clown*, 1916, Lead wire, glass eyes, and colored paper attached to glass, 37 x 20 cm, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris



Figure 4. John Covert, *Vocalization*, 1919



Figure 5. Kurt Schwitters, *One One (Eins Eins)*, 1919-20



Figure 6. Joseph Stella, *Collage No. 21*, 1920

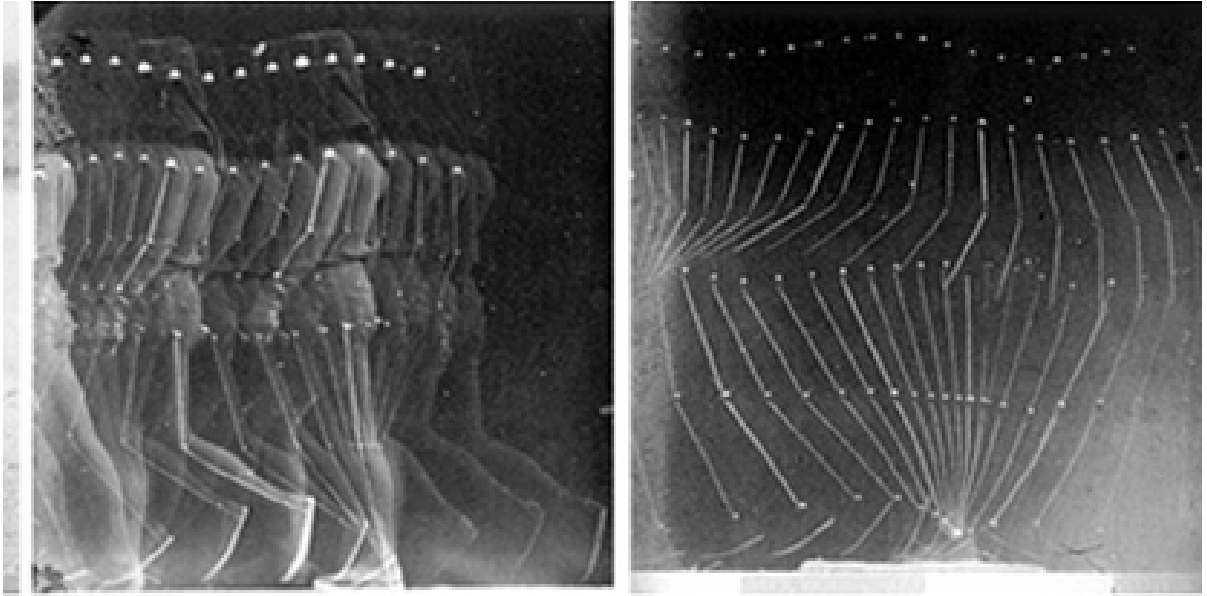


Figure 7. Etienne-Jules Marey, chronophotograph.



Figure 8. Etienne-Jules Marey, motion capture suit.

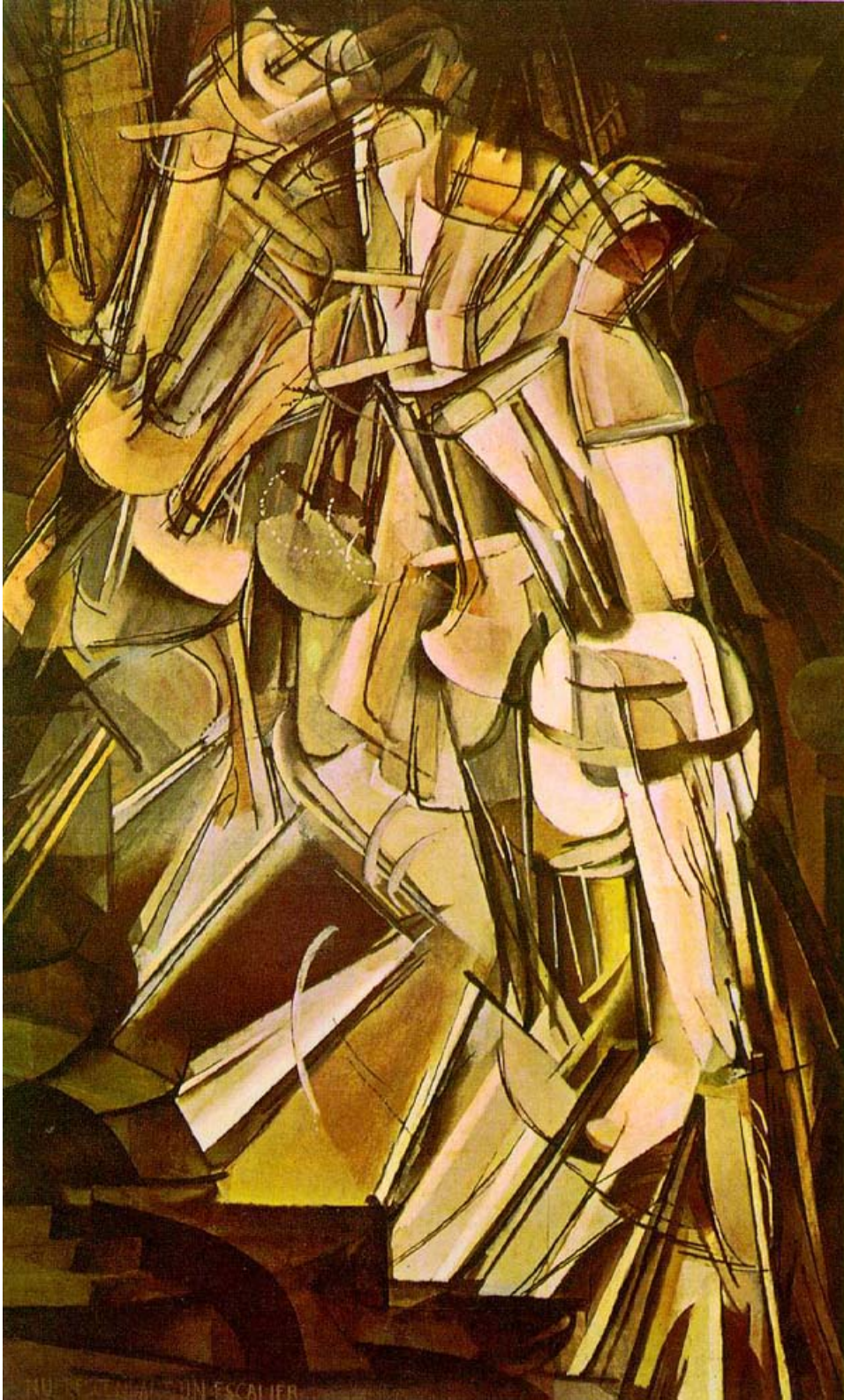


Figure 9. Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, 1912

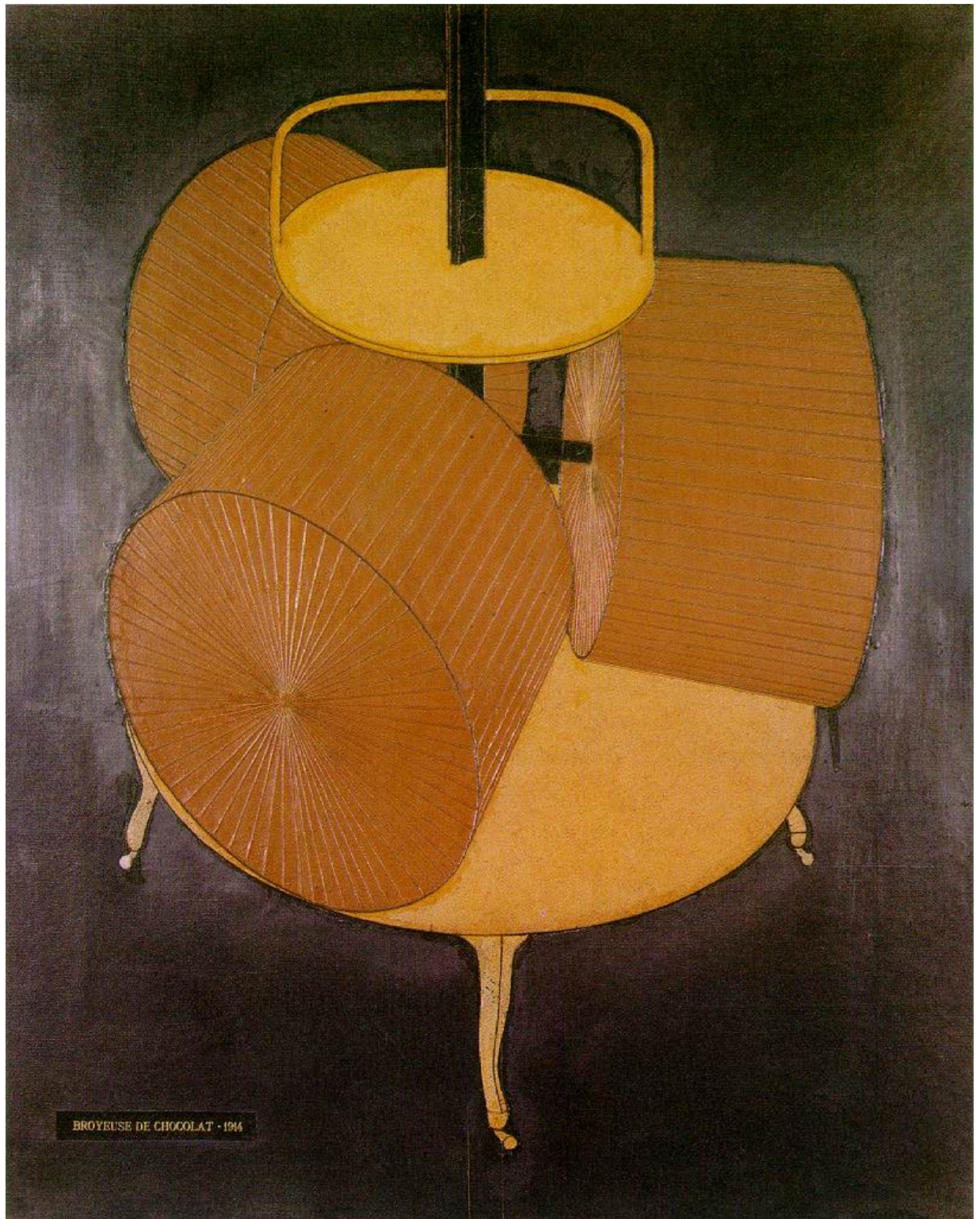


Figure 10. Marcel Duchamp, *The Chocolate Grinder #2*, 1914, Oil, graphite, and thread on canvas, 65.4 x 54.3 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art

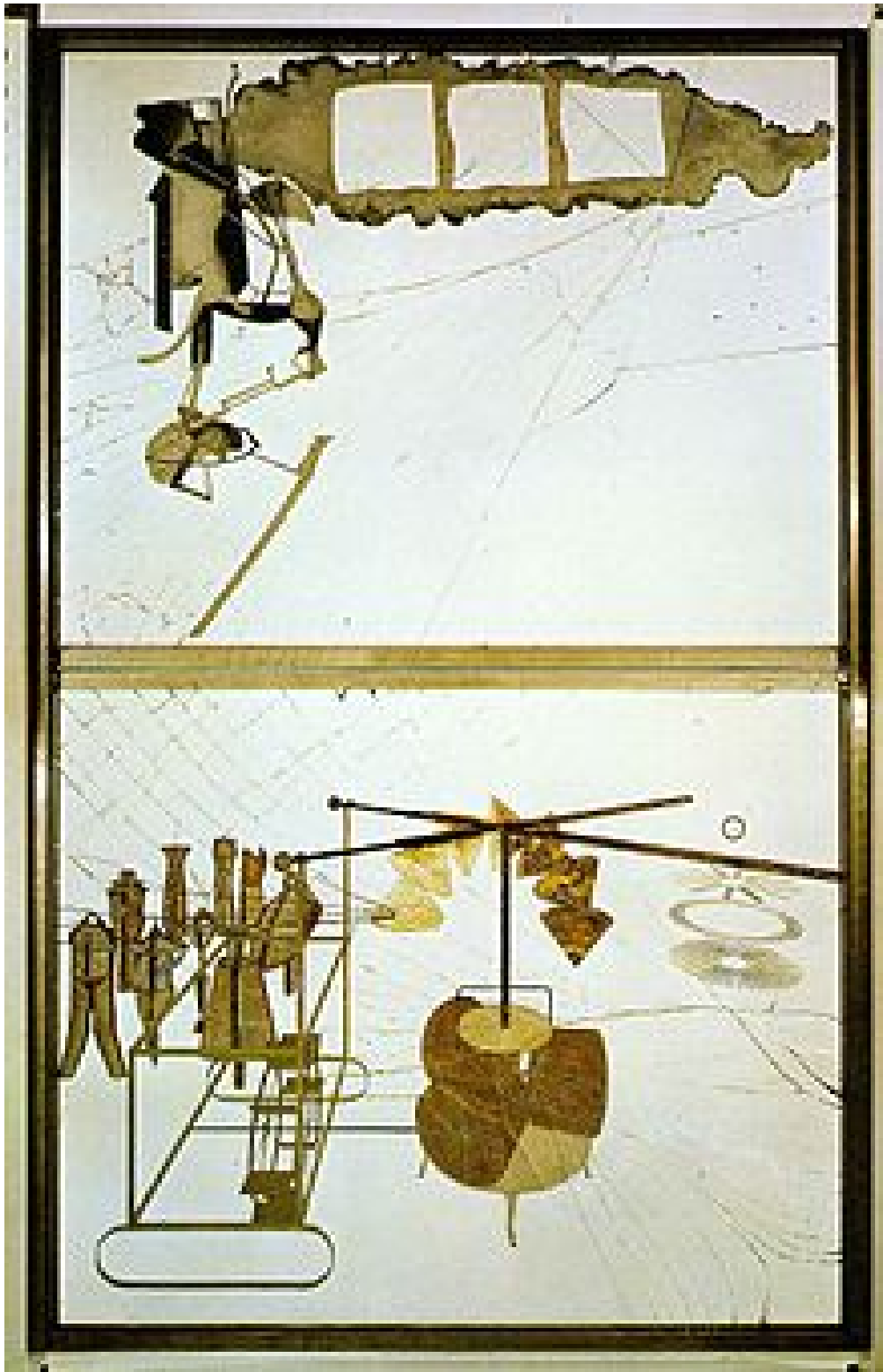


Figure 11. Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* or *The Large Glass*, 1915-1923

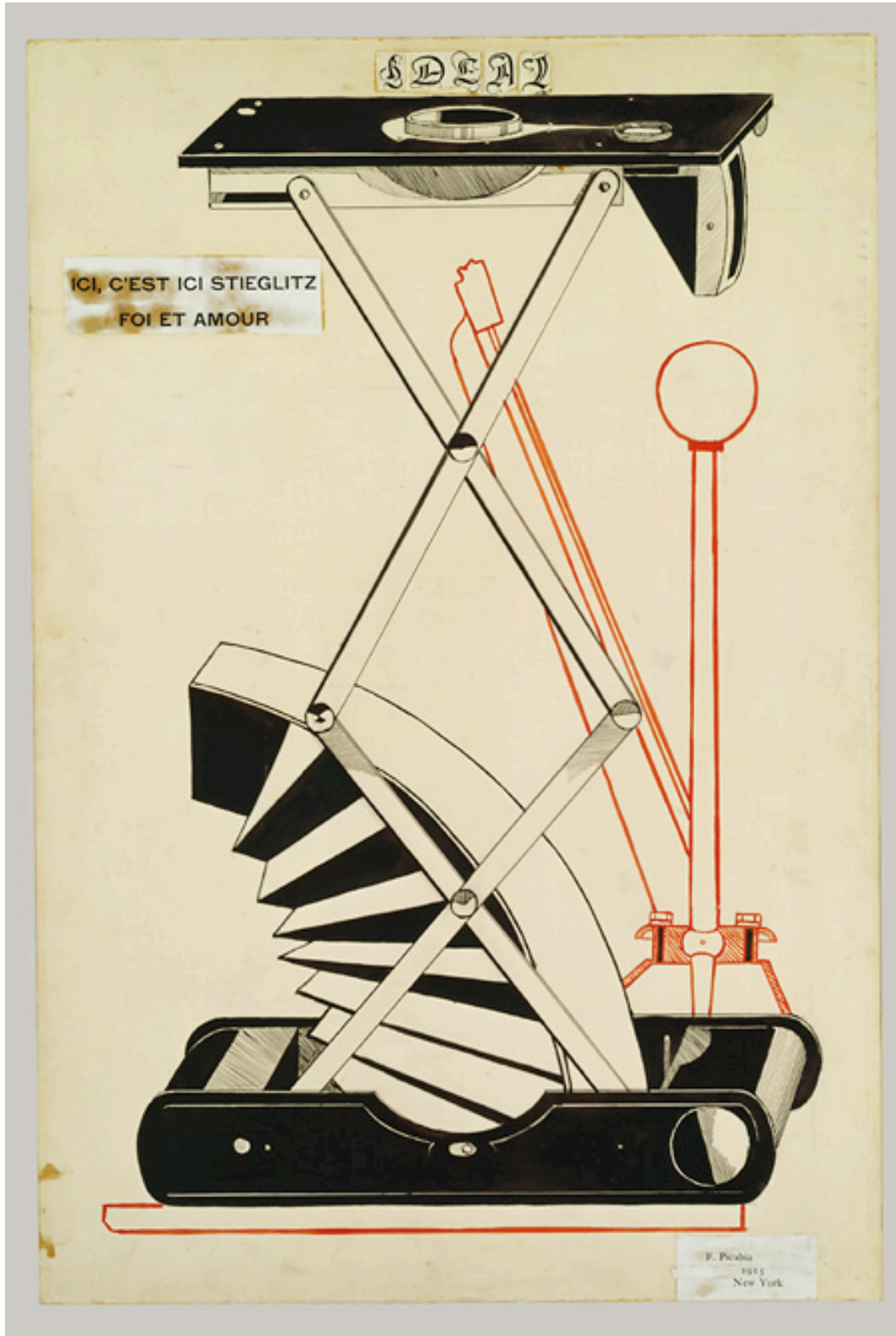


Figure 12. Francis Picabia, *Ici, C'est ici Stieglitz / Foi et Amour* (Here, This is Stieglitz / Faith and Love), July-August 1915 issue of *291*, Pen, brush and ink, and cut and pasted printed papers on paperboard, 29 7/8 x 20 in, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

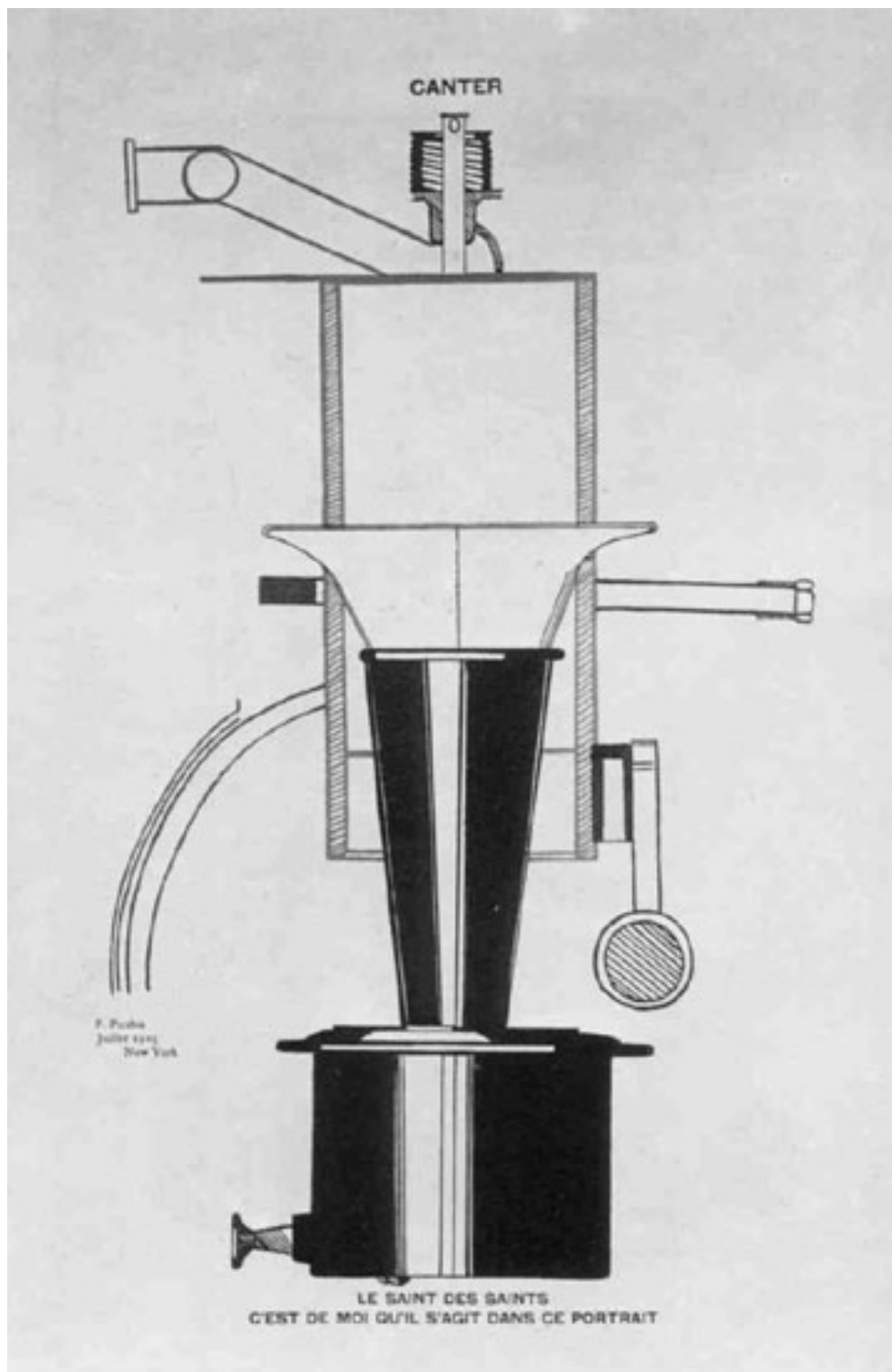


Figure 13. Francis Picabia, *Le Saint des saints / C'est de moi qu'il s'agit dans ce portrait* (The Saint of Saints / This is a Portrait About Me), July-August 1915 issue of 291

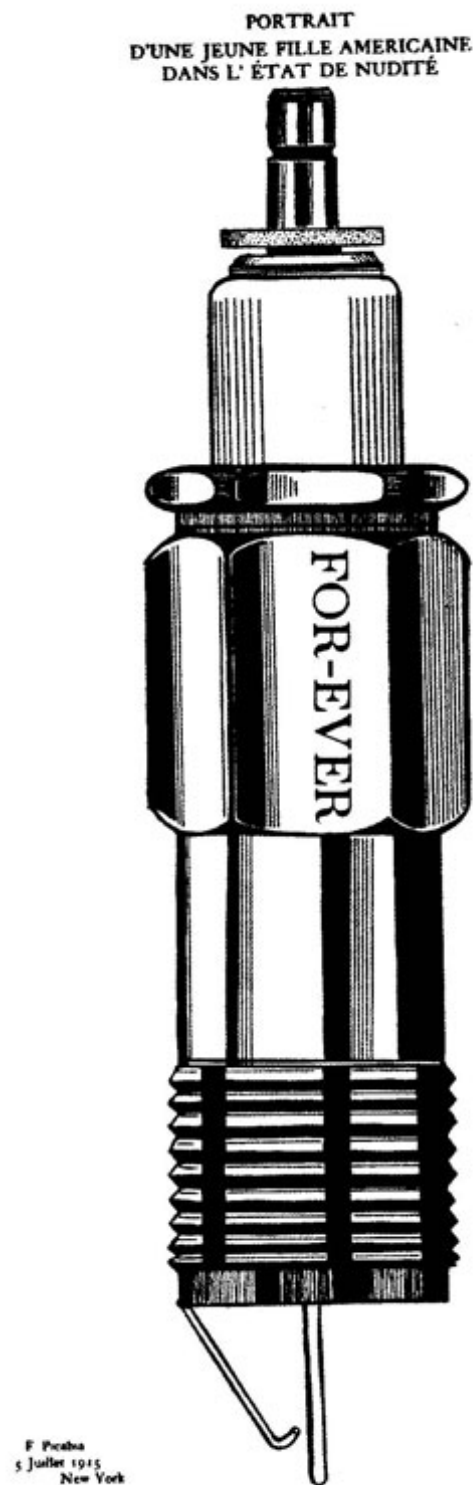


Figure 14. Francis Picabia, *Portrait d'une jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* (Portrait of a Young American Girl in a State of Nudity), July-August 1915 issue of *291*, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University



Figure 15. Francis Picabia, *Fille Née sans Mère* (Girl born without a mother), c. 1916-1918

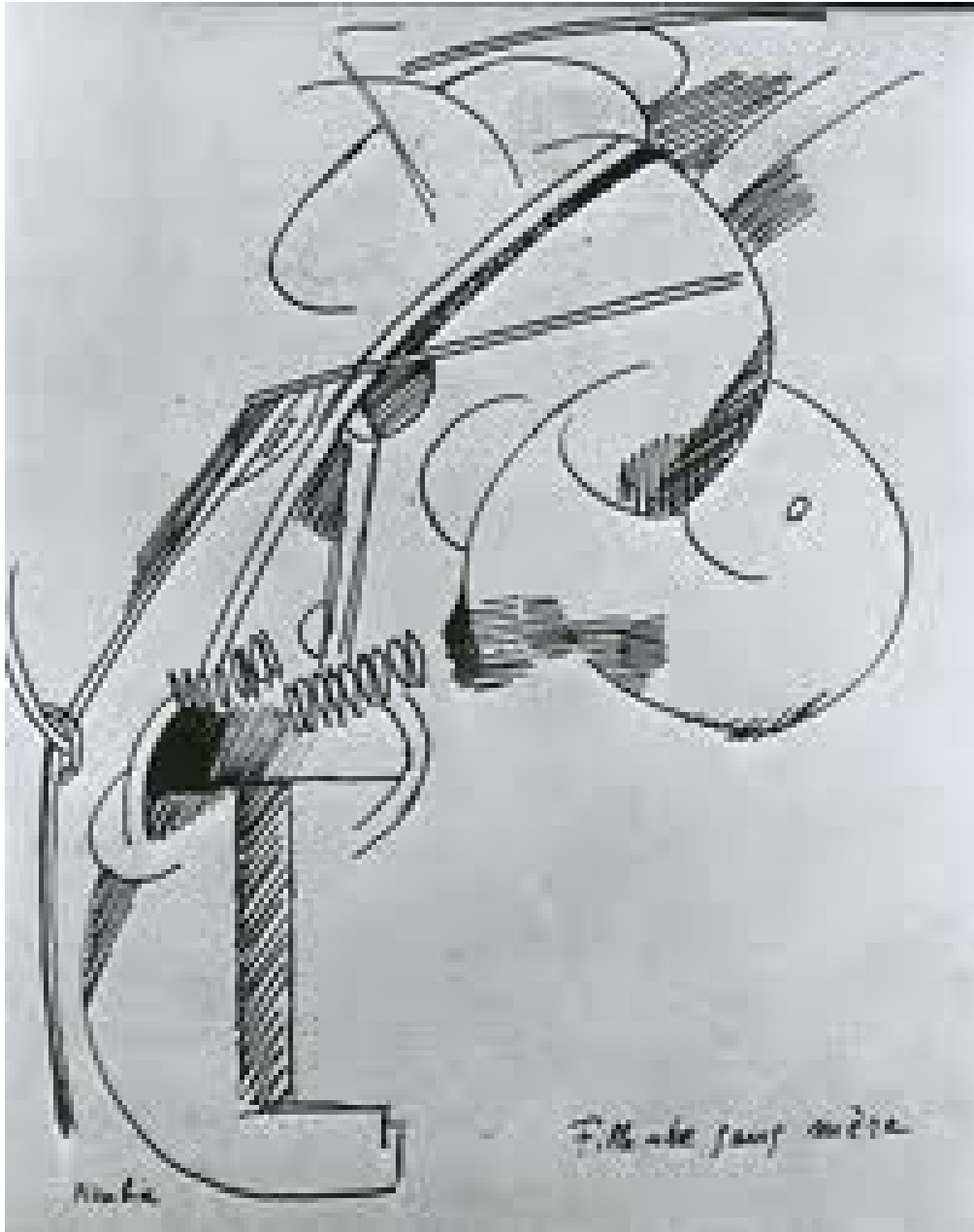


Figure 16. Francis Picabia, *Fille Née sans Mère* (Girl born without a mother), 1915, pen and ink on paper, 26.7 x 21.6 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

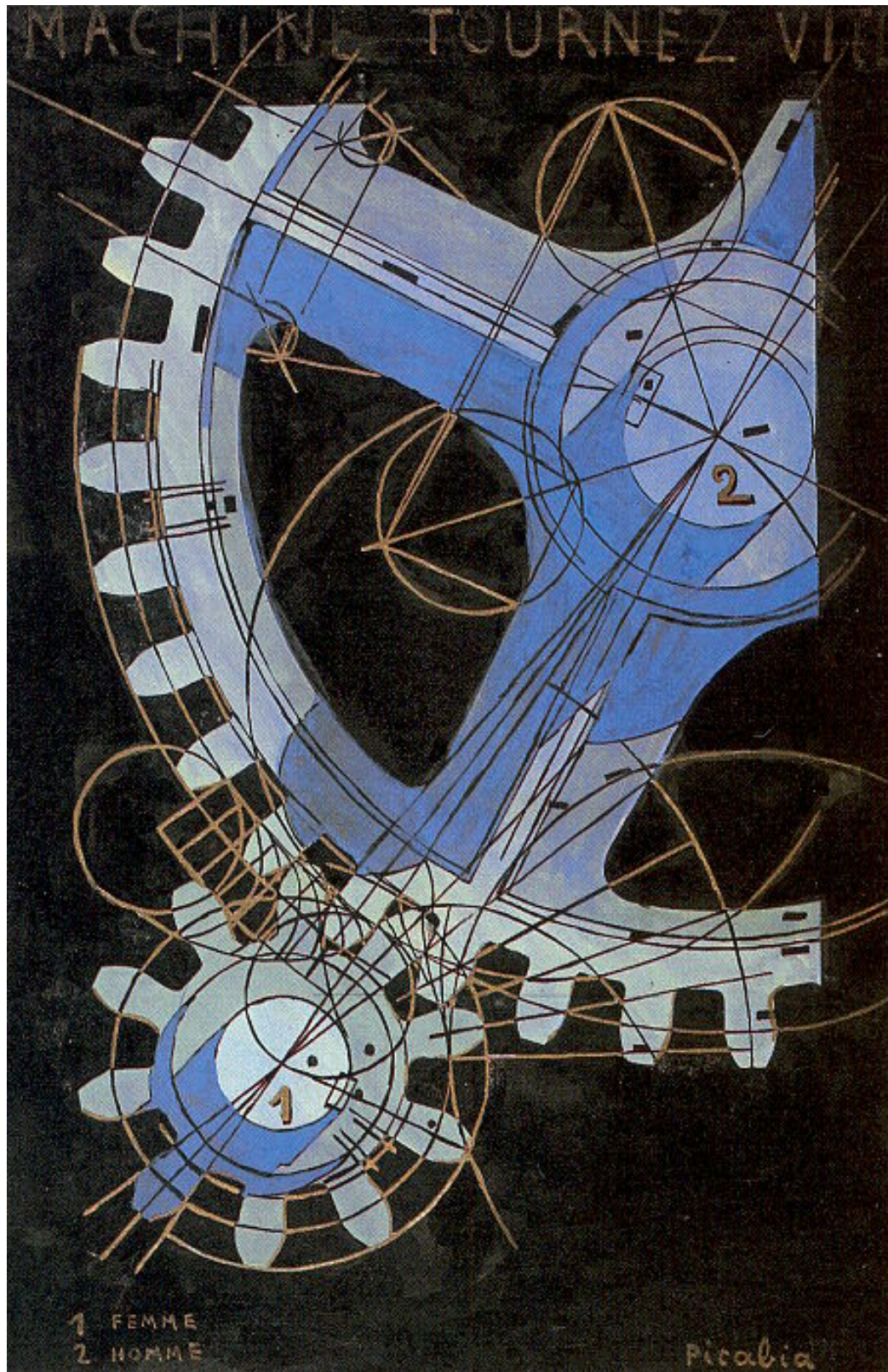


Figure 17. Francis Picabia, *Machine Tournez Vite*, c. 1916-1918

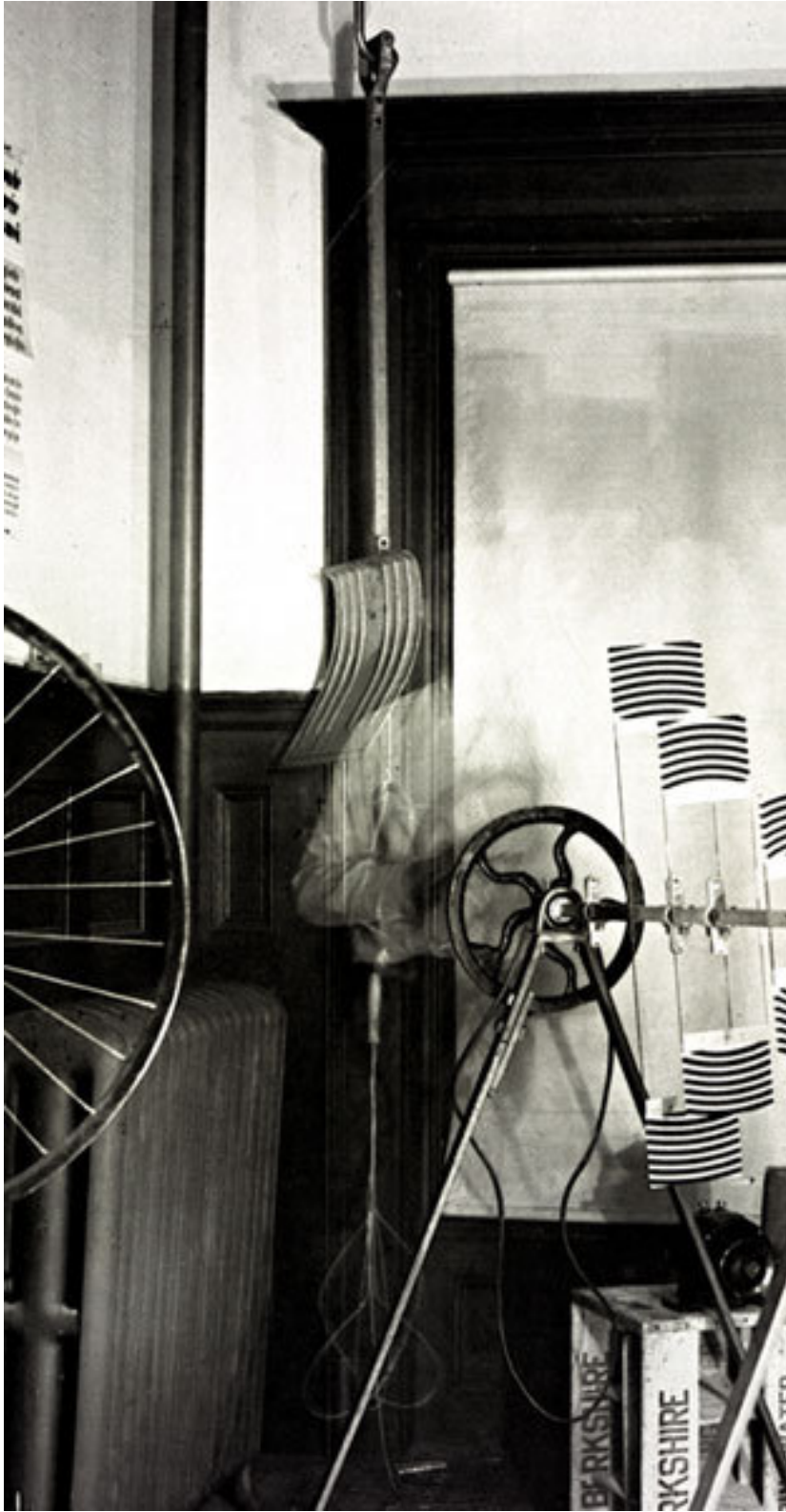


Figure 18. Marcel Duchamp, *In Advance of the Broken Arm*, 1915, studio photograph by Man Ray

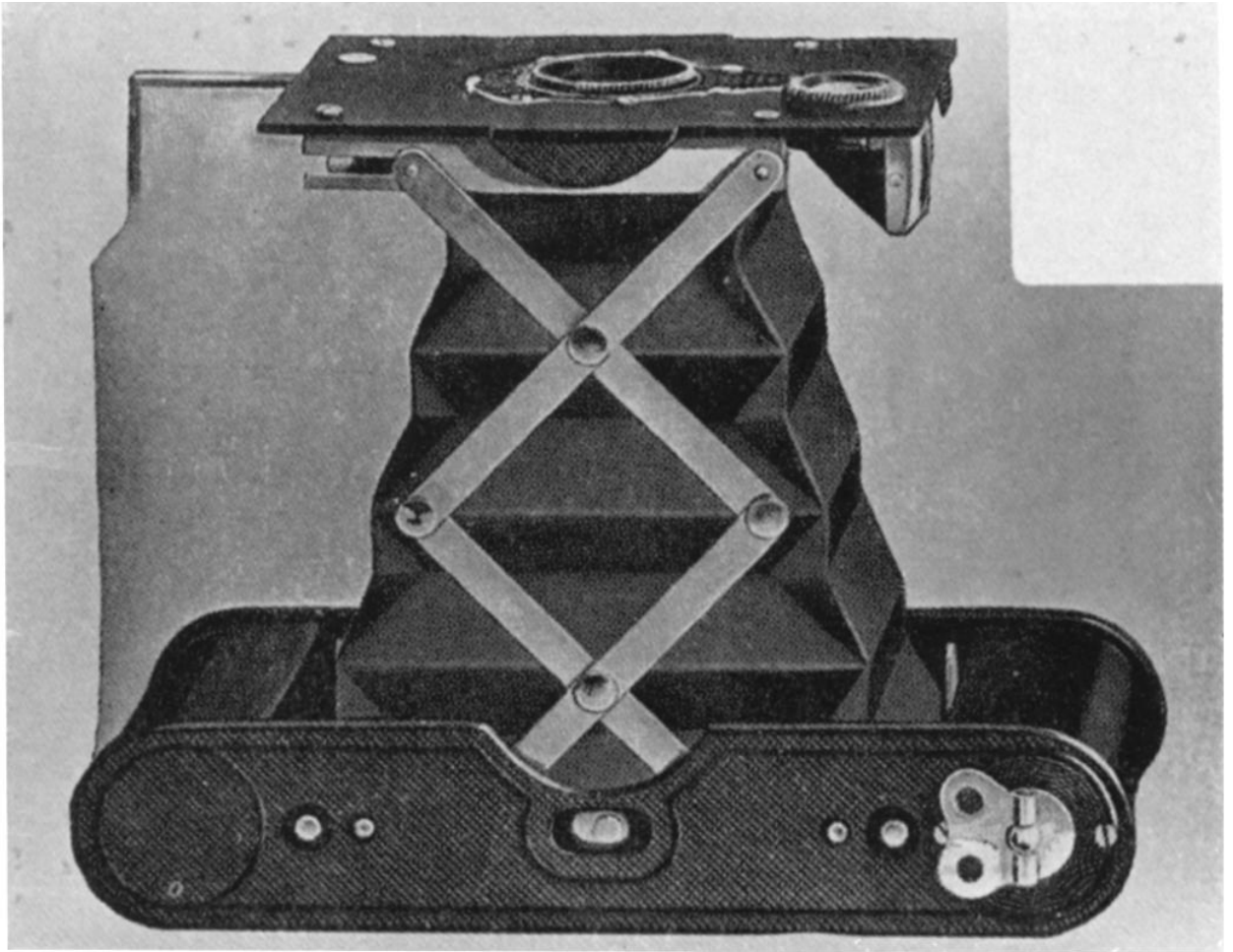


Figure 19. Advertisement for the Vest Pocket Kodak, *Camera Work*, January 1913

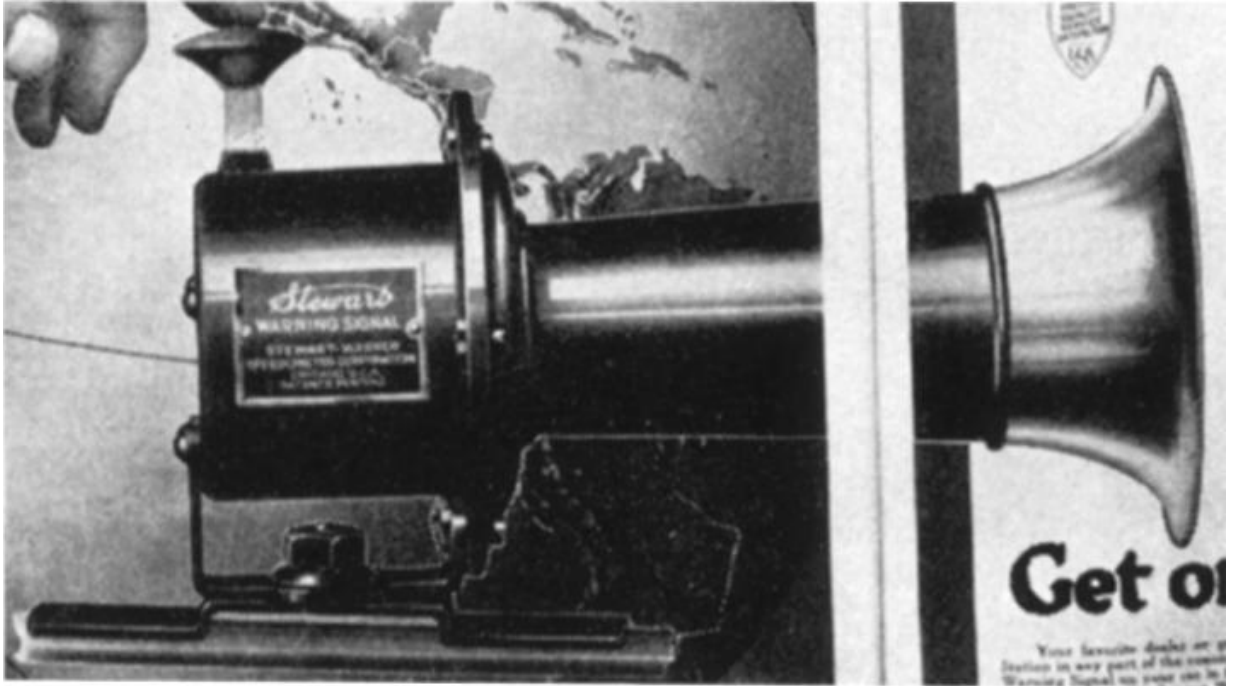


Figure 20. Advertisement for the Steward Warning Signal, *Horseless Age*, June 23, 1915

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RED HEAD

\$1.25 each
supply
stores, or

Emil Gross
Bush Terminal
Brooklyn,
Makers of
Motor

\$1.25

Figure 21. Advertisement for the Red Head Priming Plug, *The Motor*, December 1914

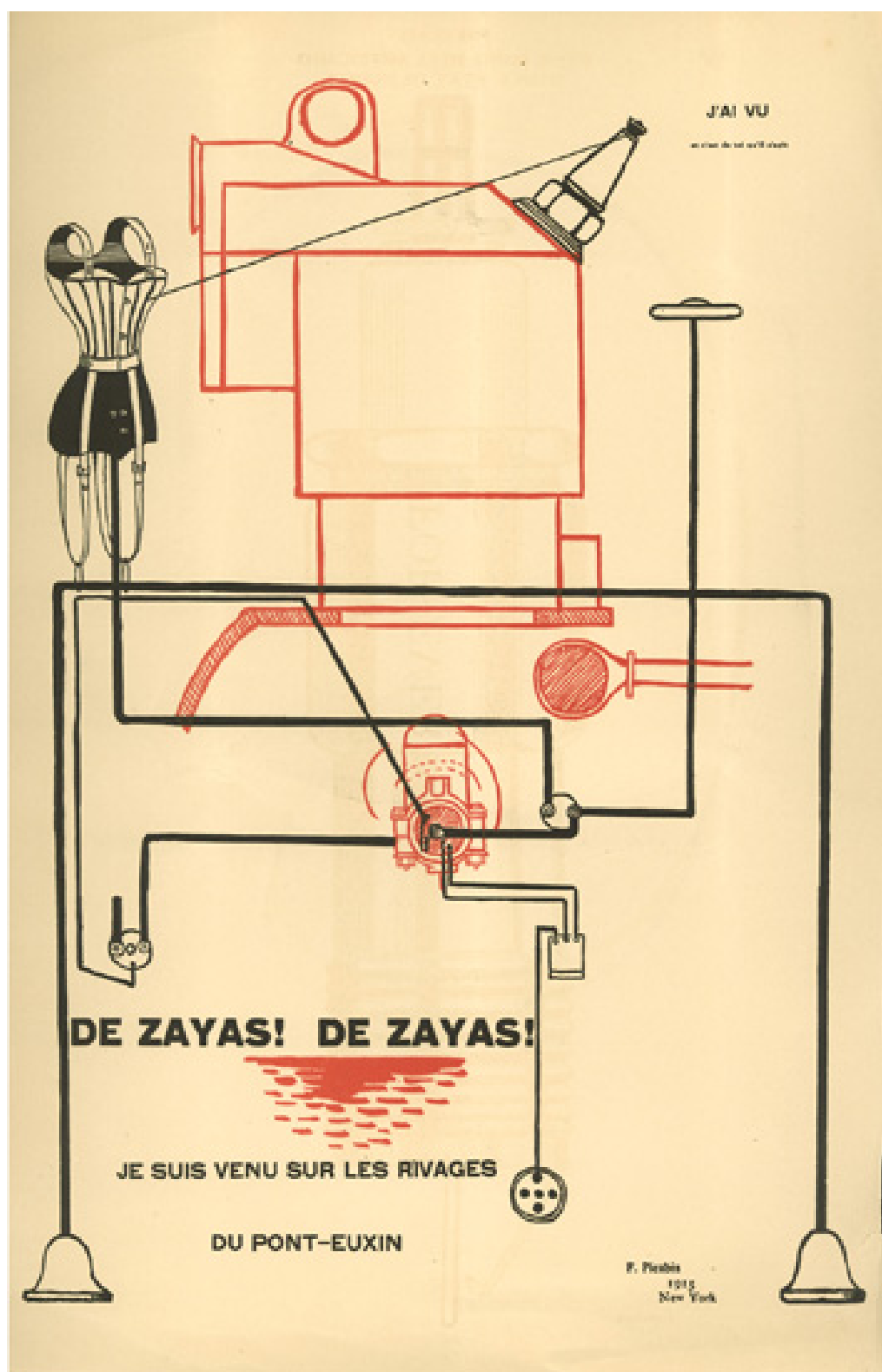


Figure 22. Francis Picabia, *De Zayas! De Zayas!*, July-August 1915 edition of 291, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University

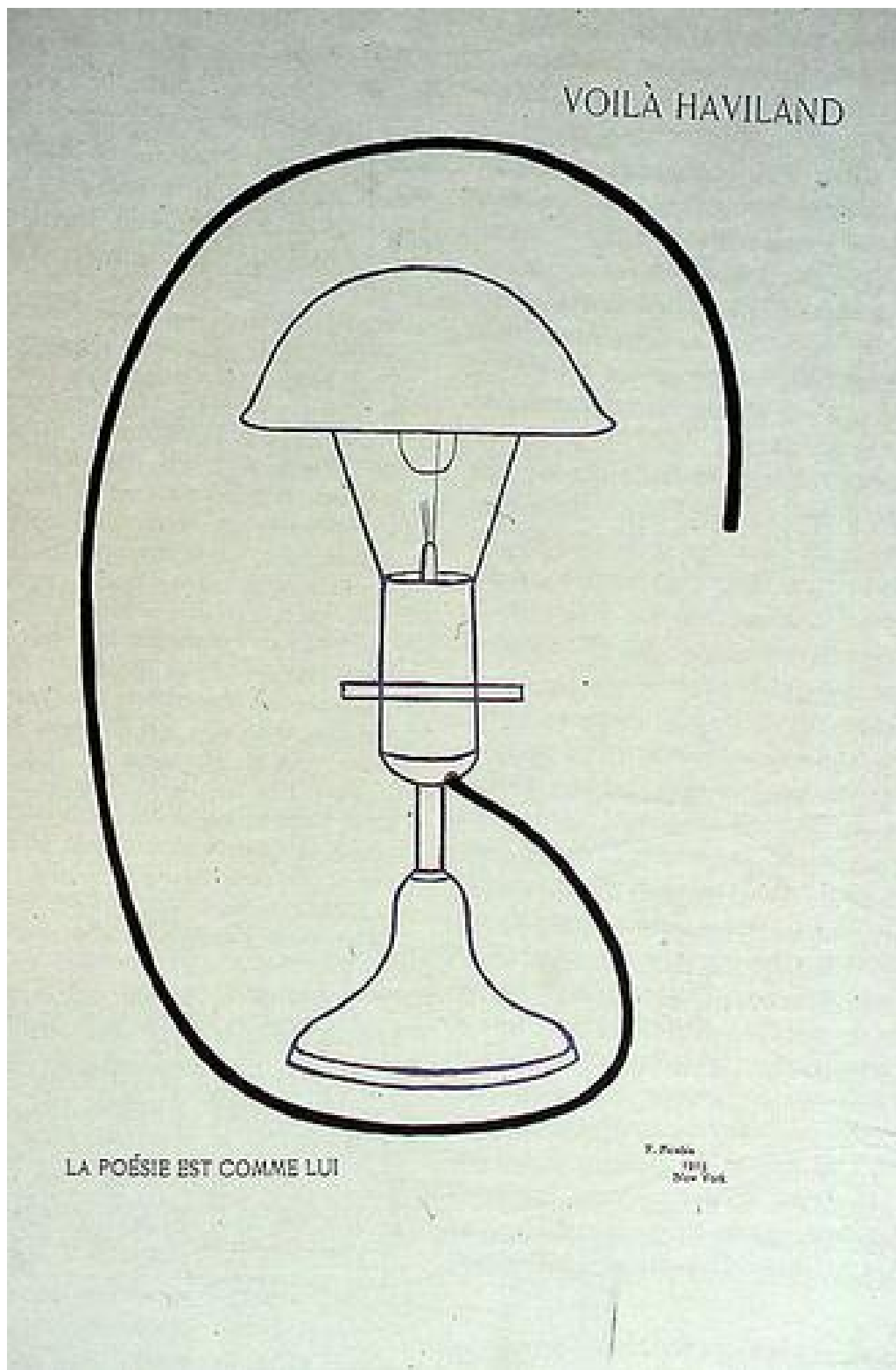


Figure 23. Francis Picabia, *Voilà Haviland*, July-August 1915 edition of 291

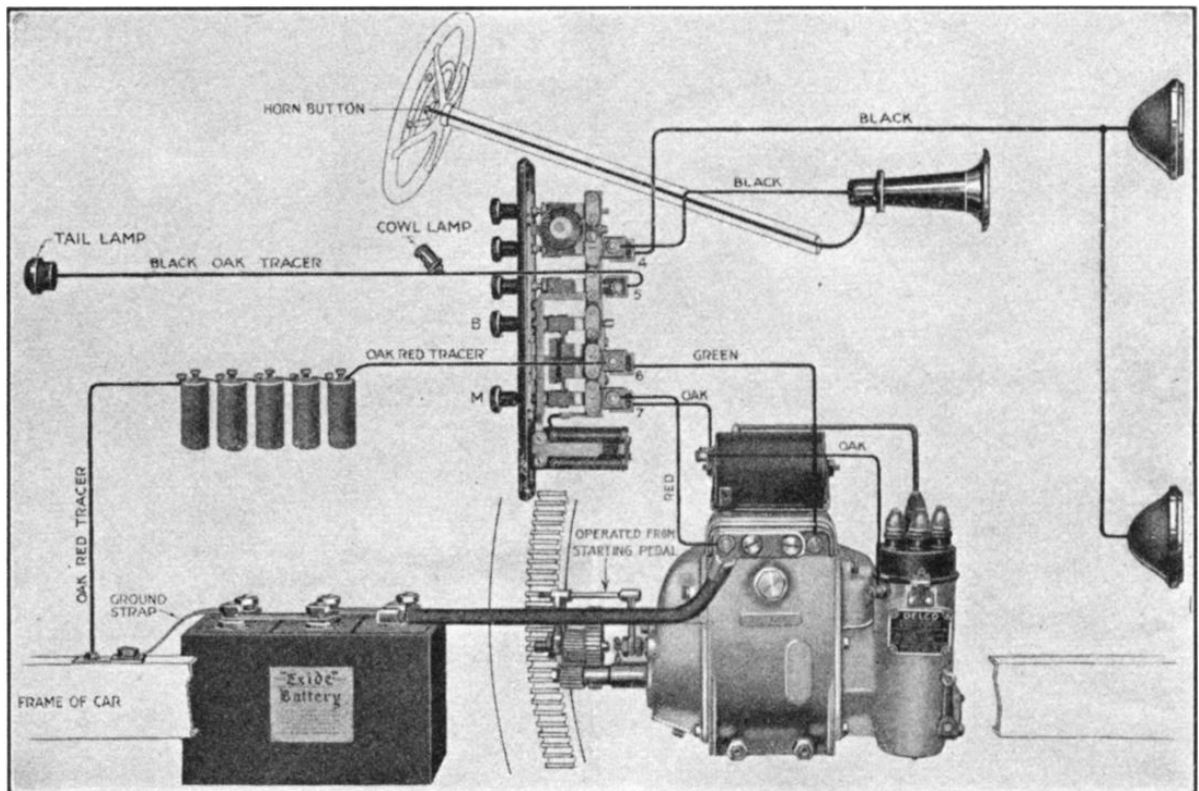


Figure 24. Diagram of a Delco starting and lighting system, *The Gasoline Automobile*, 1915

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Stand, Hangs, Clamps, Sticks, ANY PLACE and at ANY ANGLE you put it

Price **\$2** by Parcel Post prepaid

SAVE YOUR EYES!

Your eyes are your most valuable possession. Upon them your whole happiness and success depends. Here's the very lamp you have been wishing for to **save eye strain and preserve your sight.**

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The handiest lamp in the world, because, concealed in base are devices which enable you to place it **ANYWHERE**—either **Standing, Hanging, Clamped, or Stuck** by its suction cup—and it will **stay** wherever you put it, in any **position** desired, and **CONCENTRATE** its light exactly where you want light—always **keeping your eyes in the shadow and resting and saving them from strain.** Lamp is handsomely and durably made of high-grade brass, beautifully nicked. Indispensable in the Home, the Office, and when Traveling.

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Ask for it at your favorite store, or send us a \$2 bill, your personal check, or money order, and a "WALLACE" will be sent you by parcel post prepaid. Use it 10 days and if not entirely satisfied, return it and we will promptly refund your money. Saving your eyesight is worth twenty times \$2. Write now before you forget it.

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BIG OPPORTUNITY FOR AGENTS

Must be hustlers with selling experience, and enough capital to carry stock required. Write for proposition and proof.

Folded when not in use, or for travelling.

Figure 25. Advertisement for the Wallace Portable Electric Lamp, *Vanity Fair*, February 1915



Figure 41. Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *God*, 1917, Gelatin silver print by Morton Schamberg, 9 ¼ x 7 ¾ in., Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.



Figure 42. Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, c.1920, Platinum silver print by Charles Sheeler, 9 7/8 x 7 7/8 in, Private collection



Figure 4326. Images of the Baroness

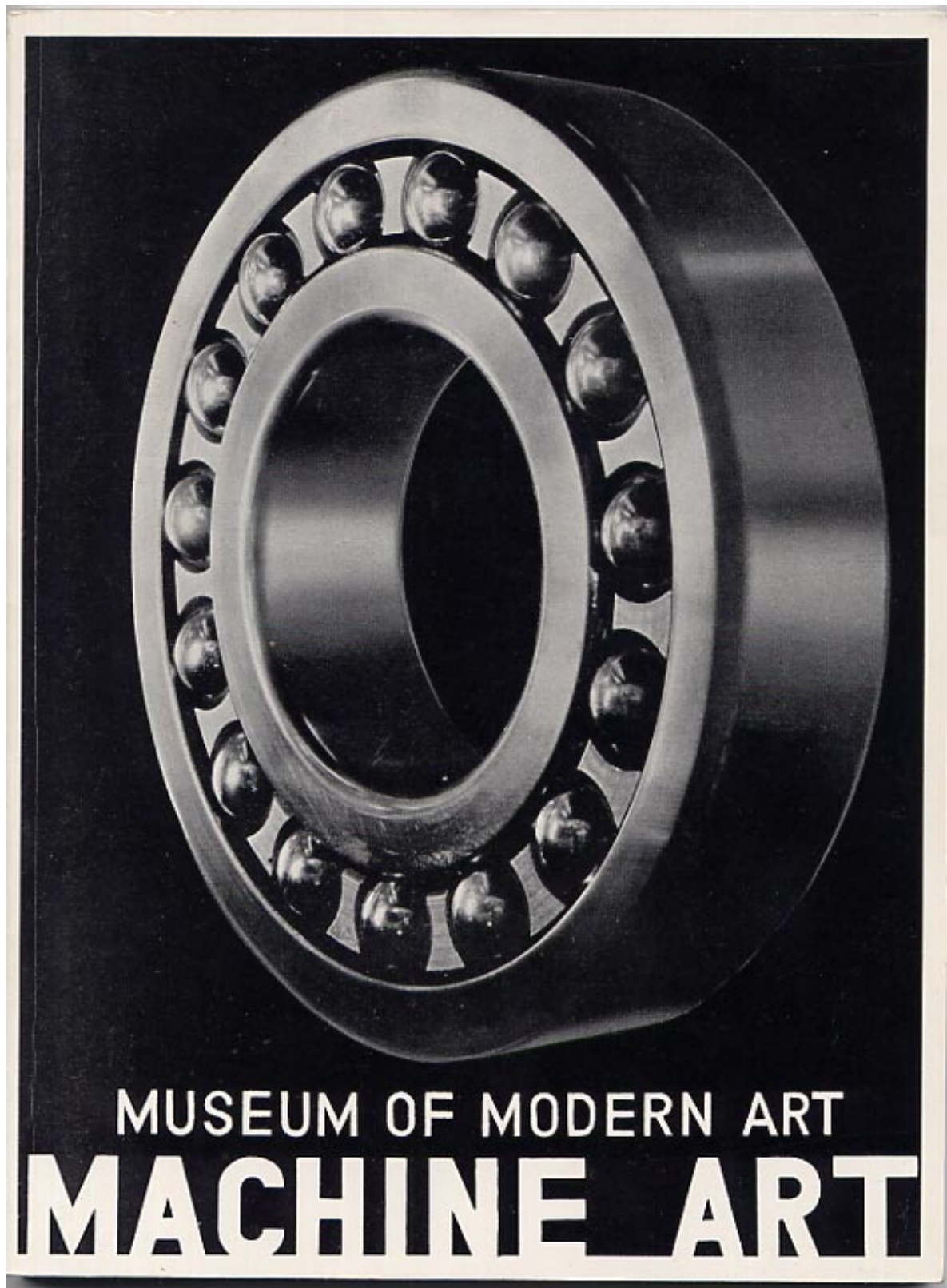


Figure 44. Cover for MoMA's *Machine Art* exhibition, 1934



Figure 45. Image Still: Oswald the Lucky Rabbit removes his foot and kisses it for luck



Figure 46. Before and after images from the Anna Coleman Ladd papers

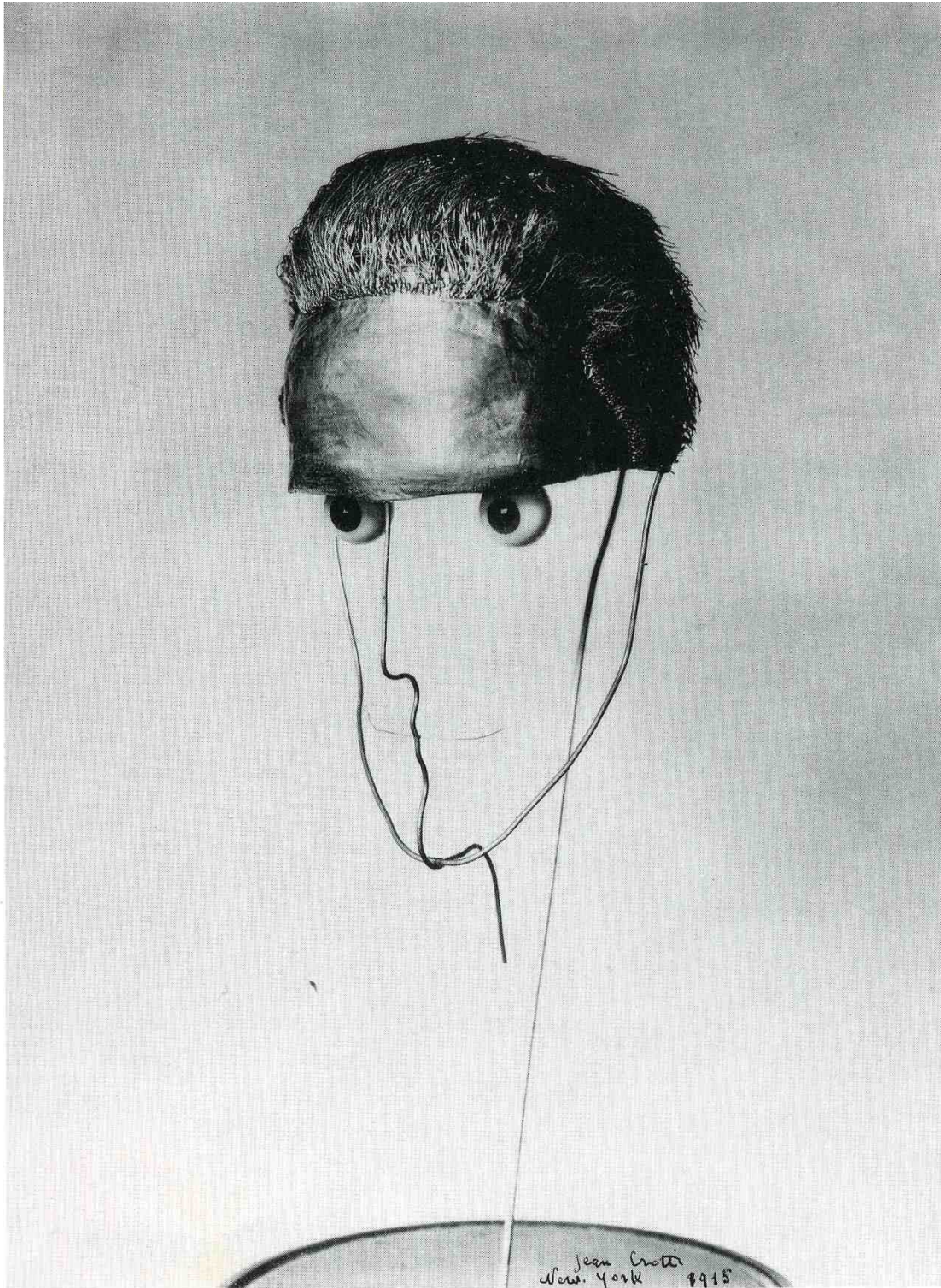
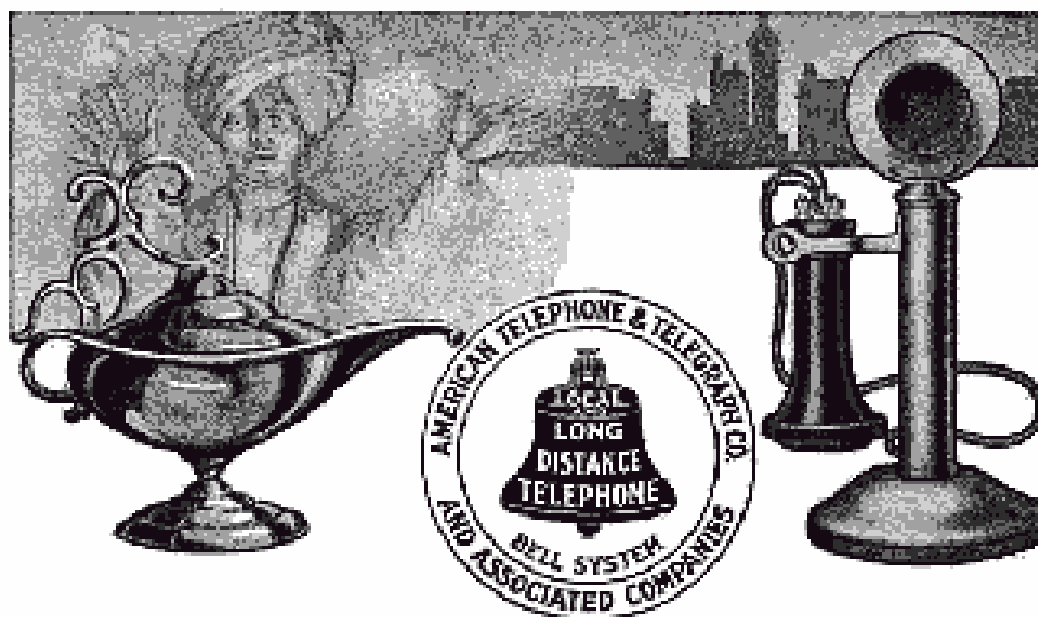


Figure 47. Jean Crotti, *Portrait of Duchamp sur mesure*, 1915, Gelatin silver print by Peter A. Juley, 23 x 17.5 cm, Archives Marcel Duchamp, Villiers-sous-Gréz

The Review of Reviews—Advertising Section



Everyday Magic

Aladdin's lamp transported its owner from place to place in the twinkling of an eye.

That was thousands of years ago — and the lamp was only a myth. But so wonderful that the story has endured to this day.

The Bell telephone is *far more wonderful* — and it is a reality.

It is the dream of the ages, come true. In the office, in the home, it stands; as commonplace in appearance as Aladdin's lamp.

By it the human voice—the truest expression of personality, ability, and char-

acter — is carried from place to place instantly and accurately. And human powers are thus extended as if by magic.

All other means of communication are cold and colorless in comparison. By the telephone alone is the *human quality of the human voice* carried beyond the limitations of unaided hearing.

The Bell System has provided this wonderful faculty for all the people.

The whole country is brought together by the Bell policy of universal service; and the miracle of telephone talk is repeated six billion times a year.

The Bell Long Distance telephone puts a man in intimate touch with new resources, new possibilities. One Policy, One System, Universal Service—these make every Bell Telephone the Center of the System.

1-15

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Figure 48. AT&T Telephone Ad from the 1920s

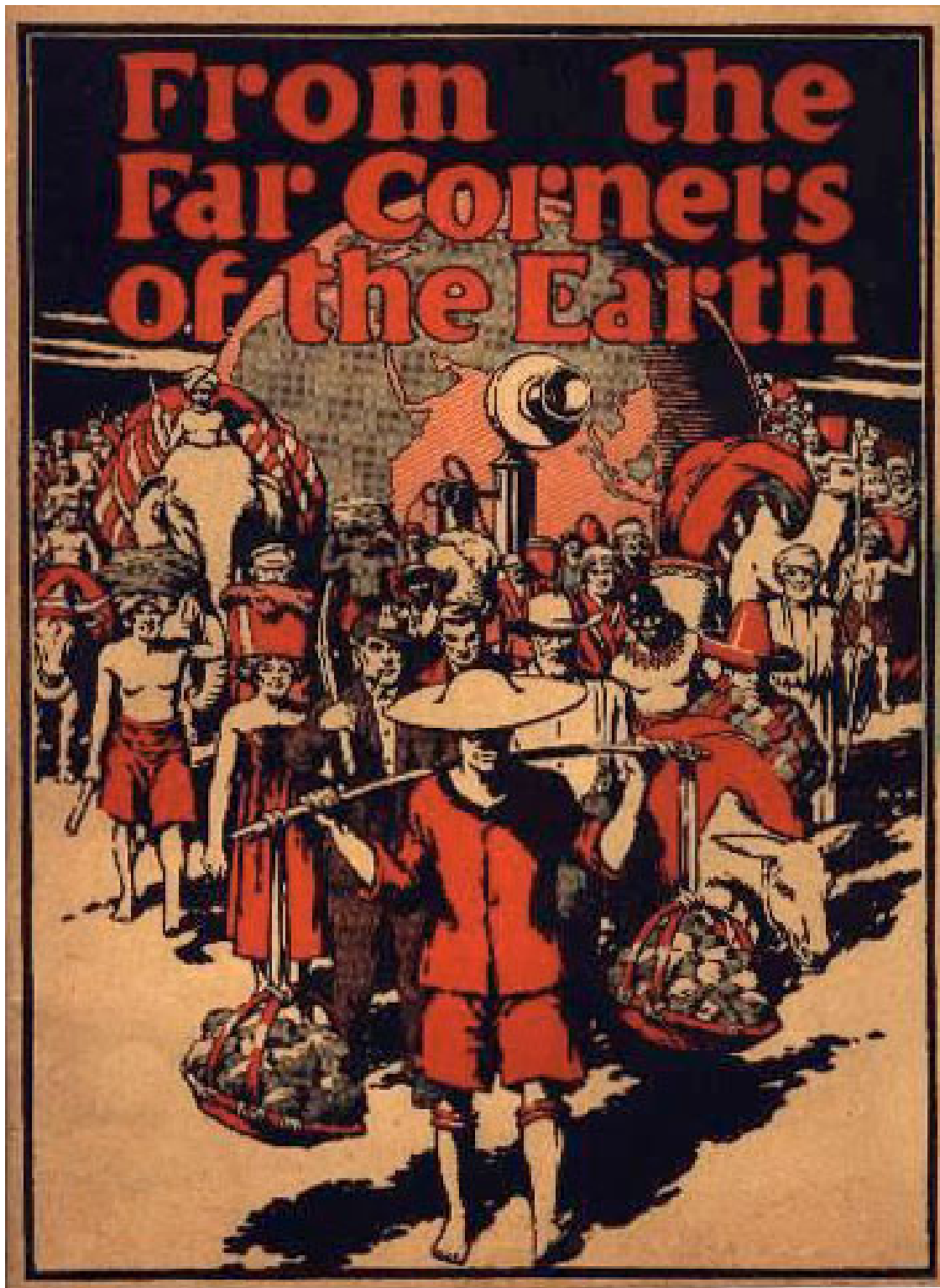


Figure 49. Telephone Ad from 1927

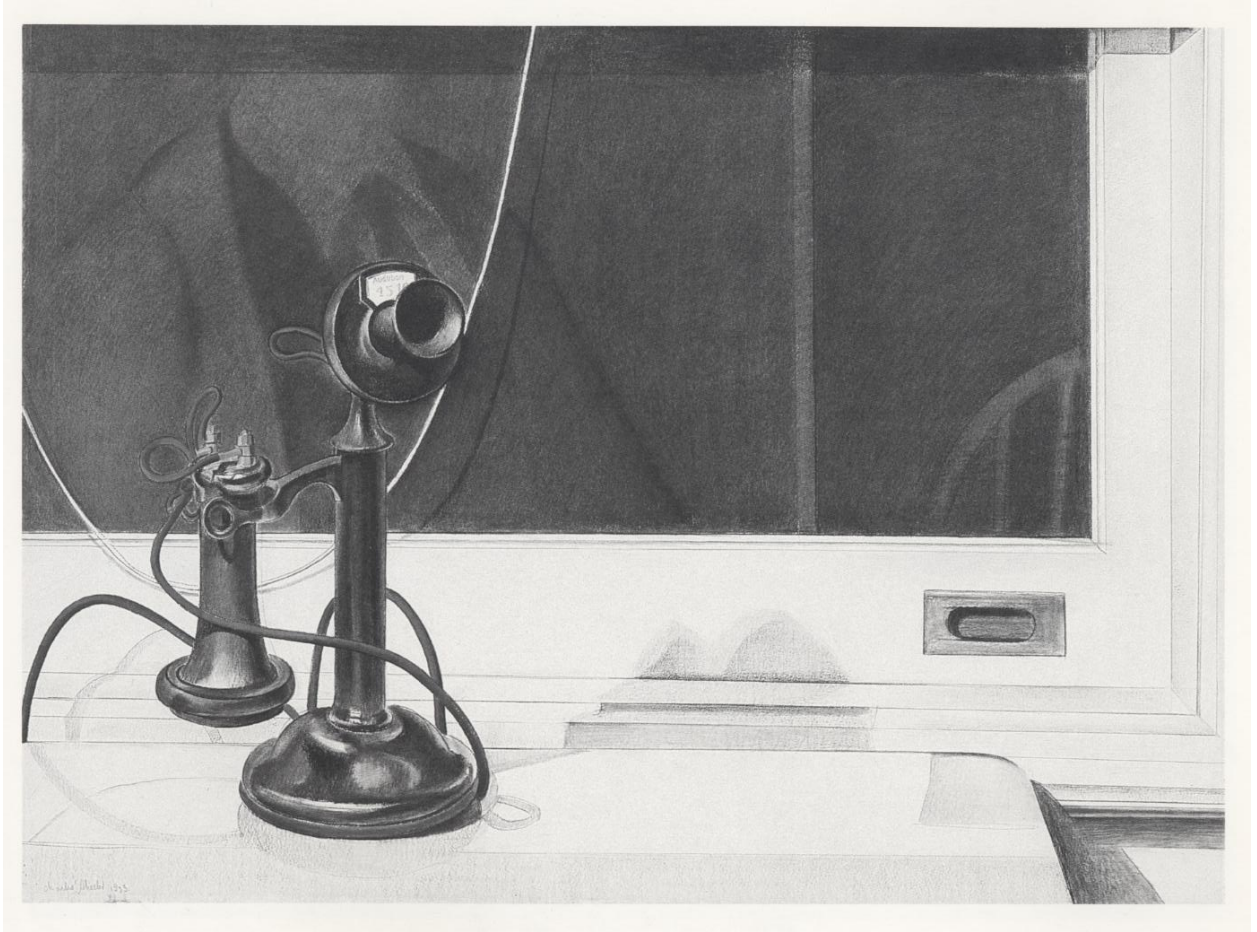


Figure 50. Charles Sheeler, *Self-Portrait*, 1923, Conté crayon, watercolor, and pencil on paper, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ in, The Museum of Modern Art, New York



Figure 51. Original 1927 Metropolis movie poster

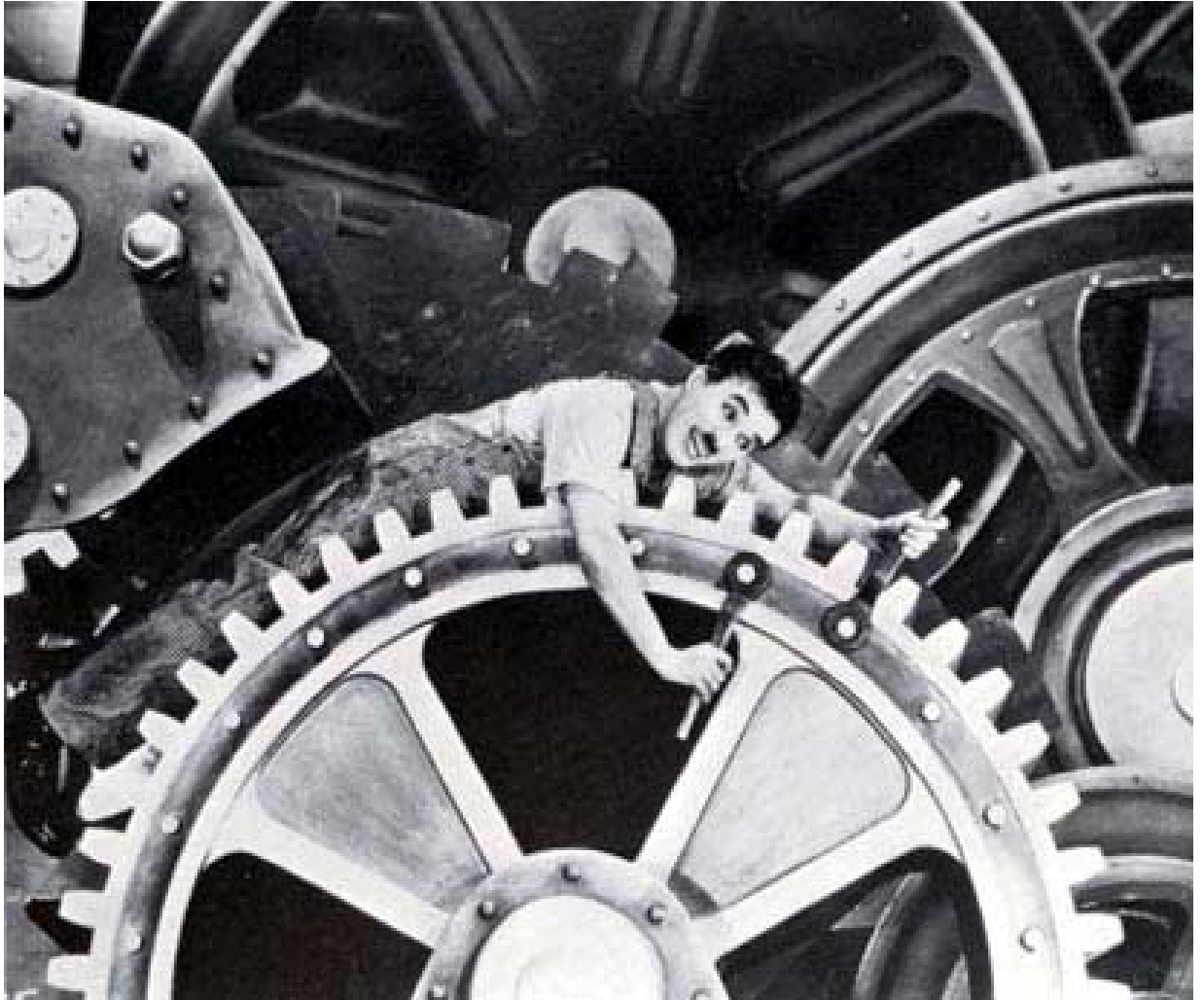


Figure 52. Film Still: Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times*, 1936

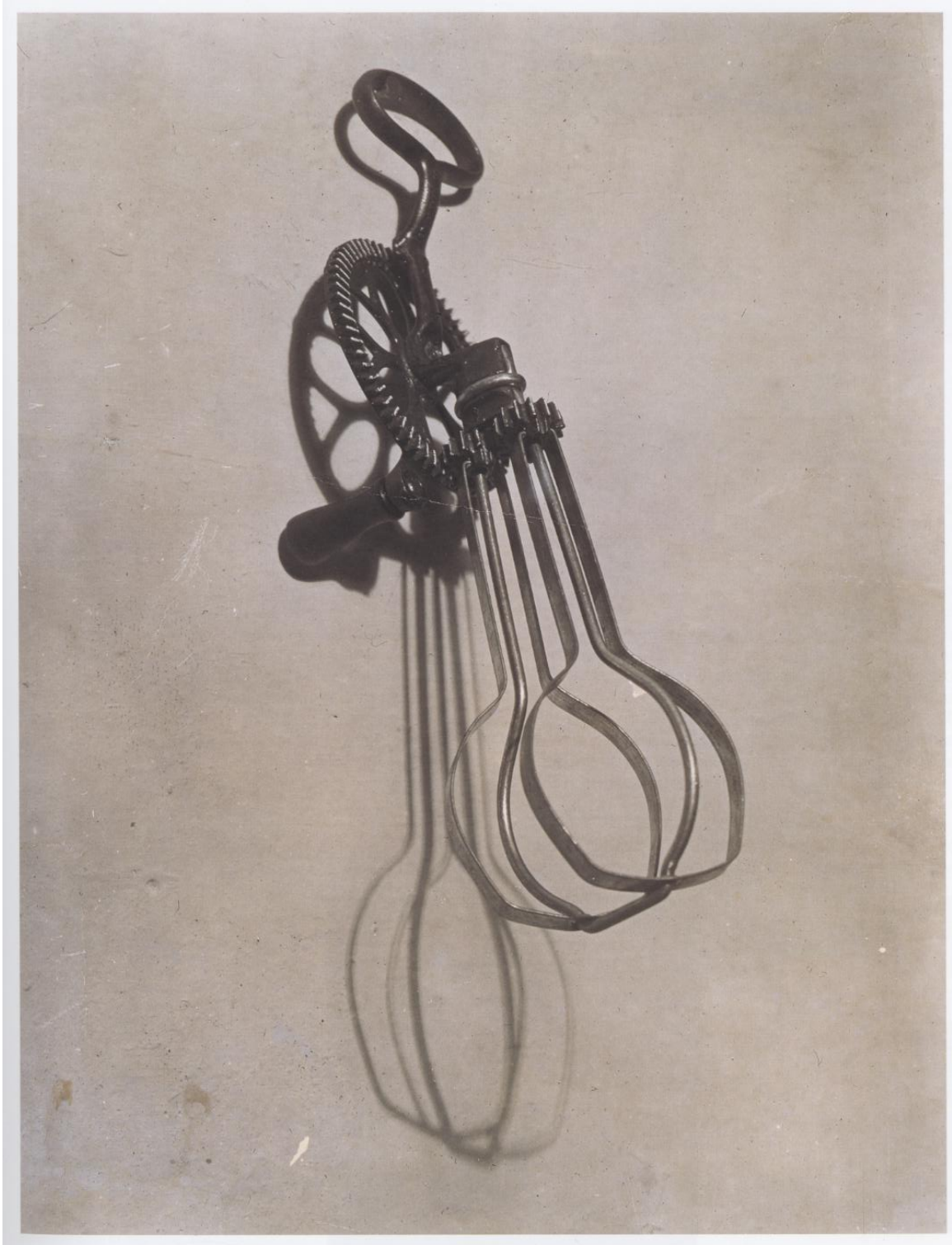


Figure 53. Man Ray, *Homme*, 1918



Figure 54. Man Ray, *Self-Portrait*, 1916 (1964 replica), Mixed media assemblage with push button and doorbells, 69.2 x 48.3 cm, Private collection



Figure 55. Arthur Dove, *The Intellectual*, 1925, wood box with magnifying glass, bone, lichen, bark, and a scale on varnished cloth mounted on wood, 43 x 18.2 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

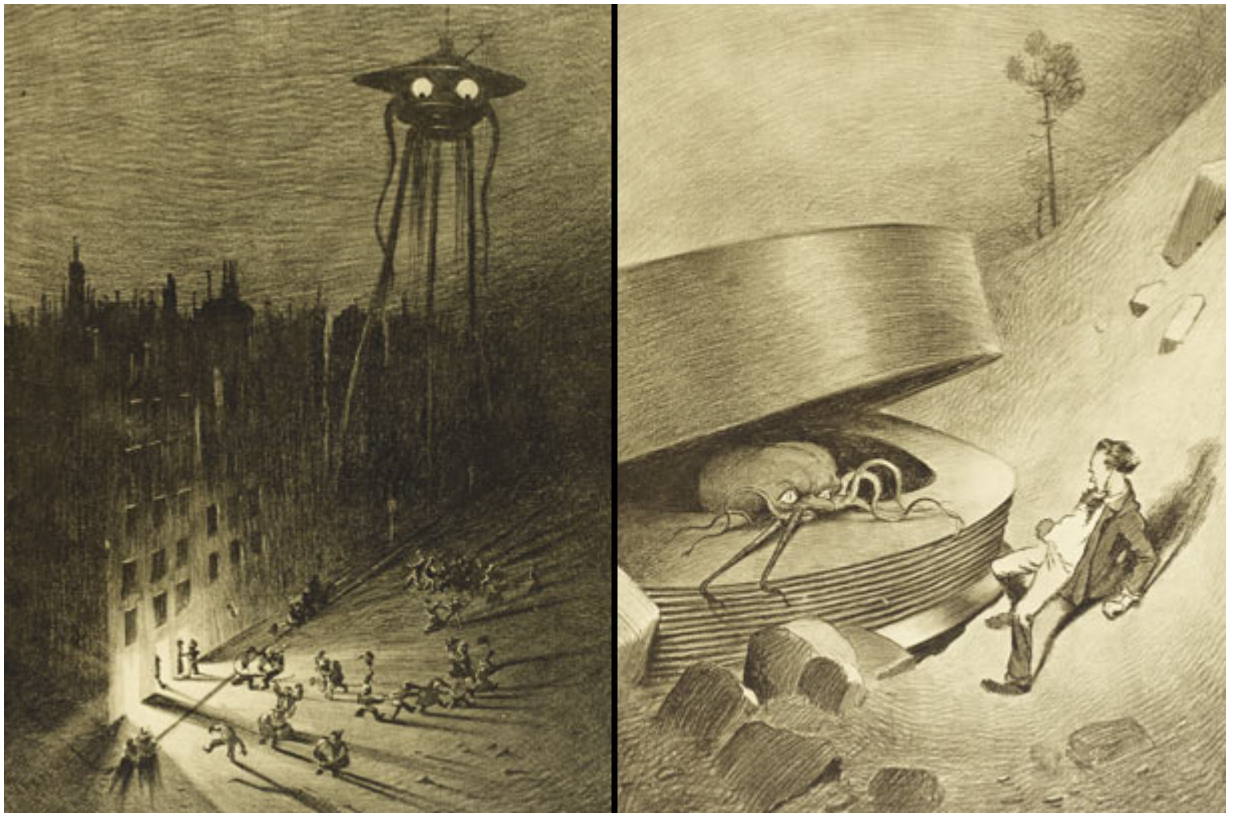


Figure 56. Original illustrations from H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, 1898



Figure 60. Film Still: Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times*, 1936, detail of Feeding Machine



Figure 61. Arthur Dove, *Nature Symbolized No. 2*, 1914, oil on canvas

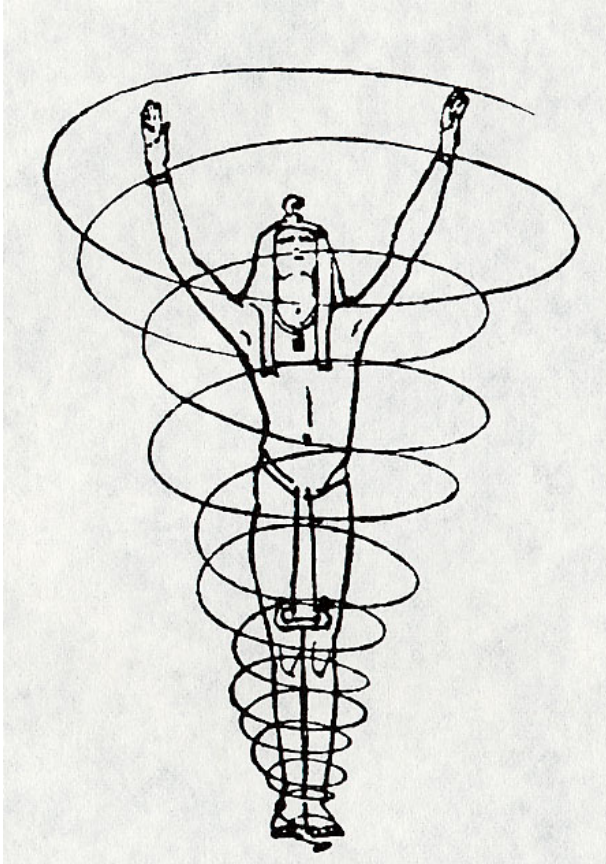


Figure 62. Frontispiece for Claude Bragdon's *A Primer of Higher Space*, 1913

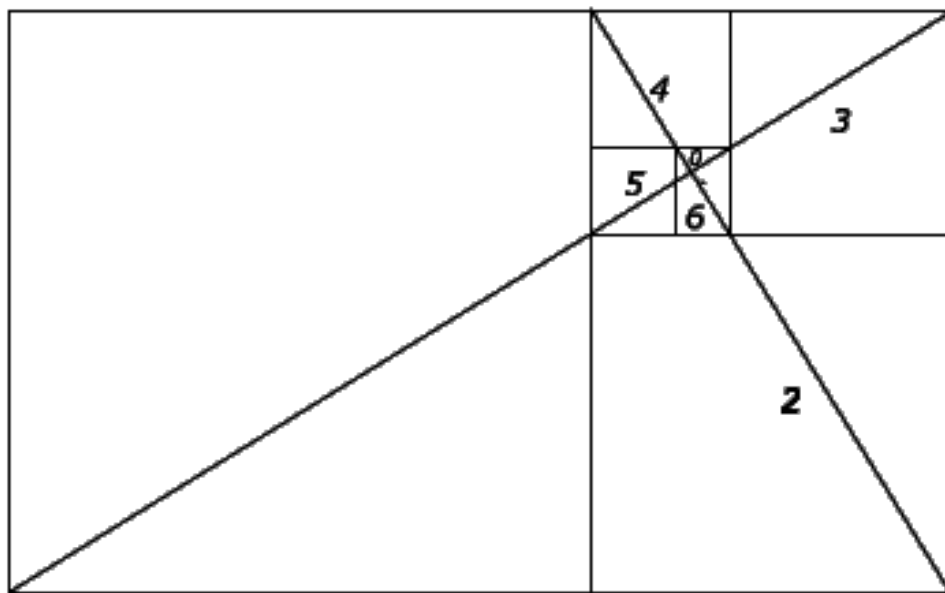


Figure 63. Jay Hambidge, Illustration from *Dynamic Symmetry*, published 1920.



Figure 64. Arthur Dove, *Painted Forms: Friends (or Portrait of Rebecca and Paul Strand)*, 1924-25, oil paint, metal rods, wire, nails, metal spring, fence staple, metal disk, and wood mounted on panel, 12.1 x 13 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art

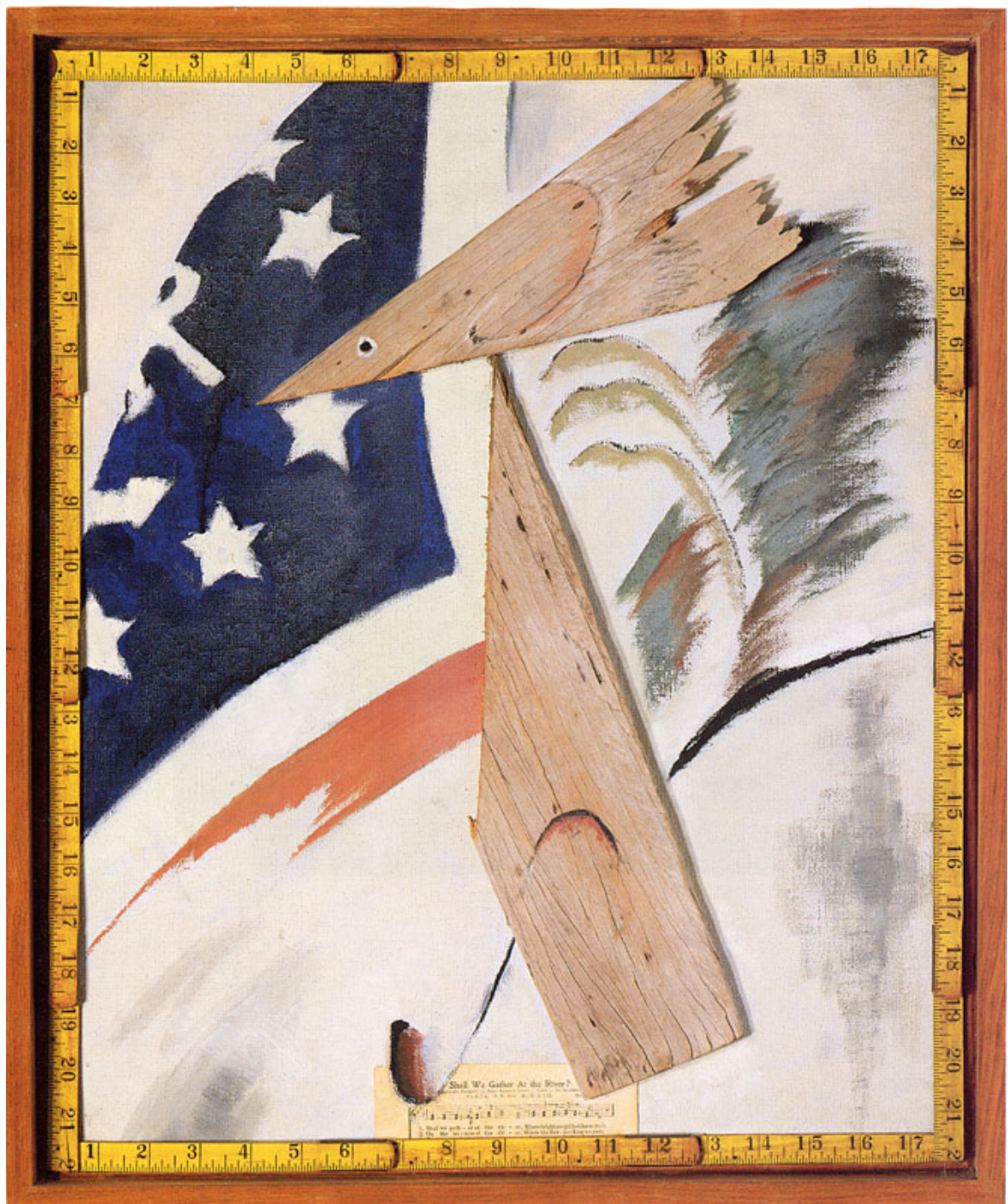


Figure 65. Arthur Dove, *Portrait of Ralph Dusenberry*, 1924, oil, folding wooden ruler, wood, and printed paper pasted on canvas, 55.9 x 45.7 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 66. Coca Cola Ad, *Saturday Evening Post*, 1922

March, 1925

The Ladies HOME JOURNAL



For those rosy cheeks, try hot breakfasts

QUICK QUAKER—luscious and strength building—cooks in 3 to 5 minutes

FOR sparkling eyes and rosy cheeks—"hot oats and milk," say authorities on child feeding. Because of limited cooking time, many mothers were serving less nourishing breakfasts, so Quaker Oats experts perfected Quick Quaker. Creamy, luscious and delicious, it's cooked and ready in 3 to 5 minutes. That's quicker than toast, quicker than coffee! Why not have faster, more nourishing breakfasts then? Ask your grocer for Quick Quaker. You will be delighted with it.

All that rich Quaker flavor, all its smooth deliciousness, are retained. The grains are cut before baking and rolled very thin. They cook faster. That's the only difference.

Your grocer now has two kinds of Quaker Oats—the kind you have always known and Quick Quaker.



Quick Quaker
Cooks in 3 to 5 minutes

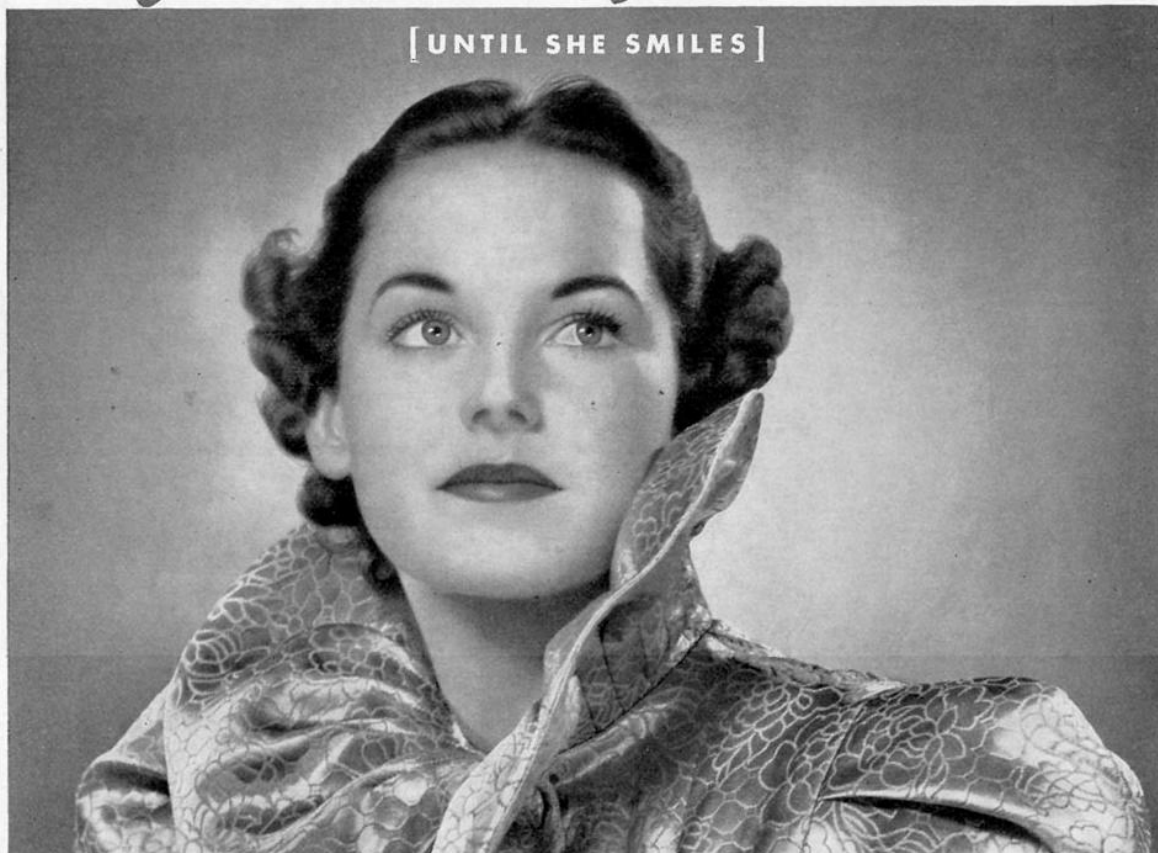
Quaker Oats
The kind you have always known

Available in 1-lb. and 5-lb. packages—Molasses: 1 and 3-lb. packages; Large: 3 packages 7-lb.

Figure 67. Quaker Oats Ad, 1925

Fortune's Favorite

[UNTIL SHE SMILES]



"SURELY," you say, "surely the world's at this girl's feet!" Blessed with beauty and dowered with grace—life seems to have given her its best. But there is a thief that robs her loveliness, steals away her charm. That thief is *her dull, dingy smile*. Tragic? Yes, but that's the price she pays for neglect—a *penalty she could have avoided*.

NEVER NEGLECT "PINK TOOTH BRUSH"

Play safe—don't pay the penalties of tender gums and dull and dingy teeth! When you see that warning tinge of "pink" on your tooth brush—*go and consult your dentist immediately*.

She evades close-ups . . . Dingy teeth and tender gums destroy her charm . . . She ignored the warning of "Pink Tooth Brush"

While there may be nothing seriously wrong, don't take chances—let your dentist decide. Often, however, he will explain your condition as a "simple case of sensitive gums—gums that are the victims of our modern menus—gums robbed of work by today's soft and creamy foods." And his advice will probably be "more work and resistance for lazy gums" and, often, "the helpful stimulation of Ipana Tooth Paste and massage."

For Ipana, with massage, is especially designed to help the gums as well as keep teeth clean and

sparkling. Massage a little extra Ipana 'into your gums every time you brush your teeth.

Circulation quickens in the gums. Gums tend to become firmer—teeth brighter, more lustrous.

Millions of people already have adopted the Ipana and massage dental health routine. It's one simple way of helping to prevent dental disorders—and with your gums more vigorous and healthy, your teeth sparkling—you need never be ashamed of your smile!

LISTEN TO "Town Hall Tonight"—every Wednesday night, over N. B. C. Red Network, 9 o'clock, E. S. T.



Figure 68. Ipana Toothpaste Ad, *Saturday Evening Post*, 1936

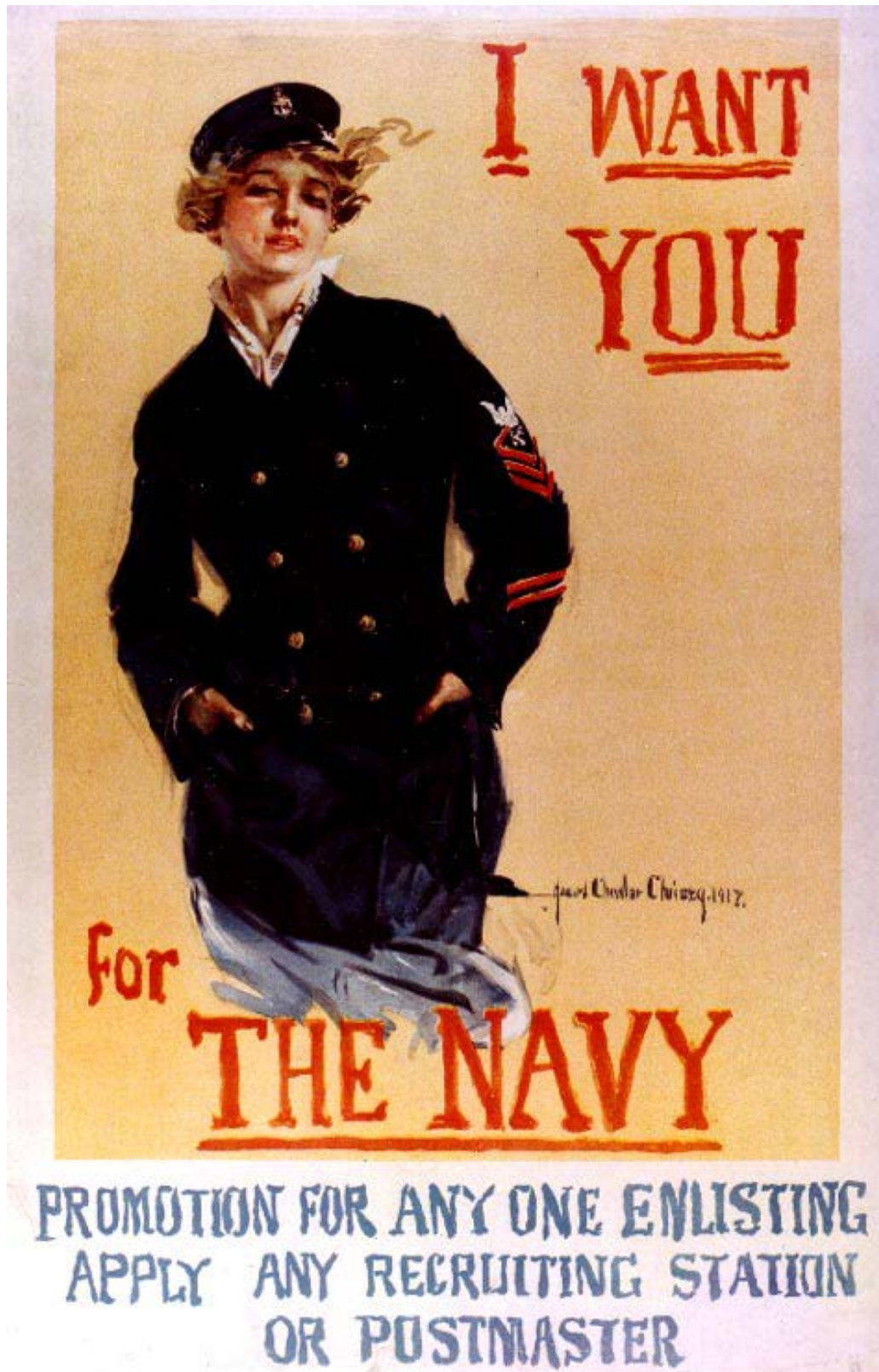


Figure 69. Howard Chandler Christy's *I Want You for the Navy*, 1917



Figure 70. R. F. Babcock's *Join the Navy*, 1917



Figure 27. Fatty Arbuckle putting up a Liberty Loan poster in Times Square, 1918

The Chiffons & Printed Silks

Paris is now wearing

Practical only if guarded
from two enemies

THE Longchamps track is brilliant now with smart women wearing the new creations of the Paris couturiers.

Everywhere are printed silks and chiffons, the newest versions of silk crêpe—a bewildering variety of lovely fabrics in fascinating colors!

Such delicate fabrics, such exquisite colors are practical only if you guard them from two enemies.

The first danger is rubbing with cake soap. Rubbing destroys the rich, soft sheen of silks and chiffons. The other menace is the destructive alkali contained in so many soaps—regardless of whether they are flakes, chips or cakes. Alkali fades colors and weakens the sensitive silken fibres—may cut their life in half.

With Lux you avoid these destructive foes of silks and chiffons. Trust your precious new dresses only to Lux—anything less is a risk. The rich, bubbling Lux suds cleanse without harmful rubbing. The tissue-thin Lux diamonds contain no harmful alkali. Any fabric that is safe in water alone Lux leaves bright and unfaded, as beautiful as new. 20,000,000 women use Lux to keep their precious fine things ever lovely. Lever Bros. Co., Cambridge, Mass.

LUX



Figure 72. LUX Ad, 1927



Figure 73. Paul Outerbridge, Ad for Ide Collars in the November 1922 issue of *Vanity Fair*

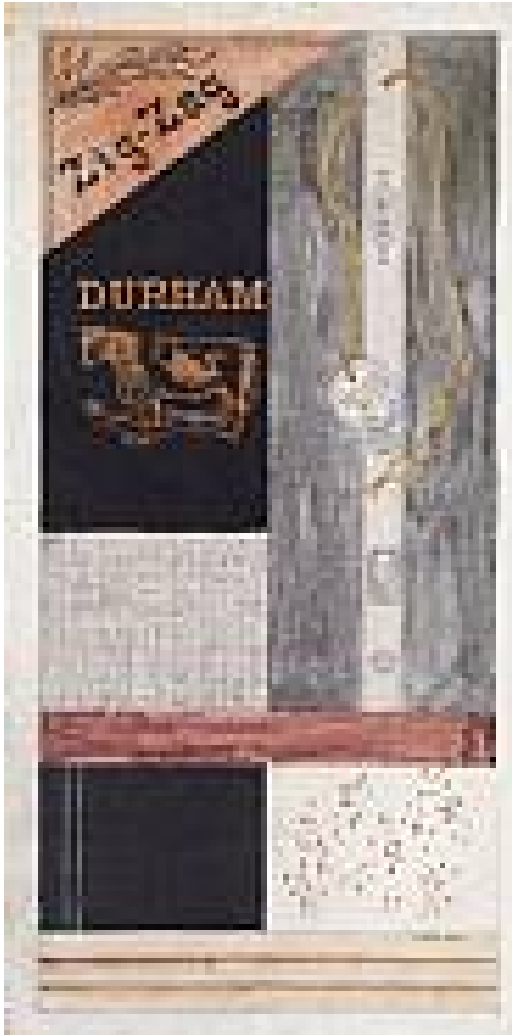


Figure 74. Stuart Davis, *Bull Durham*, 1921



Figure 75. Stuart Davis, *Lucky Strike*, 1921

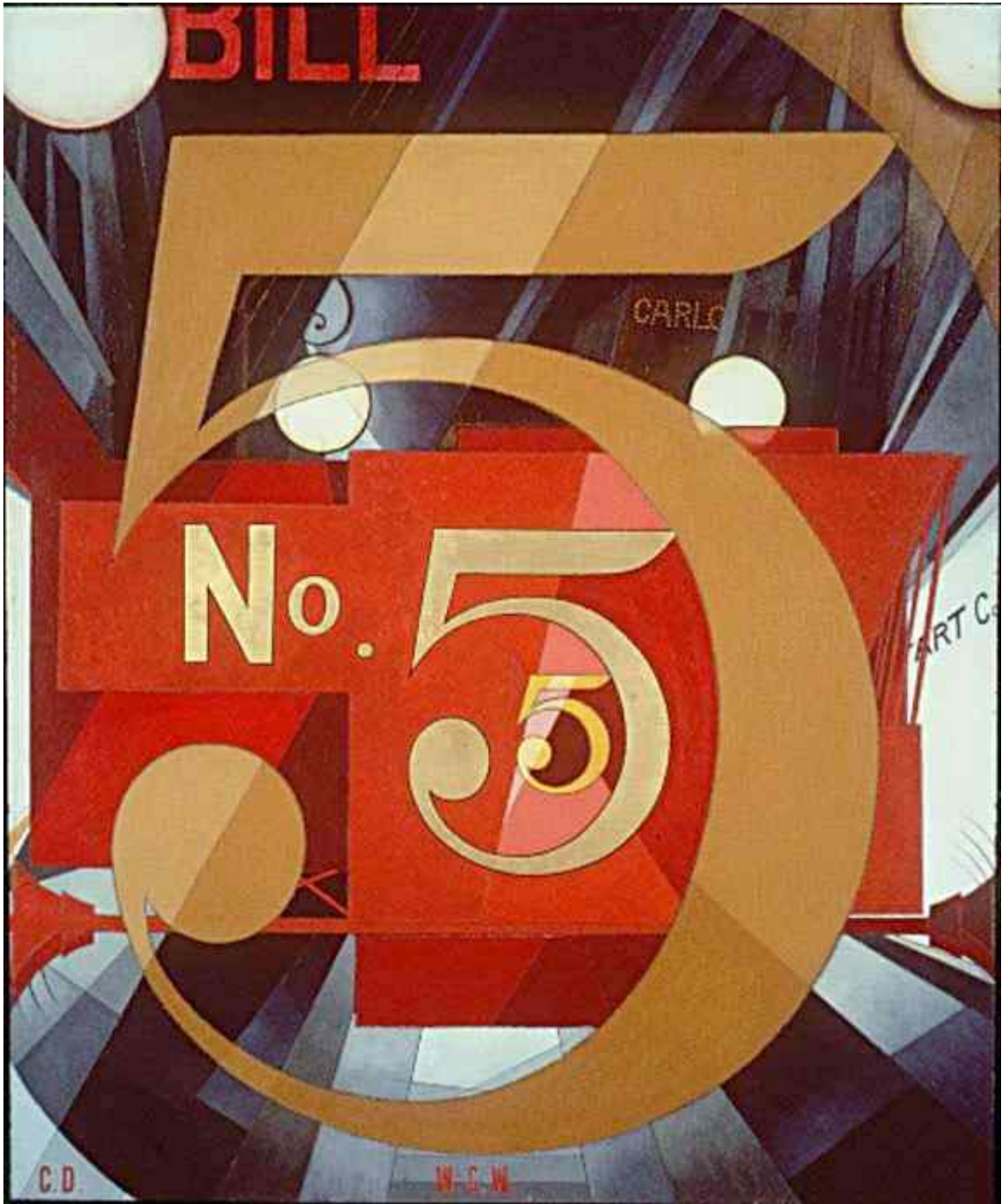


Figure 76. Charles Demuth, *I saw the figure five in gold*, 1928, oil on board, 35 ½ x 30 in, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 77. Charles Demuth, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1924-25, poster paint on panel, 20 x 16 in, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University

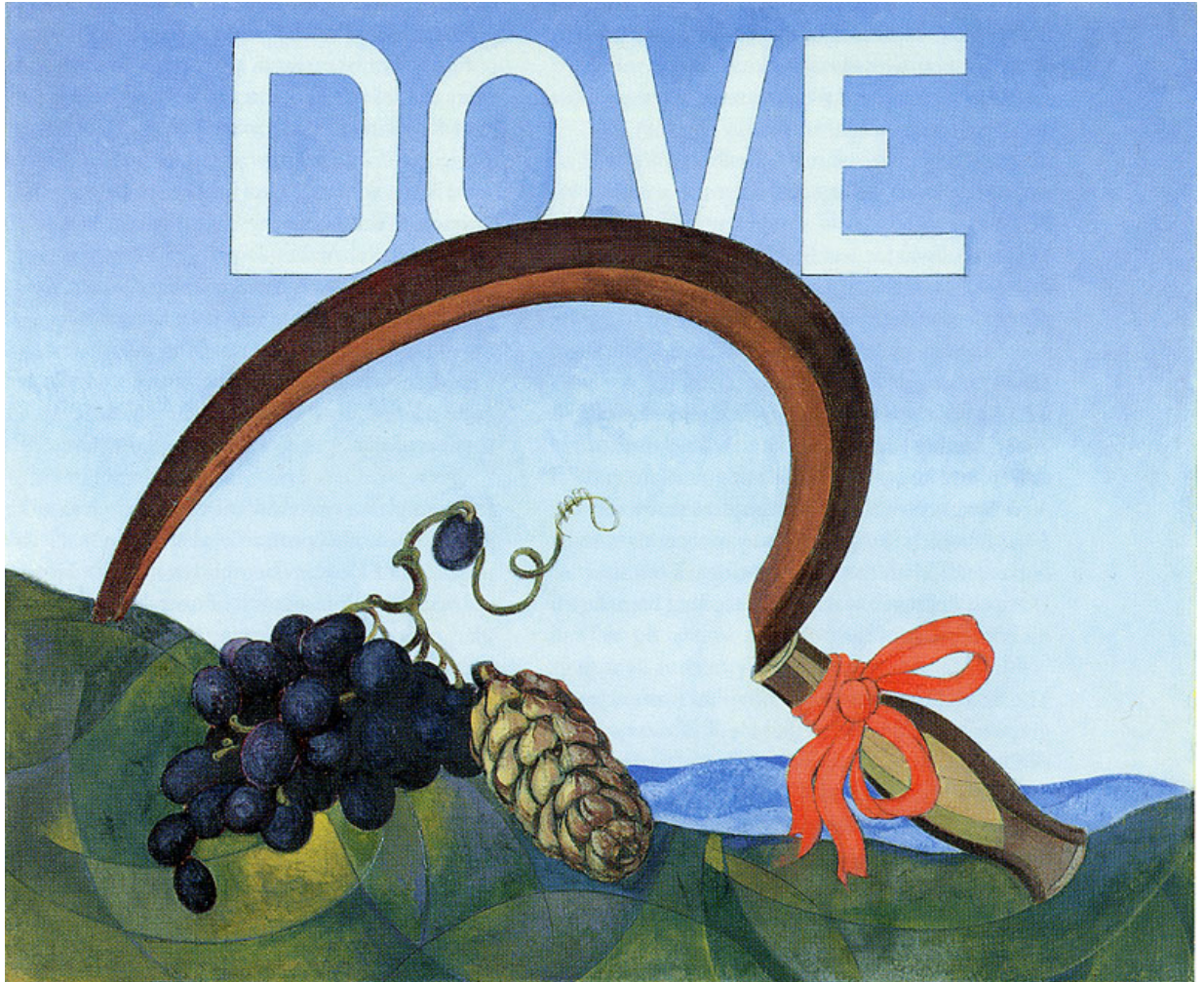


Figure 78. Charles Demuth, *Arthur G. Dove*, 1924-25, poster paint on panel, 20 x 23 in, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University



Figure 79. Gerald Murphy, *Razor*, 1924, oil on canvas, 81.44 x 92.71 cm, Dallas Museum of Art (79a. An actual image of the Murphy and Gillette razors)

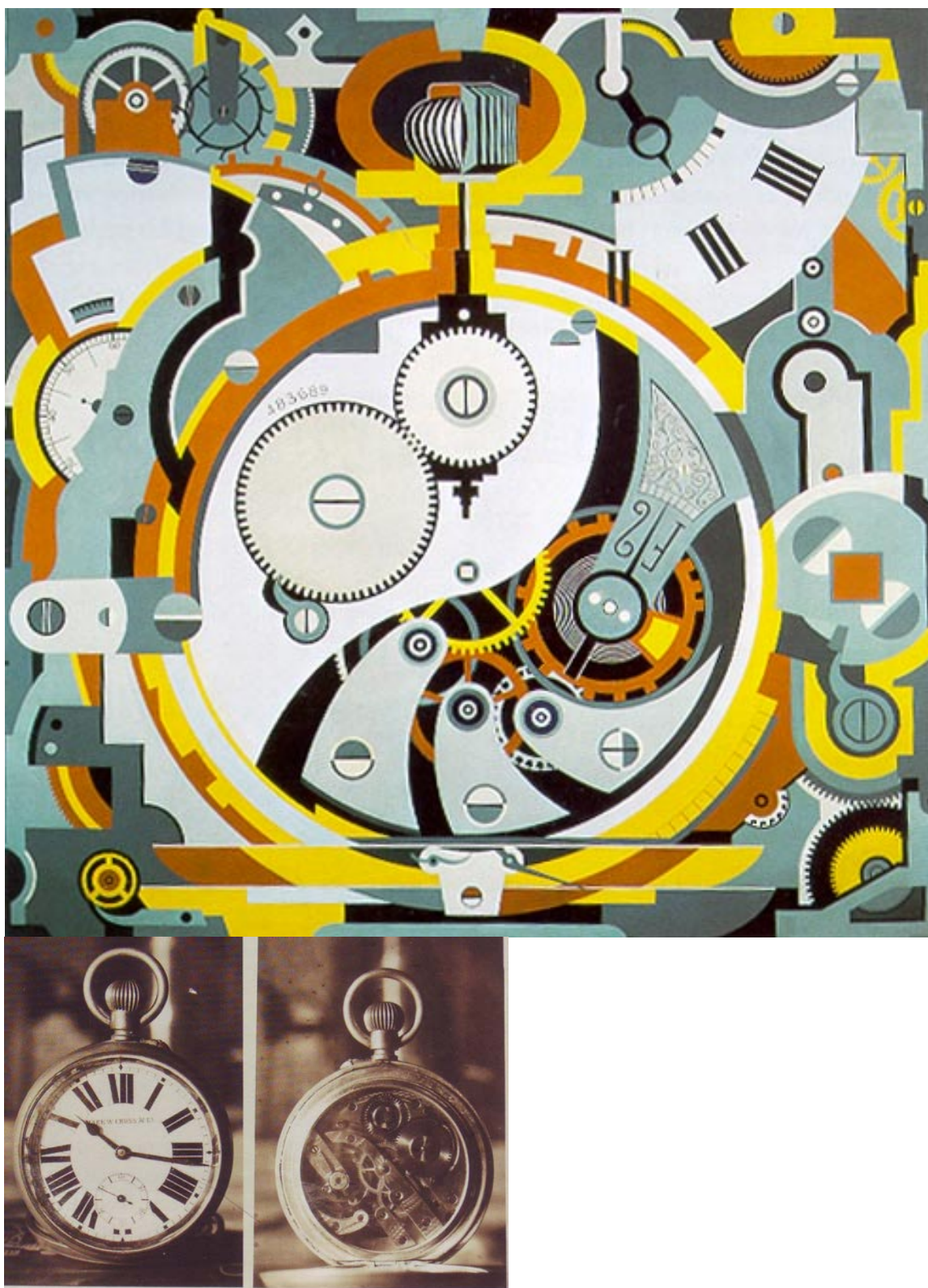


Figure 80. Gerald Murphy, *Watch*, 1925, oil on canvas, 199.4 x 200.4 cm, Dallas Museum of Art (80a. Murphy's personal watch)

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