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THE FOLDING SCREEN AS SEXUAL METAPHOR IN TWENTIETH CENTURY WESTERN ART: AN ANALYSIS OF SCREENS BY EILEEN GRAY, MAN RAY, AND BRUCE CONNER

by

VIRGINIA FABBRI BUTERA

VOLUME I

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2002

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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thank the Art History Department of the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York for granting me a Program Fellowship allowing me to travel to do research in conjunction with my dissertation.

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PREFACE

The folding screen is a unique form. As both a utilitarian object and a decorative accessory, the folding screen mediates between painting, sculpture, and architecture and, in the best of circumstances, functions as a vehicle for the expression of aesthetic, intellectual, and political ideas. Traditionally, the folding screen is double-sided; it has a changeable angled shape and a solid, albeit partitioned, surface. It is used to block drafts and light, create pockets of private space within a larger area, conceal people, things, or actions, and serve as a protecting shield or a restraining barrier. Generally screens have been decorated with images of nature and landscapes, but there are also screens with urban views; genre scenes; figures from history, religion, and mythology; and abstract patterns.

Although the folding screen was invented more than two thousand years ago, the form was revitalized in the twentieth century when artists began to reconceive its function and imagery. They pierced the surface, displaced its practical uses, and expanded the traditional iconography of screen decoration to include an unlimited range of subject matter. While some screens retain their conventional functional and decorative roles, others convey intriguing metaphors and can signify duality, opposition, change, rigidity, vitality, time, movement, narrative, closure, or

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revelation. In its use as a dressing partition--concealing one person's nakedness from the eyes of another--the folding screen may also represent an erotic boundary and, more generally, may be a metaphor for sexuality itself.

My own fascination with folding screens dates to January 1978, when I began a National Endowment for the Arts Internship in the Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. At that time, the Print Department had installed an exhibition of prints from the 1970s, including Rowboat, a 1977 color serigraph created as a four-panel folding screen by the contemporary American artist Jack Beal.[1] In addition, the Print Department then had on loan Pierre Bonnard's 1896 color lithographic four-panel folding screen Promenade des Nourrices, Frise des Fiacres. I remember being struck by the curious fact that two artists, almost eighty years apart, had made folding screens in print editions.

Later that month, I saw painted folding screens by Thomas Hart Benton and other Synchromists at the exhibition Synchromism and American Color Abstraction, 1910-1925 at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and also learned that Ansel Adams had made several photographic folding screens. Although my interest was aroused, I could find only a few articles and no books that focused on folding screens created by Western artists. In the cases where such screens

[1] Almost all the folding screens referred to, but not illustrated, in this dissertation are illustrated in the books listed in footnotes 4, 5, and 6 below.

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were known, documentation and discussion of them usually was buried in monographs on the individual artists. The remaining literature on folding screens tended to discuss them primarily as furniture or as ornamental objects.[2]

Why, I kept asking myself, would nineteenth and twentieth century artists working in different media, different styles, and with different artistic concerns have all made folding screens, especially when the functional need for screens to block drafts seemed to have disappeared with the advent of central heating?[3] The desire to answer that question led me to ask many museum directors, curators, scholars, gallery owners, and artists if they knew of any artists who had made folding screens. Almost all were aware of the conception, subject matter, and even the structure of Chinese and Japanese screens, and were familiar with the collections of Asian screens at museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cleveland Art Museum, and the Victoria and Albert Museum. However, most knew few, if any, Western artists who had created folding screens.

Over the next six years, at my invitation, art historian Michael Komanecky worked with me to develop and

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[2] See, for example, Joseph William Gleeson White, "Screens: Folding and Otherwise," Amateur Work, V (1885): 15-19,70-75; "Screens," Beck's Journal of Decorative Art (December 1886): 244-245; an article on screens in store windows: Lloyd Goodrich, "A Note on Advertising Art," The Arts, IX, (June 1926): 338-341; or George Savage, "Screens as a Medium for a Colorful Background," Arts and Decoration, 31 (July 1929): 50-51.

[3] Hot water and steam heating were developed at the end of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. See the Encyclopedia Britannica, 1973 ed., s.v. "Heating."

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organize an exhibition of folding screens by nineteenth and twentieth century British, European, and American artists. To locate objects for the exhibition, we investigated the works of hundreds of nineteenth and twentieth century artists who may have made screens. We crisscrossed Europe and the United States looking at screens in museums, galleries, private collections, and artists' studios. To our surprise, we found hundreds of screens, from which we selected forty-two for inclusion in the exhibition, The Folding Image: Screens by Western Artists of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, held at The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and the Yale University Art Gallery in 1984.[4] This exhibition displayed, for the first time anywhere, a panoply of screens by major Western artists who, from 1860 to 1982, had used this versatile object as an important format for their aesthetic expressions.

Since there was an extraordinary abundance of superb screens created in the United States in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, I was invited by the Art Museum Association of America to organize a show on this theme. That exhibition, Contemporary Screens, traveled to five different museums in the United States during 1986-88.[5] It revealed how

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[4] See the catalogue, Michael K. Komanecky and Virginia F. Butera, The Folding Image: Screens by Western Artists of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1984).

[5] Virginia Fabbri Butera, Contemporary Screens (San Francisco: The Art Museum Association of America, 1986). The exhibition traveled to The Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio; Lowe Art Museum, Coral Gables, Florida; City Gallery of Contemporary Art, Raleigh, North Carolina;

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innovative both major and emerging contemporary United States artists have been in experimenting with folding screens and how screens have become an inspirational structure, answering the need of many artists to combine function, decoration, aesthetics, and metaphor in one work.

Several years into the development of The Folding Image, Komanecky and I met Janet Woodbury Adams, an art historian who was in the process of writing a book, Decorative Folding Screens: 400 Years in the Western World (ultimately published in 1982).[6] Her history, which spans the years 1650 to 1980, provided the first general account of the Western screen. Adams kindly wrote an historical introduction for The Folding Image catalogue, while Komanecky and I contributed essays covering the history of European and American screens from 1867 to 1982, as well as catalogue entries for each of the exhibited screens. Komanecky adopted a formal and iconographic approach to discussing the screens and their subject matter. By focusing on the works of key artists, such as Alma-Tadema, Whistler, Redon, Vuillard, Bonnard, Mucha, Dewing, Klee, and Marc, he was able to show how the development of the folding screen occurred simultaneously, and often with mutual influence, among late nineteenth and early twentieth century artists and artistic movements.

The Toledo Museum of Art; and The Gallery of Contemporary Art, Gainesville, Florida.

[6] Janet Woodbury Adams, Decorative Folding Screens, 400 Years in the Western World (New York: The Viking Press, 1982).

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My own essay for The Folding Image catalogue was conceived differently. Rather than write a documentary history of twentieth century screens, I sought to address several key issues raised by the form. What kind of artist made folding screens and why they did so were questions of the first import. I found in almost every instance that the artist was interested in Chinese and/or Japanese art, and especially Japanese screens. Most artists were also interested in trying to make something that was useful as well as expressive. Another crucial question was, why, if there were so many wonderful screens created, were they so rarely mentioned in discussions of an individual artist's work?[7] One reason, I believe, is that screens are not regarded as art but as furniture--functional, decorative, frivolous objects. In the eyes of traditional art historians, then, these works are of lesser importance.[8] One

[7] Some artists' screens were well documented. The Nabi artists (Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis, Armand Seguin, Edouard Vuillard) and Art Deco designers (Donald Deskey, Jean Dunand, Eileen Gray, Leon Jallot, Albert Armand Rateau) were well known for their screens, and the literature on these artists documents many of their screens. In many other cases, screens by an artist were often unknown, or, if known, were ignored in the major literature on an artist. For example, a 1913 screen by Franz Marc, was listed in a 1936 catalogue of Marc's work, but it was then broken up and the three panels were sold separately at auction in 1958 and 1959. The panels were finally found and reunited for The Folding Image only after a long search. The screen was never really discussed in the Marc literature. See Komanecky's catalogue entry on the screen in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 220-223. As I will show later, the 1935 Screen by Man Ray and the 1964 Partition by Bruce Conner have been virtually ignored in the literature on these two artists.

[8] The notion that something considered decorative cannot be intellectually engaging plagues perceptions of the

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of the goals of The Folding Image exhibition was to prove that screens are not "merely decorative," and that artists often made these objects with complex concepts and creative techniques.

I questioned other aspects of folding screens as well. What did the ancient screen format offer twentieth-century artists? How and why were they able to break away from the centuries-old tradition, essentially reinventing the folding screen, pushing it beyond a strictly serviceable and decorative object into sculptural, theatrical, architectural, and metaphorical realms? Because of their involvement in photography and filmmaking, did some artists acknowledge the connections as well as the differences between "the silver screen" and a folding screen? For many artists, the most important feature of a folding screen is the versatility of its structure, functions, and connotations. As each succeeding generation confronted the screen, there was always a direction in which to push its use and meaning. Most artists amplified or subverted the accumulated history of the folding screen, its usage, decoration, and symbolic content .

In my desire to understand the complexity of many screens created during the past one hundred years, I began

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Western folding screen. Nancy Troy's discussion of the debate on the decorative in late nineteenth and early twentieth century France reveals how difficult an issue it was. See Nancy Troy, Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France: Art Nouveau to Le Corbusier (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), and specifically pages 92-102 for her discussion on the 1912 Maison Cubiste.

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to analyze the images and metaphors chosen by the artists. Was there a special kind of subject matter that artists used on screens? How did the structure of the screen itself, the history of folding screens, and the history of screen subject matter affect the images? And what was the most effective subject matter for Western folding screens? In my catalogue essays for The Folding Image and Contemporary Screens I began to develop an approach for interpreting--not just documenting--folding screens. This approach centered on my theory of the screen as metaphor.[9] Although the subject matter utilized in screens is incredibly varied, the most successful subjects are those that allude to the screen's unique functions, physical structure, history, and implications. I quickly realized that one of the most potent themes used on and implied by the screens was the subject of sexuality. And I began to wonder why, when an artist used a screen to investigate sexual imagery, it carried such complex meanings.

This dissertation is the result of my investigation into these and other questions about the history, the role, and the implications of the folding screen as sexual metaphor. While seeking to outline briefly the historical instances and the theoretical and art historical reasons that these types of screens developed, my main emphasis is on an in-depth study of three very different twentieth

[9] See Butera, "The Screen as Metaphor" in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 195-213; and Butera, Contemporary Screens, 9-17.

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century objects by Eileen Gray, Man Ray, and Bruce Conner, which are paradigms of sexual screens. In addition, it is my intention that this study will help eliminate the continuing prejudice against art in a functional format and will reveal the hidden complexity of modern folding screens.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME I

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....iv

PREFACE.....vi

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....xvi

CHAPTER I: Introduction: The Folding Screen as Sexual Metaphor.....1

CHAPTER II: A Brief History of the Folding Screen From its Beginnings until the Late-Nineteenth Century.....46

CHAPTER III: Folding Femininity: Screens of the Nineteenth Century.....88

CHAPTER IV: An Erotic Enigma: Eileen Gray's Block Screen (1923).....141

CHAPTER V: Sexual Motives and Motifs in Man Ray's 1935 Screen.....200

VOLUME II

CHAPTER VI: Gazing at the Grimy Gauze: Bruce Conner's Partition, a Sixties Screen.....253

CHAPTER VII: Conclusion.....339

ILLUSTRATIONS.....345

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....446

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Pierre Bonnard (French 1867-1947), Man and Woman, 1900, oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 28 3/8," Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

2. Armand Seguin (French 1869-1903), The Delights of Life, 1892-1893, oil on canvas with painted and gilded frame, four-panel folding screen, 62 5/8 x 101," Private Collection, New York.

3. Man Ray (American, 1890-1976) Screen, 1935, oil on wood, five-panel folding screen, 70 1/2 x 98 7/16," Collection of Giorgio Marconi, Milan.

4. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Partition (recto), 1961-64, Nylon stockings, fringe, jewelry, artificial flowers, fabric, paint, string, paper collages, straw hat fragment, metal mirrors, paper, feathers, aluminum foil, wax, offset lithograph on paper, tinsel, found objects, etc. on three wood panels, hinged together, 71 x 111 x 33" overall, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

5. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Partition (verso), 1961-64, Nylon stockings, fringe, jewelry, artificial flowers, fabric, paint, string, paper collages, straw hat fragment, metal mirrors, paper, feathers, aluminum foil, wax, offset lithograph on paper, tinsel, found objects, etc. on three wood panels, hinged together, 71 x 111 x 33" overall, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

6. Francesco Clemente (Italian, born 1952), Screen #1 (recto), 1982, watercolor on paper, four-panel folding screen, 72 x 92 1/2," Courtesy Sperone Westwater Gallery, New York.

7. Vanessa Bell (English, 1879-1961), Bathers in a Landscape, 1913, gouache on paper mounted on canvas, four-panel folding screen, 70 3/8 x 79 1/2," Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

8. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, c. 1923, black lacquered wood with metal rods, eight rows high, 71 1/2" x 70 1/4," Private Collection.

9. Natalia Goncharova (Russian, 1881-1962), The Spanish Dancers, 1920, oil on wood, five-panel folding screen, Sophia Loren, Geneva.

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10. Jane Kaufman (American, born 1938), Untitled, 1985, coquille feathers and glass beads on green velvet with rosewood frame, two-panel folding screen, 72 x 119," Collection of the artist.

11. Nancy Mitchnick (American, born 1947), Adam and Eve Screen (recto and verso), 1984, oil on wood, two-panel folding screen, 96 x 41," Collection of Suzanne Feld Hilberry and Richard H. Kandarian, Birmingham, Michigan.

12. Unknown Artist (Chinese), The Figures of Ladies Screen (detail), 752-756, colors on paper, Shoso-in, Nara, Japan.

13. Unknown Artist (Japanese, Early Ukiyo-e School, The Hikone Screen, c. 1640s, colors and gold on paper, six-panel folding screen now mounted flat, Ii Collection, Shiga Prefecture.

14. Unknown Artist (Japanese, Early Ukiyo-e School), Princess Sen and Her Lover, c. early 1620s, colors and gold wash on paper on two-panel folding screen, Collection of the Tokugawa family, Japan.

15. Unknown Artist (Japanese, Edo Period), "Tagasode (Whose Sleeves?)," early 17th century, color on gilded paper on six-panel folding screen, 67 1/4 x 150," Collection of Mary Griggs Burke, New York City.

16. Moronobu (Japanese, d. 1694), Lovers, Tan-e woodblock print with hand-coloring, ca. 1680s, oban size, Tokyo National Museum.

17. Nicolas Lancret (French, 1690 - 1745), Les Quatres Heures du Jour, ca. 1730, oil on canvas, four-panel folding screen, 75 1/2 x 92," Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

18. Unknown Artist (English, 18th century), A True Picture of the Famous Skreen, ca. 1721, engraving, Published in the London Journal, no. 85, ca. 1721, The Pierpont Morgan Library.

19. Unknown Artist (English, 18th century), Ladies in Contemporary Dress, early 18th century, Queen Anne period, painted wood, life-size, present whereabouts unknown.

20. Jane Carlyle (English, 19th century), Four-Panel Screen, collage, Collection of The National Trust, England.

21. William Morris (English, 1834-1896), Three-Panel Screen, ca. 1860-1887, wool, silk, and gold thread on serge with oak frame, 67 x 84," The Castle Howard Collection, Yorkshire, England.

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22. Unknown Artist (after Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones) (probably American, active ca. 1875-1900), Four Elements, ca. 1885, oil on pine with ebonized wood frame, four-panel folding screen, 71 x 66 1/4," Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Frangiamore, Atlanta, Georgia.

23. Sir Laurens Alma-Tadema (Dutch 1836-1912); and Lady Laura Epps Alma-Tadema (English, 1852-1909), Portrait of the Epps Family (recto), 1870-1871, oil on canvas, six-panel folding screen, 72 x 186," Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

24. James Abbott McNeill Whistler (American, 1834-1903), Blue and Silver: Screen with Old Battersea Bridge (recto), 1872, tempera on brown paper mounted on canvas, two-panel folding screen, 76 3/4 x 71 3/4," Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, Birnie Philip Bequest.

25. Émile Bernard (French, 1868-1941), Les Quatres Saisons (recto), 1891, tempera on linen, four-panel folding screen, 66 x 97 1/2", Courtesy of Galerie Bellier, Paris.

26. Pierre Bonnard (French 1867-1947), Promenade des nourrices, Frise des Fiacres, 1896, color lithograph, four-panel folding screen 59 x 78 3/4", Private Collection.

27. Edouard Vuillard (French, 1868-1940), Five-Panel Screen (The Dressmakers), 1892-1893, distemper on linen, Private Collection, London. Photograph of original state of screen, Antoine Salomon.

28. Maurice Denis (French, 1870-1943), Screen with Doves, ca. 1902, oil on canvas, four-panel folding screen, 63 3/4 x 80 3/8," Private Collection, St. Germain-en-Laye.

29. Thomas Wilmer Dewing (American, 1851-1938), Morning Glories, oil on canvas on a multilayered panel with gilded wood and gesso frame, three-panel folding screen, 74 1/2 x 77," Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh.

30. Alfons Mucha (Czechoslovakian, 1860-1944), Four Times of Day, color lithographs mounted in painted and gilded wood frame by Josef Rous (Czechoslovakian, 1872-1942), four-panel folding screen, 74 3/8 x 76 3/4," Mestské Museum, Zamberk, Czechoslovakia

31. Pierre Bonnard (French, 1867-1947), Pair of Three-Panel Screens, 1902, oil on paper mounted on canvas, 63 3/8 x 159 7/16," both screens, Musée du Prieuré, Saint Germain-en-Laye, France.

32. Edouard Vuillard (French, 1868-1940), Four-Panel Screen, ca. 1895, distemper on canvas (remounted as a wall painting), 47 1/4 x 66 15/16," Private Collection, London.

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33. Unknown Photographer, Installation photograph of Boudoir de l'Art Nouveau Bing by Georges de Feure (French, 1868-1943) as seen in Bing's Art Nouveau Pavilion at the Exposition Universelle of 1900 in Paris. Three-Panel Screen, 1900, with brocades by Anais Fauré, embroidered silk with gilded wood and gesso frame, 46 7/8 x 40 1/4," at rear right, now in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.

34. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, 1971, black lacquered wood with raised panels with metal rods, seven rows high, Victoria and Albert Museum.

35. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, c. 1923. black lacquered wood with metal rods, seven rows high, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

36. Unknown Photographer, Installation shot of Eileen Gray in her apartment in Rue Bonaparte with Block Screen, now in a Private Collection.

37. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, c. 1923 black lacquered wood with raised panels with metal rods, nine rows high, Private Collection.

38. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, c. 1922, black painted wood with metal rods, nine rows high, Collection Caroline Constant.

39. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, c. 1923, white painted wood with metal rods, ten rows high, Collection Metropolitan Museum of Art.

40. Unknown Photographer, Installation photograph from the 1923 XIV^{e} Salon des Artistes Décorateurs of the Bedroom-boudoir for Monte Carlo showing two white Block Screens, black and white geometric wall screen, bed, desk, stool, tables, assorted lighting fixtures, and rugs all designed by Eileen Gray.

41. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Pair of Block Screens, white lacquer, Rue Bonaparte apartment, c. 1923, current location unknown.

42. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Study of a Nude, c. 1900, drawing, Private Collection.

43. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), La Voie Lactée (The Milky Way), 1912, blue lacquered wood with mother-of-pearl inlay, Four-panel folding screen, Illustrated in Vogue and Wendigen, Location unknown.

44. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Door panel with sitting and soaring figures (unfinished), c. 1912-1913, blue and red lacquered wood, Private Collection.

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45. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Le Magicien de la Nuit or (La Forêt Enchantée), 1912, blue lacquer with mother-of-pearl, Michel Perinet, Paris.

46. Bert (active, early-twentieth century), Portrait of Nijinsky in L'Après-Midi d'un Faune, photograph, Private Collection.

47. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Door panel (Figure watching two people fight), c. 1913-1915, brown, red and silver lacquer, Courtesy of DeLorenzo Gallery, New York.

48. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Siren Armchair, c. 1913-1915, black lacquer with carved mermaid and seahorse, Private Collection.

49. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Le Destin (recto), 1913, red, silver, and black lacquer, 78 1/4 x 84," Private Collection.

50. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Le Destin (verso), 1913, red, silver, and black lacquer, Private Collection.

51. Unknown Photographer, Photograph of entrance-hall in the Mathieu-Levy (Rue de Lota) apartment designed by Eileen Gray, c. 1922-1923. Interior no longer extant.

52. Unknown Photographer, Photograph of the salon with lacquered wall screens, standing folding screen, Pirogue Sofa, and hanging ostrich-shell lamp in the Mathieu-Levy (Rue de Lota) apartment designed by Eileen Gray, c. 1921-1923. Interior no longer extant.

53. Unknown Photographer, Mme. Mathieu-Levy with perfume bottle in Pirogue Sofa in front of wall screens in Rue de Lota apartment salon, c. 1922-1925, Interior no longer extant.

54. Charles Rennie Mackintosh (Scottish 1868-1928), Drawing-room and curving, vertical-slatted painted wood screen at Hous'hill, 1904, Nitshill, Glasgow.

55. Charles Rennie Mackintosh (Scottish 1868-1928), Curved lattice-back chair for the Order Desk at the Willow Tea Rooms, Glasgow, 1904, ebonised oak, Glasgow School of Art.

56. Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471-1528), Draughtsman Drawing a Reclining Nude, 1525, woodcut, published in Teaching of Measurement with Compass and Ruler (Nuremberg: Hieronymous Formschneyder, 1538). Uffizi Galleries, Florence.

57. Lucas Samaras (American, born 1936), Screen, 1967, painted wood, five-panel folding screen, 59 1/4 x 139 1/2," Collection of the Artist.

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58. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Lee Miller, 1930-1931, silver print, published in Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934.

59. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Lee Miller (Neck), ca. 1930, gelatin silver print, A. & R. Penrose Collection.

60. Unknown Artist (probably French), Scrap Screen, 19th century, collage, reproduced in La Révolution surréaliste 2, 7 (15 June 1926): 13.

61. Max Ernst (German 1891-1976), Collage from Une Semaine de bonté: A Suurealistic Novel in Collage (Paris: Éditions Jeanne Bucher, 1934; New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1976).

62. Unknown Photographer. Installation shot of Man Ray and Juliet Man Ray's apartment with Twenty Days and Nights of Juliet, 1952, oil on canvas, five-panel folding screen, 96 x 120."

63. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Paravent, 1944, tempera on paper, Private Collection.

64. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Untitled (Kiki), 1923, photograph, Collection of Roger Therond, Paris.

65. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Torso (Nusch), 1935, published in Facile (Paris: Edition G.L.M., 1935).

66. Brassai (Hungarian 1899-1984), Untitled, 1933, photograph, Collection of Rosabianca Skira, Geneva.

67. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Explosante-Fixe, photograph published in André Breton's article, "La Beauté sera convulsive," Minotaure 5 (1935): 8.

68. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Untitled, 1931, gelatin silver print, Lee Miller Archives.

69. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Torso (Lee Miller), 1931, photograph, published in Electricité.

70. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Reflections, 1932, silver print, published in Photographs By Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934.

71. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Lee Miller Wearing a Collar with Seabrook, 1928-1929, photograph, Man Ray Trust ADAGP.

72. William B. Seabrook (American, 20th century), Leather Mask and Collar, ca. 1930, published in Documents 8 (1930): 464.

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73. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Untitled, color photograph, published as the cover for Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934.

74. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Object of Destruction, 1932, drawing, reproduced in This Quarter 5, 1 (September 1932) (Surrealist Number): 55.

75. Max Ernst (German 1891-1976), Poème visible (Eyes), 1933, drawing for Une Semaine de bonté: A Surrealistic Novel Collage (Paris: Jeanne Bucher, 1934; New York: Dover Publicationins, Inc. 1976), also published in E. Tériade, "Aspects actuels de l'expression plastique," Minotaure 5 (December 15, 1934): 45.

76. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Untitled, solarized photograph, published in Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934.

77. Unknown Photographer, installation shot of Man Ray in front of his painting, A l'heure de l'observatoire--les amoureux (The Lips), 1932-34, oil on canvas, 39 3/8 x 98 1/2," painting now in Nyarkos Collection.

78. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Untitled, rayograph, published in This Quarter 5, 1 (September 1932) (Surrealist Number).

79. Max Ernst (German 1891-1976), Poème visible (Hands), 1933, drawing, for Une Semaine de bonté: A Surrealistic Novel in Collage (Paris: Jeanne Bucher, 1934; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1976), also published in E. Tériade, "Aspects actuels de l'expression plastique," Minotaure 5 (December 15, 1934): 45.

80. Man Ray (American 1890-1976) Untitled, rayograph, Published in Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934.

81. Marcel Duchamp (French 1887-1968), The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even (Large Glass) (recto) 1915-1923, mixed media, 109 1/4 x 69 1/4," The Philadelphia Museum of Art.

82. Marcel Duchamp (French 1887-1968), The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even, installed in Katherine Dreier's Library at The Haven. Photograph taken in 1942.

83. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Storage shot of Partition (left panel, recto), 1961-64, mixed media, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

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84. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Storage shot of Partition (right panel, recto), 1961-64, mixed media, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

85. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Storage shot of Partition (left panel, verso), 1961-64, mixed media, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

86. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Storage shot of Partition (Right panel, verso), 1961-64, mixed media, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

87. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Looking Glass, 1964, mannequin arms, dried blowfish, magazine photographs. show, nylon, nylon stockings, beaded purse, jewelry, cotton cloth, beads, metal, twine, glass, plastic, fur, silk, feathers, elastic, wood, etc. on Masonite, Collection San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco.

88. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), La Virgen, 1962, Beads, mantilla, fur, paper collage, metal milagro, show-polish can, leather, paint, magazine photographs etc. on Masonite on wood, 28 3/4 x 21 5/8 x 7," Collection Becht, Maarden, The Netherlands.

89. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Last Supper, 1960, mixed media, no longer extant.

90. Unknown Photographer, Photograph of Bruce Conner and his friends in front of Last Supper and Partition in Conner's Mexican home, c. 1961-62, Bruce Conner, San Francisco.

91. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Mushroom, 1962, pencil on paper, 20 1/2 x 14 15/16," Kohn Turner Gallery, Los Angeles.

92. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Suitcase, 1961-1963, Crayon on paper, colored foil paper, fabric emblem, beads on lace, glitter, soot, candles, wax, graphite, wrapping paper, S & H Green Stamps, mirror, half of a carved wood-and-plastic yo-yo, pins, fur, woven strap, etc. on suitcase, 22 1/8 x 24 3/16 x 8 15/16," Collection of San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego .

93. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933) Cross, 1962, wood, nylon, photograph, fabric, cardboard, candle, tacks, nails, thorns, desert water bag, fringe, fired clay, feather, etc., 37 x 19 1/2 x 14", Collection of Orange County Museum of Art, LAM/OCMA Art Collection Trust, Newport Beach, California.

94. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), The Marcel Duchamp Traveling Box, 1963, metal-and-glass box, candle, string,

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rubber stamp of the artist's signature, beads, etc., 3 3/4 x 4 3/4 x 4 1/4," Collection Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

95. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Snore, 1960, wood, fabric, nylon, string, metal vent, paint, metal can, etc., 36 1/2 x 17 1/2 x 21 1/2," Collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

96. Allen Jones (English, born 1937), Screen (recto), 1965, oil on pine on five-panel folding screen, 72 x 85," Private Collection, London.

97. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), The Artist, 1990, paper collage, 13 1/8 x 9 1/2," Private Collection, Los Angeles.

98. Robert Rauschenberg (American, born 1925), Gold Standard, 1964, combine painting: oil, paper, printed reproductions, clock, cardboard box, metal, fabric, wood, sting, show, and Coca-Cola bottles on six-panel gold leaf Japanese folding screen with electric light, rope, and ceramic dog on bicycle seat and wire-mesh base, 7' 1/4" x 11' 10" x 4' 3," The Sogetsu Art Museum, Tokyo.

99. Bruce Conner (American born 1933), Untitled (verso), 1954-61, paper, wood, adhesive, nails, paint, staples, metal, tar, feathers, plastic, etc. on Masonite. 63 7/8 x 49 5/8 x 4 1/8," Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

100. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Black Dahlia, 1960, offset photograph, feather, nails, paper collage, tobacco, rubber hose, fabric, sequins, string, etc., 26 3/4 x 10 3/4 x 2 3/4," Collection of Walter Hopps, Houston.

101. Unknown Photographer, Photograph of Gutai performance piece by Kazuo Shiraga with folding screen shot with arrows and being thrust with spears, 1957.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE FOLDING SCREEN AS SEXUAL METAPHOR

In 1900 Pierre Bonnard completed a painting titled simply Man and Woman (fig. 1).[1] The painting shows, on the left, an undressed woman sitting on a bed playing with a cat, and, on the right, a man standing, taking off (or putting on) his clothes. Separating these two figures, creating almost two distinct panels, is a tightly compressed folding screen. The screen serves as a prominent erotic *caesura* in this typical bourgeois interior space, underscoring certain latent issues of sexuality and dramatizing the ways in which specific aspects of modern life, generally addressed only in relation to public life, have now invaded and marked "the interior."

Visually and symbolically, Bonnard's Man and Woman establishes the folding screen as a prominent and highly evocative sexual signifier in the modern, bourgeois home. As a screenmaker himself, Bonnard was aware that a folding screen could produce a wide range of sometimes contradictory

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[1] This painting is no. 224 in Jean and Henry Dauberville, Bonnard: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint (Paris: Éditions J. et H. Bernheim Jeune, 1965), 1: 233. The catalogue information reads, L'Homme et La Femme, 1900, oil on canvas, 115 x 72 cm., signed and dated lower left Bonnard 1900, formerly collection of Thadée Natanson, now Musée d'Orsay. There is an earlier study for this painting titled Intérieur or Homme et Femme Dans Un Intérieur, 1898, oil on cardboard, 51.5 x 34.5 cm, Collection Dr. Jacques Koester, Bollegin, Berne, Switzerland (Dauberville no. 182). Significantly, there is no folding screen in this earlier oil study.

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meanings.[2] Screens originally functioned as protection against the wind or a person's gaze, thus blocking drafts and creating privacy.[3] But in modern life, these utilitarian meanings were sometimes superseded by the sexual symbolism of the folding screen as a shield between a naked woman and a desiring man. In Bonnard's painting, for instance, the claustrophobic red room is a none-too-subtle allusion to the womb, with the folded screen serving as its symbolic entrance. This bedroom, this inner sanctum of privacy, then, is coded as female. The woman, emblematic keeper of domestic space, demonstrates her ease in this setting as she teases

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[2] Historians of Bonnard's work have written about the importance of the folding screen for the meaning of contrast, existential division, and lack of communication between the sexes in Man and Woman. Guy Cogeval writes, "Ce n'est donc pas à la délectation de l'instant que Bonnard nous convie, et le paravent ne se dresse pas là par hasard: il marque bien une séparation existentielle entre les deux sexes, il materialise avec une force surprenante l'incommunicabilité qui menace toute relation amoureuse--préfigurant en cela certaines épreuves que le peintre devra traverser dans sa propre vie privée." (It is not, to be sure, for the gratification of the moment that Bonnard invites us, and the folding screen is not standing there erect by chance: it clearly indicates an existential separation between the two sexes, it makes material with astonishing power the incommunicability which threatens each amorous relationship--prefiguring in itself certain evidence which the painter must confront in his own private life.") Guy Cogeval, Bonnard (Paris: Fernand Hazan, 1993), 74. See also Antoine Terrasse, Pierre Bonnard (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1967), 55.

[3] The word, screen, derives from Old High German skirm or skerm and means protection. Ernest Klein, A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language (Amsterdam, London, and New York: Elsevier Publishing Company, 1967), 2: 1403.

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the cats, seemingly content to remain in the interior, "her" space.[4]

In his painting, Olympia, Edouard Manet used a folding screen as backdrop to enhance the sexual aura of the prostitute's room and hide Olympia from the client entering on the other side of the screen.[5] In the Bonnard painting Man and Woman, the labialike edges of the closed screen underscore the bedroom as a sexual metaphor for the female body.[6] The naked woman who is looking down, occupies only

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[4] For a discussion of the allocation of female spaces in the domestic interior, see Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," Sexuality and Space, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 327-389 passim.

[5] T.J. Clark points out in his chapter "Olympia's Choice," The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 136/137, "Olympia's face is framed, mostly, by the brown of a Japanese screen, and the neutrality of that background (what is shown is the back of the screen, the unpictured part) is one of the things that make the address and conciseness of the face/all the sharper. But the blankness is illusory: to the right of Olympia's head is a shock of red-brown hair, just sufficiently different from the screen's dull colour to be visible with effort." Here again the screen symbolizes what we are not supposed to see. Olympia is behind the screen, hidden from men who normally would be entering the room on the painted side of the screen.. The screen is a metaphor of transgression and disclosure in this painting, much the way Clark explains that Olympia herself is an image of transgression for the Second Empire.

[6] A slightly earlier Bonnard painting, L'Indolente, 1899, oil on canvas, 96 x 105 cm, formerly Collection Thadée Natanson, now Collection Musée d'Orsay (Dauberville no. 219), which shows a naked woman stretched out on a bed with a cat curled up by her head and her legs spread apart so that her labia are located in the center of the painting like the screen in Man and Woman, could be considered as a kind of pendant to Man and Woman. Bonnard's mistress, model, and subsequent wife, Maria Boursin (Marthe) has been suggested as the woman in both canvases. Cogeval, Bonnard, 72; and Terrasse, Bonnard, 54-55.

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about one-third of the height of the painting and sits on the bed with her legs apart, revealing her genitals, an unusually candid pose for a turn-of-the-century nude. Above her is a flower painting, which reiterates her connection to nature, and alludes to sexual deflowering. To emphasize his meaning, Bonnard has included a cat, a well-established symbol of infidelity,[7] in an ironic, ready-to-pounce position, viz-a-viz the woman's vulva, not unlike the position the viewer occupies in relationship to the compacted screen and to the painting as a (w)hole.

In contrast, the man, standing with his head up and holding his clothing, signifies a connection to the outside world, to the public, to an arena that was, in the early twentieth century, a distinctly masculine domain. Although it is tempting to read this scene as an encounter with a prostitute, the fact that the man is unclothed argues against this interpretation. Indeed, the two figures have been identified as the artist himself with his lover and model Marthe.[8] We cannot tell with certainty from this

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[7] For the cat as a symbol of infidelity in Olympia, see Linda Nochlin, Realism (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1971), 203.

[8] In the standard brothel or prostitution scene the women are naked and the man or men are clothed. See for example, Hollis Clayson, "Avant-garde and Pompier Images of 19th Century French Prostitution: The Matter of Modernism, Modernity and Social Ideology," Modernism and Modernity, eds. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Serge Guilbaut, and David Solkin (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), 43-64.

The reason for the male nudity and the clear feeling that this is not a brothel scene is answered by Cogeval who first suggested that Man and Woman is a portrait/self-portrait of Marthe and Bonnard. "La scène se déroule sur le

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painting who instigated the sexual encounter. The painting even seems to highlight such ambiguities, emphasizing the decentered, ever-elusive meaning in part through the symbol of the undulating and multifaceted folding screen.

Here, the prominently positioned screen denotes fragmentation and a loss of identity or place. This screen is a barrier that bisects the painting and its meaning. In Man and Woman, Bonnard forces us to conclude that this screen, with its secrets folded inside itself like a woman's genitalia, actually sexualizes the interior.[9] While every folding screen is formally vulvalike, it is the placement and implied meaning of this screen that offer a sexual reading, which is only enhanced by art historian Sarah Whitfield's reference that the screen functions in this

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ton de la confidence réaliste et désabusée, et l'hypothèse vraisemblable selon laquelle il s'agirait de Marthe et de Bonnard lui-même n'éclaire qu'en partie l'iconographie profonde du tableau." (The scene unfolds in an atmosphere of realistic and undeceived disclosure, and it is the reasonable hypothesis that it is Marthe and Bonnard himself who are illuminated in part by the profound iconography of the painting.) Cogeval, Bonnard, 74. This reading of Man and Woman is embraced by Sarah Whitfield as she discusses this painting and the several other related studies and oil paintings in her essay, "Fragments of an Identical World," and in her "Catalogue" in Sarah Whitfield and John Elderfield, Bonnard (London: Tate Gallery, 1998; New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998), 15-17, 74-75, 82-85. Also see above footnote 6.

[9] This screen, the visual echo of the woman's displayed vulva, is a reference to Bonnard's own earlier painting, L'Indolente (see footnote 6 above) as well as to Gustave Courbet's close-up view of a woman's vulva in his 1866 painting, The Origin of the World. For a discussion of Courbet's painting, see Linda Nochlin's catalogue entry for the painting in Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, Courbet Reconsidered (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum, 1988), 176, 178.

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painting the way the Tree of Knowledge functions in another Bonnard painting of Adam and Eve.[10] In the next two chapters I will briefly trace the history of the use of sexual subject matter on screens to show how nineteenth and twentieth century artists used this imagery to redefine representations of women, sexuality, and domestic space.

If, as many feminist critics now contend, the assertion of modernity was generally enacted by male artists across the naked bodies of women, what was the role of the sexually charged folding screen?[11] By depicting the "compromised" screen in Man and Woman as the "passageway" into the meaning of the painting, Bonnard makes clear that he, standing and with his head up, is the active male artist, and is different from, and has defined and conquered, the Other,

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[10] Whitfield discusses Man and Woman as being "...another intimate picture of his own bedroom...which includes a full-length self-portrait (where)...Bonnard appears as a tall, bony, shadowy figure divided from [Marthe] by a folding screen, a severe vertical division that accentuates the separateness of the two figures, rather as the Tree of Knowledge separates Adam and Eve. Here, the play between intimacy and distance (one of Bonnard's chief characteristics) is given a particularly fine edge." In Whitfield, "Fragments," 16.

[11] Lynda Nead, The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 55-60; Griselda Pollock, Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 54-55.

An additional observation about these two figures seems relevant. A topos of the traditional, academic nude figural type, and hence, a signifier of patriarchal (aesthetic) power, the virile figure, possibly the artist himself, is the stand-in for all male viewers. However, by 1900 a woman's body had completely supplanted the man's as the male artists' preferred image of the "Nude" and the embodiment of beauty. For an in-depth discussion of this shift, see Nead, The Female Nude, 46-48.

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the passive woman/muse, seated and with her head down, who is represented by the screen (vulva). One of the more dramatic conclusions suggested by Bonnard's Man and Woman is that the act of painting or constructing a folding screen can be analogous to stroking the female genitalia. In the case of Bonnard, a male screenmaker, this was a manifestation of attempted mastery; in the case of a female artist who creates screens, it could be read as an act of sexual/aesthetic self-examination or self-gratification. Later, I will discuss the implications of these metaphorical acts, but for now it is sufficient to note that folding screens problematize the very essence of sexual anxiety and must, therefore, be understood as a unique locus for both male and female assertions of sexual questioning and identity.

Folding screens combine the elements and problems of painting, sculpture, architecture, and applied arts.[12] In this sense, Bonnard's *intimiste* scene perfectly mirrors the decorative tastes of his male bourgeois patrons, such as the original owner of Man and Woman, Thadée Natanson, the publisher of the famous Post-Impressionist magazine, La

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[12] In the nineteenth century high versus low art usually encompassed the debate between fine and decorative or applied art. But as debated in the twentieth century, the issue has been vastly reconfigured to include the influence of popular culture on fine art. The two approaches are nonetheless widely interconnected beginning in the late nineteenth century. For a general historical overview of influences, objects, and bibliography see, Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1990).

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Revue Blanche.[13] Bonnard establishes the screen as the literal and metaphoric boundary between the man and woman thus showing the contrast, as well as the pairing of, male and female in the domestic environment. Perhaps in this painting Bonnard is suggesting that the once-devalued "feminine" art of the interior (both the domestic scenes preferred by Bonnard and his Post-Impressionist compatriots as well as the functional art objects which they made) has attained equal status with the once-dominant "masculine" arts of history painting and large-scale public art. A folding screen represents is the place where these two approaches could meet. Although utilitarian, the screen has a surface larger than many easel paintings and thus, like a mural, makes a greater architectural/environmental impact.[14]

According to architectural historian, Mark Wigley, the feminization of interior domestic space and the objects in it, had its inception in the very first contemplation of

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[13] Thadée Natanson was the patron of both Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard, and owned Bonnard paintings such as Man and Woman and L'Indolente. His cousin, Stephane Natanson, owned Vuillard's Four-Panel Screen in which Stephane as well as Thadée's wife, Misia, are depicted (see pages 132-137 below).

[14] In the academies, history painting was ranked as the most important subject. Landscapes, scenes of everyday life, and still lifes were considered inferior subject matter, but constituted the images most often found on western screens. For a discussion of the importance of the various genres see Nead, The Female Nude, 47; and Pollock, Vision and Difference, 44-46.

For a discussion of the importance and impact of decorative painting see Gloria Groom, Beyond the Easel: Decorative Painting by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis, and Roussel, 1890-1930 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001).

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walls and shelter.[15] Reexamining various seminal essays by the nineteenth century German critic, Gottfried Semper, including "The Four Elements of Architecture" (1851) and "Style: The Textile Art" (1860), Wigley finds that Semper identified the act of weaving as the first instance of building.[16] The second instance, according to Semper, was the erection of temporary structures draped with weavings to divide space. This, of course, constitutes an ancient and exceedingly important precedent for the pre-seventeenth century screening devices called, clôtets, éperons, and/or ôtevents, which the architect Viollet-Le-Duc considered to be precursors of Western folding screens.[17] Because the ancient draped weavings were patterned, Semper emphasizes the fundamental inseparability of architecture and ornamentation, a link which is also evident in folding screens.[18]

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[15] Wigley, "Untitled," 326-389.

[16] Ibid., 366-373; and Gottfried Semper, "The Four Elements of Architecture: A Contribution to the Comparative Study of Architecture (1851)," The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 102-110; and Semper, "Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics: A Handbook for Technicians, Artists, and Patrons of Art; The Textile Art: Considered in Itself and in Relation to Architecture (1860)," The Four Elements, 254-257.

[17] See the history of the paravent (folding screen) in Eugène Émmanuel Viollet-Le-Duc, Dictionnarie Raisonné de Mobilier Français: Meubles (Paris: V^e A. Morel et C^ie, Éditeurs, 1872), 1: 196-198.

[18] Wigley also explains Semper's reading of the buildings of antiquity where Semper considered the marble as "...a smooth surface on which to paint," and that "...the building's structure (was) that of a mere prop for the layer of paint..." As Wigley explains Semper's theories, "(t)his reading involves a fundamental transformation of the account

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In ancient cultures, weaving was often done by women, and used by husbands and fathers to create walls to separate public (masculine) space from private (family and female) space.[19] These walls isolated and confined women, in part to prevent their sexual betrayal. Screens mimic this early conception of a wall, and have consequently taken on the sexualized implications. Wigley shows that the notion of femininized domestic space as a container of female sexuality persisted from an ancient Greek treatise, the Oeconomicus (4th cent. B.C.) of Xenophon (c. 430 - 354, B.C.), to De Re aedificatore (1452) and Della Famiglia (1434-1441) by the Florentine theorist and architect Leon Battista Alberti.[20] In a sense, folding screens are surrogates for the wall and carry the reminders of the wall's ancient functions and meanings, especially as a form of gender division and sexual shielding.

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of the origin of architecture on which traditional architectural discourse bases itself. Architecture is no longer seen to begin with naked structures gradually dressed with ornament. Rather, it begins with ornament." Wigley, "Untitled," 366-367.

[19] Semper writes, "'Hanging carpets remained the true walls, the visible boundaries of space. The often solid walls behind them were necessary for reasons that had nothing to do with the creation of space; they were needed for security, for supporting a load, for their permanence and so on.'" Semper, "The Four Elements," 104 as quoted in Wigley, "Untitled," 367.

[20] Xenophon, The Economist of Xenophon, trans. Alexander D. O. Wedderburn and W. Gershom Collingwood (New York: Burt Franklin, 1971); Leon Battista Alberti, On the Art of Building in Ten Books, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1988; Leon Battista Alberti, The Family in Renaissance Florence, ed. and trans. Renée Neu Watkins (Columbia, South Carolina: South Carolina University Press, 1969); Wigley, "Untitled," 332-365.

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The idea of a gendered division of space had not changed by the nineteenth century. Sociologists and critics have described the urban spaces of mid-nineteenth century Europe as a masculine domain, for the conduct of political and economic business and for the intersection of men of all classes with lower-class women (often prostitutes).[21] As art historian Griselda Pollock explains, for bourgeois women, "the public spaces thus construed were where one risked losing one's virtue, dirtying oneself; going out in public and the idea of disgrace were closely allied."[22] Women, as Xenophon and Alberti had earlier opined, were only controllable at home where their jobs were tending to domestic details and child-rearing.[23] Until the last decade

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[21] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (orig. pub. Paris: Figaro 26 and 28 November and 3 December 1863; Greeenwich, Connecticut: Phaidon Publishers Inc., 1964), 26-38; and Pollock, Vision and Difference, 70.

[22] Ibid., 69.

[23] In Book Three of The Family in Renaissance FLorence (Della Famiglia), Alberti has two of his relatives discussing how to arrange domestic affairs. Gianozzo says to Lionardo: "Since I find it no easy matter to deal with the needs of the household when I must often be engaged outside with other men in arranging matters of wider consequence, I have found it wise to set aside a certain amount for outside use, for investments and purchases. The rest, which takes care of all the smaller household affairs, I leave to my wife's care. I have done it this way, for, to tell the truth, it would hardly win us respect if our wife busied herself among the men in the marketplace, out in the public eye. It also seems somewhat demeaning to me to remain shut up in the house among women when I have manly things to do among men, fellow citizens and worthy and distinguished foreigners." A bit later Lionardo says, "The woman, as she/ remains locked up at home, should watch over things by staying at her post, by diligent care and watchfulness." Alberti, The Family, 207/208.

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of the nineteenth century, images of women on screens reinforced the repressive status quo of women as asexual, idealized beings and/or iconic figures. These screens actively confirmed the politically sanctioned gendered reading of domestic space--and the screens themselves--as placidly feminine and devalued. With the advent of modernism and its emphasis on sexual discovery, the folding screen and the domestic interior began to embody new metaphors and fulfill new needs for men and women.

Historically, rooms and buildings have rarely been considered gender-neutral. Architectural treatises which specified the arrangement and use of rooms usually clarified whether a room or section of the house was under male or female control.[24] This delineation of the furnishing and function of domestic space had a direct parallel in the highly self-conscious planning of the structure, shape, function, subject matter, and meaning of folding screens. To

[24] Wigley quotes Alberti, "I recall reading...that it was the custom in Greece for women not to be admitted to table, except for meals with relatives, and the custom too for certain parts of the house, where the women resided, to be out of bounds to all but closest kin. And certainly, to my mind, any place reserved for women ought to be treated as though dedicated to religion and chastity..." Alberti, The Art of Building, Book V, 149, as quoted in Wigley, "Untitled," 332. See Ibid., 332-365 for Wigley's general discussion of space, gender and sexuality.

Wigley notes, too, "While one of the first signs of the growing desire for privacy for the individual...was the separation of the bedrooms that Alberti prescribes, which established a masculine space, this space was not completely private, since women can enter it, albeit only when allowed. The first truly private space was the man's study, a small locked room off his bedroom which no one else ever enters, an intellectual space beyond that of sexuality." Wigley, "Untitled," 347.

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understand this historical development, I will later examine the structure of the eighteenth century "feminine" interior, with its emphasis on superbly crafted and functional objects; the role of William Morris in the continued femininization of space and the re-evaluation of the applied arts in mid-nineteenth century England; and the implications of the highly psychologized and eroticized mid-nineteenth century French interiors formulated by the Goncourt brothers.

Twentieth century architects and designers have been even more self-conscious about creating or neutralizing sexualized domestic space. The eroticized uses of architecture by Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier; the sexual and psychological manipulation of objects and spaces by Marcel Duchamp and Salvador Dalí; and the implementation of the detritus of everyday life by Claes Oldenburg, Allan Kaprow, and Edward Kienholz are reflected in the screens made by their contemporaries: Eileen Gray, Man Ray, and Bruce Conner. My objective here is to demonstrate the impact on folding screens of modernism's radical shift away from traditional aesthetic approaches. The result is that certain screens (such as those by Gray, Man Ray, and Conner) destabilize the conventions of domestic space; destroy the concept of the passivity of objects, and challenge preconceptions of sexual difference and hierarchy.

In the first volume of The History of Sexuality (1976), Michel Foucault points out that while the discourse on sex

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began in the seventeenth century, by the late nineteenth century the search for the "truth" about sex had become an all-consuming enterprise. Foucault describes the initial efforts.

> The society that emerged in the nineteenth century--bourgeois, capitalist, or industrial society, call it what you will...put into operation an entire machinery for producing true discourses concerning (sex). Not only did it speak of sex and compel everyone to do so; it also set out to formulate the uniform truth of sex. As if it suspected sex of harboring a fundamental secret. As if it needed this production of truth. As if it was essential that sex be inscribed not only in an economy of pleasure but in an ordered system of knowledge.[25]

Foucault also notes that "this technology of sex was a whole series of different tactics that combined in varying proportions the objective of disciplining the body and that of regulating populations."[26] Not only was sex crucial for manipulating society, but "tracked down" in one's behavior, dreams, follies, and childhood, it provided a sense of individuality and access to one's own intelligibility and one's own body.[27]

These social ramifications of sex and sexuality are vividly expressed by the screens produced in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Throughout this study I will show the various ways that artists sought to deploy their screens: to engage the ongoing dialogue of sexuality;

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[25] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (orig. pub., Histoire de la sexualité: La Volonté de savoir, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976; New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 1: 69.
[26] Ibid., 1: 146.
[27] Ibid., 1: 146, 155-156.

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to demonstrate changing attitudes toward women; to affirm or question the place of women in the hierarchy of gender; and to disrupt notions of bourgeois propriety in relation to sexuality. But what, specifically, did screens do that late Victorian erotic pictures did not? First, a folding screen stands, like the viewer, on the floor; it is three-dimensional and usually flexible; it can physically change, with varying sides and angles and with certain kinds of imagery and/or structure. As with sculpture, shifting viewpoints and meanings are the norm, and as with both painting and sculpture, a screen can metaphorize the human body.[28] Moreover, within the domestic arena, the screen, like a spectator/actor on Antonin Artaud's stage, is engulfed by, yet affects, the spectacle of life/theater.[29] When considered in this manner, an erotic folding screen may

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[28] In his book, Painting as an Art, Richard Wollheim presented the idea that in certain instances a "...painting becomes a metaphor for the body, or...for some part of the body, or for something assimilated to the body," and that when painting metaphorizes the body...it uses the resources of pictorial metaphor to the full." Richard Wollheim, "Painting, metaphor, and the body: Titian, Bellini, De Kooning, etc.," Painting as an Art (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 305.

[29] "The Stage--The Auditorium: *We abolish the stage and the auditorium and replace them by a single site, without partition or barrier of any kind, which will become the theater of the action. A direct communication will be re-established between the spectator and the spectacle, between the actor and the spectator, from the fact that the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, is engulfed and physically affected by it.*" Antonin Artaud, "The Theater of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)," The Theater and its Double, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (orig. pub. as Le Théâtre et son Double, Paris: Gallimard, 1938; New York: Grove Press, 1958), 96.

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constantly provoke a viewer's investigation of his or her own sexuality.

In the 1905 essay, "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious," Sigmund Freud suggested an additional significance of the screen. Freud recounts the story of a man who leaves his precious teenage daughter in the care of his best friend while he is away on a long business trip. He makes it perfectly clear that he wants her isolated and her virginity protected. However, when he returns, he finds her pregnant. Furious, he asks how this could have happened. His erstwhile friend says he does not know yet he admits that he had the girl sleep in the same room as his teenage son. The girl's father is shocked by the folly of this, but the boy's father explains literally that, "After all there was a screen between them."[30] Freud's anecdote perfectly illustrates how a room can be sexually-charged by the very presence of a screen, and by what it hides and what it promises to reveal. Although designed to ensure privacy, the screen is a tempter, and actually fosters desire. Like the hymen, the screen is meant to be a barrier. It signified society's taboo on pre-marital sex and an unsanctioned child, but it is overcome and penetrated by the individuals' desires to experience and learn the truth of their own sexuality.

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[30] Sigmund Freud, "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (1905)," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed. James Strachey et al. (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953), 8: 57/58.

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Truth about sex is often learned through the agency of "the gaze" and, in the case of the sexualized screens, through the Freudian concept of scopophilia (pleasure in erotic looking).[31] In her groundbreaking article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," theorist Laura Mulvey notes:

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.[32]

In Freudian terms, Mulvey further explicates the meaning of the role for the masculine viewer.

> Ultimately, the meaning of woman is sexual difference, the visually ascertainable absence of the penis, the material evidence on which is based the castration complex essential for the organization of entrance to the symbolic order and the law of the father. Thus the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified.[33]

Because the folding screen is designed to foster looking, or attempting to hide from the look, or subverting the look, screens created by men, for example those by Armand Seguin (fig. 2), Man Ray (fig. 3), Bruce Conner (figs. 4 & 5), and Francesco Clemente (fig. 6) often signify the artist's exploration of sexual difference, a woman's

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[31] Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905)," The Standard Edition, 7: 157.

[32] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Visual and Other Pleasures (London: Macmillan, 1989), 19 [first pub. Screen 16, 3 (Autumn 1975): 11].

[33] Ibid., 21 (13).

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sexual lack, fear of castration, and the disruptiveness of woman in patriarchal society. A female viewer looking at these screens by male artists will see her own subjectivity translated through the male gaze as passivity and objectivity. The French feminist writer, Luce Irigaray explains the effect of this situation:

> Woman, in this sexual imaginary, is only a more or less obliging prop for the enactment of man's fantasies. That she may find pleasure there in that role, by proxy, is possible, even certain. But such pleasure is above all a masochistic prostitution of her body to a desire that is not her own, and it leaves her in a familiar state of dependency upon man. Not knowing what she wants, ready for anything, even asking for more, so long as he will "take" her as his "object" when he seeks his own pleasure. Thus she will not say what she herself wants; moreover, she does not know, or no longer knows, what she wants.[34]

Throughout the twentieth century, however, women artists such as Vanessa Bell (fig. 7), Eileen Gray (fig. 8), Natalia Goncharova (fig. 9), Jane Kaufman (fig. 10), or Nancy Mitchnick (fig. 11) have made folding screens that did not exploit women for male pleasure. Their often subtle, sometimes explicit goal was to disallow and disavow the male gaze by creating images that would present the female body and sexuality in its own terms, uncompromised by male fears and fetishes. In specific screens, the male gaze is ignored (Bell), threateningly diverted (Goncharova), or made polysexual (Gray). More recently, Kaufmann's 1985 screen,

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[34] Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One," This Sex Which Is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (orig. pub. as Ce Sexe qui n'est pas un, Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 25.

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Untitled, a pubic-hair-like, feather-covered screen *celebrates* and *disregards* "lack", while Mitchnick's 1984 Adam and Eve Screen, sarcastically equates Adam's penis with the snake and the Devil thus overturning two thousand years of blame for the Fall which has been heaped upon Eve. Such emphatically vulvar and nonphallic screens help women supersede what feminist writer Judith Butler calls "being" the Phallus."

> 'Being ' the Phallus and 'having' the Phallus denote divergent sexual positions, or nonpositions (impossible positions, really), within language. To 'be' the Phallus is to be the 'signifier' of the desire of the Other and to *appear* as this signifier. In other words, it is to be the object, the Other of a (heterosexualized) masculine desire, but also to represent or reflect that desire. This is an Other that constitutes, not the limit of masculinity in a feminine alterity, but the site of a masculine self-elaboration. For women to 'be' the Phallus means, then, to reflect the power of the Phallus, to signify that power, to 'embody' the Phallus, to supply the site to which it penetrates, and to signify the Phallus through 'being' its Other, its absence, its lack, the dialectical confirmation of its identity. By claiming that the Other lacks the Phallus is the one who *is* the Phallus, Lacan clearly suggests that power is wielded by this feminine position of not-having, that the masculine subject who 'has' the Phallus requires this Other to confirm and, hence, be the Phallus in its 'extended' sense.[35]

In these screens women artists are able to reclaim their sexuality and display it in their own terms. No longer must

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[35] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 44, 159 n. 13. See also Jacques Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," in Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne, eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1985), 74-85.

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women be assigned to "being the phallus" and be confined to the home.

Domestic space is no longer an exclusively male-defined province or a prison for passive females. Rather, it is a site from which a woman can assert her power and control over her environment and sexuality. But since the domestic arena continues to be marked as feminine (even while controlled by men), every object placed in or created for that interior space is automatically coded as feminine. In the past, applied arts objects, in particular, were often created for the domestic interior, decorated with low-status subject matter (such as genre scenes, still lifes, nature imagery, and/or patterning and ornamentation), and were frequently considered "feminine", "decorative", "popular", and "devalued".[36] But the gradual insertion of these

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[36] Christopher Reed edited a book titled, Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), contains a series of essays which addresses a multitude of aspects of a devalued, "feminine" art in and about the late nineteenth and twentieth century European and American domestic interior.

It is tempting to say that the gender coding changes when applied arts such as those by Bauhaus or De Stijl artists were created using abstract and/or nonobjective imagery. As documented and discussed by Nancy Troy, some De Stijl artists were able to create successful "plastic" (as opposed to "decorative") interiors, by fully integrating furniture color and design with the painted walls, the effect created was harmonious with no sense of the furniture as being devalued. See Nancy J. Troy, The De Stijl Environment (Cambridge, Mass and London: The MIT Press, 1983), 34-45, esp. 40. In many other types of interiors, even those with nonobjective images, I nonetheless believe that, ultimately, functional domestic objects always bear the devalued coding, and are never quite considered as the metaphoric and intellectual equals of painting and sculpture.

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qualities into modernist art destabilized the traditional aesthetic hierarchy that had privileged fine art over the applied arts as *the* legitimate aesthetic activity.

William Morris promoted the aesthetics of the functional object and cleared the path for twentieth-century interest in the applied arts and the appropriation of the functional as a site for important as well as fine art.[37] In 1936, art historian Nikolaus Pevsner claimed, "So far, Morris is the true prophet of the twentieth century. We owe it to him that an ordinary/man's dwelling-house has once more become a worthy object of the architect's thought, and a chair, a wallpaper, or a vase a worthy object of the artist's imagination."[38] But if William Morris promoted the experience of creativity for every worker through the process of *making* everyday objects by hand, it was Marcel Duchamp who embraced the experience of creativity for each person through the process of *choosing* everyday, mass-produced items as art objects. Although they approached art from very different vantage points, both artists attempted to break down or break into the hierarchies of art. Their complementary efforts to force a re-evaluation of the

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[37] The catalogue for the major 1996 William Morris exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, for example, historically documents Morris's life and production, but does not put an emphasis on a more interpretive or textual reading of his imagery, objects, or intentions. Linda Parry, ed., William Morris (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 1996).

[38] Nikolaus Pevsner, Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius (orig. pub. as Pioneers of the Modern Movement, London: Faber and Faber, 1936; rev. ed., London: Penguin Books, 1960), 22/23.

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aesthetic status (but not use) of functional objects underlies my discussion of the sexual screens by Eileen Gray, Man Ray, and Bruce Conner.

Even before he created his celebrated readymades, Duchamp had participated in discussions and an exhibition redefining the object in domestic space. With his brother Jacques Villon and other Cubists of the Puteaux Group, Duchamp helped to decorate the interior of the Maison Cubiste (the exterior was designed by another brother Raymond Duchamp-Villon) for the 1912 Salon d'Automne in Paris.[39] Duchamp's selection in 1914 of a bottle drying rack in 1914 as a "readymade" sculpture, radically reconceived the intersection of art and domesticity by challenging both the decorative and the functional aspects

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[39] See Daniel Robbins, "From Symbolism to Cubism: The Abbaye of Creteil," The Art Journal, 23, (Winter 1963-1964): 111-116, for an outline of some of the theories including that of Unanisme (the interpenetration of art and life) which may have shaped the Maison Cubiste discussions held by members of the Puteaux Group.

For a discussion of the Maison Cubiste and the artists who created it, see Marie Noëlle Pradel, "La Maison Cubiste en 1912," L'Art de France, 1 (1961): 177-86; and Troy, Modernism, 79-88. For a discussion of the gendering of the interior, see Troy's essay, "Domesticity, Decoration and Consumer Culture: Selling Art and Design in Pre-World War I France," Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture, ed. Christopher Reed (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996). Here she discusses how, although the cubist painters Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger (authors of Du Cubisme) condemned paintings whose integrity depended upon their placement as part of an ensemble, as being decorative, feminine, and passive, through their contribution to André Mare's Maison Cubiste of independent paintings which are complete unto themselves, Gleizes and Metzinger were trying "...to redefine decorative art itself, and the domestic interior in particular, as appropriate sites for *men's* (emphasis mine) artistic activity (115)."

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of the object. In essence, he turned Morris's enterprise on its head precipitating as art historian Amelia Jones says, "the breakdown of modernism and the instigation of its radical other:...*all is art*."[40]

Both Morris and Duchamp shared an interest in reading Woman as an object and a metaphor, an attitude that is commonly represented in the history of folding screens. While Morris often celebrated the traditional theme of intertwining Woman and nature in his work (including at least one screen), Duchamp saw woman as the sexual and the unattainable seductress typified by the machine (and exemplified by his own screen-like The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even). But whereas Morris's images of women were fixed and conventional, Duchamp's representations of femininity epitomized the slipperiness and ambiguity of gender in the twentieth century. The maneuvers by Morris and Duchamp to gain acceptance of the functional as art and to

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[40] Amelia Jones, Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp (Cambridge, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 37 and 239-240, n 33. Jones show how the critical response to Duchamp casts him as the antitype to the Greenbergian ideal of the American masculine "genius" modern artist and shows how Duchamp was critically defined as the foreign, "feminine," transgressive, theatricalized destroyer of modernism, the "generative patriarch of American postmodernists." Jones notes that the critical evaluation of Duchamp as a radical takes place nonetheless within a traditional framework. "Through a still masculinist and heterosexualized paradigmatic, the very antimasculinity of the feminine, spectacular, theatrical, decorative, mass-culture-embracing, and/or (male) homosexual is called upon to legitimate Duchampian postmodernism in opposition to a now-devalued other, modernism." "Duchamp as 'Generative Patriarch' of American Postmodernists: The Antimasculinist, Antimodernist Lineage," Ibid., 29-62.

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reconsider representative attitudes toward gender stereotypes influenced, among other things, a rethinking of the folding screen as a complex metaphoric device, capable of exploring aesthetic questions as well as more political questions pertaining to gender and sexuality.

This study focuses on the development and the implications of sexually coded folding screens. In the next two chapters I outline a brief history of folding screens, touching both on the circumstances under which they became an aesthetic format in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century England, France, and the United States and on the development of the sexual sub-genre of screens. Then, I examine in detail three historically important sexual screens: Eileen Gray's Block Screen (1923), Man Ray's Screen (1935), and Bruce Conner's Partition (1961-64). I show how these three works were developed under radically different historical circumstances and explain the variety of reasons for which they were created. In addition, I examine how each screen embodies the multiplicity of characteristics of sexually coded screens and illustrates particular issues raised by modernism and the erotic interior. Moreover, these three screens represent the three main stylistic ways in which twentieth century artists have approached the creation of sexually symbolic screens: through structural modifications of the traditional format for erotic intent (Gray); through sexually explicit or coded figurative imagery (Man Ray); or through surfaces built up with

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signifying materials and/or found objects (Conner). In analyzing these works, I also attempt to show how each artist used the functions, cultural history, and connotations of the screen to create complex and provocative meanings not possible in any other medium or art form.

Eileen Gray's Block Screen of 1923 is a transfiguring work in the history of twentieth century screens. The structure of this screen, with its rotating lacquered wooden blocks that create solids and voids, first negates then redefines the concept of a folding screen. Its rigid and formal appearance belies an ambiguity that is easy to miss, but which haunts this screen. When the Block Screen is considered in the context of Gray's earlier work, the cultural atmosphere of early twentieth century Paris, Gray's relatively hidden lesbian life, contemporaneous theories of domestic and stage design, and late twentieth century feminist critical theories, the screen's latent sexual and erotic connotations are uncovered.

Whereas Eileen Gray's Block Screen is pointedly ambiguous about its sexual message, Man Ray's figurative painted Screen of 1935 explicitly presupposes a male viewer and an erotically charged female subject, the passive object of his gaze. This attitude is thoroughly in keeping with the general iconography and practice of Surrealist painting, sculpture, and interior design. But Man Ray's screen also reflects the more specific influences of the writings of Marquis de Sade, Sigmund Freud, and Georges Bataille, and

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the art of Salvador Dalí and Marcel Duchamp, all of which show a deep fascination with sexuality, perversion, misogyny and gender difference that helps to problematize Man Ray's Screen. Based on a poem-portrait of Man Ray written by his friend Paul Éluard, Screen displays an image of a disrobing woman which serves as, among other things, a metaphoric "stripping bare" of the artist's own sense of visual fragmentation, and as the symbol of his inability to tame the explosive sexuality of the woman he loved.

Bruce Conner's 1961-64 Partition is also about fragmentation. It is a complicated assemblage that intermingles religious meanings, psychedelic experience, and the theme of death with objects symbolically associated with women and seduction. Conner began the work as an altarpiece, with candles and Mexican religious popular prints; over the course of three years he then added nylon stockings, feathers, ribbons, lace, sequins, jewelry, and other detritus. By contrasting and intertwining spiritual and religious feelings with symbols and accoutrements of male, but particularly female, sexuality, he questions the socially constructed validity of all three. Through the very use of cast-off materials as his aesthetic medium applied with an organized chaotic style, Conner transgresses yet redefines the meaning of a folding screen, sexuality, and the modernist artistic enterprise. This is a screen that defies the notion of decoration, and with scathing modernist

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irony, provides Conner's rebuttal to the mid-twentieth century bourgeois environment and the sexual status-quo.

Because my approach to these works is interdisciplinary, the sources that I have used cover a wide timespan and range over a variety of scholarly fields and methodologies. In general, the pre-1982 literature on Western folding screens is sparse. Since that time, however, Adams's Decorative Folding Screens (1982), the catalogue for The Folding Image (1984) by Michael K. Komanecky and me, and my own exhibition catalogue Contemporary Screens (1986) have begun to establish a history of Western folding screens. In addition, the exhibition catalogue Paravents, published in Germany in 1984, illustrates (but does not critically analyze) screens by nineteen contemporary artists, mostly German.[41] Another exhibition catalogue, Polyptyques et Paravents: Un Siècle de Création, 1890-1990, documents screens and polyptychs shown at the Galerie Bellier in Paris in 1990.[42] Although I have relied on the information in these recent histories of Western screens, my intention in this dissertation is not to rewrite that narrative. Rather, I have tried to explore in depth an area that I touched on briefly in earlier essays, and that seems pertinent to recent discussions regarding the relations between the fine and decorative arts: that is, the folding screen as sexual metaphor.

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41 Julie Werner, Paravents (Schloss Lorsfeld, 1984).

42 Galerie Bellier, Polyptyques et Paravents, Un Siècle de Création, 1890-1990 (Paris: Galerie Bellier, 1990).

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In her book Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art, feminist art historian Griselda Pollock outlines certain questions which have provided me with a way to rethink the fundamental purposes of art historical inquiry. Pollock asks pointedly, "How and why an art object or text was made; for whom it was made, to do what kind of job..., within what constraints and possibilities ... was (it) produced and initially used?" Rather than making qualitative or aesthetic judgments, Pollock wants art historians to pay attention to the issues around art's production, to figure out what is the work *of* and what is it really *about*?[43] In considering the social role of folding screens then, Pollock's questions provide the basis for a new critical vocabulary.

Christopher Reed also benefitted from Pollock's methodology in shaping his contributions to his 1996 anthology Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture.[44] This collection disputes the notion that art associated with the interior or domestic issues is "feminine", anti-intellectual, or unworthy of sustained critical attention. Individual essays offer in-depth documentation of the atmosphere in which folding screens were created as well as expanded views on what constitutes the "interior." In her essay, "Psyche and

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43 Pollock, Vision and Difference, 26-27, and 1-49 passim.

44 Christopher Reed, "Introduction," Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture, ed. Christopher Reed (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 7-17.

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Sympathy: Staging Interiority in the Early Modern Home," for instance, Susan Sidlauskas demonstrates how the domestic interior served as a metaphor for bourgeois identity in the paintings of Edouard Vuillard, Edgar Degas, James Whistler, and John Singer Sargent at the turn of the century. Sidlauskas claims that such works (which often include images of screens) "enacted the instabilities" of cultural change by utilizing "pictorial structures that exploited the interior's accessibility as a sign, even as they subverted its commonplace associations with comfort and safety."[45] She also makes the important point that "in representations of the body within a domestic space, ... we are contending not with one interior, but with *two*: the body itself and the container that surrounds it."[46] This was a key aspect of the figurative screens made by turn-of-century artists, but it also resonates in the later and sometimes more abstract screens by Gray, Man Ray, and Conner.

Over the past two decades, the representation of the female body and the notion of the social construction of gender have been raised by many feminist critics including Emily Apter, Judith Butler, Carol Duncan, Luce Irigaray, and Lynda Nead.[47] Rather than trying to read the screens through

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[45] Susan Sidlauskas, "Psyche and Sympathy: Staging Interiority in the Early Modern Home," Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture, ed. Christopher Reed (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 65.

[46] Ibid., 67. See above, footnote 27 and Richard Wollheim's exploration of the body/painting symbiosis in his essay, "Painting, metaphor, and the body," 305-356.

[47] Emily Apter, Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France (Ithaca

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the views of any one of these feminist writers, I have tried to use many of their theories as a basis for asserting the screen as a sexual metaphor. Of more specific relevance to my interpretation of sexual folding screens are several essays from architectural theory. Wigley's "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," convincingly traces the history of gendered space through an interpretation of several key ancient and modern architectural treatises.[48] Also helpful was Anthony Vidler's book of essays, The Architectural Uncanny, in which he analyzes architecture as a metaphor for the body. In the essay "Architecture Dismembered," for example, Vidler studies the changing use of the body/building metaphor since Vitruvius, a genealogy that reinforced my own theories about the use of the folding screen as a symbol for the gendered body.[49] In a similar vein, Beatriz Colomina's analysis of buildings by Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier in her essay, "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism," demonstrates how it is possible to construct an erotic, sexual, and gendered reading of modernist architecture. What is interesting is that the austere,

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and London: Cornell University Press, 1991; Butler, Gender Trouble; Carol Duncan, "Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting," Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (orig. pub. Artforum 12, 4 (December 1973): 30-39; rev. ed. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982); Irigaray, This Sex; and Nead, The Female Nude.

48 Wigley, "Untitled," 326-389.

49 Anthony Vidler, "Architecture Dismembered," The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1992), 67-82.

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abstract structures of Loos and Le Corbusier were (like the works of their contemporary, Eileen Gray) initially felt to be without sexual meaning or iconography.[50]

Obviously, such discussions hinge on the cultural distinctions made between high and low art. In my investigation of this issue as it pertains to folding screens, I found that the most useful single volume was Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik's massive compendium, High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture (1994) which superbly documents the modernist cultural context in which Gray, Man Ray, and Conner made their screens. Other texts, such as Jeffrey Weiss's The Popular Culture of Modern Art: Picasso, Duchamp, and Avant-gardism (1994) and the exhibition catalogue, Beat Culture and the New America, 1950-1965, by Lisa Phillips et al. (1996), explore this high/low theme with a more critical and theoretical approach, and therefore provide a necessary supplement to the more formalist and iconographic approach of Varnedoe and Gopnik.[51]

In tracing the early history of folding screens, I relied on Robert H. van Gulik's history, Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur (1958) and Michael

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[50] Beatriz Colomina, "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism," Sexuality & Space, ed. Beatriz Colomina (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 73-128.

[51] Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1990; Jeffrey Weiss, The Popular Culture of Modern Art: Picasso, Duchamp, and Avant-gardism (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994); Lisa Phillips with contributions by Maurice Berger et al., Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-1965 (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art in association with Flammarion, Paris-New York, 1996).

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Sullivan's "Notes on Early Chinese Screen Painting" for important facts and theories about the beginning of this tradition. The Double Screen (1996) by Wu Hung confirms the metaphoric and iconographic complexity of Chinese screens, and reinforces my contentions about the sexual coding of both actual and depicted folding screens and the use of female figures for erotic intent in Chinese art.[52] Books in English on Japanese screens such as Elise Grilli's The Art of the Japanese Screen (1970); Miyeko Murase's Byōbu: Japanese Screens from New York Collections (1971); Sherman Lee's Japanese Screens from the Museum and Cleveland Collections (1977); and Robert Jacobsen's catalogue The Art of Japanese Screen Painting: Selections from The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (1984) were important general sources for understanding the development of Japanese screens.[53] In these English texts on Japanese screens, the authors do not necessarily probe the more subtle significance or subtexts of the screens they are discussing. Only Lee attempts to

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[52] Robert H. van Gulik, Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by a Connoisseur (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958); Michael Sullivan, "Notes on Early Chinese Screen Painting," Artibus Asiae 27, 3 (1965): 239-264; and Wu Hung, The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[53] Elise Grilli, The Art of the Japanese Screen (New York: Walker/Weatherill, 1970); Miyeko Murase, Byobu: Japanese Screens from New York Collections (New York: The Asia Society, 1971); Sherman Lee, Japanese Screens from the Museum and Cleveland Collections (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1977), 3-9; and Robert D. Jacobsen, The Art of Japanese Screen Painting: Selections from The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of Art, 1984). This is a representative sampling of the literature in English on Japanese folding screens.

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address broader theoretical questions. Also helpful for my dissertation were the following books and articles: Jiro Harada's "Old Japanese Folding Screens;" Bettina Klein's "Japanese Kinbyobu: The Gold-leafed Folding Screens of the Muromachi Period (1333-1573);" Timon Screech's Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan, 1700-1820; Kenji Toda's "Japanese Screen Paintings of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries;" and "Yuzo Yamane's Momoyama Genre Painting (1967).[54]

Chapter Three surveys the development of the Western folding screen in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries as a context for the discussion of the use of female and sexual screen imagery. For the history of Western folding screens, I relied primarily on the research done by Janet Adams in her book, Decorative Folding Screens, and by Michael Komanecky in his essay, "A Perfect Gem of Art," in The Folding Image catalogue. But I have attempted to situate their findings in a broader social and theoretical context. Nineteenth century authors, such as Charles Blanc, Gustave Fraipont, and Henry Havard, provide valuable historical

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[54] Jiro Harada, "Old Japanese Folding Screens," International Studio 45 (1911): 110-122; Bettina Klein, "Japanese Kinbyöbu: The Gold-leafed Folding Screens of the Muromachi Period (1333-1573)," translated, adapted, and expanded by Carolyn Wheelwright, Artibus Asiae 45, 1 (1984): 5-33, and 45, 2/3 (1984): 101-173; Timon Screech, Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan, 1700-1820 (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1999); Kenji Toda, "Japanese screen paintings of the ninth and tenth centuries," Ars Orientalis, 3 (1959): 153-166; Yuzo Yamane, Momoyama Genre Painting, trans. John M. Shields, (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill/Heibonsha, 1967).

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documentation and discussion of the sociological significance of the folding screen in French interiors.[55] Debora Silverman in Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France (1989); Nancy Troy in Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France: Art Nouveau to Le Corbusier (1991); and Kenneth Silver in Esprit de Corps (1989) examine the role of art, craft, and design in the political and social milieu of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century France.[56] In particular, Silverman's discussion of the Goncourt brothers' psychologicalization and sexualization of domestic interior space; Troy's investigation of the social, political, and aesthetic reasons for, as well as the role of Le Corbusier in, the intermingling of early twentieth century art, craft, and design; and Silver's presentation of the return to classicism in France as a reaction to Germany and World War I were crucial to my ideas about the evolution in France of the folding screen as a sexual metaphor. In a similar vein, Shearer West's study, Fin de Siècle (1993) also surveyed

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[55] Charles Blanc, Grammaire des Arts Décoratifs (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 2nd. ed., 1882); Gustave Fraipoint, L'Art de composer et de peindre l'Éventail, L'Écran, Le Paravent (Paris: H. Laurens, Éditeur, 1893); and Henry Havard, Dictionnaire de l'Ameublement et de la Décoration: Depuis le XIII^{ème} siècle jusqu'à nos jours, 4 vols. (Paris: Maison Quantin, 1887-90).

[56] Debora L. Silverman, Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, Style (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1989); Troy, Modernism; and Kenneth Eric Silver, Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-garde and the First World War, 1914-1925 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

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many of the issues of sexuality and gender which underlie European visual art at the turn of the century.[57]

There were several inherent problems in attempting to analyze Eileen Gray's Block Screen. First, few books written on Art Deco provide anything more than a documentation of the artists and their work.[58] Fortunately, Troy's Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France, outlines some of the critical, political, economic, and social developments that influenced French design from 1910 through the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes held in Paris in 1925. Secondly, since Gray destroyed most of her personal papers before her death, there are few primary documents concerning her work.[59] What is publicly available through the Archives of Art and Design, a part of the Victoria and Albert Museum, are mainly newspaper and magazine clippings, her working notebook with lacquer

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[57] Shearer West, Fin de Siècle (Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1993).

[58] Other than Nancy Troy's book, Modernism and the Decorative Arts in France, some of the better books on the history of the Art Deco period in France are: Victor Arwas, Art Deco (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1992); Martin Battersby, The Decorative Twenties, rev. and ed. Phillipe Garner (1969; London: The Herbert Press, 1988); Yvonne Brunhammer, 1925 (Paris: Les Presses de la Connaissance, 1976); Alain Lesieutre, The Spirit and Splendor of Art Deco (New York: Paddington Press, 1974); and Felix Marcilhac, Jean Dunand: His Life and Works (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1991).

[59] "Shortly before her death she burned almost all the letters and photographs that concerned her personal life. The discretion she had manifested all her life prevented her from leaving any traces except in her work. It was there that she wanted her passions and preoccupations to be read." Peter Adam, Eileen Gray: Architect/Designer (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987), 8.

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formulas, a few pieces of correspondence, a few sketches and numerous architectural drawings, almost entirely from after 1925.[60]

Thirdly, there is a problem with how Gray and her work were reviewed. Her work at the Salons and at her gallery, Jean Desert, received some mention; the critical attention, however, was often mixed in its evaluation. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to explore why the praise was not greater, but she was innovative, non-French, a woman, very shy, not very prolific, and with hindsight these characteristics undoubtedly had a lot to do with her reception.[61]

As Art Deco itself experienced a revival, Gray's work was rediscovered. J. Stewart Johnson's catalogue for the 1979 retrospective of Gray's work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York was the first book to summarize and document her career, although he attempted no critical analysis of

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[60] All this material was given to the Archives by Prunella Clough, Gray's niece. Miss Clough kindly let me interview her by telephone, but as she explained, by the time she really met and knew her aunt, Gray was not interested in talking about the past or her past work (which, according to Peter Adam, Gray essentially repudiated). Miss Clough was able to give me only very general indications about Gray's interests and influences in the early part of the twentieth century.

[61] Gray was so ignored that many texts cite Jean Dunand as the man who revived the art of lacquer in Paris, but it was, in fact, Eileen Gray who initiated the lacquer craze. Dunand came to Gray to find out about the lacquer work she was doing, and it was Gray who introduced Dunand to her lacquer teacher, Sugawara. Adam, Gray, 58,61. Felix Marcilhac explains what seems to be the correct sequence of events vis-à-vis lacquer, Gray, Sugawara, and Dunand; see Marcilhac, Jean Dunand, 170.

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her oeuvre.[62] Birgitte Loye's 1983 biography, Eileen Gray 1879-1976: Architecture Design, offers insight and analysis to her work not offered by most others.[63] Philippe Garner's 1993 book, Eileen Gray: Design and Architecture, 1878-1976, is superficial in its text but presents new and more extensive photographs of her oeuvre.[64] In his 1987 biography, Eileen Gray: Architect/ Designer, Peter Adam provides, for the first time, an insight into Gray's shy personality and very private life while weaving a discussion of her work into the narrative of his biography.[65] He adds no new analysis of the work, but does offer the beginning of a catalogue raisonné and an extensive bibliography (although both have many mistakes in them). Most recently, however, Caroline Constant's article, "E. 1027: The Non-Heroic Modernism of Eileen Gray," and her book, Eileen Gray, published in 2000, offer the most important in-depth and contextualized reading of Eileen Gray's work.[66] In both these publications, Constant analyzes Gray's contributions within the context of modern architecture, modern theatrical theories on movement and stage sets, the Ballets Russes and gendered space. In her book, Constant presents new and more

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62 J. Stewart Johnson, Eileen Gray: Designer (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1979).

63 Brigitte Loye, Eileen Gray 1879-1976: Architecture Design (Paris: Analeph/J.P. Viguier, 1983.

64 Philippe Garner, Eileen Gray: Design and Architecture, 1878-1976 (Cologne: Benedikt Taschen Verlag GmbH, 1993).

65 Adam, Eileen Gray.

66 Caroline Constant, "E. 1027: The Non-Heroic Modernism of Eileen Gray," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 53, 3 (1994): 265-279; and Caroline Constant, Eileen Gray (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2000).

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revealing biographical and documentary facts that support her contention that both Gray's objects and architecture are, in part, erotically and sexually motivated, a concept with which I concur and which I first discussed in relationship to the Block Screen in my 1984 catalogue, The Folding Image. Eighty percent of Constant's book is about architecture, and she contends that the early work is just that. For Constant, Gray's "real work" begins with the Mathieu-Levy apartment renovation. I would contend that Gray's lover, Jean Badovici, pulled Gray into the architectural arena because he, himself, wanted to participate in the avant-garde architectural environment of Le Corbusier and others. I feel that Gray's creations in lacquer screens, panels, chairs, tables, and rug designs had a depth of expression and symbolism that became ever more elusive as she began to use steel, aluminum, glass, and other modern materials and become totally abstract in her style.

The issues of abstraction are crucial for interpreting Gray's work. Books and articles such as David Brett's C. R. Mackintosh: The Poetics of Workmanship (1992), Rose-Carol Washton Long's Kandinsky: The Development of an Abstract Style (1980), and Anna C. Chave's 1990 article, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," provided me with clear

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methodologies for seeking meaning beyond a formalist reading of abstraction.[67]

An equally elusive aspect of Gray's life is the effect of her sexual identity as a lesbian. Shari Benstock does not mention Gray in her study of the lesbian writers and artists in Paris, Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940 (1986), but she does trace the issues, attitudes, and lives of the lesbians whom Gray knew. And Benstock does investigate how their lesbianism affected the style and subject matter of their art. Jonathan Weinberg's study, Speaking for Vice: Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth and Marsden Hartley (1993) also presents an incisive approach for investigating homosexual content in twentieth-century art.[68]

In the case of Man Ray's 1935 Screen, much has been written about him and Surrealism but almost nothing has been said about his 1935 screen. I begin my analysis of Man Ray's Screen by comparing it with the images and themes in a book he produced at the time. A kind of photographic autobiography, Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934 also includes Paul Éluard's poem-portrait, "Man Ray," which Man Ray admitted, supplied much of the iconography for the

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[67] David Brett, C. R. Mackintosh: The Poetics of Workmanship (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Harvard University Press, 1992); Rose-Carol Washton Long, Kandinsky, The Development of an Abstract Style (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," Arts Magazine 64, 5 (January 1990): 44-63.

[68] Shari Benstock, Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); and Jonathan Weinberg, Speaking for Vice: Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth and Marsden Hartley (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993).

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screen.[69] My understanding of the sometimes confusing Surrealist imagery was facilitated by a thorough review of the issues of Minotaure magazine published around the time the screen was created.[70] Since the imagery of the eye is woven into the meaning of the screen, it was important for me to investigate the meaning of this key motif in Surrealist art. Particularly helpful in this regard were Georges Bataille's The Story of the Eye (1928); Jeanne Siegel's 1982 article, "Image of the Eye in Surrealist Art and its Psychoanalytic Sources"; and Martin Jay's, Downcast Eyes, The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought (1993).[71] Hal Foster's book, Compulsive Beauty (1993), a theoretical repositioning of Surrealism, also helped frame my discussion about: the "gaze" of the artist and the viewer, the role the folding screen plays in that maker/spectator dynamic, and the notion of scopophilia and the screen.[72]

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[69] Man Ray, Photographs by Man Ray: 1920 Paris 1934 (Hartford: J. Thrall Soby, 1934).

[70] See my discussion of these Minotaure articles and photographs in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

[71] Georges Bataille, The Story of the Eye, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Paris: Histoire de l'oeil, 1928; San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1987); Jeanne Siegel, "The Image of the Eye in Surrealist Art and its Psychoanalytic Sources, Part One: The Mythic Eye" Arts Magazine 56, 6 (February 1982): 102-106; Ibid., "The Image of the Eye in Surrealist Art and its Psychoanalytic Sources, Part Two: René Magritte," Arts Magazine 56, 7 (March 1982): 116-119; Martin Jay, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1993).

[72] Sigmund Freud, "Medusa's Head (1922)," The Standard Edition, 18: 273-274; Freud, "Three Essays," The Standard Edition, 7: 135-243; and Hal Foster, Compulsive Beauty (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1993).

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Giorgio Marconi, who owns Screen, graciously lent it to The Folding Image exhibition and allowed me to see a copy of the letter Man Ray sent to him about the work. Marconi's letter was helpful in disproving information about the screen contained in Jean-Charles Gâteau's book, Paul Éluard et la peinture surréaliste 1910-1939.[73] In 1983, I was able to interview Juliet Man Ray regarding her husband's screens, two of which I saw in her apartment, but she said she thought that his papers contained no mention of the screens.[74] Lucien Treillard, head of the Man Ray Trust and a close friend of the artist, also granted me an interview. I discussed with him Man Ray's notions of sexuality, imagery,

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Other general and biographical sources for this chapter include: Man Ray, Self-Portrait (1963; Boston: Little Brown, 1988), 137-138, 155, 179, 210; Roland Penrose, Man Ray (1975; London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1989); Antony Penrose, The Lives of Lee Miller (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985); Xavière Gauthier, Surréalisme et sexualité (Paris: Gallimard, Coll. Idées, 1971); Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston, L'Amour fou: photography & surrealism (New York: Abbeville Press, Publishers, 1985); Sandra S. Phillips, "Themes and Variations: Man Ray's Photography in the Twenties and Thirties," Perpetual Motif, The Art of Man Ray, Merry A. Foresta, et al. (New York: Abbeville Press, Publishers 1988), 175-231; and Roger Shattuck, "Candor and Perversion in No-Man's Land," Ibid., 311-333.

[73] Jean-Charles Gâteau, Paul Éluard et la peinture surréaliste 1910-1939 (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 1982), 228-229.

[74] Juliet Man Ray, interview by author, 15 June 1983, Paris. In 1993, following the death of Juliet Man Ray, I again requested permission to examine Man Ray's papers. At that time I was told by Gregory Browner, the executor of her estate, that the papers were unavailable because they were in the process of being donated to the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou. (Gregory Browner, telephone interview by author, 28 October 1993, Paris).

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and screens.[75] Treillard also made very clear to me two important ideas. He agreed that Screen was very possibly about Lee Miller, with whom Man Ray was still obsessed in 1935. Treillard also emphasized the importance of Man Ray's relationship to Marcel Duchamp, not only for Man Ray but also for Duchamp. Central to my discussion of Man Ray's Screen is a parallel investigation of Duchamp and The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even, in which I amplify an earlier proposition I made that we must also analyze the Large Glass as a screen.[76]

Bruce Conner's little-known screen Partition is a key example of the assemblage aesthetic of the early 1960s. Conner, who currently lives in San Francisco, is reluctant to discuss his work, but I was able to interview him briefly about Partition in 1982.[77] Fortunately, in the possession of the Archives of American Art are several interviews that amplify the context in which Partition was made.[78] Equally

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[75] Lucien Treillard, interview by author, 26 October 1993, Paris.

[76] Butera, "The Screen as Metaphor," The Folding Image, 207.

[77] Bruce Conner, telephone interview by author, 4 May 1982. However, when I asked to talk to him further about his work and his screen, he replied that he felt that he had nothing more to say on the subject. (Bruce Conner, telephone interview by author, 28 September 1993).

[78] There are several interviews that have been conducted with Bruce Conner and are available on tape or in transcript form at the Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution. They include: Bruce Conner, interview with Thomas Garver, tape recording, San Francisco, 10 January 1973 and 17 March 1974; Bruce Conner, interview by Paul Cummings, Microfilmed transcript of tape recording, New York City, 16 April 1973, Reel 3196 and 3197; Bruce Conner, interview by Paul Karlstrom and Serge Guilbaut, tape recording, San Francisco, 29 March 1974; Bruce Conner,

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germane is a cache of letters to and from Charles Alan, Conner's dealer during the late 1950s and early 1960s, as well as a group of papers and letters donated by Conner himself which reveal first-hand his interests surrounding, and motivations for, many of his early works, including Partition.[79] Two main catalogues of Conner's early work--Thomas H. Garver's Bruce Conner, Sculpture/ Assemblages/ Drawings/ Films (1965) and Joan Siegfried's Bruce Conner: Sculpture/ Assemblages/ Collages/ Drawings/ Films (1967) cover the general themes and motivations of his art.[80] The catalogue for the 1995 exhibition Beat Culture and the New America, 1950-1965 provides a clear overview of the larger cultural context in which Conner created Partition.

As with Joseph Cornell, Robert Rauschenberg, and other artists whose images are densely layered, it is often difficult to decode Conner's individual works. For one thing, his works lack the clear narrative structure of works by some of his contemporaries, such as Edward Kienholz. Conner's Partition is much closer to the work of his peer Rauschenberg, yet it also derives from the antibourgeois

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interview with Paul Karlstrom, Microfilmed transcript of tape recording; San Francisco, 12 August 1974, Reel 3949;

[79] Letters between Bruce Conner and Charles Allan, 1960-1964, Charles Alan Papers, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution; and Bruce Conner Papers, Microfilmed copies, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution, Reel 1092.

[80] Thomas H. Garver, Bruce Conner, Sculpture/ Assemblages/ Drawings/ Films (Waltham, Mass.: Rose Art Museum, 1965); and Joan Siegfried, Bruce Conner: Sculpture/ Assemblages/ Collages/ Drawings/ Films (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1967).

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sexual undercurrents of Victorian collage and ephemera. Apter's essay, "Cabinet Secrets: Peep Shows, Prostitution, and Bric-a-bracomania in the Fin-de-siècle Interior," creates a historical basis for Conner's approach to his image, while Rebecca Solnit perceptively analyzes the mid-twentieth century anxiety, the dual threat of Eros and Thanatos in Conner's work in "Civilization and Its Discontent" in her 1990 catalogue Secret Exhibition: Six California Artists of the Cold War Era.[81] The large catalogue from Conner's long-awaited 1999 exhibition, 2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story, Part II, photographically documents some of his extensive oeuvre. In their important and comprehensive catalogue essays, curators Peter Boswell, Joan Ruthfuss, and David Watkins critically discuss Conner's total work, his many-faceted personality and issues of identity, and his films respectively. It is important to know, however, that the exhibition and this catalogue were produced through tremendous collaboration with Conner himself who seems to have carefully structured and approved what was exhibited and printed.

None of the published essays so far have consulted and analyzed the letters Conner sent to his dealer Charles Alan,

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[81] Emily Apter, "Cabinet Secrets: Peep Shows, Prostitution, and Bric-a-bracomania in the Fin-de-siècle Interior," Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 39-64; and Rebecca Solnit, "Civilization and Its Discontent," Secret Exhibition: Six California Artists of the Cold War Era (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1990), 58-65.

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and thus they have missed an opportunity to learn about a Conner not yet determined to hide and shape his public identity. By analyzing the letters, the interviews, and the published essays, one is able to formulate a context for understanding Conner's Partition and his assemblage work from the early Sixties.

This is the first time that anyone has conducted such a broad inquiry into the folding screen as sexual metaphor. It is my intention to reveal the multifaceted characteristics, meanings, and resonances of these provocative objects by presenting a brief history of sexual screens and by investigating three specific examples. In so doing I demonstrate how the folding screen provides a unique and important intersection of function, metaphor, and sexuality for modernist art.

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CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FOLDING SCREEN FROM ITS BEGINNINGS UNTIL THE LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY

> The characteristic of a *byobu* (folding screen) lies in its flexibility of opening and folding. If you sit surrounded by the *byobu*, immediately new worlds emerge around you, and you can enjoy their lasting pleasure.
>
> --Sugawara no Michizane,
> Japanese poet and statesman

In just a few lines, the seventh century Japanese poet and statesman Sugawara no Michizane captured the enticing experience available to any observer who sits entranced before a folding screen. Using words which suggest the sensual enjoyment of a screen's imagery, be it landscape, court scene, or female beauties, Michizane hints at the essential metaphors of the folding screen: notions of closure and disclosure, movement and exploration, fantasy and pleasure. Indeed, Michizane could almost be describing a sexual encounter. More than thirteen hundred years later the French encyclopedist Pierre Larousse slyly characterized the folding screen partially as an object whose nature and facility helped satisfy his epoque's propensity for amorous

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intrigues.[1] Despite a general notion that a folding screen is simply an item of furniture, one of the most persistent themes in the history of folding screen imagery is that of female sexuality.

Though invented more than two thousand years ago, the freestanding, accordianlike folding screen has been widely deployed as a decorative and utilitarian object. Folding screens were first used in China and Japan, possibly as early as the third century B.C., but the first examples of these screens were not imported to the West until the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.[2] Beginning in the

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[1] Pierre Lacrosse wrote, "Une semblable disposition était bien faite pour satisfaire aux moeurs quelque peu galantes de l'époque et pour permettre des entreprises ou des intrigues dont les Mémoires du temps indiquent la nature et la facilité." ("A similar arrangement (of the folding screen) was made to satisfy the not very tasteful customs of the era and to permit ventures and intrigues the type and arrangement of which are indicated in the Memoirs of the time.") Pierre Larousse, Grand Dictionnaire Universel, 1874 ed., s.v. "Paravent."

[2] Michael Sullivan, "Notes on Early Chinese Screen Painting," 240-42; and Lee, Japanese Screens, 3. According to Miyeko Murase, "In 686 A.D. a *byobu* was sent as a gift from the Silla Kingdom in Korea to the Japanese court, and byobu were also imported from China. The Todaiji Kemmotsu Cho, an inventory of treasures donated to Todaiji by the Imperial family, included one hundred screens. This suggests that by the mid-eighth century, *byobu* were in common use at the court and in the homes of noblemen." See Murase, Byobu, 10. Japan also received and imported other aspects of the Chinese culture including the religion, Buddhism, and craft techniques like lacquer. See William Watson, ed., The Great Japan Exhibition, Art of the Edo Period, 1600-1868 (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1981), 241-42.

There is some confusion about exactly where and when the first screens arrived in the West. Henry Havard proposed a date of 1599 based on the notation of an oriental screen in an inventory of Gabrielle d'Estrées's possessions made in that year. See Havard, Dictionnaire de l'ameublement et de la décoration depuis le XIII^{ème} siècle jusqu'à nos jours (Paris: Maison Quantin, 1887-90), 4: col. 93. A pamphlet, Le

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1850s, many Western artists--in Great Britain, Europe and the United States--were drawn to the folding screen as an aesthetic *objet d'art*, and developed a remarkably rich iconography for the illumination of their surfaces.[3]

The majority of Chinese and Japanese screens were covered with landscape views, nature and animal subjects, genre scenes, or historical or courtly figurative images designed to evoke philosophical contemplation, awe, or pleasure in the viewer. Western screens were decorated with an equivalent range of subjects. However, there is another theme that both Eastern and Western artists have explored on folding screens for at least thirteen hundred years: sexuality. From the outset, screens were viewed as sites for

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Paravent de la Marquise de Rambouillet (Paris: Les Éditions d'Art de Rambouilllet, n.d.), credits the Marquise with the screen's introduction at the beginning of the seventeenth century: "D'origine orientale, le paravent fut réelement introduit au debut du dix-septième siècle en Europe par la Marquise de Rambouillet." ("Of oriental origin, the folding screen was actually introduced in Europe by the Marquise de Rambouillet at the beginning of the seventeenth century.")

Janet Adams writes, "Chinese lacquer began to come into Europe in the early years of the seventeenth century, and in 1614 the first English ship returned from Japan with 'Japanese ware, scritoires, Trunkes, Beoubues, Cups and dishes of all sorts, and of a most excellent varnish.' From that moment on one finds numerous notations of screens." See Adams, Decorative Folding Screens, 22. See also Hugh Honour, Chinoiserie (London: John Murray, 1961), 72. Other scholars note that the screen came into Portugal and Spain from the East at the end of the sixteenth century and it was so identified with the (supposed) country of importation that in Germany, for example, a screen was known as a "Spanische Wand" (Spanish wall). See Teresa Castello Yturbide and Marita Martinez del Rio de Redo, Biombos Mexicanos (Cordoba, Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, 1970), 12.

[3] See Adams, Decorative Folding Screens; Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image; and Butera, Contemporary Screens.

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the exploration of feminine beauty, behavior, and symbolism. In this chapter and the next I would like to outline a brief history of this type of screen, partly to explain the traditions and repudiations at work in the vastly different sexual screens of Eileen Gray, Man Ray, Bruce Conner, and other twentieth century artists. As I indicated in Chapter One, I would like to suggest that certain screens must be read as gender-inflected disruptions in the midst of highly conventionalized interior spaces, and as structural metonyms for female genitalia. Far from being merely decorative pieces of furniture, folding screens can be analyzed as subtly orchestrated and highly complicated sexual metaphors. The recurring historical examples of screens which focus on images of women and metaphors of sexuality provide precedents for my unique analysis of a specialized group of folding screens.

Surviving tomb paintings, stone reliefs, scroll paintings, and literature make clear that from the end of the late Chou Dynasty (770-256 B.C.) folding screens were used in a variety of ways throughout Chinese social life. Single-panel and multipanel screens were used to surround outdoor eating, sleeping, and gathering areas; to create backdrops for dignitaries; to block wind; or to reconfigure interior spaces.[4] Early Chinese folding screens were

[4] Robert H. van Gulik specifically states that in a typical upper middle-class Chinese home, a screen would have been used in the open and exposed main hallway to create an official reception area on one side of the screen and the family dining area on the other. See van Gulick, Chinese

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probably constructed so that a heavy wooden central panel was linked to two narrower "wing" panels by means of leather ties.[5] Fan Ch'ang Shou, a seventh century cavalry officer who became a painter, is credited with having invented the modern, accordion-type folding screen with narrow, vertical panels.[6] After the sixteenth century, the elaborate incised and painted lacquer screens known as Chinese Coromandel screens, frequently had as many as twelve panels.[7]

Initially, Chinese screens were decorated either with carved designs and stone inlays or with images painted on paper or silk and then mounted onto the screens.[8] The Shoso-In Repository in Nara, Japan, houses approximately one hundred eighth century Chinese screens which came to Japan either directly or via Korea and are the earliest extant Chinese screens.[9] From these screens and the artifact

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Pictorial Art, 145-46. See also Sullivan, "Chinese Screen Painting," 239-64 passim.

[5] Sullivan, "Chinese Screen Painting," 239; and Lee, Japanese Screens, 3.

[6] Sullivan,"Chinese Screen Painting," 242. Sullivan takes this from the book Mei-shu ts'ung-shu (rev. trans. by A.C. Soper), published in Artibus Asiae 21, nos. 3/4 (1958): 222.

[7] Adams, Screens, 25-34 passim.

[8] Gulik, Chinese Pictorial Art, 33, 160; and Sullivan, "Chinese Screen Painting," 159, 239-40.

[9] There are several sources in English with varying descriptions and explanations of the screens located in the Shoso-In. For an extensive inventory of screens found in the Shoso-In, see Alexander C. Soper, "The Rise of Yamato-e," Art Bulletin 24, 4 (December 1942): 355. See also: Mosaku Ishida and Gunichi Wada, The Shosoin: An Eighth Century Treasure-House (Tokyo: Mainichi Newspapers, 1954), 2, 4, 10; Sullivan, "Chinese Screen Painting," 244-45; Ienagg Saburo, Painting in the Yamato Style, trans. John M. Shields (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill/Heibonsha, 1973), 13-14; Ryoichi Hayashi, The Silk Road and the Shoso-In, trans. Robert Ricketts (New York: Weatherhill, 1975), 122, 125, 162-63; and Kimura Norimitsu, The Treasures of the Shoso-In:

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records we know that until the end of the Sung Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) screen artists focused on a range of subjects that included poems, nature, landscape, animals, and religious, philosophical, and literary subjects.[10]

Among the surviving examples of early Chinese screens, there are several Tang dynasty screens which display subtle as well as overt sexual symbolism.[11] One screen, The Figures of Ladies Screen (pre-756) (fig. 12), also housed in the Shoso-In Repository, shows six palace ladies, three standing and three sitting under or beside trees and proves to be a compositional precedent for many subsequent Oriental and Western screens.[12] According to scholar Michael Sullivan:

> Their faces are carefully drawn and delicately coloured, but their dresses are only lightly sketched in, as they were originally covered with pheasants' feathers. The effect when these screens were in their original state must have been bizarre in the extreme, offering an example of the occasional vulgarity of T'ang art at its most opulent.[13]

This screen, according to art historian Ryoichi Hayashi, was probably painted by one of the leading painters of the period, and he may have based his collaged feathered skirts on an actual one commissioned by a fashionable T'ang court

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Furniture and Interior Furnishings (Kyoto: Shikosha Publishing Co., 1992), 9.

[10] Gulik, Chinese Pictorial Art, 159; Sullivan, "Chinese Screen Painting," 245; and Hayashi, The Silk Road, 162.

[11] For a discussion of the sexualization and eroticization of female figures on Tang dynasty screens see, Hung, The Double Screen, 96-102.

[12] Ishida and Wada, The Shosoin, 10.

[13] Sullivan, "Chinese Screen Painting," 245.

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lady, Princess An-lo.[14] Hayashi also links the conventional motif of a lady standing under a tree with concurrent Indian Buddhist imagery as well as with the figure in Persian art of the beauty, Anahita, goddess of fertility.[15] As we will see, the Chinese folding screen conventions of one figure per panel and the juxtaposition of women and nature to symbolize fertility continue throughout the entire history of the folding screen.

Until the end of the Sung Dynasty, screen painting was considered one of the three most important Chinese art forms. But with the division of the "literati" painters from the artisans, screen painting was classified as a "decorative" art.[16] As a format for conveying ideas or philosophical issues, the screen fell out of favor. Instead, there was a heavy emphasis on the technical aspects of gilding, carving, lacquering, and in-laying ivory, mother-of-pearl, and other semi-precious stones.[17] Many of the Chinese screens that were exported to the West were of this latter, more ornamental type.

The evolution of the Japanese folding screen was different from that of the Chinese screen. In approximately the seventh century, folding screens were introduced to Japan from China. From the late ninth to the late eleventh century, the Japanese developed their own painting style and

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14 Hayashi, The Silk Road, 122, 162.
15 Hayashi, The Silk Road, 125.
16 Sullivan, "Chinese Screen Painting," 239.
17 Sullivan, "Chinese Screen Painting," 253-54; and Adams, Screens, 20.

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subject matter (Yamato-e), although the Chinese style (Kara-e) continued.[18] By the mid-fourteenth century A.D., the heavier, tied wooden panels, which had initially been adopted from Chinese examples, were replaced by panels with a light wood frame and core covered by a multilayered paper surface.[19] These and other structural innovations were made possible by the Koreans, who developed large sheets of paper that could cover screen panels as well as a unique paper hinge that enabled the panels to be folded in either direction.[20] This new, lighter type of screen could be moved more easily and placed where necessary. In addition, by eliminating the broad frames and borders that had characterized all previous screens, the Japanese created a radically new, visually seamless screen surface that could be considered as one large expanse, not just linked panels, as in earlier Chinese and Japanese screens.[21]

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[18] Kenji Toda, "Japanese screen paintings of the ninth and tenth centuries," Ars Orientalis 3 (1959): 154; and Soper, "The Rise of Yamato-e," 351-72.

[19] On the use of wooden panels, see Hayashi, The Silk Road, 157. Paper screens were first manufactured in Kyoto in the mid-fourteenth century, during the Ashikaga period (1338-1573). See Harada, "Old Japanese Folding Screens," 115.

[20] Ibid. The Koreans, not surprisingly, have their own history of screens. However, Korean screens have not been integrated by Japanese scholars into the general discussion of the history of Asian screens. For an introduction, see Evelyn B. McCune, The Inner Art: Korean Screens (Berkeley: Asia Humanities Press, 1986); and Hongnam Kim, ed., Korean Arts of the Eighteenth Century (New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1993).

[21] Murase, Byōbu, 12-13.

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The Japanese folding screen, or *byobu*, was one of three types of screens used in Japan.[22] Its name signifies enclosure or 'protection against' (*byo*) the wind (*bu*). Like Chinese screens, *byobu* were used to form outdoor enclosures, protect against drafts, divide interior spaces, decorate rooms, inspire viewers, or even line roads for state ceremonies.[23] For vast areas in castles, temples, or private homes, screens were frequently devised in pairs, often of six panels each, to create imposing continuous compositions, to impress visitors.[24] For smaller spaces, screens were sometimes opened with only a few panels showing at a time.[25] Japanese artists produced screens with two, four, or eight panels, but they never used an odd number (a prohibition later ignored by Western screenmakers). Although by the fifteenth century the Japanese were masters of lacquer techniques and used it for many different types of objects, including screens, they preferred the painted-paper screens for inside their own homes and tended to export the lacquer ones or use them outdoors.

Each era of Japanese screen making had its own preferred styles, themes, colors, and compositional formats.

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22 Painted Japanese screens are divided into three types: a *tsuitate* is a low, one-panel wooden screen on legs; a *fusuma* is a sliding screen decorated with figural or abstract imagery; and a *byobu* is a folding screen. See Murase, Byobu, 9-10.

23 One Japanese ruler, Taiko Hideyoshi, used hundreds of screens to line the roads on the occasion of state ceremonies. See Harada, "Japanese Screens," 116.

24 Murase, Byobu, 13.

25 Harada, "Japanese Screens," 117.

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But in every period, Japanese artists demonstrated their profound reverence for nature.[26] During the Muromachi period (1336-1573 A.D.), sixteenth century screen paintings such as Soami's Landscape of Four Seasons and Kanö Motonobu's The Four Accomplishments in the collection of Dr. and Mrs. Roger Gerry, were painted only with brush and ink; in their subdued, contemplative elements, these screens reflect the influence of Chinese Zen Buddhism.[27]

The subsequent Momoyama period (1573-1614 A.D.) was, according to art historian Miyeko Murase, "a golden age in screen painting, when many works not only of high quality but also widely varied subject-matter and styles were created."[28] Many screens that were made for the shoguns and nobility during this era were covered with gold leaf and were elaborately painted. Especially popular were screens depicting animals, such as the early seventeenth century pair of six-panel screens, Hawks, attributed to Soga Nichokuan, in the Tokyo Unviersity of Fine Arts; images of nature, which symbolized the power of the emerging military class, seen, for example, in the Cherry Trees, a pair of six-panel screens by an unknown artist in the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Mathias Komer; and more intimate views of everyday life and leisure, as seen in the Hikone Screen (ca.

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26 Ibid., 118-19; and Toda, "Japanese Screen Paintings," 154.

27 Murase, Byobu, 13.

28 Ibid.

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1640) (fig. 13).[29] The goal of these screen painters was to synthesize the structural, functional, and intellectual properties of the screen; that is, to create screens that were harmonious in form, function, image, and symbol.

Artists of the Edo period (1610-1867 A.D.) continued various thematic and stylistic traditions of Momoyama screen painting. This may be seen in two representative works at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Sakai Hoitsu's Persimmon Tree (1816) and Ogata Korin's early eighteenth century Irises and Bridge as well as in Tawaraya Sotatsu's mid-seventeenth century pair of screens, God of Wind and God of Thunder, now in Kyoto. As more and more people could afford screens, other painters developed new images to accommodate the taste of their new patrons. They depicted a variety of genre subjects encompassing popular festivals and pastimes, as well as more purely quotidian scenes, such as Hanabusa Itcho's eighteenth century six-panel screen in the Mary Griggs Burke Collection in New York, Taking Shelter from Rain.[30] Among these preferred everyday-life (ukiyo-e) themes

[29] Ibid., 14. For a further discussion of Momoyama screens see, Julia Meech-Pekarik, Momoyama: Japanese Art in the Age of Grandeur (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975), 2-85 passim; and Yamane, Momoyama Genre Painting, passim. For a discussion of the Hikone Screen, see Richard Lane, Images from the Floating World: The Japanese Print (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1978), 25-26.

[30] "Among the favorite themes are the cherry blossom- and maple-viewing picnics, the Gion Festival, the Kamo horse race, the archery contest at Sanjusangen-do, dog-chasing games, the Kabuki and Noh theatres, and above all, scenes of pleasure quarters and the beautiful women of these districts." Murase, Byobu, 16. For further discussion of Edo screens, see Oliver Impey, "Painting," in The Great Japan Exhibition, 38; and especially, Hiroshi Mizuo, Edo Painting:

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were the subjects of the "floating world," which emphasized leisure, pleasure, and eroticism, especially in connection with the geisha quarters.[31]

Japanese screens of all periods feature images of love and courtship. For example, a seventeenth century eight-fold screen from the School of Sotatsu depicts events from the most famous Japanese book, the Tale of Genji, a novel on courtly love and sexual intrigue, written in the eleventh century by Lady Murasaki Shikibu. Three scenes on the two left-hand panels deal with the courtship and attempted seduction of a woman, Tamakatsura, by both Prince Genji and his brother.[32] An unusual, early *ukiyo-e* screen titled Princess Sen and Her Lover (ca. 1620) (fig. 14), shows the princess receiving a *billet-doux* from her samurai lover.

Sotatsu and Korin, trans. John M. Shields (New York: Weatherhill, 1972), passim.

[31] In his introduction to *ukiyo-e* art and to the imagery of the "floating world", Lane writes, "Although *ukiyo-e* was always concerned with genre representations of ordinary scenes from daily life, leisure and entertainment, it was soon to choose as its special domain the amusement quarters of the great Japanese cities: the courtesan districts and the Kabuki theater." See Lane, Images from the Floating World, 21. See also his general discussion of the meaning of Ukiyo-e and its folding screens, scroll paintings, and prints: Ibid., 11-32. Screech intermittently discusses the use of erotic imagery on screens in Japanese prints in Sex and the Floating World, passim.

[32] Murase describes the scenes on the seventh and eighth panels (counting right to left) on a pair of screens illustrating the Tale of Genji. "The seventh panel illustrates an episode from chapter twenty-five (The Glowworm). Genji tries to persuade his ward, Tamakatsura, to talk to his brother, Prince Sochi, who wishes to court her...Two scenes in the eighth panel illustrate Genji's frustrated attempts to seduce Tamakatsura;...In the upper scene Genji talks to her; in the lower, after demonstrating a few notes on the koto...which is partly hidden behind a byobu, he admires her beauty." Murase, Byobu, 20, 23.

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Scholar Richard Lane points out that "an essentially erotic, almost decadent, mood pervades this masterpiece."[33] In his hanging scroll, Man Seducing a Young Woman (1801-4), Kitagawa Utamaro placed a two-panel folding screen with a flowering plum tree on it behind the older man as he embraces a young woman from the rear. Screech remarks that in Japan:

> There is reason for the...selection of the plum, and one that remained alive in Edo times: it was considered a male blossom, equivalent to the 'female' cherry. It was noticed that, whereas a young cherry gave the best blossoms, a gnarled old tree was best for plums./...Utamaro has put the plum itself into the tertiary level of a picture within a picture, as if the man had brought the screen out prior to engaging with the woman, or as if she has set it there to indicate her acceptance of the desirability of older men.[34]

In a somewhat more abstract manner, a pair of six-fold screens Wisteria in Blossom (1776) by Maruyama Okyo, depicts wisteria growing on a tree in such a way as to emphasize gender difference. As art historian Oliver Impey observes:

> On the left is the gentle insinuating 'female' plant, on the right the more thrusting 'male' wisteria. This duality is deeply ingrained in the popular philosophy of Japan, and is derived from Chinese ideas.[35]

During the late Momoyama and early Edo periods in Japan, another popular subject for folding screens was an

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33 See the caption to the illustration of Princess Sen and Her Lover in Lane, Images of the Floating World, 17.

34 Screech, Sex and the Floating World, 146/147.

35 Impey, "Painting," 105.

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image of kimonos hanging on a kimono rack (fig. 15). Murase notes that these screens are often titled "Tagasode" (or "Whose sleeves?"), which refers to "a beautiful woman whose absence is missed."[36] Here, the sexual overtones are more subtle, and in certain respects, more complex. Murase explains:

> Beautiful sleeves, alluding to kimono, evoke the image of a beautiful woman; they also imply the fragrance of perfume arising from her kimono....The subject of Tagasode for painting seems to have developed as an abstraction of genre painting depicting beautiful women dressed in the latest fashion. As the emphasis on costumes increased, the figure itself became less important and was finally eliminated altogether. This theme, which only hints at the presence of a woman but refrains from portraying her, is typically Japanese. It is more evocative than the actual representation of a woman.[37]

Scrolls and ukiyo-e prints showing beautifully dressed women were produced to appeal to the less well-to-do or less sophisticated patrons.[38] But the wall-hanging scroll and/or the hand-held print does not overwhelm the viewer or capture the controlled, subtle eroticism that permeates a life-size, angled, free-standing Tagasode screen. There is intrigue to absence, to the unseen. The Tagasode screens not only allow the viewer--historically assumed to be a heterosexual male--to conjure up the perfect female in absentia but they also refer to what might be going on behind the actual screen, erotic scenes such as those graphically depicted in

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36 Murase, Byobu, 94.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.

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contemporaneous *shunga* prints (fig. 16).[39] Although the empty kimonos surely imply absence, they also obviously refer to dressing or undressing and, by extension, to nakedness, sensuality, and sexuality.[40]

Over the centuries, the production of screens in Japan had developed into a highly organized tradition. The Japanese artists produced a range of remarkable screens which Sherman Lee describes as "a flood of great and original works of art--all decorative and, not only that, informed with intellectual and literary overtones permitting their inclusion with the finest and most profound achievements of the Japanese artist."[41] That screens were used in all facets of Japanese life, from the battlefield to the temple to the bedroom, attests to the profound cultural significance they acquired.[42] And to be able to suggest,

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[39] For a discussion of the Japanese erotic *shunga* prints and paintings see, Lane, Images of the Floating World, 26-30; and Theodore Bowie, "Erotic Aspects of Japanese Art," Studies in Erotic Art, edited by Theodore Bowie and Cornelia V. Christenson (New York and London: Basic Books, 1970), 171-229, esp. figs. 87 and 93, in which folding screens are visible; and Screech, Sex and the Floating World, passim. For a general discussion of the erotic in Japanese prints see, Elizabeth de Sabato Swinton et al., The Women of the Pleasure Quarter (New York: Hudson Hills Press, in association with the Worcester Art Museum, 1996), passim.

[40] Murase does not comment on whether the absence of the woman might be an indicator of the status of women in Japanese society at the time. Oliver Impey also notes a general lack of interest in the human figure as an individual in Japanese art. See Impey, "Painting," 37.

[41] Lee, Japanese Screens, 4.

[42] Jiro Harada lists some of the many different types of Japanese folding screens, their descriptive names, and their various uses in Japanese life. There were screens of all different sizes for a variety of uses. See Harada, "Old Japanese Screens," 113-14.

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depict, and/or physically create a setting for sexual encounter establishes the folding screen as a unique and highly evocative work of art.

The history of the Western screen is vastly different from that of the Oriental screen, and until quite recently remained obscure.[43] Created under entirely different types of social, political, and artistic traditions, Western screens nonetheless owe an enormous debt to the "Oriental" examples.[44] However, just as the Japanese revered, yet radically altered, the Chinese structure and imagery of the folding screen, so Western artists also reinvented the Japanese folding screen. The Japanese shifted from the Chinese heavy wood to light-weight layered paper panels and abandoned the isolated panel imagery for an extended composition made possible by invisible hinges and huge sheets of paper. In tandem with the structural changes, the Japanese amplified the subject matter for screens,

[43] Despite its pejorative implications, the term "Oriental" has relevant historical and art-historical meanings. Therefore, I use the term in this sense and advisedly. On the imperializing connotations of "Orientalism," see Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). In contemporary American usage, the preferred terms for China, Japan, and other Far Eastern countries is often "Asian" or more broadly still, "Pacific Rim". I shall switch from "Oriental" to "Asian" when referring to contemporary art.

[44] The great diversity of Western screens is documented in Adams, Decorative Folding Screens. The astonishing panoply of screens produced by major artists and designers in Europe, Great Britain, and the United States from 1850 to 1982 was first revealed in the 1984 exhibition, The Folding Image, organized by the author and Michael K. Komanecky. The author's 1986 exhibition, Contemporary Screens, delved further into the extraordinary range of screens made in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s.

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concentrating on its intellectual, religious, and metaphoric meanings while the Chinese gradually relegated screens to ornamental objects devoid of higher aesthetic and philosophical aims. Similarly, Western artists and designers completely transformed the nature, function, and subject matter of the screen to suit their own utilitarian and aesthetic needs.

In medieval Europe and Great Britain, large nonfolding and fixed architectural screens were developed (independent of Oriental influences) for use in churches and castles to block drafts and to separate one part of a building from another.[45] In churches, the rood screen distinctly delineated the chancel from the nave, purposefully blocking and isolating the clergy from the laity.[46] Before the late-sixteenth and seventeenth century influx of screens from China and Japan, actual hinged folding screens must have existed in a very basic form in France and other Western countries because the clergy apparently used a small, moveable, two- or three-panel screen when saying mass in private.[47] As I indicated above, Viollet-Le-Duc described in his Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier français that temporary partitions and walls made with hanging material and draperies were also contrived for domestic functional

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45 Adams, Screens, 65-67.

46 See the entry for "Rood Screen" in Chilvers et al., eds., The Oxford Dictionary of Art, 431.

47 Havard, Dictionnaire d'Ameublement, 4: col. 93.

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purposes.[48] These partitions were labeled, among other things, *paravents*, which means "against the wind" and, like the Japanese word *byobu*, describes the essential function of the traditional folding screen: to block drafts.[49]

The dissemination of Chinese and Japanese examples, however, completely altered the Western concept of a folding screen. Regular maritime trade directly between Europe and the Far East only began in the early sixteenth century, with the arrival of the Portuguese in Canton.[50] By 1600, the

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[48] "Les habitants des chateaux et maisons du moyen âge prenaient toutes sortes de précautions pour éviter l'humidité, le froid et les courants d'air...Outre les doubles vitrages, qui étaient assez frequents, les portières de tapisserie tombent sur les portes, les vastes cheminées, on plaçait, dans les salles ou l'on se réunissait le soir ou dans les chambres à coucher, de grands paravents dont la disposition est singulière. Ces paravents étaient des sortes de tambours placés au devant des portes à l'intérieur, composés de deux joues et d'un plafond. Une draperie tombait devant l'ouverture." ("The inhabitants of the medieval houses and chateaus took all sorts of precautions to avoid the humidity, the cold and drafts... Other than double glass windows which were fairly usual, the tapestry door-curtains fell on the doors, one placed huge fireplaces in the rooms where one met in the evening or in the bedrooms placed large folding screens whose arrangement was curious. These folding screens were a sort of embroidery frame placed in front of the interior doors, made up of two sides and a ceiling. A drapery fell in front of the opening.") Viollet-Le-Duc, Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier français (Paris: A. Morel, 1868, 2nd ed.), 196-98. See also the definition of "ôtevent" in Havard, Dictionnaire de l'ameublement, 3: cols. 1204-5.

[49] Gustave Fraipont, L'Art de composer et de peindre l'éventail, l'écran, le paravent (Paris: H. Laurens, 1893), 152; and Adams, Screens, 65-69.

[50] John A. Garraty and Peter Gay, eds., The Columbia History of the World (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 333; Rudolf Wittkower, "Introduction," East-West in Art: Patterns of Aesthetic and Cultural Relationships, ed. Theodore Bowie (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), 14; and Michael Sullivan, The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art (1972; reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 41.

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Dutch were also importing Chinese goods.[51] In 1571, the Portuguese had disembarked at Nagasaki, Japan, importing Catholicism and establishing East-West trading agreements there for the first time. Initially, the Portuguese dominated trade with Japan, and they were followed by the Dutch. But England and France also found ways to procure goods via circuitous trading routes. Goods were frequently taken by the Chinese (who actively traded with the Japanese) to interim ports such as Coromandel on the Indian coast (this gave the Chinese "Coromandel" screens their name).[52] For religious and political reasons, however, the Japanese shogun imposed a ban on Christianity in 1640, and forbade all Japanese citizens from traveling abroad and prohibited any foreigners from visiting Japan. Trade was limited to a few Chinese and Dutch merchants. For the next two hundred years, Japan isolated itself.

Nonetheless, Chinese and some Japanese objects continued to be imported to Europe. By 1690, for example, Queen Mary of Britain had filled Kensington Palace with Chinese porcelain and lacquerware.[53] As Janet Adams indicates, the beautifully decorated, intriguing, folding screens from China and Japan became especially coveted objects in Europe, Great Britain, and subsequently their

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51 Ibid., 91.
52 Adams, Screens, 22, 24.
53 Charles Saumarez Smith, Eighteenth-Century Decoration: Design and the Domestic Interior in England (London: Weindenfeld and Nicolson, 1993), 24.

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"new world" colonies.[54] These Oriental screens were not only functional and decorative but also informative and exotic. While the Japanese artists painted "Namban" (southern barbarian, i.e., European) screens, which showed their versions of Western figures, scenes, or imaginary views, Europeans were eager for glimpses of China, Japan, and their "exotic" cultures.[55] The screens arriving in the West embodied vastly different aesthetic styles and recorded views of these virtually unknown foreign lands; introduced landscape, nature, architecture, clothing, physiognomy, religion, myths, literary and historical figures; and documented procedures of daily life completely different than those of their importers. In addition, the physical structures of the screens as well as the painting, lacquering, and decorating techniques were new. These screens were floor-standing windows onto the unknown.

Initially, only the wealthiest collectors could afford to buy Chinese or Japanese screens.[56] And frequently these

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[54] Adams, Screens, 8-63. For a history of screens in Mexico see Yturbide and de Redo, Biombos Mexicanos, passim.

[55] While the Europeans were hungry for glimpses of China, Japan, and their cultures, the Japanese actively collected the "Namban" screens. These were folding screens made by Japanese artists based on the images of cities, people, and landscapes from European prints and paintings . The Namban screens also recorded the ships, people, and goods arriving in Japan from the West. See Adams, Screens, 11-19; and Yamane, Momoyama Genre Painting, 178-82.

[56] Smith writes that although goods came from the Far East into England throughout the seventeenth century, it was "not until the first two decades of the eighteenth century that such goods, instead of being treated as rarities, began to be considered relatively commonplace." Smith, Eighteenth-Century Decoration, 48.

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rich European buyers deliberately broke up screens in order to cover whole rooms with lacquer panels.[57] Then, by the last quarter of the seventeenth century, because of greater demand or to appeal to another audience, merchants began to send orders to the Far East commissioning screens and panels with specific Western images, exemplified by a Chinese object such as the eighteenth century Nine-Panel Screen with a View of Amsterdam now in Montreal.[58]

Not surprisingly, in order to compete with the imported screens, decorative artists and artisans in the West began to imitate the styles, themes, and materials of Chinese and Japanese screens, ceramics, and other objects. Holford's six-panel leather screen with still lifes and architectural views in Chinoisserie style (ca. 1750) now owned by the

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[57] Janet Adams mentions a late seventeenth century record book that records a ship's cargo that included boards, boards for screens, and screens set in frames, indicating that some of the boards may have been destined for wainscoting. See Adams, Screens, 24. For illustrations of German eighteenth century palaces with rooms covered with lacquer screens and separated panels, see Adams, Screens, 45; and Hans Huth Lacquer of the West: The History of a Craft and an Industry: 1550-1950 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

[58] Janet Adams notes, "As the demand for imports from the Orient continued to grow, the Chinese, while maintaining the making of traditional screens, increasingly produced screens designed expressly for the European market. As early as 1670, Europeans interested in commercial development were going to the East to introduce patterns to be made in China for the Western market. These patterns, combined with the teachings and engravings supplied by the missionaries, gave the craftsmen ample materials to copy and reinterpret." See Adams, Screens, 34. Adams also quotes the records of the English East India Company from 1697 which asks a Chinese factory to provide " '...20 sets of screens, 12 leaves to a set, 8,9, & 10 feet high by 20 to 24 inches broad; black & gold, with Landscapes & figures engraved on a gold ground.'" See Adams, Screens, 24.

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Hamlyn Group, and the painted "Singerie" screen (ca. 1760) with a landscape filled with monkeys dressed in eighteenth century garb attributed to Alexis Peyrotte now in the collection of Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild at Waddesdon Manor, demonstrate the impact of Chinese art and culture on Western art in the eighteenth century. Covered with Oriental style figures, buildings, and landscape, a pair of English japanned screens (ca. 1680) belonging to the Hamlyn Group, reveals that artisans also tried to duplicate the unique Oriental lacquer technique. In fact, Oriental lacquer work was so highly prized in the West that craftsmen in many countries (including the extensive Martin family in France) developed their own lacquer formulas during the eighteenth century, because the main ingredient, the sap from the Rhus Vernicifera tree, could not be transported from China and Japan.[59]

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[59] The fact that lacquer was prized but unavailable, accounts for books such as John Stalker and George Parker, A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing (1688). For a brief history of lacquer in the West, see Herbert Cescinsky, English Furniture from Gothic to Sheraton (1929; Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, Inc., 1937), 211-231; and Adams, Screens, 24-25, 44, 46. For a description of various lacquerists and their techniques, see Paul Mantz, "Les Meubles du XVIII^{e} siècle," Revue des arts décoratifs 4 (1883-1884): 317-19; André Charbonnier, "L'Art de la lacque: les techniques chinoises et japonaises retrouvée," Gazette des Beaux-Arts ser. 6, 15 (February 1936): 95-104;, Adolf Reichwein, China and Europe, trans. J.C. Powell (Taipei: Ch'Eng-Wen Publishing Company, 1967), 33-34; Huth, Lacquer of the West, passim; and Adams, Screens, 42-47, 60-61. For a recent in-depth article on the Martin family, see Anna Czarnocka, "*Vernis Martin*; The Lacquer Work of the Martin Family in Eighteenth-Century France," trans. Laura Lindgren and Renata Stein, Studies in the Decorative Arts 2, 1 (Fall 1994): 56-74, esp. 65-70.

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But early collectors, patrons, and artists were also receptive to folding screens that were painted or decorated with domestic images. In the early seventeenth century, Madame de Rambouillet apparently featured domestic tapestry screens in her impromptu plays, using them "as scenery for performances of sketches called 'comedies of screens,' a favorite pastime of the Marchioness and her friends."[60] As the anonymous author of the Dictionnaire critique, pittoresque et sentencieux (1768) makes clear, by his time, folding screens were considered "winter furniture and a beautiful as well as useful means to enhance a room..."[61] Among the many seventeenth and eighteenth century decorative screens that strictly followed Western styles, materials, and imagery, there are ones as diverse as a French needlepoint screen with flowers and a somewhat primitive four-panel, double-sided English screen in the Victoria and Albert Museum that depicts men hunting, fishing, gaming, and pursuing other male pastimes. These views of men actively engaged with the natural environment are in complete contrast to the common representations of women on screens, which show them passively holding or standing next to an element of nature. On one panel of this screen, curiously,

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60 "Comme décors pour y jouer des saynetes dites 'comédies de paravents,' passe temps favoris de la Marquise et de ses amis." Le Paravent de la Marquise de Rambouillet, n.p.

61 "Meuble d'hiver et dont la mode à su faire une garniture de chambre aussi belle qu'utile." Dictionnaire critique, pittoresque et sentencieux (Lyons, 1768), as quoted in Havard, Dictionnaire de l'Amublement, 4: cols. 91-92.

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four nude and partially clothed women are painted in and around a pond. Are they meant to be considered as one more diversion for the men, or do they represent simply another view of eighteenth century life?

Despite the vogue among monarchs, wealthy collectors, and the craftsmen for both oriental and domestically produced screens, major British, French, and American artists of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries rarely painted screens.[62] Like Chinese painters in these centuries, Western artists probably viewed the screen as strictly functional and decorative, relegating its creation and ornamentation to more technically oriented artisans. Since the fifteenth century, European artists and patrons had made a clear distinction between fine art and craftsmanship.[63] They regarded painting and sculpture as

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[62] A similar refusal on the part of important painters exists regarding the creation and decoration of fans. Jacques Callot and Antoine Watteau are perhaps the two most important artists prior to the artists working in the last decades of the nineteenth century, who made fans. See Virgina Fabbri Butera, The Great American Fan Show (New York: Lerner/Heller Gallery, 1981), unpag., and nn 9-10.

[63] It is important to recognize the longevity of this separation between art and craft and realize that its effects continued to shape art and the art academies even up to and throughout the twentieth century. Troy correctly points out that because of this distinction between the fine arts and the decorative arts, any painting or sculpture in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century which came close to the look or qualities of decorative art was viewed suspiciously. I believe that consequently the functional and purely decorative possibilities of the folding screen added and add to its continued problem of acceptance as a fine art format. Troy, Modernism, 2-3.

For a traditional historical view of the separation of art and craft, see Pevsner, Academies of Art: Past and Present (1940; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 30-36 passim. For a slightly different historical and

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"high" arts, and deemed furniture making, goldsmithing, and ceramics as "low" arts. It was felt that a painter or sculptor put his artistic skills to the service of the intellectual ideas he was trying to convey in his art but that the artisan prized craftsmanship above all else. Undoubtedly, this aesthetic hierarchy helped to discourage "fine artists" in Europe from creating folding screens.

Moreover, because they were considered as furniture rather than luxury goods, screens were often treated casually, damaged, and discarded. Similarly, they were not documented in the same way as paintings and sculpture. Thus, many screens by major artists may have simply fallen apart or may yet be languishing in some attic or storeroom, unknown and unrecorded.[64]

Nevertheless, from 1715 to 1774 in pre-Revolutionary France, there was a renewed appreciation for the applied arts. During the Regency and the reign of Louis XV, the styles in both fine and decorative arts evolved rapidly to meet the demand of noble, Parisian-based patrons who wanted to decorate intimate private spaces with "diminutive objects

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contemporary account of this issue concerning the decorative, see Arthur C. Danto, "Furniture as Art," The Nation 250, (April 23, 1990): 571-575 reprinted in Arthur C. Danto, Embodied Meanings: Critical Essays & Aesthetic Meditations (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1994), 74-81.

[64] I am speaking from a bias toward France, England, and the United States, the countries with which this dissertation is concerned. The facts may be different for other countries to which I occasionally refer. I draw these conclusions based on all the screens that I have seen and those that are documented in books such as Adams, Decorative Folding Screens, passim; and Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, passim.

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and furnishings, vested with forms and functions that were conceived as explicitly feminine."[65] In an era in which standards of taste and culture were often dominated by strong women, this feminized Rococo style stood in complete contrast to the masculine style of the objects and monumental public art produced to glorify Louis XIV and to embellish court life at Versailles.[66] In response to new physical, sociological, and psychological needs and desires of aristocratic Parisian patrons, as well as those of the artists and craftsmen, there was a massive unification of all the arts. As cultural historian Debora L. Silverman points out:

> for such artist-artisans of the eighteenth century as Watteau, Boucher, Fragonard, and Falconet and for their elite patrons, all the concrete media--furniture, picture frames, precious stones, fans, umbrellas, porcelain--were considered art, which was defined as a technical wizardry for fashioning surfaces.[67]

Silverman also stresses that during the era of Louis XV, craftsmen conceived of and designed furnishings as an ensemble in an effort to integrate and harmonize rooms. For the eighteenth-century aristocrat, the domestic interior, filled with curving lines and motifs derived from nature,

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65 Silverman, Art Nouveau, 28. Silverman also notes the importance of the three-part article by Paul Mantz in which he discusses the development of Rococo furniture, specifically emphasizing the feminine and erotic qualities of the work. See Mantz, "Les Meubles du XVIII^{e} Siècle," 313-25, 356-67, 377-89 (esp. 313-14, 380-81).

66 Silverman, Art Nouveau, 25, 27-28.

67 Ibid., 24.

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became an escape from political and social controversy, "a sanctuary of nature and the female form."[68]

This half-century of emphasis on the feminine and the intimate (as opposed to the masculine and the public), as well as the high-art interest in fashioning paintings as well as "decorative" domestic objects and their designs, set an important precedent for succeeding generations of artists. It provided both inspiration and consternation, particularly from the mid-nineteenth century on. Partly in response to the eighteenth century example and, then, in reaction to the revival of similar concepts during the Art Nouveau period, a new aesthetic argument emerged in the twentieth century. Especially in France, that new attitude maintained that the creation of functional or domestic objects was a feminine, "decorative" pursuit and, therefore, of lesser importance. Troy underscores the fact that at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century:

> the decorative arts in general (that is, furniture and other useful objects) continued to be identified with handicraft as well as commerce, and their aim was widely understood to be the satisfaction of the senses rather than the engagement of the mind.[69]

I propose that it was during the middle decades of the eighteenth century that artist-designed decorative objects began to appeal to both the senses and the mind, a goal for some artists that has continued to the present.

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68 Ibid., 25.
69 Troy, Modernism, 2.

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Many well-known eighteenth century French painters either executed screens or had screens made based on their designs. Antoine Watteau apparently made at least four folding screens, including one titled Quatre Saisons, a theme that was historically important, as we have seen, in Chinese, Japanese and Western art.[70] None of Watteau's screens survive; what remains are copies by a minor artist named L. Crépy of Watteau's screen designs featuring Commedia dell'Arte figures, shepherds, and shepherdesses in little vignettes.[71] The influence of Watteau's style and his thematic emphasis on Commedia dell'Arte and pastoral figures as well as the often erotically tinged *fêtes champêtres* scenes is apparent in screens by his contemporaries, such as François Boucher's oil on canvas Five-Panel Screen (ca. 1735-60) at Colnaghi's in London; Jacques de Lajoue's Seven-Panel Screen (ca. 1730-40) at the Frick Collection; and Nicolas Lancret's screen, Four Hours of the Day (Les Quatre Heures du Jour) (ca. 1730) (fig. 17) at the Victoria and Albert Museum.[72] In the Lancret screen, aristocratic women

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70 Jean Ferre, Watteau, Catalogue Raisonné (Madrid: Éditions Artistiques Athena, 1972), 4: 1110, 1122, 1210. Paul Mantz noted that in keeping with the popular subject matter of the day, the Four Seasons and the Four Elements, were embroidery subjects in eighteenth century carriages. Mantz, "Les Meubles du XVIII^{e} Siècle," 382.

71 Jacques Mathey, Antoine Watteau: Peintures Reapparues (Paris: F. de Nobelle, 1959), figs. 104-107.

72 According to Janet Adams, "Adaptations of Watteau's "Scenes Champêtres" appeared, in fact, in both English and French screens, probably because Watteau had gained fame in England before attaining it in France." See Adams, "The Ornamental Background", in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 33.

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(and a few men) are shown engaged in fashionable relaxing outdoor entertainments such as boating, gaming, and tea drinking, making this a type of female variant of the eighteenth century English male pastime genre screen discussed above that shows men pursuing various sports.

In her book about Rococo pursuit of pleasure, Duncan has observed that Watteau's art is devoted to themes of sensual and social pleasure, flirtation, and entertainment.[73] Elements of other known eighteenth century screens emphasize similarly amorous, bawdy, and enjoyable aspects of life. According to an anonymous twentieth century pamphlet, the Rambouillet family once owned an eighteenth century tapestry screen produced at the Atelier des Gobelins.[74] Its imagery was based on an earlier screen design by François Boucher titled The Nest (Le Nid). It depicts a young man handing a nest to a young woman, who in the next scene is holding the nest in her lap--a rather obvious symbol of fertility and domesticity. This type of sexual allusion is also present in scenes of couples atop the painted leather panels of a mid-eighteenth century English screen at the Victoria and Albert Museum, whose images were based on the works of Lancret and other French artists.[75] Meanwhile, the erotic implications of screens

[73] Carol Duncan, The Pursuit of Pleasure: The Rococo Revival in French Romantic Art (New York: Garland, 1976), 5.

[74] Les Paravents de la Marquise de Rambouillet, n.p. The Atelier de Beauvais apparently also made a screen during the eighteenth century based on a Tiepolo cartoon titled Masquerade.

[75] Adams, Screens, 79.

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themselves are blatantly apparent in a contemporaneous print, A True Picture of the Famous Skreen (fig. 18), illustrated in the London Journal in 1721. This print shows a woman on the right half concealed by the screen being watched by the men who are reflected in the mirror to the left. The text surrounding the image explains that screens had "early acquired salacious overtones" and that one of the licentious features of this "Famous Skreen" is that it "commodiously contracts & opens as occasions offer."[76]

In several examples, the subject matter of the screen directly coincided with the era's fashion requirement that interior spaces should reflect nature and the feminine. These screens were designed to add to the grace, flow, harmony, intimacy, and symbolism of mid-eighteenth century rooms. The reading of the folding screen as a feminized--or even "female"--object is forcefully underscored by a pair of stand-alone Queen Anne firescreens (1700-1730) in the shapes of life-size courtly ladies in contemporary dress (fig. 19).

Eighteenth century English artists often made screens that employed subject matter and compositional strategies which were similar to those of their French counterparts. In her 1727 needlework screen, now in Northumberland, England, Lady Calverly illustrated scenes from Virgil's Georgics, a treatise on farming. During the same period, the Four Seasons was a popular subject for screens.[77] In traditional

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76 Smith, Eighteenth-Century Decoration, 88-89.
77 Adams, "The Ornamental Background," 32.

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Oriental Four Season screens, each season is denoted by particular animals, birds, trees and/or flowers. Viewers could contemplate their place in the natural world or be reminded of the brevity of life implied by the *momento mori* theme. In Western versions of the same subject, however, Woman, often paired with the appropriate natural symbol, stands for Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter; this female personification of the seasons seems to be a visual descendant of the Chinese Figures of Ladies screen. Woman as the embodiment of nature coincided with both the cultural importance of natural resources and the aesthetic importance of such themes in England in the eighteenth century.

In these eighteenth century examples, the visual narrative or the notion of the passage of time is structurally emphasized by the cadence of the screen's undulating yet partitioned surface.[78] Rather than avail themselves of the large expansive screen surface that the Japanese artists had developed, Watteau, Boucher, Lancret, and their English counterparts generally chose to follow the earlier Chinese style, creating individual but related scenes on each panel, thus emphasizing the folding screen's unique structure and format.[79] Although no one has fully

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[78] Janet Adams was able to compile extensive visual and written documentation of many screens made in the West in the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries. She did not attempt to analyze or theorize about the subject matter of the screens. Adams, Screens, passim.

[79] Adopting the Chinese format probably underscores this period's preference for Chinese art and may also indicate its greater availability.

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analyzed the themes and metaphors of pre-1850 screens, the notions of temporality and the rhythm of life suggested in some eighteenth century screens are appropriate and harmonious subjects given the repetitive form of the screen itself.[80]

Interest in folding screens gradually declined in England and France during the latter half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In 1757, for example, J. Tucker noted in his Instructions for Travellers that screens were part of the accepted furnishings of English homes at all levels of society.[81] And yet in the 1762 pattern book of household furniture designed by Thomas Chippendale, only one panel of a two-panel folding firescreen (as opposed to a regular folding or "draft" screen) is illustrated. Similarly, Thomas Sheraton, in 1802, in the third edition of his The Cabinet-maker and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book in Four Parts, shows only firescreens.[82] Apparently, by the early

[80] See my discussion of the folding screen as a metaphor for the passage of time in Butera, "The Screen as Metaphor," 198, 203; and Butera, Contemporary Screens, 15.

[81] Tucker noted that the material conditions of English life were good and that various levels of society had a quantity "of clean, neat furniture, and a greater Variety (such as Carpet, Screens, Window Curtains, Chamber Bells. polished Brass Locks, Fenders etc. etc. Things hardly known Abroad among Persons of such a Rank) than are to be found in any other Country in Europe, Holland excepted." See J. Tucker, Instructions for Travellers (1757), 26, as quoted in Smith, Eighteenth Century Decoration, 142.

[82] Thomas Chippendale, The Gentleman and Cabinetmaker's Director: Being a Large Collection of the Most Elegant and Useful Designs of Household Furniture, in the Most Fashionable Taste (London: 1762; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), plate 157. Thomas Sheraton defines a screen solely as a fire screen and does not address the design of a full-standing folding screen. See

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nineteenth century, neither oriental nor domestically produced folding screens were deemed part of a proper drawing room.[83] Indeed, a compilation of eclectic British nineteenth century furniture designs shows no folding screens at all until very simple wooden screens began appearing again around 1850.[84] No one has yet explained the sociological reasons for this change in taste, but Janet Adams suggests an aesthetic reason: the stylistic shift from Rococo to Neoclassical style in the design, disposition, conception, and use of furniture. Neoclassical interior designers rejected the Rococo dalliance with the feminine, the sensual, the decadent and its love of curves, the constantly changing arrangements of furniture, and asymmetry. Instead they emphasized rigidity, formality, fixed placement of furniture, and symmetry.[85] Screens simply may not have fit in.

In France, screens were still being made. But apart from a screen at the Musée Mobilier in Paris decorated with mythological figures designed by Pierre Fontaine and the celebrated painter Jacques-Louis David for Gobelins as part of their production of furniture for Emperor Napoleon,

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Thomas Sheraton, The Cabinet-maker and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book in Four Parts (3rd ed., rev., London: T. Bensley, 1802; New York: Towse Publishing Company, 1946), plate 74 and Appendix. See also Adams, Screens, 99, 103, 105-6.

[83] Ibid., 106.

[84] Edward Joy, "Introduction," in Pictorial Dictionary of British 19th Century Furniture Design (Suffolk, Eng.: Antique Collectors Club, 1977), 406-7.

[85] Adams, Screens, 105-6.

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folding screens seemed once again to have been pushed into the realm of stylized artisanal production. According to Adams, many screens were created with the elaborate wallpapers then popular. Neoclassical historical, allegorical, and mythological motifs and figures (including famous lovers), as well as landscape views and geographical panoramas, were the preferred images.[86] Despite falling in and out of vogue as an *objet d'art*, the folding screen retained its erotic overtones. In a play by Planard titled Le Paravent, staged in Paris in December 1807, a screen was used to hide the illicit lovers.[87]

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, designers and critics began to recognize and promote both the functional and visual potential of the folding screen. The flexible utilitarian qualities of the screen as well as its sexually symbolic aspects had been spelled out by Pierre Larousse in his entry on screens in the 1874 edition of his Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX Siècle.[88] Larousse noted its historical functions as a shield against drafts, as a creator of small rooms within larger ones, as a means for personal isolation, as a dressing partition, and as an object used in intrigues and affairs. In his Dictionnaire de l'ameublement et de la décoration published in 1887-90,

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86 Ibid., 107, 110, 111.

87 See the definition of *paravent* in Pierre Larousse, Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe Siècle (Paris: Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel, 1874), 12: 202-3.

88 Ibid.

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Henry Havard traced the history of the screen in France. In that entry, Havard outlined the origin and functions of the domestic screen during the Middle Ages and mentions Gabrielle d'Estrées, Mme de Rambouillet, Louis XIV, and Cardinal Mazarin as among the first collectors of oriental screens.[89]

In 1882, noted critic Charles Blanc had lamented in his Grammaire des Arts Décoratifs that the use of screens had fallen out of favor, undoubtedly because of increasingly confined domestic space:

> Our ancestors made great use of folding screens and it is truly a shame that this genre of furniture has slowly fallen into disuse without a doubt because of the smallness of our apartments which have become so crowded.[90]

Blanc extolled the exotic subject matter and brilliant colors of Chinese and Japanese screens and those that imitated their style, while also praising domestic examples covered with images of *fêtes galantes* and *Commedia dell'Arte* figures.[91] Yet Blanc, writing for a middle-class audience, argued that the screen could be revived if only its patrons used inexpensive printed fabrics and wallpapers rather than the lacquer, tapestry, leather, silk brocade, or painted

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89 Havard, Dictionnaire de l'ameublement, 4: col 93-94.

90 "Nos aïeux faisaient grand usage de paravents, et il est vraiment dommage que ce genre de meubles tombe peu à peu en désuétude, sans doute à cause de la petitesse de nos appartments qui en seraient bientôt encombrés." Blanc, Grammaire des Arts Décoratifs, 233.

91 Ibid., 234-35.

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canvas that the royal patrons and the rich had demanded in previous centuries.[92]

But if Blanc was mourning the demise of the screen, he was speaking too soon. In accord with Blanc, Havard noted that changes in the size of French houses, shifts in attitude toward interior decoration, and improvements in heating (notably the availability of central heating) slowly rendered the screen's principal functions obsolete.[93] But he also made clear that the screen had acquired other functions and meanings. He described several stories in which screens figured prominently. Amid the Mémoires of Saint-Simon (1675-1755), for instance, Havard found the tale of a screen that was prized because it had shielded the Duchess of Bourgogne, saving her dignity when Louis XIV entered her chambers unannounced as she was washing her private parts. Another story concerned the painter, Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805), who discovered his wife and her lover, M. de Saint-Maurice, hidden behind a screen, *in flagrante*.[94]

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92 "Il ne faut pas croire, après tout, qu'une grande fortune soit nécessaire pour se procurer des paravents de la plus aimable couleur." Ibid., 235.

93 Havard writes, "Le XIX siècle, en réduissant encore la taille des appartments, en perfectionnant les appareils de fermeture et les moyens de chauffage, devait rendre le paravent à peu près inutile. Il disparut donc de notre mobilier...Il a fallu la passion singulière de notre génération pour le bric-à-brac et la curiosité. ("The nineteenth century, again reducing the size of the apartments, perfecting the apparatuses of closing and the methods of heat, must have rendered the folding screen almost useless. It has disappeared from our furniture...It was a part of a unique passion of our generation for bric-a-brac and curiosities.") See Havard, Dictionnaire de l'ameublement 4: col. 100.

94 Ibid., 4: col. 100-101.

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> Returning home, I found her behind the folding screen in the living room in a situation which was hardly ambiguous. . . . Another time, one of my friends coming to see me found the same person again behind the fatal screen. As we were about to separate, and as she had very improperly made use of the name of an honest woman, she was counseled by him: "Ha, Madame, you have forgotten the screen."[95]

What is important in Havard's historical account is his shift from a description of the purely functional folding screen and the history of its collectors to the presentation of the screen's role as a highly charged, highly suggestive object of furniture, of interest to visual artists, and of use in creating a discrete space for intimate and even sexual encounters.

This increasing sexualization of the folding screen may also be linked to its presence and popularity in the *demi-monde* as illustrated, as I noted above, in Manet's Olympia and as described by Havard.[96] In addition, screens are

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[95] "Rentrant chez moi,je la trouvai derrière le paravent dans le salon de compagnie dans une situation qui n'était point équivoque./...(Une autre fois) un de mes amis venant me voir trouva encore derrière le fatal paravent la même personne. Comme nous étions près de nous séparer, elle fut le consulter, et comme elle se servait très-improprement du nom d'honnête-femme: "Ha, Madame, vous avez oublié le paravent." Jean-Baptiste Greuze, "Mémoire de Greuze contre sa femme," Archives de l'Art Français: Recueil de Documents Inédits des Arts en France (Paris: J.-B. Dumoulin, 1852-53), 3: 168-69.

[96] There were numerous terms in French to identify women who sold their bodies for sex. Charles Bernheimer has delineated a number of them. I accept his two broad designations. "'Prostitute' is the more general term and refers to any woman who sells the use of her body for sexual intercourse. A 'courtesan' is a prostitute who associates/with men of wealth and prestige, is often kept by one or more of these men, and is a public figure, often ostentatiously so." See Charles Bernheimer, Figures of Ill

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occasionally found in the illustrations of Western pornographic literature which commonly used prostitutes as the narrators.[97] While screens historically may have had an erotic association for followers of this underground pornography, folding screens were openly prized as appropriate accoutrements for houses of the upper class, a status which some courtesans attained. As historian Charles Bernheimer notes,

> It was a commonplace of the time to observe that a prostitute of the better class was practically indistinguishable from a proper lady of society. A lithograph published in Le Carryover in 1864. . . makes the point that *grandes dames* and *petite dames* share the same dress, receive the same gentlemen, go out to the Bois at the same time in similarly equipped carriages, and have the same quantity of false hair.[98]

Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth Century France (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 6/7.

Havard's *demi-mondaines* are best considered as courtesans, and he notes that screens were very popular among the *demi-monde* and he records that two well-known courtesans (Mlle Lucy Dekern and Humberta) had publicly sold magnificent screens which they had inherited from their ancestors. Havard, Dictionnaire de l'ameublement, 4: col. 100.

[97] For a discussion of prostitutes as narrators see Lynn Hunt, "Introduction: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800," The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800 (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 24-25, 38. Hunt makes the distinction between classical and pre-Renaissance depictions and descriptions of amorous and erotic encounters, and the sixteenth century development of "pornography." She quotes Peter Wagner's definition of pornography as "'the written or visual presentation in a realistic form of any genital or sexual behavior with a deliberate violation of existing and widely accepted moral and social taboos.'" Peter Wagner, Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America (London: Secker & Warburg, 1988), 6, as quoted in Hunt, The Invention of Pornography, 25.

[98] Bernheimer, Figures of Ill-Repute, 90.

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As I will suggest in Chapter Three, the interlocking associations between the *demi-mondaines*, folding screens, the bourgeois interior, and the screen's increasingly apparent sexual connotations began to manifest themselves on the imagery and signification of screens created by late nineteenth and early twentieth century artists.

Although both Blanc and Havard suggested that the folding screen was by their time out of favor both as a domestic accoutrement and as an aesthetic format, their conclusions seem to be wrong. Blanc and Havard listed no significant artists of their period who were making screens and no upper-class patrons who owned screens. Yet a painting by a woman artist, Mme. Vianelli, exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1885 shows a screen, images indecipherable, dominating the background in her work titled Une Jury (sic). Here two women sit in a room where the screen is an integral part of the domestic environment and helps to code the room as a feminine space.[99]

[99] Art historian Tamar Garb includes an image and description of this painting in her book, Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 30-31 noting that this painting was created by Vianelli to challenge the exclusion of women artists from the annual French Salon jury. According to Garb, another work in the Salon of 1885 by Henri Gervex, Une Séance de jury de peinture, shows the male jurors meeting and arguing in the public Salon galleries (coded masculine) to make their decisions about what should be included in the Salon, whereas Vianelli's painting shows that "the female 'jurors' are making their judgements in the refined, intuitive manner deemed appropriate to women and situated in the comfortable and contained sphere of the drawing room." While Garb notes that the private domestic space in this painting is gender coded feminine, she has missed the fact that this coding is

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That screens were still very much a part of the bourgeois domestic environment was also evident to Gustave Fraipont. In 1893 Fraipont, obviously recognizing a need, authored L'Art de composer et de peindre l'Éventail, L'Écran, Le Paravent, providing historical, technical, structural, compositional, and thematic information about fans, firescreens, and folding screens for the amateur as well as the professional artist.[100] Clearly, Fraipont perceived a resurgence of interest in these traditional objects. Fraipont emphasized that the maker of a screen should be clear about its final destination and use. He suggested that:

> A folding screen made for a bedroom or dressing room of an elegant woman will comprise flowers; birds; love scenes; gay, sophisticated ornamentations; the materials will be clear and brilliant. If it is in the apartment of a dowager to intercept drafts, the folding screen will be decorated in a more discreet manner, on materials of dark tones; the decoration will be more severe.[101]

Fraipont's "how-to" approach was similar to instructional articles then appearing in England, such as Joseph White's 1885 piece in Amateur Work on "Screens:

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reinforced by the fact that there is a folding screen behind the two women.

100 Fraipont, L'Art de composer.

101 "Un paravent fait pour une chambre à coucher ou un cabinet de toilette de femme élégante, comportera les fleurs, les oiseaux, les amours, des ornamentations gaies, pimpantes; les étoffes en seront claires, brillantes. Si c'est dans l'appartement d'une douairière qu'il doit intercepter les courants d'air, le paravent sera décoré de facon plus discrète, sur étoffes de tons plus sourds; la décoration en sera plus sévère." Ibid., 34.

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Folding and Otherwise."[102] White not only explained how screens were meant to be used in a room but also offered advice to those who wished to build a screen, including those who wanted to make a "scrap screen".[103] Many well-known English men and women made scrap screens, including the poet Lord Byron and the wife of the author Thomas Carlyle (fig. 20).[104] Scrap screens were fabricated by gluing prints, newspaper and magazine cut-outs, bits of wallpaper, or advertisements onto panels of canvas. Although they were necessarily random montages, scrap screens often followed general themes, such as the theater or boxing.[105] The scrap screen continued the art of découpage, a fad that eighteenth century aristocratic French women had developed by gluing scraps onto screens, fans, furniture, tapestries, and even the insides of carriages.[106] Such homemade screens

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[102] Janet Adams quotes extensively from the following article: White, "Screens: Folding and Otherwise," 15. See Adams, Screens, 115, 117. This article is also referred to by E.J. Wiseman, Victorian do-it-yourself: Handicrafts and Pastimes of the 1880s (North Pomfret, Vt.: David and Charles, 1976), 49.

[103] In addition to the scrap screens made by Byron and Jane Carlyle, even the verso of the screen painted by Sir Laurens Alma-Tadema and his wife Laura, which originally had William Morris wallpaper as its backing, had been covered with scrap images, presumably put on by a member of the Epps family who owned the screen. The scrap images were removed 1983 at the time of restoration, and the William Morris wallpaper was replaced with a copy of the original paper. See Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 130.

[104] Adams, Screens, 118, 120.

[105] Wiseman, Victorian do-it-yourself, 50; and Gillian Walkling, "Jack of All Work: Screens from East and West," Connoisseur 203, no. 816 (February 1980): 141.

[106] See Mantz, "Les Meubles du XVIII siècle," 319-20. He mentions that in the December 1727 Mercure de France, the "mode des meubles en découpure" was announced. Mantz claims

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underscored the trend toward greater personal expression in the use and decoration of domestic objects. This tendency paralleled the growing late nineteenth century understanding of the bourgeois interior as a psychologically inflected and self-reflective space.

By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a dramatic change in attitude toward the meaning and the function of folding screens. Both historians (such as Larousse, Blanc, and Havard) and all classes of the public seemed to recognize this shift. Moreover, this change seems to have taken place simultaneously in France, Great Britain, and the United States. While a few key artists had created screens before 1870 (notably Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot and Charles Daubigny, and Paul Cézanne), there was a substantial and renewed interest by artists in France and England in the folding screen as an object of artistic expression during the remainder of the nineteenth century.

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that he has not only read about this phenomenon but also has seen examples in antique shops.

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CHAPTER III

FOLDING FEMININITY: SCREENS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Ever since there have been screens to decorate, there have been women depicted on them and sexuality implied through them. But during the last third of the nineteenth century, the Western folding screen, which had previously been produced predominantly by artisans as a functional or decorative object, was increasingly used as a kind of shaped canvas by traditional as well as avant-garde painters. Perceiving both the cultural references and metaphoric meanings implied by the folding screen, artists such as Laurens Alma-Tadema, Émile Bernard, Pierre Bonnard, Georges de Feure, Maurice Denis, Thomas Dewing, Alphonse Mucha, Edouard Vuillard, and James A. McNeill Whistler challenged conventional screen imagery and, in so doing, launched a renaissance of the ancient format.[1]

In this chapter I will describe briefly several key events, people, and ideas of the nineteenth century which helped to formulate the aesthetic trends fostering the creation of screens by artists living in England, France, and the United States.[2] The new influx of Japanese art into

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[1] Most of the screens discussed in this chapter have been the subject of examination in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image and/or Adams, Screens. Please consult these references for additional bibliography on individual screens.

[2] Michael Komanecky documents why there were not as large a number of screens made in the United States around the

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the West; the activities and writings of William Morris, Siegfried Bing, and the Goncourt brothers on behalf of the decorative arts; and a new fascination with defining gender roles and documenting and investigating sexuality were part of the cultural environment that fostered a new symbiosis of structure, subject matter, and significance for folding screens. I will also propose specifically how, in the early 1870s, Alma-Tadema and Whistler, two foreign-born painters living in England, changed the Western screen into a modern object, purposefully self-reflective, anti-traditional, and symbolically saturated--a shift which I believe was crucial to the development of modern, sexually charged folding screens. Finally, I will discuss certain Nabis, Post-Impressionist, and Art Nouveau screens to demonstrate some of the new ways in which male artists depicted women on folding screens. Sometimes they focused on women's various roles as workers or leisured aristocrats; gradually they also portrayed women in a more overtly sexual way.

When the representations of women on folding screens began to change, so did the screens' sexual implications. These screens were influenced by, and in turn affected, the concept of the interior as a psychologically suggestive, gendered, and even sexualized space, a point that was articulated particularly well by the Goncourts. Thus, certain turn-of-the-century screens altered the screen's

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turn of the century as there were in Europe. See Komanecky, "A Perfect Gem of Art," 99-108.

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previously accepted role as a passive piece of furniture in the bourgeois or aristocratic home. Finally, I will explain how the Art Nouveau artist, Georges de Feure, used the image of women on a screen to sexualize and complete the meaning of an entire interior he created in 1900.

One of the primary catalysts for aesthetic change in the nineteenth century was the English craftsman William Morris (1834-1896). He promulgated a socialistic view of art and society based on the reintegration of art and craft and the necessity for handmade domestic objects. His ideas, designs, and furniture inspired artists in many Western countries to produce decorative arts objects, including screens. This so-called Arts and Crafts Revival developed almost simultaneously with the spread of Japonisme, the mania for Japanese art and culture that swept through many Western countries following the reopening of Japan in 1853.[3] Traditional Japanese folding screens were particularly admired and sought after by artists and collectors.

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[3] For Morris's influence as well as the importance of nineteenth century Japanese art imports on the subsequent production of nineteenth century screens, see Komanecky, "The Perfect Gem of Art," 41-108; and Adams, Screens, 104-52.

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In developing his ideas, Morris was influenced by the Gothic Revival and its principal theorist A. W. N. Pugin, and by the extensive writings of essayist and art critic John Ruskin.[4] Rebelling against the machine-made products of the Industrial Revolution, Morris wanted to generate social, moral, and aesthetic reform through the creation of handmade domestic and decorative objects.[5] In his essay "The Decorative Arts" (1878), Morris decried the segregation of the arts, lamenting that the separation was not only detrimental to the applied arts but also to architecture, painting, and sculpture.[6] He also explained what he believed

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[4] Gillian Naylor, The Arts and Crafts Movement (London: Studio Vista, 1971), 96.

[5] Pevsner explains that the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London showed how industry had ruined design. He cites Gottfried Semper's Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst (1852), Owen Jones's landmark book The Grammar of Ornament (1856), and L. de La Borde's work on the situation of the arts after the separation of the fine and applied arts (1856) as texts that underscored the problems and proposed solutions. Semper, for example, urged the creation of both museums of applied arts as well as schools of applied arts. See Pevsner, Academies of Art, 248, 251, 256-57.

William Morris felt that socialism would eliminate greed and the master/servant relationship so that "...men will then assuredly be happy in their work, and that happiness will assuredly bring forth decorative, noble, *popular* art. That art will make our streets as beautiful as the woods, as elevating as the mountain-sides: it will be a pleasure and a rest." See Morris, "The Decorative Arts: Their Relation to Modern Life and Progress (1878)," The Decorative Arts and The Aims of Art, ed. F.-A. Schmidt-Kunsemüller (Osnabruck: Otto Zeller, 1975), 31. See also Naylor, Arts and Crafts, 7.

[6] In his first public lecture at the Trade Guilds of Learning in 1877, Morris said, "...I shall not meddle much with/the great art of Architecture, and less still with the great arts commonly called Sculpture and Painting, yet I cannot in my own mind quite sever them from those lesser, so-called Decorative Arts which I have to speak about: it is only in latter times, and under the most intricate conditions of life, that they have fallen apart from one

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was the value of the decorative arts: "To give people pleasure in the things they must perforce *use*, that is one great office of decoration; to give people pleasure in the things they must perforce *make*, that is the other use of it."

In focusing on decorations for the home, Morris addressed its mid-nineteenth century associations with femininity. Over the previous hundred years, there had been a gradual shift in the location of manufacturing from the home to the factory.[7] In other words, men's work had been evacuated from the home, leaving it as the physical and psychological domain of women. But Morris, in this respect a proto-feminist, sided with the women and sought to emphasize rather than downplay the importance of the domestic. He utilized and called attention to neglected handicrafts such as weaving and needlework, which, in the West, were traditionally associated with women. The historical combination of Morris's view that decoration should be inspired by nature, the general cultural association of women with domestic space, and the traditional representation of women as the embodiment of Nature fortified the identification of domestic decorative objects (including folding screens) with the concept of the "female."[8]

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another; and I hold that, when they are so parted, it is ill for the Arts altogether..." Morris, "The Decorative Arts," 3/4.

[7] In the eighteenth-century, as the home was gradually no longer the place of manufacture, there was a sharper

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Morris himself designed furniture, wallpaper, carpets, textiles, and oversaw the creation of fabric and embroidered screens.[9] One of his projects was a three-panel screen (fig. 21) assembled in 1887 for Rosalind Howard, Lady Carlisle, the wife of George Howard, the ninth Earl of Carlisle.[10] The three female figures on the screen were designed by Morris and embroidered by his wife's sister, Elizabeth (Bessie) Burden. The panels themselves had been created about twenty-five years earlier and had originally been intended as part of a series of wall hangings representing famous women from classical, Christian, mythological, and medieval sources.[11] The three figures used on the screen are Lucretia, a virtuous Roman matron who committed suicide after being raped by her husband's political enemy; Hippolyte, the Queen of the Amazons; and Helen of Troy. Together, they symbolize Virtue, Power, and Beauty. Although still comprised of idealized, iconic images, this inspiring trio supersedes the previous use on screens of rather stock figures of women to represent temporal or seasonal themes.

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division between work and home, and between men's roles and women's roles. Men either pushed women into the home or women insisted on their own domain in the house. See Smith, Eighteenth-Century Decoration, 233.

8 Morris, The Decorative Arts, 5.

9 According to Pevsner, despite Morris's desire to encourage artists to reunite art and craft, he was the only artist in his firm to actually design, build, and paint decorative objects and furnishings. See Pevsner, Academies of Art, 263.

10 For the circumstances surrounding the creation of this screen, see Parry, ed., William Morris, 226, 236-37; and Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 65, 133-35.

11 Ibid., 134, n. 2.

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In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Morris greatly influenced the production of screens in England, including those produced by the Royal School of Art Needlework and the more traditional stained glass screen Four Elements (ca. 1885), probably designed by Edward Burne-Jones.[12] Burne-Jones' screen, in turn, influenced the production of an American copy, Four Elements (ca. 1885) (fig. 22).[13] The importance that Morris placed on beauty and quality in domestic objects also affected artists and designers in Europe and the United States.[14] Among his proponents were Belgian architect Henry Van de Velde, Scottish designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and American craftsman Gustav Stickley. Through their own work, which included screens, they translated and transmitted Morris's concepts, creating a shift in artistic attitude toward screens and other aesthetically functional objects. Well into the twentieth century, Morris's outlook continued to

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12 "Morris's well-known goal of improving the quality of hand-crafted goods, especially fabrics, resulted at least indirectly in several other folding screens done in the 1870s. His interest in embroidery led to the foundation of several societies dedicated to the renewal of this 'lost' art." Komanecky, The Folding Image, 65. See also Pevsner, Academies of Art, 264.

13 For a discussion of Burne-Jones' screen and an American copy, see Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 65-67, 136-39.

14 Komanecky discusses many craftsmen and designers in Great Britain, Europe, and the United States whose works were inspired by William Morris. See Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 88-101, 106-8, 170-88. See also Naylor, Arts and Crafts, 113-94.

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propel designers and artists to create handcrafted domestic objects.[15] But especially important, and often understated, was his embrace and elevation of the feminine in the decorative arts.

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[15] For the extension of Morris's principles in recent contemporary art, see, for example, Denise Domergue, Artists Design Furniture (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1984); and Robert Jensen and Patricia Conway, Ornamentalism (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1982).

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Another crucial development that stimulated interest in folding screens during the second half of the nineteenth century was the opening of Japan. In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States succeeded in convincing the Japanese to reopen their ports to foreign vessels. This action inaugurated trade agreements between Japan and the United States, France, Great Britain, and other countries.[16] In subsequent decades, British, European, and American artists and craftsmen felt the visual impact of a new wave of imported Japanese screens, fans, prints, ceramics, and domestic objects. Japanese aesthetic styles, techniques, compositions, subjects, and formats were suddenly all the rage among late nineteenth century Western artists.[17] The dissemination of Japanese art occurred in a variety of ways. Japanese and Chinese screens were included in several key international exhibitions in England, France, and the United States in the mid- to late nineteenth century, and they were

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16 Garraty and Gay, eds., The Columbia History of the World, 638.

17 During the past few decades, many articles, books, and exhibition catalogues have been devoted to the subject of "Japonisme." The following are a few of the many works I consulted. Colta Feller Ives, The Great Wave: The Influence of Japanese Woodcuts on French Prints (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974); Geniviève Lacambre, ed., Le Japonisme (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1988); Gabriel Weisberg et al., Japonisme: Japanese Influence on French Art 1854-1910 (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975); Chisaburoh F. Yamada, ed., Dialogue in Art: Japan and the West (Tokyo: Kodanasha International Ltd., 1976). For further references, see in particular, the bibliography in Lacambre, ed., Le Japonisme, 334-41.

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also bought for important Western private and public collections of Oriental art.[18]

Many of the British, French, and American artists who were making screens owned Japanese or Chinese folding screens, and they were well aware of Western screen precedents.[19] Artists could see examples of Japanese art at the Von Siebold Collection in Leiden. They also could buy Oriental objects at La Porte Chinoise or E. Desoye's shop in Paris and at Bontor & Collins or Liberty in London.[20] And, finally, Japanese art was frequently described and analyzed in articles and books by contemporary critics and collectors, including Siegfried Bing, Phillipe Burty, Ernest Chesneau, and Louis Gonse.[21] In 1883, French critic Louis Gonse suggested that the Japanese were the most important decorators in the world:

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[18] Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 45-55. These exhibitions included an 1862 display of Japanese works of Industry and Art in London, the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867, and the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. For a first hand account of the 1862 exhibition, see Sir Rutherford Alcock, Art and Art Industries in Japan (London: Virtue and Co., 1878), 1-8, and passim. For a more in-depth article on the impact of the exhibitions, see Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, "The Documentation for the Contribution of Three Mid-Nineteenth Century Exhibitions to the Popularization of Japanese Art," in Moshe Barasch and Lucy Freeman Sandler, eds., Art, The Ape of Nature: Studies in Honor of H. W. Janson (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1981), 639-650; and for an excellent summation of key ways Oriental art influenced American decorative arts, see Ian M. G. Quimby, "Oriental Influence on American Decorative Arts," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 35, 4 (December 1976): 300-308.

[19] Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 55-58.

[20] For artists' interaction with Japanese art see, Gabriel Weisberg, "Japonisme: Early Sources and the French Printmaker 1854-1882," in Japonisme, 2-4; and Sullivan, Meeting of Eastern and Western Art, 209-13.

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> A frank idea must be clearly conveyed. The Japanese are the foremost decorators in the world. All explanation of their aesthetic must be sought in their supreme instinct for harmonies, in a constant, logical unwavering subordination of art to the necessities of life, to the amusement of the eyes.[22]

The dual influences of William Morris's tenets and Japanese art may be directly observed in three well-known screens by London-based artists: Six-Panel Screen (1867), by William Nesfield and James Forsyth; Portrait of the Epps Family (1870-71) (fig. 23), by Sir Laurens Alma-Tadema and his wife, Lady Laura Epps Alma-Tadema; and Blue and Silver: Screen with Old Battersea Bridge (1872) (fig. 24), by James

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According to an unsigned 1872 note in the London Art Journal, "It is Messers. Bontor and Collins, of Oxford Street, who have been the first systematically to adapt Japanese materials to English work; this firm is known for the specialty of folding screens, which they manufacture of all sizes. Within the last few months they have produced screens ornamented with the drawings, the coloured prints, or the gorgeous silks and embroideries of Japan; and the effect is so happy that we do not doubt there will arise a brisk demand for these elegant articles, at once useful and novel." See "Japanese Decoration in England," Art Journal 34, n.s. 11 (1872): 29.

[21] For a bibliography of Siegfried Bing's writings on Japanese art, see Gabriel Weisberg, Art Nouveau Bing: Paris Style 1900 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), 282. See also, for example, Ernest Chesneau, L'Art Japonais, Conférence faite à l'union centrale des Beaux-Arts appliquée à l'industrie, le vendredi 10 février 1869 (Paris: 1869), 16, 19 (as cited in Holt, "The Documentation for the Contribution," 649); and Louis Gonse, "L'Art Japonais et son influence sur le goût européen," Revue des Arts Décoratifs (1898): 97-116. For the most recent extensive listing of sources, see the exhibition catalogue Lacambre, ed., Le Japonisme, 334-41.

[22] "Une idée nette doit être nettement exprimée. Les Japonais sont les premiers décorateurs du monde. Toute explication de leur esthetique doit être cherchée dans un instinct suprème des harmonies, dans une subordination constante, logique, inflexible de l'art aux besoins de la vie, à la recreation des yeux." Louis Gonse, L'Art Japonais (Paris: A. Quantin, 1883), 1: 1.

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A. McNeill Whistler. Nesfield and Forsyth's screen displays on the recto and verso twelve Japanese bird paintings mounted onto a six-panel screen frame. The frame was hand carved by Forsyth and contains in the upper and lower registers painted carved elements that reinterpret Japanese ornamental motifs. The screen represents a British colonialist pastiche of various elements from an exotic land, fashioned according to Arts and Crafts taste.[23]

The Alma-Tademas' portrait screen is not such an obvious or exoticizing mixture. Although the composition recalls contemporaneous panel paintings by the well-known Dutch-born painter, Portrait of the Epps Family is a radical departure from traditional Western screen compositions.[24] In fact, the screen demonstrates how Western artists were beginning to rethink screen imagery. Painted mostly by Alma-Tadema himself and partially by his wife, the screen is a multi-generational family portrait paired with an inscription celebrating the strength of the family; object and subject signify the metaphors of lineage, continuity,

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[23] Of this screen, Michael Komanecky wrote, "Japan may be recalled in individual motifs, but the overall result is a tightly organized exercise more typical of English interpretations of the Orient than of the Orient itself." Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 58 and 113, n.76. See also his general description of this screen on pages 122-28.

[24] For a discussion of the Alma-Tadema screen, see Ibid., 129-32; and Vern G. Swanson, The Biography and Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (London: Garton & Co. in association with Scolar Press, 1990), 159-60.

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movement, and time.[25] Alma-Tadema was an ambitious collector of Japanese art, including screens, and he may have sought a precedent for his procession of figures in somewhat similarly composed Japanese screens (such as the early seventeenth century Hikone Screen).[26] The Alma-Tademas isolated their image by juxtaposing it with a vast L-shaped area of red blank space. This type of large void, reminiscent of the undecorated areas of gold in many Japanese screens, is often considered spiritually significant in Japanese Buddhism.[27] At the same time, the unique arrangement of figures in space and the Gothic lettering recall medieval manuscripts, perhaps an allusion to the culture of the Middle Ages and to manuscript illumination, two abiding interests of William Morris whose Pomegranate wallpaper was used to cover the back of this screen.[28]

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[25] For a transcription of the quotation on the screen, see Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 129. See my discussions of the folding screen as a metaphor for movement and time in Butera, "The Screen as Metaphor," 198-206; and in Butera, Contemporary Screens, 15-16.

[26] For elaboration on Alma-Tadema as a collector of Japanese art see Swanson, Alma-Tadema, 41. For a discussion of the important Hikone Screen, see Yamane, Momoyama Genre Painting, 104-5.

[27] A good example of such a use of negative space is the Edo period screen Persimmon Tree (1816) by Sakai Hoitsu (1761-1828). For a discussion of this screen, see Murase, Byobu, 42-43; and Grilli, The Art of the Japanese Screen, 82-83. For a discussion of the use of the void, see David J. Clarke, "The Concept of the Void in Oriental Philosophy and Its Influence on American Painting and Sculpture," The Influence of Oriental Thought on Post World War II American Painting and Sculpture (New York: Garland, 1988), 145-73.

[28] For Morris's interest in the Middle Ages and manuscript and book illumination, see Paul Thomson, The Work of William Morris (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991),

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The Alma-Tademas' screen shows how a functional format could be manipulated for metaphoric purposes. Alma-Tadema was clearly inspired by Morris's program to combine art, function, and meaning in decorative objects. But this screen's main significance lies in the fact that on it, for the first time, real women were depicted not as mythological or symbolic creatures but with husbands, children, and suitors (self-portraits of Alma-Tadema and Laura Epps are third and fourth from the right). In fact, the screen boldly promotes the virtues of marriage, family solidarity, and procreation, emphasizing the conventional values and roles of the Victorian family. This highly self-conscious and personally revealing screen inaugurated an era in which Western artists began to employ folding screens to explore modern issues regarding relationships, gender identification, and sexuality.

One year later, in 1872, Whistler completed a folding screen which demonstrates the extent to which Western artists were capable of exploiting the creative possibilities of folding screens. Whistler's screen has no human figures and no overt sexual implications, but it represents a subtle and sophisticated merging of Japanese

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esp. 150-165; John Nash, "Calligraphy," William Morris, Linda Parry, ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996), 296-309; and John Dreyfus, "The Kelmscott Press," Ibid., 310-341.

Scholar Lesley Hoskins writes, "Morris's first three papers, Trellis, Daisy and Pomegranate (also known as Fruit), issued between 1864 and 1866/7 (cat. nos. L 1-3), were closely associated with the informal medievalism of the early firm." Lesley Hoskins, "Wallpaper," Ibid., 200, 206-7.

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and Morrisonian influences. Whistler was fascinated by Hiroshige's wood-block print of Kyo Bridge (ca. 1857), and he tried to emulate some of the Japanese master's aesthetic qualities in painting his own suggestive image of London's Battersea Bridge.[29] In Blue and Silver: Screen with Old Battersea Bridge, one of several paintings he did of the site, Whistler bisected the delicate image of a bridge with the structure of a two-panel folding screen.[30] The simultaneous separation and union implied by both the bridge and the bi-fold screen is echoed in the juxtaposition of Whistler's image on the recto and the Japanese flower and bird paintings on the verso of the screen. This symbolic yin-yang duality is further amplified by the merging of sea and sky, and the rhyming of the moon with the Old Chelsea Church clocktower lights in the background of Whistler's composition.[31] Whistler's blend of function, structure,

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[29] Whistler's use of bridge imagery extends to his prints as well. See, for example, Weisberg, "Japonisme," 11-12; and Andrew McLaren Young et al., The Paintings of James McNeill Whistler (New Haven and London: The Yale University Press, 1980), 1: 85.

[30] See my discussions of the screen as a metaphor for duality and separation in Butera and Komanecky, The Folding Image, 198-203; and in Butera, Contemporary Screens, 15-16.

[31] Based on information given to him by Martin Hopkinson, Michael Komanecky reports that the "vaguely Japanese paintings are by a Japanese woman artist named Nampo Osawa." See Komanecky's analysis of Whistler's screen in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 58-63 and 113-14, n.78 and 79. According to Young, Whistler, 85, these paintings in the Chinese style are dated 1867. Perhaps Whistler purchased this screen from Bontor and Collins in London where, as described in footnote 20 above, they were creating screens "with the drawings, the coloured prints, or the gorgeous silks and embroideries of Japan." "Japanese Decoration in England," 29.

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theme, and meaning makes his screen an excellent example of the type of work that Morris felt could reunify the fine and decorative arts.

An analogous effort to revive crafts and applied arts took place in France during the second half of the nineteenth century. Based in part on William Morris's aims, this movement to create sophisticated and meaningful decorative objects was vigorously supported, for example, by critic, collector, and gallery owner Siegfried Bing (1838-1905).[32] Bing believed that "a new design could be stimulated in Europe simply by applying Japanese aesthetic principles to everyday objects and by adapting the Japanese attitude of making no distinction between the major or minor, fine or applied arts."[33] He argued that the French needed the outside impetus of Japan, writing:

> In all events we will find there worthy examples to be followed, certainly not to disturb the foundations of our ancient aesthetic structure, but to add a greater force to all those foundations which for centuries we ourselves have adapted to support our national genius.[34]

Bing felt so strongly about Japonisme that he not only collected and exhibited Japanese art but also published a

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[32] For recent evaluations of Bing's life, work, and beliefs, see Troy, Modernism and the Decorative Arts, 7-51; and Weisberg, Art Nouveau Bing.

[33] Ibid., 9.

[34] "Nous y trouverons des exemples dignes à tous égards d'être suivis, non certes pour ébranler les bases de notre vieil édifice esthétique, mais pour venir ajouter une force de plus à toutes celles que depuis des siècles nous nous sommes appropriées pour en étayer notre genie national." Siegfried Bing, "Programme," Le Japon Artistique 1 (1888): 5.

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magazine on the subject. Le Japon artistique was published between 1888 and 1891 and available in French, German, and English editions.[35]

Bing's active involvement with the development of a new style of decorative arts is evident from the course of his career. He worked first as a dealer of Japanese art, then as the owner of a gallery of contemporary art, and finally as the head of an atelier that produced contemporary furniture. In addition, he was actively involved with the Central Union of Decorative Arts, a Parisian political and aesthetic organization committed to revitalizing the applied arts and developing a new style in France.[36] In 1895, Bing opened the Art Nouveau gallery to introduce the French public to contemporary artists and craftsmen from France (many of whom were active in the Central Union), the rest of Europe, Great Britain, and the United States who were developing a new, non-historically derivative, nature-based design style.[37] To develop his gallery and roster of artists, Bing worked closely with Henri van de Velde, a follower of Morris's

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[35] For a description of Bing's Le Japon artistique and other articles, magazines, and books devoted to the appreciation of Japanese art in the nineteenth century, see Akiko Mabuchi, "Japonisme et Naturalisme," in Lacambre, ed., Le Japonisme, 34-35.

[36] Debora Silverman discusses the Central Union of the Decorative Arts extensively in Art Nouveau, 8, 109-33, 186-206, and passim.

[37] For information on Bing and his gallery, Art Nouveau, see ibid., 270-283, and passim.; Troy, Modernism and the Decorative Arts, 15-43, and passim.; and Weisberg, Art Nouveau Bing, 49-139, and passim. For the idea of a nature-based design style see Émile Sédeyn, Le Mobilier (L'art français depuis vingt ans) (Paris: F. Rieder et Cie., 1921), 20/21.

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ideas.[38] Several of the artists Bing sponsored made screens in addition to paintings, furniture, ceramics, fans, and stained glass windows.[39]

In France, another cultural influence on the development of folding screens and their interpretation as sexual metaphors were the theories of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt. These Parisian brothers collected and wrote about French Rococo furniture and art and the Japanese and Chinese objects collected during that period.[40] As archaeologists, collectors, aesthetes, and art historians, they promoted the concept that objects affected both the atmosphere of an interior and, in turn, the psychological, creative, and erotic state of the viewer. Subsequently, their theories had

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[38] According to van de Velde, Bing "shared the same repugnance for the continual imitation of the historic styles and voiced the same eagerness to branch out in a fresh direction." Henry van de Velde, "Extracts from his Memoirs 1891-1901," Architectural Review 112 (September 1952): 152, as quoted in Troy, Modernism, 17.

[39] For hundreds of years, fans had been accoutrements for women in the West. The more elaborate fans were often painted with imagery used to convey social, political, and romantic messages. Inspired by examples of Japanese and Chinese fans as well as those of their countries, nineteenth century artists rediscovered the sweeping compositional power and potential symbolism in the fan and the fan shape. Artists such as Bonnard, Degas, Denis, De Feure, Eakins, Gauguin, Monet, Mucha, Pissarro, Seguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Whistler experimented with the fan shape. Paralleling the interest in screens, twentieth century artists also created fans. For introductions to artists' fans of these two centuries, see Marc Gerstein, "Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Fans" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1979); and Virginia Fabbri Butera, "The Fan as Form and Image in Contemporary Art," Arts Magazine 55, 9 (May 1981): 88-92.

[40] For a discussion of men as collectors in womanless spaces, see Martha Ward, "Impressionist Installations and Private Exhibitions," The Art Bulletin 73, 4 (December 1991): 613

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direct impact on the development of Symbolist art and literature and on the design of Art Nouveau objects and interiors.[41] Their ideas also helped establish the intellectual and emotional power of decorative objects and furniture, and anticipated the still on-going modernist debate by artists, architects, theorists, and critics over whether the domestic interior should be a visually provocative, meaning-filled, psychologically charged space or a neutral, functional retreat. Sexualized folding screens clearly participate in the former.

The Goncourts' interest in the Rococo stemmed in large part from their desire to escape the stress of the masculine-coded public space, the democratic nineteenth century modern urban life, and the turmoil caused by increasing industrialization.[42] The Goncourts wanted to console themselves in a refined yet voluptuous atmosphere, in interiors filled with aristocratic, feminine eighteenth century art dominated by themes of nature and the organic.

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[41] J.-K. Huysmans's 1883 Symbolist manifesto A Rebours was inspired by Edmond de Goncourt's La Maison d'un artiste, 2 vols. (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1881). Debora Silverman discusses the mutual importance and interactions between the Goncourt brothers and Symbolism in Art Nouveau, 77. I believe that the Goncourt's concept of the interior as a dynamic psychological and sexual arena continued to effect Art Deco artists either directly or through the development of the Art Nouveau interior. See Chapter Four on Eileen Gray.

[42] Greta Daniel, "Decorative Arts," Art Nouveau: Art and Design at the Turn of the Century, ed. Peter Selz and Mildred Constantine (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), 87-88. See also Jerold Seigel, Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930 (New York: Viking Press, 1986), 179.

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According to the Goncourts, the key to this style was voluptuousness:

> Voluptuousness! It's the whole 18th century. It breathes voluptuousness, it emits voluptuousness. Voluptuousness is the air by which the century is nourished and animated. She is its atmosphere and its influence. She is its essence and its inspiration, its life and its spirit.[43]

As art historian Debora Silverman points out, while the Goncourt brothers were preserving eighteenth century artifacts, they were also changing the interpretation of those objects. Their own intellectual and sensual proclivities as well as those of nineteenth century France, prompted the Goncourts to measure "the quality of applied arts by the Romantic criteria of individualism and the proximity of the objects to the immaterial refinements of painting."[44] Given the Goncourts' influence, this view helped to elevate the critical status of the decorative arts in France, encouraging both the producers of decorative objects as well as late nineteenth century painters interested in the applied arts.

Edmond and Jules de Goncourt were acutely aware of every nuance of feeling they experienced in their feminized eighteenth century interior. As Silverman observes:

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[43] "Volupté! c'est tout le xviii^{ème} siècle. Il respire la volupté, il la dégage. La volupté est l'air dont il se nourrit et qui l'anime. Elle est son atmosphere et son souffle. Elle est son élément et son inspiration, sa vie et son génie." Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, La femme au dix-huitième siècle (1862; Paris: Flammarion, 1982), 6.

[44] Silverman, Art Nouveau, 32.

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> The perpetual exercise of their nervous sensibilities had important consequences for the Goncourts' conception of rococo ensemble. With their particular form of self-analysis, they transformed the eighteenth-century ensemble from organic oasis to a source of nervous palpitation. The objects in their eighteenth-century rooms were not soothing and stable reminders of a historical past; they shifted according to the brothers' superaesthetic eyes and played inner chords of nervous vibrations.[45]

In The House of an Artist (La Maison d'un Artiste) (1881), Edmond de Goncourt described in precise detail his psychological reactions to individual objects and to his collection as a whole. In one passage, he states that he cannot write without first being surrounded and visually satiated by his objects.[46] Elsewhere, in an 1875 entry from his Journal, Edmond describes in erotic tones an encounter with Oriental objects.[47]

> It is five o'clock when someone suggests that we finish the day at Bing's and look at the things that have just been unpacked there. Thereupon we all go to the Rue Chauchat, where until seven o'clock in a state of fatigue verging on collapse we touch, handle, and stroke more rare objects. A debauch of things Japanese and Chinese.[48]

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45 Ibid., 38.

46 Goncourt, La Maison, 2: 349.

47 Silverman notes that objects for the Goncourts are essentially "erotic substitutes for real women." Silverman also stresses that it was the Goncourts' abhorrence of the bourgeoisie, their misogyny, and their psychologically perverse attitudes which were responsible for their erotic transference. Silverman, Art Nouveau, 35. See also Edmond de Goncourt's La Maison for erotic descriptions of objects and his Outamaro: Le Peintre des Maisons Vertes (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1891), passim., for sensuously-written passages about the women Utamaro depicted in his color woodcuts.

48 Journal entry for July 1, 1875, in Edmond de Goncourt, "Goncourt Journal," Paris and the Arts, 1851-1896, trans. and ed. George S. Becker and Edith Philips (Ithaca and

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The Goncourts' intuitive theory that decorative objects and interior environments could be psychologically fraught coincided with the views of the two most prominent pre-Freudian psychologists in France, Jean-Martin Charcot and Hippolyte Bernheim.[49] Charcot and Bernheim were responsible for identifying the "interior of the human organism as a sensitive nervous mechanism."[50] As Silverman discusses, Bernheim revamped Charcot's work to conclude that all people, not just hysterics (as Charcot had proposed), were susceptible to images from the external world and that there could be no stable boundaries between inner and outer, subjective and objective, reality. Silverman shows how this radical theory of a dynamic, fluctuating interaction between a human being, his interior state, and his perceptions of the external world was reflected in the nervous and attenuated imagery of Art Nouveau. This 1890s French version of psychological interiority, Silverman writes, "provided the intellectual vehicle for the transformation of the

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London: Cornell University Press, 1971), 157-58. For a description of Bing's shop, see Weisberg, Art Nouveau Bing, 16-25.

[49] Silverman states, "The writings and activities of Charcot and Bernheim make it clear that pre-Freudian French psychiatry was charged with implications for the artistic community. Both doctors were immersed in aesthetic concepts and practices, and their redefinition of rational consciousness was generated in part by their experiments with the fluid, dynamic power of images to release unconscious forces." See Silverman, Art Nouveau, 9; see also her discussion of the work of both doctors on pages 79-106.

[50] Ibid., 9.

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domestic interior from a place to display a historical anchorage to one that expressed personal feeling."[51]

At the end of the nineteenth century, the development of a new style for French art and craft was of utmost importance to politicians and patrons as well as to artists and critics. The Goncourts' affinity for and interpretation of French Rococo art changed the notion of an Art Nouveau from one based on pure technological advancement to one based on eighteenth-century concepts of nature and the domestic domain. Silverman observes that:

> ...the rococo in particular represented a French tradition linking the notion of modernity with the notion of privacy and interiority. In the period of Louis XV modernity became associated with the nature style; by the mid-eighteenth century, the term "modern style" described a retreat to an organic, feminine, and intimate interior....Art nouveau artists immersed themselves in the rococo precedent and discovered in the period of Louis XV a legacy that matched their own stylistic goals: a unity of all the arts and an organic ensemble of interior decoration.[52]

By examining decorative objects the way one would analyze paintings at the Salon, the Goncourts gave even greater prestige and value to the decorative arts. They also proposed that furnished and decorated spaces could not only be construed as feminine and even erotic (as Morris and Rococo art had suggested, too), but also that the objects in, and an entire domestic interior space itself, could

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51 Ibid., 106.

52 Silverman, Art Nouveau, 9; see also her discussion on pages 4-5, 20-24, 38.

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reflect and affect the psychological state of the collector or viewer. I believe this view inspired late nineteenth and early twentieth century artists who found that there could be not only function and beauty but also psychological meaning and intellectual validity in "decorative" objects. Folding screens were an especially well-suited vehicle for artists since, being made of stretched canvas, they could serve as floor-standing, metaphoric paintings as well as practical pieces of furniture.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, many European artists chose images of women to decorate the historical allusions, the emblematic implications, and the sociological symbolism of their screens. Incorporating Japanese and decorative influences into their work and their screens as had Alma-Tadema and Whistler, certain French Nabis and Art Nouveau artists, the Czech-born Mucha, and the American Impressionist Dewing, for example, all focused almost exclusively on women as their screen subject matter, evoking a wide range of meanings and metaphors. Their use of female subject matter refers not only to the long tradition of women as a primary screen motif but also consciously points to the screen itself as a female object, able to feminize and sexualize interior space, and even serve as a metaphor for female genitalia. But within these broad implications, some turn-of-the-century artists developed more critical iconographies depicting, for instance, different classes of

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women or a variety of domestic settings. In doing so, these artists documented several aspects of traditional gender roles while gradually using the screen as a conveyor of more overt female sexuality.

For the Nabis, in particular, folding screens were a logical extension of their aesthetic goals. The Nabis refuted the pejorative connotations of decorative art which, at that time, connoted nondetachable, nonportable, artwork associated "with architectural embellishment and artifice," rather than fine-art easel painting.[53] Indeed, as late as 1927, the definition of *décoratif* in France was still:

> art applied as decoration of luxury objects, everyday objects, and human dwellings, having as a goal, not the creation of independent works of art such as the easel painting, or the statue, but those works of art having a predetermined destination such as carvings, ornamental paintings, furniture, jewelry, dresses, etc.[54]

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[53] Art historian Gloria Groom writes, "The most important contribution of the Nabis to the concept of painting as decoration at the end of the nineteenth century was to broaden the definition among progressive artists and critics from its traditional association with architectural embellishment and artifice to a type of painting complete in and of itself.../As part of the Nabis's efforts to change the way a painting was defined, the Nabis stressed, in their choices of facture, subject, and unconventional formats, what the critics referred to as the quality of 'Le décoratif,' regardless of a destination and purpose." See Groom, Edouard Vuilllard: Painter-Decorator (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 11/12.

[54] "On appelle art décoratif, l'art appliqué à la décoration des objets de luxe au des objets usuels, des habitations de la personne humaine ayant pour but, non la création d'oeuvres d'art isolées comme le tableau, la statue, mais celle d'oeuvres d'art ayant une destination déterminée des sculptures, des peintures d'ornamentation, des meubles, des bijoux, des costumes, etc." Jules Adèline, Lexique des termes d'art (Paris: Grund, 1927), 143.

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The Nabis, on the other hand, had absorbed ideas from both Japonisme and William Morris, and used their art specifically to create everyday objects.[55] Bonnard noted that in his generation artists "sought to link art with life. At that time [the 1890s] I personally envisaged a popular art that was of everyday application: fans, furniture, screens."[56] Maurice Denis, a Nabi theorist and himself a maker of screens, noted with pride that Gauguin "admitted being an artisan, that he made furniture, pottery, that he embellished even his wooden shoes."[57] From this knowledge, Denis "drew the wise maxim that all painting has as its aim to decorate and to be ornamental."[58]

Denis's own well-known theories of art were often based on his acceptance of artworks as objects of everyday life and vice-versa. A famous line from Denis's writings

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[55] The Nabis may have been inspired by Gauguin's attitudes toward applied art. In a letter written in August 1892 to his friend Daniel de Monfried, Gauguin laments, "To think that I was born to do decorative art and that I have not been able to achieve it. Neither windows, nor furniture, nor ceramics, nor whatever...There lie my real aptitudes much more than in painting strictly speaking." Quoted in Herschel B. Chipp, Theories of Modern Art: Source Book by Artists and Critics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 64. Komanecky notes that Gauguin visited Pierre Bonnard's studio in 1890, prior to Bonnard's screenmaking activity, and that a carved wooden screen has been attributed to Gauguin, although it is a much questioned work. See Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 114-15 n 103.

[56] Ibid., 71, as quoted in Francis Bouvet, Bonnard: The Complete Graphic Work (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1981), 5-6. Work by the Nabis artists also encompassed ceramics, decorative wall panels, stagesets, prints, and magazine illustrations.

[57] Maurice Denis, "The Influence of Paul Gauguin," L'Occident (October 1903); quoted in Chipp, Theories of Modern Art, 104.

[58] Ibid.

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underscores this: "One must remember that a canvas--before being a war horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote--is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order."[59] Art historian Alan M. Fern offers this interpretation of another of Denis's theories pertaining to the decorative in art:

> When Denis stated that a line, a color, or a shape has the power to arouse specific feelings in the observer, he was not restricting himself to paintings; this power of form could be present in a vase, a chair, or wallpaper just as well. To the extent that painting became literary, it ceased to be a painting; to the extent that a useful object was composed of visually meaningful forms, it became a work of art. Ideally, suggested Denis, there was no difference between the fine and useful arts in this respect.[60]

Liberated by these views, the Nabis utilized alternative surfaces, structures, images, and mediums to create objects that no longer conformed to the standards of "high art," either in terms of materials or subject matter.

The Nabis also applied their decorative enthusiasms to the world of theater. Bonnard, Denis, and Vuillard shared a studio with the young actor Aurélien Lugné-Poë, who opened

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59 "Se rappeler qu'un tableau--avant d'être un cheval de bataille, une femme nue, ou une quelconque anecdote--est essentiellement une surface plané recouverte de couleurs en un certain ordre assemblées." Maurice Denis, "Définition du Neo-Traditionnisme (1890)," Du Symbolisme au Classicisme: Théories, ed. Oliver Revault d'Allones (Paris: Hermann, 1964), 33.

60 Alan M. Fern, "Graphic Design," in Peter Selz and Mildred Constantine, eds., Art Nouveau: Art and Design at the Turn of the Century (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), 30.

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the Symbolist Théâtre de l'Oeuvre in 1893.[61] All three artists designed sets and programs for Lugné-Poë. It seems likely that this immersion in the architectonics of stage space provided a parallel to their ongoing interests in the decoration of domestic interiors with easel paintings and folding screens.

Although many of the screens made by the Nabis in the 1890s depict fairly conventional genre scenes of women, the roles and images of French women were undergoing a profound revision at that very moment.[62] French feminists were seeking reforms in the areas of education, divorce, family finance, and social welfare.[63] Some men feared these "amazons" or "new women" (*les femmes nouvelles*), and caricatured them as radicals who rode bicycles, smoked cigarettes, and proselytized for social change. Others felt that highly educated, liberated women would repudiate their traditional roles as wives and mothers.[64] English naturalist

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[61] George Mauner, "The Nature of Nabi Symbolism," Art Journal 23, 2 (Winter 1964): 96-97.

[62] For a description of screens by the Nabis, see Adams, Screens, 145-51; and Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 71-80, 140-53. See also the exhibition catalogue, Galerie Bellier, Polyptyques et Paravents, 7-9, 21-5, 34-9.

[63] French feminists of the 1890s advocated "a broadly based solidarity among women of different social classes" in order for those more fortunate to give help to those less fortunate and they wanted "to reform the Civil Code to give married women some control over family finance." At the same time, many women were being more highly educated and entering professions and had also been given the right to sue for divorce. Silverman, Art Nouveau, 65-66.

[64] For an in-depth analysis of reactions to the femme nouvelle, see Silverman, Art Nouveau, 63-74. See also Carolyn J. Dean, The Self and Its Pleasures: Bataille, Lacan, and the History of the Decentered Subject (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 58-59.

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Charles Darwin's theories of progressive evolution fueled this political debate by suggesting that men and women have "totally distinct yet complimentary qualities,"[65] that women are less intellectually capable, and "are predisposed to domestic duties and are inferior to men."[66] And it was not just husbands who were worried by women's new demand for power and self-definition. As Silverman reports:

> The decline in the birthrate rigidified the response to infractions of the sexual division of labor, however, moderate, and transformed the protection of the traditional family into an imperative of national security and military strength...Doctors, politicians, and scholars after 1889 rallied to defend the traditional female role and sought medical and philosophical rationales to consign women to the home.[67]

The turn-of-the-century portrayal of women as evil temptresses, monsters, or worse highlights this growing fear of female power. The Nabis response, however, was to represent women in ways that reiterate stereotypes of female behavior and attitudes. One could see this either as a reflection of the conservative climate in which the male

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65 West, Fin-de-Siècle, 69.

66 "Woman seems to differ from man in mental disposition, chiefly in her greater tenderness and less selfishness... Woman, owing to her maternal instincts, displays these qualities towards her infants in an eminent degree...It is generally admitted that with Woman the powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps imitation, are more strongly marked than in man; but some, at least, of these faculties are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization." Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man (1871; London: John Murray, 1906), 857-858. Other passages delineating Darwin's ideas of the inferiority of women may be found, for example, on p. 847.

67 Silverman, Art Nouveau, 67, 329 n21.

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artists lived or as a subtle denigration of the *femme nouvelle* movement. Less common were attempts by Nabi and other late nineteenth century artists to portray lower-class, bourgeois, or aristocratic women in nontraditional roles or occupations.[68]

Breton women are shown working in the fields on Émile Bernard's double-sided, altar-shaped folding screen The Four Seasons (1891) (fig. 25).[69] On the recto, he reverently painted stylized female laborers personifying each season; their identities are revealed through their labor, their fruit and flower attributes, and quotes from Symbolist poet Émile Verhaeren.[70] For Bernard, peasant women represented a nostalgic link to the agricultural life of the past, a form of romantic primitivism common among the Pont Aven artists. But, seen in the context of a continuous tradition of Western screens, Bernard's Breton workers are simply another reiteration of the stereotypical image of women as symbols

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[68] For a discussion of the issue of class, sexuality, femininity as well the difference between private and public space in the discourse of modern painting see Griselda Pollock's chapter, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," Vision and Difference, 50-90. For an interesting grid outlining the types of women and the spaces they inhabit as painted by both male annd female Impressionist painters see Pollock's grids, 73, 80.

[69] Galerie Bellier, Polyptyques et Paravents, 8, 22-5.

[70] When Galerie Bellier exhibited this screen in 1990, they made a decision to separate the recto and verso of this screen and mount them as two individual wall paintings. This decision underscores the fact that dealers and viewers still undervalue folding screens. They simply do not understand the symbiotic and symbolic relationship between the front and the back of a screen; these are not separate objects but rather two parts of a whole. It is pathetic to see a fabulous object like this broken apart when it had survived intact for a century.

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of the natural world. What is unusual is their visible labor, a subject that, to my knowledge, had never been depicted before on a Western screen.

In contrast to Bernard's bucolic Four Seasons screen, Bonnard chose to illustrate urban life and work in his Promenade des nourrices, Frise des fiacres (1894) (fig. 26). Bonnard used Japanese-inspired blank space, bold outlines, and colorful plaids to capture a "timeless" scene of lower-class nursemaids on duty. All lined up, the nursemaids visually and symbolically echo the resigned carriage horses behind and above them, while in the foreground a mother (whose clothes are markedly different) actively shepherds the children and her dog through the park. The image presents "female, domestic" labor invading the public (masculine) space as represented by the carriages, all undoubtedly driven by men. On this level the screen promotes a curious and clear confrontation of gender roles.

Vuillard captured another aspect of lower-class work in his Five-Panel Screen (The Dressmakers) (1892-93) (fig. 27), part of a decorative commission for the dressing room in the home of Paul Desmarais. This screen shows various seamstresses in the midst of their duties, a subject the artist pursued in other canvases as well.[71] And, by altering

[71] For a more in-depth explanation of this screen as part of a decorative commission, as well as a formal rather than a metaphoric analysis of this work, see Groom, Vuillard, 34-36, 41; and Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 78. For a discussion of Vuillard's mother as a dressmaker and the importance of this subject matter for Vuillard, see Groom, Vuillard, 28-30.

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the number of women in each of the main four panels, Vuillard varies the standard format of the traditional "Times of Day" or "Four Seasons" screens in which a single figure on each panel served as the symbol. In the original configuration of the irregularly sized screen, the smaller fifth panel (today cut down) contained no human figures, only a cat. In Vuillard's screen, women are allied not with nature but with the work of dressmaking, often identified as a specifically female form of domestic labor.[72] According to Groom, Vuillard felt strongly that work was a practical and moral responsibility; its use by the artist as subject matter for painting was probably an effort to elevate its status.[73] On the other hand, the repeated images of dressmaking and the specific dressing room site for this screen commission relate to the metaphor of the screen itself, which, like the Japanese Takasode screens Vuillard may have known, concerns dressing and undressing. Like the screen, a dress is a shield and a mask. Although there is no explicit sexual message in this screen, one art historian noted that the dressmakers' "...femininity manifests a form

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[72] In his article on the 1995 Claes Oldenburg retrospective exhibition, "Demon in the Kitchen: Oldenberg's Alterations," Art in America 83, 10 (October 1995): 90-91, Robert Haywood remarked that, traditionally, sewing has been perceived as a feminine and lesser art/craft.

[73] Groom, Vuillard, 5. The subject matter of this screen pays homage to Vuillard's mother who had a dressmaking atelier in their home. By depicting his mother in the center panel, and his sister in the fourth panel, and by manipulating the use of pattern and a merger of figure and ground, Vuillard purposefully and symbolically made them indistinguishable from their upper-class clientele.

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of sensuality which is revealed in their faces and elongated bodies."[74] The screen is clearly layered with symbolic inferences framed by the occupation and disposition of these women.

In contrast to the images of women working, Bonnard's Femmes au Jardin (1891), and Denis's Screen with Doves (ca. 1902) (fig. 28), depict upper-class women in their gardens; they symbolize leisure and woman's place in the natural order, but also a class-denoted passivity particularly in contrast to the activity of Bernard's Breton women and Vuillard's dressmakers.[75] Both Bonnard's and Denis's use of the Japanese-inspired technique of merging figure and ground into a flat, two-dimensional space, further emphasize Woman's "rightful" fusion with Nature and thus the prescribed late nineteenth century female role of fertility and motherhood. To further underscore this meaning Bonnard used a structure of one figure per panel, although not direct iconographical motifs, to recall earlier seasonal and temporal screen figures. According to Komanecky, in Denis' enclosed garden, the doves, fountain, and strolling women allude to Christian iconography, with "...the enclosed abundant garden as simultaneous symbols for the purity of

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[74] "Leur féminínité laisse apparaître une forme de sensualité que trahissent leurs visages et leurs corps allongés." Galerie Bellier, Paravents, 9.

[75] For discussions of these screens see Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 72-73, 149-53.

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Christ's brides who stand in it, and for the fruits offered by his love."[76]

The Nabis' conception of Woman seems to parallel that of the female image as it was redesigned for the cover of the Revue des Arts Décoratifs after 1895. This magazine was published by the Central Union of Decorative Arts, an institution formed to "support in France the culture of the arts which seek the realization of the beautiful in the useful."[77] The woman on the cover of the Revue is entwined with flowers, foliage, fruit, and trees to symbolize, as Silverman has pointed out, that "organic forms, the basis of a regenerated French `art nouveau,' depended on the association and inspiration of women, themselves nature's social representative."[78] The idealized cover image--a pointed antithesis to the *femme nouvelle*--stimulated the type of female imagery so closely associated with Art Nouveau and the Nabi painters.[79] It is not surprising that an image of Woman entwined with nature, inspiring a renewal of French art, should be intimately associated with the

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[76] Ibid., 152.

[77] "entretenir en France la culture des arts qui poursuivent la réalisation du beau dans l'utile." Yvonne Brunhammer, "Le Japonisme et l'Art Nouveau," in Japonisme in Art (Tokyo: Committee for the Year 2001 and Kodansha International Ltd., 1980), 303.

[78] Debora Leah Silverman, "Nature, Nobility, and Neurology: The Ideological Origins of `Art Nouveau' in France, 1889-1900" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1983), 476.

[79] Groom mentions a prevailing nineteenth century image of women as bouquets or as flowers. Groom, Vuillard, 71.

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folding screen, since screens were coded as female and they were central to the late nineteenth century craft revival.

Some would consider two screens by Dewing and Mucha, contemporaries of the Nabis, to be conservative images. But I detect a scarcely bridled sexuality exuding from both Dewing's Morning Glories (1900) (fig. 29) and Mucha's Four Times of Day (1900) (fig. 30). Morning Glories, one of at least seven screens Dewing created during his career, shows three classical female figures imposed on an idealized sylvan landscape, with morning glories trailing across the bottom of the screen, an allusion to Japanese art and screens.[80] But Dewing's women appear interconnected with the natural world; they do not merely symbolize domesticity, motherhood, or work.[81] Art historian Bailey Van Hook reports that:

> [m]ost ideal women in late-nineteenth century painting are without men, and by extension without children, either of which would destroy the illusion of availability.[82]

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[80] For information on Dewing's screens, see Susan A. Hobbs, The Art of Thomas Dewing: Beauty Reconfigured (Washington and London: The Brooklyn Museum in association with Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 27-28, 138-41; Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 158-61; and Kathleen Pyne, "Classical Figures: A Folding Screen by Thomas Dewing," Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts 59 (Spring 1981): 4-15.

[81] As Bailey van Hook has explained, in the nineteenth century when nude women were painted with the woods as background, they were often associated with innocence and purity of nature, thus eliminating some of the erotic overtones. Although that seems to be true for certain clothed female screen figures, it certainly is not for others. See van Hook, "The Ideal Woman in American Art" (Ph.D. diss., Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, 1988), 201.

[82] Ibid., 121.

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The women in Dewing's screens are available, sensual, and sexual. The fact that he painted them in classical (or neoclassical) garb further removes them from the strictures of late nineteenth century mores and also alludes to the pagan world. Like many of his contemporaries in England and the United States, Dewing was inspired by antique Greek Tanagra figurines, classical Greek and Roman statuary, and Italian Renaissance painting, influences that allowed him to make the women on his screens into even more idealized female icons.[83]

Komanecky states that these figures embodied in their proportions and lines the late Victorian ideas of "the Greek's inner spiritual state and harmony of body and mind," and represented Dewing's ideal of the modern woman: refined, delicate, "a spiritual and artistic mediator between nature and human intellect."[84] However, this straightforward reading of the image should also consider what Robert Rosenblum has noted is the languid, but pervasive eroticism in Dewing's work. He specifically points to one of Dewing's images of a woman's pose where she is "stretching her elbows upward in a posture of sexual yearning."[85] The adoption of this sexual pose by the central figure in Morning Glories, seems to turn the title into a sly double-entendre.

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83 For a discussion of Dewing and his interest in Tanagra figures, see Hobbs, The Art of Thomas Wilmer Dewing, 100; and Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 159-61.

84 Ibid,, 159.

85 Robert Rosenblum and H.W. Janson, 19th-Century Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984), 456.

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While clearly related to the Art Nouveau cover image on the Revue des Arts Décoratifs, the women in Mucha's screen pretend to have, but somehow lack, chastity.[86] Mucha has ensconced them in symbolic landscapes; they represent Morning Awakening, Daybreak, Evening Reverie, and Nocturnal Slumber.[87] But their classically inspired clinging drapery, the sensual arrangement of their bodies, and the peach and golden tones of the prints produce a nauseating erotic atmosphere. Obviously created for a male viewer, these women resemble self-conscious courtesans (*demi-mondaines*) rather than the aristocratic women on Dewing's screen. Thus the screen, combining its potential function as a sexual barrier between male and female with its provocative image of sexual offerings, evokes erotic male-female encounters.

How society wanted women to be, how they were, and how they were portrayed by artists were often quite different.

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[86] Mucha produced various screens during his career including the Four Seasons of 1896, and a three-panel screen with images of the "The Flower," "The Pen," and "Reverie," in addition to the "Four Times of Day" (1899). See Michael Komanecky's catalogue essay on Mucha for a description of these screens in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 165-69. Mucha probably had ample opportunity to see and discuss folding screens with some of his contemporaries who made or were interested in folding screens. He taught with Whistler at the Académie Carmen, and may have seen Whistler's screen which was in his studio with him in Paris. Mucha also shared a studio with Gauguin, and designed stage sets and screens for Sarah Bernhardt and other theatrical productions. He layered his Art Nouveau style with Symbolist content and became increasingly interested in the occult and Rosicrucian and Masonic symbols. For a more in-depth study of Mucha, his screens, and his imagery, see Jirî Mucha, Alphonse Maria Mucha: His Life and Art (London: Academy Editions, 1989), 49-54, 110-19, and passim.

[87] Ibid., 115-16.

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Armand Seguin's only screen, The Delights of Life (1892-93) (see fig. 2), is slightly more obvious in its sexual message than Mucha's, and it displays a veritable cornucopia of pleasurable pastimes. In the far-right panel, a half-naked waitress, whose bare breasts appear to be offered up on the tray she carries, adds a distinctly erotic element.[88] Instead of the usual screen composition, in which a different symbolic woman was depicted on each panel, Seguin represents men and women (undoubtedly lower class) smoking, drinking, playing cards and billiards, listening to music, dancing, and eating. According to Jerold Seigel, these layered pleasures of late nineteenth century cafe life signal a "release of feelings and emotions that were repressed or restricted in every day life."[89] Although the circumstances behind the making of this screen are unknown, it represents an excellent compendium of influences, including earlier screen imagery, Japanese print inspired style (black outlines, flat color, and flattened perspective), depiction of contemporaneous cafe life, and sexual metaphor.

In 1902, two years after he painted his canvas Man and Woman, Bonnard created the most graphic screen image by a

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88 On this screen, the woman's breasts rhyme visually with the oranges on the table in obvious erotic symbolism. Traditionally, artists and writers have used apples as a symbol for a woman's breasts. See Linda Nochlin, "Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth Century Art," Woman as a Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1730-1970, ed. Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin (New York: Newsweek, 1972), 8-15, esp. 11.

89 Seigel, Bohemian Paris, 239.

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well-known artist of that time. Pair of Three-Panel Screens (fig. 31) depicts naked couples of satyrs and nymphs (perhaps Bonnard and Marthe, suggests Groom) engaging in sexual intercourse and frolicking rabbits that stretch across the upper and lower sections of the work respectively.[90] In keeping with his use of the folded screen as a sexual signifier in Man and Woman, Bonnard reinforces an equivalent reading of the Pair of Three-Panel Screens by disclosing what "should be" hidden, merging thrusting subject with undulating structure, and using couples and rabbits rather than the flora-entwined women to signal themes of sexuality and fertility. This pair of screens makes clear what other turn-of-the-century screens only implied. Moreover, they signal what Michel Foucault pinpointed as the increasing interest in the discussion, articulation, and investigation of sexuality in the late nineteenth century.

Several other scholars, too, have analyzed how at this time the beginning of research, publications, and discussions of gender and sexuality, coincided with political changes, the advent of the "new woman" in England or the "*femme nouvelle*" in France, a vast increase in pornography, and new types of visual images of men and women.[91] According to West, Freud's precursors,

[90] For a discussion of this screen, see Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 75-76 and Groom, Beyond the Easel, 171-73, 268.

[91] See the chapter on androgyny in West, Fin de Siècle, 68-85. Silverman writes, "The menace of the *femme nouvelle*,

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psychologists, anthropologists, and sexologists in England, Germany, France, Russia, and Italy, such as Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, Carl Ulrichs, and Richard von Kraft-Ebbing were already discussing the important concepts of gender roles and sexuality. In debating the place and role of women in society, these thinkers attempted to reinforce bourgeois values and argue against the political changes sought by women.[92] At the same time, there was widespread scholarly investigation of sexuality and homosexuality. But despite public outrage about these titillating topics, "once sex had entered the public forum, it was very difficult to drive it away."[93] The subject of sex had an immediate and powerful impact on literature and the visual arts. Many late nineteenth century European artists including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Aubrey Beardsley, Felicien Rops, Gustave Moreau, and Edvard Munch devised images of women such as Salomé, Medusa, Medea, and the Sphinx, to highlight issues of eroticism, androgyny, sensuality, and decadent sexuality. Sometimes these images cast women in a negative light,

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who left home and family for a career, pervaded contemporary journals between 1889 and 1898. . . . The periodicals presented the *femme nouvelle* as rejecting woman's position as the anchor of bourgeois domesticity. . . . The *femme nouvelle* inverted traditional sexual roles and threatened the essential divisions ordering bourgeois life: public from private, work from family, production from reproduction." See Silverman, Art Nouveau, 63. For other issues pertaining to the need of French society and the government to maintain the marital status quo, see Bernheimer, Figures of Ill-Repute, 235, 259.

92 West, Fin de Siècle, 68-70.

93 Ibid., 68-9.

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emphasizing Woman as evil and "the enemy".[94] But these are not the types of images that appear on folding screens of the period. The sexuality expressed on the screens is a sensual, erotic sexuality, not yet a decadent one.

Edouard Vuillard's Four-Panel Screen (ca. 1895) (fig. 32), a portrait of two known people, pushes the notion of the screen as an articulation of gender roles and a metaphor for sexuality to another, more self-conscious level.[95] Vuillard's screen shows the interior of a room dominated in the foreground on the three left panels by a large round table with a sprawling floral arrangement and a vase on it. The table is seen from above in the flattened Japanese-inspired perspective at work in the rest of the composition. The table visually separates the male figure who is seated on the far side "above" the table in the second panel from the left and the woman seated to the right of the table whose white dress flows across the two right-hand panels. The plaid rug in the foreground, the diamonds of the tile floor in the middleground, and the view through the doorway in the background, lead the eye toward greater abstraction

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[94] Ibid., 68-103, esp. 93-4. See also Rosenblum and Janson, 19th-Century Art, 454-61; and Bram Djikstra, Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[95] Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 147-48. When I first examined the screen in June 1982, I found that, unfortunately, much of the distemper has flaked off the canvas. It had been mounted flat to help preserve what was left of the painting.

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and emptiness of form and space. The room seems sparsely furnished, yet it is the two people who fill the space.

Vuillard's work is unlike all other screens by turn-of-the century artists. Influenced perhaps by the Symbolists' interest in probing a person's mental depths, Vuillard's screen harbors an unusual psychological and sexual tension.[96] In fact, Vuillard's screen is more in keeping with Matisse's 1909 painting Conversation (a tense portrait of his marriage in which Matisse and his wife stare at one another across the entire width of the canvas), than with the playful tone, stylized figures, and more overt sexuality in Mucha's Four Times of Day, Seguin's The Delights of Life, and Bonnard's Pair of Three-Panel Screens.[97] Vuillard recognized and reflected some key issues of sexuality for bourgeois and aristocratic women. This interest goes well beyond what Gloria Groom has characterized as Vuillard's "image of women as both ornamental and expressive."[98]

The Vuillard screen was commissioned by one of his principal patrons, Stephane Natanson, whose portrait appears on the second panel. He sits in three-quarter profile, his chin propped in his hand, staring across the room at Misia,

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96 Seigel, Bohemian Paris, 256.

97 Jack Flam has noted the psychological implications in this painting. See Jack Flam, Matisse: The Man and His Art, 1869-1918 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 250-252. See also Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Matisse: His Art and His Public (1951; New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966), 126.

98 Groom, Vuillard, 41.

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the wife of his cousin Thadée Natanson. Misia's hair covers her face, her back is up against the wall (and the edge of the screen), and her body reclines in such a subtly suggestive way that there seems to be some covert relationship between her and the man who studies her so carefully and predatorially. The distance between the two figures is reinforced by the space in the image, even more apparent in its earlier folded format. Even if we did not know the identities of these two figures, the sexual tension between them and their shared psychological alienation would be clear. The woman is faceless for the viewer, a potential object of male contemplation and perhaps even a fantasy, a "decorative" (read sexual) accoutrement for any room. But at the same time the woman appears unattainable. She seems to recoil from the man and to reject his objectifying gaze. Vuillard rendered her gender role in a way that is unusually more complex and protean for the period.

Misia Natanson was, in fact, a complicated and compelling woman. According to her biographers, Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, she "took it for granted that not only was her husband in love with her, but so, more or less, were all his friends. It was the thing, to be in love with Misia."[99] Misia was an enormous flirt, and Vuillard,

[99] Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, Misia: The Life of Misia Sert (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 38. Gold also makes clear that Misia did not marry Thadée in 1893 because she passionately loved him, but rather because she needed to be loved, she admired him, and they amused each other. In 1905, Misia married a wealthy tycoon, Alfred Edwards, who had ruined Thadée in order to pursue and win her. Then, in

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himself, was smitten.[100] In the screen, Vuillard reveals Stephane as another of Misia's admirers, though certainly not one who will attain what he seeks. The composition, the tilted picture plane and the space once fragmented by the folds of the screen all reinforce this reading.

As contemporary photographs reveal, Misia was involved in decorating her house with William Morris style wallpapers and fabrics in a manner that resembled Vuillard's painted interiors, and the artist, in turn, "could hardly wait to paint Misia's flat and Misia in it."[101] Gold and Fizdale argue that Vuillard's paintings in the late 1890s were "a lyric sublimation of Vuillard's love for Misia."[102] Although this screen is tentatively dated ca. 1895, one could argue for a redating of ca. 1897 after Vuillard had declared his love for Misia.[103] Given this biographical context, it even seems possible to consider the screen as a projection of the emotional and physical distance between the artist and Misia

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1920, she married José-Maria Sert, her long-time lover, who was a society painter as well as a set designer for Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes. Perhaps not coincidentally, many designers and artists working for the Ballets Russes, including Sert, designed folding screens.

100 Ibid., 68-74.

101 Ibid., 39.

102 Ibid., 72.

103 Gold and Fizdale remark on Vuillard's love for Misia: "Although he never actually names her, it is clear that his hopeless love for Misia was making him unhappy." They quote a passage of a letter dated 20 July 1897 and written to fellow painter Felix Vallotton by Vuillard who was staying at Villeneuve-sur-Yonne with the Natansons: "There are really bad moments to conjure away. It seems to me that it would be cowardly to leave; otherwise I would escape at once or go and be desperate somewhere else..." Gold and Fizdale, Misia, 69.

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with Stephane Natanson, Vuillard's patron, as the stand-in for the artist. But, above all, this image is about the gaze: a man looking at a woman, the woman avoiding looking at the man, and the artist watching the man gazing at the woman. Ironically, this "gaze-intense" picture is on an object that is designed specifically to block the gaze.

Vuillard's screen is also unusual in that it would have made emotional demands on the owner and his guests once installed in his home. This screen is unsettling even today, and it manifests the idea, quite popular in France at the end of the nineteenth century, of using interior decoration to feminize and emotionalize space. The decorative arts were cultivated and promoted by aesthetes, politicians, entrepreneurs, and practitioners as a way for France to regain its superior position as the world's producer of luxury craft items. While this impetus may have been responsible for the creation of many folding screens, there was also a more deeply rooted motive. As Gloria Groom explains, one of the Nabis' important contributions was:

> to broaden the definition among progressive artists and critics from (decorative art's] traditional association with architectural embellishment and artifice to a type of painting complete in and of itself.[104]

Screens with female imagery such as those by Bernard, Bonnard, Seguin, Vuillard, Mucha, and Dewing were specifically designed to draw attention to the screen as a female object. At the same time, the screens were decorated

[104] Groom, Vuillard, 11.

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with women in various symbolic and actual roles, they referred to the function of the screen as a barrier between male and female, and they projected a strong female presence in a room.

As Groom explains, Vuillard amplified this psychological concept and his "young women...are not merely decorative elements and embellishments of space, but serve as purveyors of mood."[105] Many scholars have shown how French eighteenth century furniture was designed specifically to create a female-focused environment. The Goncourts in particular nurtured this vision and highlighted the fact that eighteenth century noble women were practitioners of various arts including embroidery, découpage, and printmaking. They even noted that some furnishings, diminutive in proportion, were devised for and named after female activities.[106] Women's clothing and accessories were fashioned to harmonize with the nature-inspired shapes and motifs of eighteenth century furniture, upholstery, wall decorations, and paintings, so that the woman herself was, in effect, the finishing touch for an interior.[107] Learning perhaps from the Goncourts,

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105 Groom, Vuillard, 80.

106 Silverman notes that "[t]he Goncourts' writings revealed the participation of noble women in various crafts, from the embroidery circles of Saint-Cyr to Madame de Pompadour's engravings." See Silverman, Art Nouveau, 27, 319 n38.

La toilette, for example, is the name for "both the small dressing table for women and the art of women's preparations of their bodies and clothes for display". Ibid., 28.

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some artists and artisans in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries adopted the concept of feminine interior space for their furnishings and art.

The Art Nouveau designer Georges de Feure created a Boudoir de L'Art Nouveau Bing in Siegfried Bing's Pavilion at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris (fig. 33). A boudoir may be defined as a type of interior "that had been developed in the eighteenth century for the intimate reception of female guests."[108] The word "boudoir" (from the French word *bouder*, which means to retire alone) actually refers to a woman's dressing room or private sitting room. But subsequently it acquired erotic connotations as an amorous meeting place for both sexes. Henry Havard was explicit in his 1884 description: "One will say of this woman that her house is chaste, one will say it of her bed. It would be profoundly ridiculous to speak of her chaste boudoir."[109] And J.-K. Huysmann, who used Edmond de Goncourt

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[107] Silverman adds, "The ensemble of the eighteenth-century *style moderne* was completed by the aristocratic woman as an objet d'art, fashioned as an integral part of the interior...(then) a special artisan appeared to unify all the elements of the scheme: the *marchande des modes*...The *marchande* provided the trimmings and accessories for the dresses and the furniture, co-ordinating woman's dress with the other curvaceous and meandering surfaces of the interior." Ibid., 30, 319 n44.

[108] Troy, Modernism, 41.

[109] "[L]e boudoir est devenu de nos jours une sorte de petit salon...L'image d'une femme vertueuse, distinguée, réservée, ne s'associe que difficilement avec les pensées toujours un peu troublantes qu'évoque le mot boudoir. On dira de cette femme que sa maison est chaste, on le dira de son lit. Il serait profondément ridicule de parler de son chaste boudoir." Henry Havard, L'Art dans la maison: grammaire de l'ameublement (Paris: Ed. Rouveyre et G. Blond,

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as a model for his protagonist Des Esseintes in his quintessential Symbolist novel A Rebours (1884), began that book with this description of Des Esseintes's boudoir:

> In other days, when he was still in the habit of inviting women to his house, he had fitted up a boudoir where, amid dainty carved furniture of the light-yellow camphor-wood of Japan, under a sort of tent of pink Indian satin, the flesh tones borrowed a soft, warm glow from the artfully disposed lights sifting down through the rich material.[110]

Clearly aware of the several uses and meanings of a boudoir, De Feure navigated between them in his conception. In a review for the Studio, Gabbier Mourey described de Feure's luxurious environment as possessing gilded furniture, upholstery of silk embroidery, brocade on the walls and divan, silk carpets on the floor and "in one corner ... a screen, a perfect gem of art."[111] De Feure designed his Three-Panel Screen to harmonize with all the other pieces in his boudoir.[112] De Feure confined the female

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1884), 368. See also Havard, Dictionnaire de l'ameublement, 1: cols. 363-69.

[110] J.K. Huysman, Against the Grain (New York: Hartsdale House, 1931), 89 [originally published as A Rebours (Paris: 1884)].

[111] Gabriel Mourey, "Round the Exhibition.-I. The House of the 'Art Nouveau Bing,'" Studio 20 (1900): 180, as quoted in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 85.

[112] I would argue that it is necessary to see de Feure's room ensemble like a theatrical stage design. De Feure described his theory on painting stage sets, saying, "The artist should paint the scenery to conform with the leading idea of the poet, inserting the unexpressed motifs, the muted colours, the revealing secondary planes, and should be content to introduce of his own accord only that measure of individuality which is necessary to transform the whole," as quoted in Philippe Julian, The Triumph of Art Nouveau: Paris Exhibition 1900, trans. Stephen Hardman (New York: Larousse & Co., 1974), 117-18. One could say that this almost

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figures on this screen to corner spaces elegantly delineated by gilded whiplash shapes, but their presence underscores the feminine atmosphere of the room. Komanecky notes that these female figures (two on the left panel, three on the right) are well-dressed, playing with their dogs in a park.[113] He also remarks that de Feure's women bear a strong resemblance to the figures painted by Bonnard and Vuillard.[114] While it is likely that de Feure had actually seen the screens of Bonnard and Vuillard, what is most noteworthy here is the presence of females on a screen formulated as part of an integrated interior ensemble. In the eighteenth century, a woman's *presence* was required to complete a room, at the end of the nineteenth century, the woman could be physically present or she could be represented on a screen.[115]

As we have seen, the concept of the screen as a sexual metaphor was just beginning to be addressed through specific imagery on turn-of-the-century screens. The fact that many artists showed an interest in this concept reflects the renewed emphasis on the feminization of interior domestic

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perfectly describes what one has to do when designing furniture and a room ensemble for a patron.

[113] Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 86.

[114] "There is at least a generic stylistic similarity between de Feure's figures and those of Bonnard and Vuillard. In addition, both of the latter by 1900 had done either painted or lithograph scenes of elegantly dressed ladies in parks; these scenes may well have been known to de Feure." Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 117 n 151. De Feure may well have seen Bonnard's 1891 Femmes au Jardin screen, for example.

[115] Silverman, Art Nouveau, 30.

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space; the changing social, political, and artistic role of women; and new research and interest in the topics of gender and sexuality. Inspired to make screens or commissioned to do so, artists sometimes used the format to explore issues of femininity and sexuality, apparently well aware of eroticized meanings carried by screens.

Throughout Europe and the United States, a wide range of artists, architects, designers, and craftsmen who were rethinking the decorative arts were also beginning to see the folding screen "not as another type of painted canvas but rather as an object whose framing elements and very form were considered as important as the choice of image."[116] For example, the furniture designers Carlo Bugatti, Josef Hoffmann, Gustav Stickley, and Gebrüder Thonet created handsome screens which often avoided figural or representational imagery in favor of an emphasis on craftsmanship, and pushed the screen into a more utilitarian, architectural, or sculptural role.[117] However, even though some of their screens focus on the neutral functional and decorative aspects of the format, certain late nineteenth and early twentieth century artists and critics such as August Endell, Hermann Obrist, Wilhelm Worringer, and Wassily Kandinsky were already beginning to advocate and celebrate the production of meaning through

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[116] Komanecky, "A Perfect Gem of Art," in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 84.

[117] For a discussion of this type of screen, see Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 86-99, 106-8, 170-85.

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pure abstraction in both painting and the applied arts.[118] Even so, the distinct sensuality and covert eroticism underlying the formal qualities in the work of Scottish designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh, for example, have only gradually been interpreted.[119] And it is with these concepts of meaning within abstraction in mind that I will approach my analysis of Gray's 1923 Block Screen.

Over the course of the twentieth century, artists pushed the screen's tendencies even further as they discovered and experimented with the screen's versatility as a symbolic, not just a practical, structure. The twentieth century screens that can be construed as fully realized sexual metaphors represent an increasingly explicit examination and representation of sexuality also visible in

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[118] See Wassily Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, trans. and intro. M.T. H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977). First published as Über das Geistige in der Kunst (Munich: 1911), reprint of The Art of Spiritual Harmony (London: Constable and Company, Limited, 1914); Wilhelm Worringer, Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style, trans. Michael Bullock (1908; New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1963); Siegfried Wichmann, Hermann Obrist: Wegbereiter der Moderne (Munich: Stuck Villa, 1968). For a discussion of the turn-of-the-century fascination with symbolizing meaning through abstraction, see Long, Kandinsky, 6-11, 158 nn 40-47.

[119] For a discussion of the masculine and feminine elements in Mackintosh's work, see Roger Billcliffe, Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Complete Furniture, Furniture Drawings and Interior Designs (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1979), 9-21. Two more recent historians of Mackintosh's work ponder extensively the notion of the erotic and sexual in his art. See Brett, C.R. Mackintosh, 1992); and William Eadie, Movements of Modernity: The Case of Glasgow and Art Nouveau (New York: Routledge, 1990).

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other art forms.[120] Perhaps not surprisingly, the reasons why twentieth century artists executed screens were often similar to those of their predecessors: personal necessity, artistic experimentation, or private commission; an interest in integrating art and life; a fascination with the changing conception of sculpture; the importance of dance, opera, theater, and/or performance on the visual arts; the inspiration of non-Western art and cultures; and/or the metaphorical potential of the folding screen.

Beyond an artist's personal history and motivation, other cultural developments would have led him/her to produce a sexually-charged screen. Prior to World War Two, three developments directly influenced the eroticization of the folding screen. Freud's theories on sexuality and sexual difference and on the importance of dreams and the unconscious, were read, debated, and incorporated by many artists, not just the Surrealists, into their aesthetic attitudes and informed their iconography and metaphorical intentions. Beginning in 1909 in Paris the Russian-born impresario, Serge Diaghilev, formulated productions for his Ballets Russes which were luxurious, sensuous, and sometimes erotic, and which affected the fine and applied arts, interior design, and fashion in France, and to some extent in England and the United States. With an increase in rights and choices for women in Great Britain, France, and the

[120] There are many books and articles which focus on the topic of a sexual reading of art. For example, see Nead, The Female Nude.

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United States, female artists became more prevalent, resulting in a new aesthetic examination of female experience and sexuality, and hence different imagery and meaning in their art and their screens.

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CHAPTER IV

AN EROTIC ENIGMA: EILEEN GRAY'S BLOCK SCREEN (1922-25)

Renouncing certain rules is only possible
by inventing new ones.

--Eileen Gray

Sometime during 1922, the Irish expatriate artist, designer, and architect Eileen Gray completed her first free-standing Block Screen. Its design was simple, modern, revolutionary, and, as we shall see, erotic. Renouncing the longstanding format of the traditional folding screen, with its solid rectangular panels hinged together, Gray devised a new structure for her fifteen known variations of the Block Screen in which rows of wooden blocks lacquered or painted black or white rotate on metal rods. In each Block Screen, the blocks do not touch one another; in fact, the space between the blocks sets up a dynamic rhythm of solids and voids so that a Block Screen constantly assumes varying configurations and meanings.

The screens differ in several ways. Of the documented versions of the Block Screen, eight are all black; six are all white; a 1975 version is red lacquer with gold. Some screens have blocks which are smooth on both sides, while others have slightly raised rectangular areas on one or both sides. In addition, the dimensions and numbers of the blocks within a given screen, the numbers of the rows, and the type

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of metal (brass or aluminum) used for the rods varies in each Block Screen. My description of the physical variations of the different Block Screens will reveal Gray's constant experimentation.

In his attempted catalogue raisonné at the back of his biography of Gray, Adam lists the variants of the block screens as six black lacquer, five white lacquer, and a red lacquer with gold.[1] I have found two other black versions and one white version which are not documented in Adam's book. All the screens vary in the disposition of the large blocks and smaller blocks, and the height and width of the rows of blocks. In the absence of specific dates for each screen, I will describe them in expanding size.

The smallest version of the black lacquer Block Screen (Adam catalogue number 3.1), has three full size blocks (15 3/4" wide) on the bottom row along the floor with half size blocks on either end of the next row framing two large panels. This alternating structure carries on for seven rows in height producing an ABABABA vertical rhythm. The blocks are plain black lacquer on both sides and when approached, the shiny blocks hazily reflect the viewer's image. The large horizontal blocks are balanced by the vertical emphasis of the smaller ones.

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[1] Adam, Gray, 381. Because it was created at such a late date, I am not discussing the 1975 red lacquer variant here. I have used Adams's catalogue raisonné cautiously; it appears to have a number of mistakes in it, so that all information needs to be considered in that light.

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Part of the pleasure and intrigue arises because the sense of space in between the blocks shifts depending on the angle at which one views the screen. The photographs sometimes show the blocks of the screens arranged in perpendicular angles to the ones above. Other times they are in more haphazardly positioned angles which softens the geometric aspect of the screen.

The black lacquer Block Screen (Adam 3.5) (fig. 34), owned by the Victoria and Albert Museum, is also seven rows high with an ABABABA vertical pattern, but the rhythm across the screen is more asymmetrical. Reading from left to right on the bottom row are three horizontal blocks and one vertical block at the end. This reverses in the next row which starts with a small block and is followed by three equal horizontal blocks. In addition, the large horizontal blocks in rows two, three, four, and five, counting from the bottom, have a slightly raised rectangular area within each block which gives the screen a slight bit of texture while adding to its asymmetrical feel. It is important to note that this screen was finished in 1971. It is not known whether or not the blocks were leftover from Gray's initial enthusiasm for block screens in 1922-25, which might account for some of the blocks having raised centers. She was no longer in the business of making lacquer pieces in the 1970s, so that the red lacquer Block Screen, for example which recalls a color she used in a few pre-World War I

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pieces, may have been crafted by someone else based on her design.

A third Block Screen (Adam 3.2) (fig. 35), which is seven rows tall, is in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Here the bottom row consists of five horizontal rectangular blocks, with the next row consisting of a small, more vertical block on each end framing four horizontal blocks. With the configuration of the small blocks on the end of every other row, this version resembles the first Block Screen (Adam 3.1) discussed, but because of the addition of two horizontal blocks in each row it has a more square aspect overall.

I have not yet located the other black Block Screen (Adam 3.3) seven rows tall which Adam lists as being in a private collection. Two other black lacquer block screens which are eight rows high have been located and documented by Adam. One of these (see fig. 8 above) has a provenance from the collection of one of Gray's lovers, Jean Badovici. This screen's bottom row starts with a small block, followed by four horizontal blocks, and ends with a small block. The row above has five horizontal blocks to create an ABABABAB pattern of rows. Gray's emphasis in this Block Screen is horizontal as opposed to vertical in the narrower versions, and thus she created a wall-like effect. The dynamism of the screen is continued by the raised section on each panel and the open and irregular arrangement of the blocks.

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Photographed in a less formal, more accordionlike way the eight row high block screen is lacquer screen seen here in Gray's own apartment on Rue Bonaparte and now in a private collection (Adam 3.6) (fig. 36). Its exact rhythm across the screen is only partially visible. From the angle of the photograph the right side seems fairly open and we see indecipherable things through it whereas the left side seems closed and impenetrable. When pushed together as it is here, its vertical and metamorphic qualities are reinforced.

Since the publication of Adam's biography, two nine row high black block screens have come to light. One is lacquered with four large horizontal blocks on the bottom and a second row of two small ones framing three horizontal ones (fig. 37). The horizontal blocks have a raised rectangle on them. Pairing its height with a relatively narrow width, Gray emphasized verticality and openness in this screen.

The other nine row Block Screen (fig. 38) is painted, derives from Jean Badovici's collection, and is discussed by Constant in her book to be the 1922 prototype for all subsequent free standing Block Screens.[2] It is the most massive of the block screens thus far documented. Five horizontal blocks make up the bottom row with the row above composed of a small vertical block on either end with four horizontal rectangles in the middle. The only deviation in this ABABABAB rhythm occurs in the top row where two

[2] Constant, Gray, 43, 65.

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horizontal blocks give way to two small vertical panels in the middle followed by two horizontal blocks. This changes the feel of the row as well as the screen. It creates an unexpected caesura and to my knowledge was a pattern not used again by Gray in her block screens.

It is also probable that Gray made her white painted Block Screen as a prototype prior to creating a pair of white lacquer Block Screens for exhibition in her Bedroom-Boudoir for Monte Carlo, installed in the 1923 Salon des Artistes Décorateurs in Paris. This ten row high painted version is now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 39). Here she designed the screen using five horizontal blocks on the bottom row and two small blocks flanking four horizontal blocks on the row above, alternating as such five times. Adam did not record this version in his catalogue.

The white blocks in contrast to the black blocks place a greater emphasis on the solid areas of this sculptural screen when photographed against a black background. However, the pair of white lacquer Block Screens (Adam 4.1 and 4.2) (fig. 40) was exhibited in the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs against light colored walls and flanking a screen with a black background and geometric designs. Here, the voids or spaces between the white blocks stand out and give the white Block Screens a light, airy quality. This pair of screens, now in a private collection, has a similar though larger configuration to the black Block Screen now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. On the bottom row Gray began

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with a small vertical block and followed it with four horizontal blocks. Then she reversed the pattern in the row above so that the four horizontal blocks come first and are followed with the small vertical block at the right end. Each screen is eleven rows high. This configuration makes the screens appear more defined. The pair, installed in the Bedroom-Boudoir for Monte Carlo, function like parentheses enclosing and emphasizing the bedroom section and separating it from the work area and the sitting section in the rest of this multi-use room.

A different effect is achieved with the pair of white lacquer Block Screens (Adam 4.3 and 4.4) (fig. 41) Gray placed in her Paris apartment, although their whereabouts are now unknown. In the undated photograph, the two screens are in front of two windows, behind and on either side of a large desk. Each are ten rows high and, from what is discernible in a partial view of each screen, there are four or five horizontal blocks on the bottom row, possibly with a vertical panel either framing three horizontal blocks or one vertical followed by four horizontals on the row above. There appear to be raised panels on the horizontal blocks. The white screens almost disappear in front of the light-filled windows and create an open, wavering effect. Thus the world outside the windows is carved up, but still visible through the orifices created by the rotating blocks.

On the surface, Gray's Block Screen appears to be a work with no content. Like many screens, it carries no

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specific image of its own. Yet, because of its apertures, the Block Screen plays with and within its surrounding environment, developing metaphorical meanings. Against a wall, it articulates and enlivens the wall and its spatial area. But it is simplistic to assume that a Block Screen is a merely an Art Deco furniture backdrop. Even though the installation photographs taken during Gray's lifetime frequently show it standing near a wall, each Block Screen must be understood within its particular context as well as a broader one. These contexts may endow the Block Screen with a range of meanings. Consequently, it is also imperative to analyze the Block Screen as an abstract sculpture. For example, if the Block Screen is placed at an angle to or away from the wall, it becomes an animated theatrical participant in the ever-changing aspect of a room. Instead of functioning as an opaque obstructer, the perforated Block Screen is like a series of open windows or peepholes,[3] an object punctured with revelatory orifices for viewers on either side of the structure. No longer functional as a shield against drafts, light, or vision; no longer useful as a discrete dressing partition; no longer a

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[3] Although Lorenz Eitner in his article, "The Open Window and the Storm-tossed Boat: An Essay in the Iconography of Romanticism," Art Bulletin 37, 4 (December 1955): 281-290, deals with nineteenth-century paintings of windows looking from the interior out to the exterior, he describes the image in a way curiously analogous to Gray's Block Screen: "The window is like a threshold and at the same time a barrier. Through it, nature, the world, the active life beckon, but the artist remains imprisoned, not unpleasantly, in domestic snugness." (p. 286)

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total obstacle between the observer and the observed, Gray's screen allows what is hidden to become partially visible and almost within reach, or at least suggests this possibility. While some photographs exist which show one or two block screens installed by Gray either in her own apartment or in an exhibition setting, other block screens were given to friends or sold to clients and to my knowledge there is no written or photographic documentation describing how and where they were arranged. Their physical construction, however, allows for a variety of possible configurations far different from a traditional screen.

By 1922, Gray was beginning a transition from being a figurative artist and furniture designer to being an interior designer and architect with an abstract vocabulary. Nonetheless she incorporated ideas from the symbolic, erotic, and sexually ambiguous images visible on her early functional objects and panels paintings into the abstract phase of her aesthetic vision. However straightforward and controlled the Block Screen may appear, I would argue that it is a highly complex structural and metaphorical object, encompassing a highly erotic symbolism. In her essay "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," art historian Anna Chave develops a methodology for addressing the sexualized symbolism of seemingly formal abstract art.[4] Chave shows how Minimalist paintings and sculptures by Donald Judd, Dan

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[4] Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," Arts Magazine, 64, 5 (January 1990): 44-63.

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Flavin, Carl Andre, Frank Stella, and Tony Smith, art generally characterized as purely abstract, are "complicated" by "associations" and indeed, possess highly specific meanings. She is able to interpret Minimalist works by examining the objects in relationship to their titles; by analyzing the works within the context of the artists' statements and political views; and by considering the ways in which medium, scale, shape, weight, and placement of some works served to underscore an abstract iconography of virility and authority. In a parallel way, I would like to interpret the symbolic content of Gray's Block Screen by examining the artist's biography and her other works, considering the traditional and avant-garde cultural context in which she worked, and exploring the sexual climate and the psychological theories prevalent during this early phase of her art.[5] I will argue that the physical properties of the Block Screen, Gray's erotically tinged work prior to these screens, the meanings and metaphors manifested in the apartment renovation she was doing at the time of her invention of the Block Screen; and her apparent switch from a lesbian lifestyle to taking a male lover, architect Jean

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[5] Constant's 2000 book on Gray reveals and interprets much more about her life and her art than any prior publication. Earlier bibliography was more documentary and often conflicting. Unfortunately, there are relatively few primary documents to consult. As Adam reports, "Shortly before her death she burned almost all the letters and photographs that concerned her personal life. The discretion she had manifested all her life prevented her from leaving any traces, except in her work. It was there that she wanted her passions and preoccupations to be read." Adam, Gray, 8.

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Badovici, provide a convincing context for reading and understanding Gray's Block Screen as an erotic and sexually ambiguous object.

As art historian Allen Weiss reminds us in his book, Perverse Desire and the Ambiguous Icon, Duchamp's sexually ambiguous ego produced objects where meaning was also sexually ambiguous, often doubling and redoubling back onto itself. Weiss writes that Duchamp's transsexualism was a search for identity so that:

> [t]he libidinized ego of narcissism is manifested, externalized, in aesthetic sublimation, where personal phantasms are transformed into collectively available cultural objects. The art object is thus the sign of an inner psychological experience, of a phantasm, but this does not/necessarily mean that it is a symptom, an effect: the art object is as much a sign of objective transformation as of subjective expression.[6]

Similarly Gray's bisexuality signals a certain sexual ambiguity, but unlike Duchamp, she was restrained and subversively controlled the revelation of these ideas and feelings. Duchamp was obscure, to be sure, in many of his artworks; Gray was masked and subtle, but readable. In the end, I believe my investigation will bring us closer to understanding Gray, her work, and the innovative, erotic nature of the Block Screen.

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[6] Allen S. Weiss, Perverse Desire and the Ambiguous Icon (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 75/76.

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Born in Ireland in 1878, Eileen Gray was the youngest child of wealthy and conservative parents: Eveleen Pounden, a descendant of an aristocratic Irish family named Gray, and James Maclaren Smith, a moderately successful painter.[7] Despite a lonely and repressed childhood, Gray emerged from her youth as a determined young woman. Following in her estranged father's footsteps, she decided to become an artist. During her initial two-year stint at the Slade School of Fine Arts in London (1901-02), Gray drew from antique statues, painted copies at the National Gallery and the British Museum, and qualified for the ladies' life class (fig. 42).[8] In 1902, however, she decided to move to Paris with two Slade classmates, Kathleen Bruce and Jessie Gavin.[9] There, all three continued their art education, initially at the Académie Colarossi and then at the Académie Julian.[10] According to design historian Philippe Garner, Gray moved back and forth between Paris and London for a period of several years, and even continued to attend the Slade as well. During this time, about 1907, she stumbled onto something outside her academic classes which radically changed her artistic personality.[11] One day, wandering in

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7 Ibid., 11.
8 Ibid., 21-23.
9 Ibid., 34.
10 Ibid., 26-34.
11 There is usually no specific date given for when Gray made the contact with D. Charles. See the following authors for their interpretations: Adam, Gray, 49; Avis Berman, "Eileen Gray: In the Vanguard of Twentieth-Century Design," Architectural Digest, 44, 5 (May 1987): 62, 66, 70; and Johnson, Gray, 11. However, Philippe Garner, quotes from a letter Eileen Gray wrote to him in 1972, where she states

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Soho in London, she saw a sign at 92 Dean Street for a shop where lacquer screens were repaired. She went up and met Mr. D. Charles and his two craftsmen who began to explain the complicated and time-consuming technique of making lacquer resin and lacquering wood. As she later asserted, "I was very interested, because I always wanted to learn lacquer; and so I said, 'I suppose I could never come here and work,' and they said, 'But you can--of course you can. Start Monday if you like.' And so I started and for years I was friends with them."[12]

By 1907 she had also rented her own apartment in Paris, at 21 rue Bonaparte, which she later bought and kept the rest of her life. Finally settled, Gray focused on the development of her own artistic expression. Through Mr. Charles or his contacts she met a Japanese lacquer artist named Sugawara who had originally been sent by the Japanese government to care for and repair their screens in the 1900 Exposition Universelle.[13] He had remained in Paris and was employed by Gray initially to continue to teach her lacquer techniques.[14]

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that she believes it was in 1907 when she met D. Charles. Garner, Gray, 11. Constant gives a date of 1902-02 in her book, Gray, 23.

12 Johnson, Gray, 11, 16, n 1.

13 According to Peter Adam, Gray's first exposure to lacquer screens was at the Victoria and Albert Museum. She may also have seen the Japanese lacquer screens at the 1900 Exposition Universelle which she visited with her Mother. Adam, Gray, 22, 25.

14 Ibid., 49-50; and Johnson, Gray, 14.

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The technique Gray was studying was an ancient one for applying Oriental lacquer, an exceedingly tedious and painstakingly precise craft. Eighteen to twenty-five thin, perfect layers of resin are built up on pieces of wood (each layer must dry for three days in a humid room). Pigment and applied decoration are added only in the last several coats.[15] Gray took extensive notes from Sugawara and was continually trying to achieve new colors and effects with her lacquer.[16] According to art historian Avis Berman:

> with its qualities of brightness, depth and smoothness, its flawless surface and its requirements of infinite patience and numerous technical intricacies, lacquering was congenial to [Gray's] extreme fastidiousness as an artist.[17]

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[15] "At least twenty-two steps are required in making lacquer. First, a thin coat of natural lacquer is applied to a smooth surface of wood. When this has dried, a second coat mixed with a fine earth imported from Japan is added in order to fill in any cracks in the wood; and onto this is laid a piece of stretched cloth, the purpose of which is to form a uniform base for subsequent coats of lacquer and to cushion any shocks or breaks that might damage the finished surface and permit the infiltration of water. From this point onward, as far as the artist is concerned, the object becomes lacquer, the wooden core having disappeared. Upon this base eight coats of lacquer and Japanese earth are added, each of which, when hardened, is carefully pumiced to make it absolutely smooth and unblemished. An eleventh coat is the first onto which pigment is introduced, and it is followed by two more coats, each of which is meticulously pumiced. Finally, several coats may be added introducing applied decoration (including such foreign materials as gold or silver leaf, bits of eggshell, or mother-of-pearl)." Ibid.

[16] The Archive of Art and Design in London acquired extensive drawings, press clippings, and papers from Miss Prunella Clough, Eileen Gray's niece. Among the papers is a notebook which contains her notes on lacquer (AAD 9/3-1980). Her first entry was dated 7 April 1914. Her last entry is dated 1921. See also Adam, Gray, 53-54.

[17] Berman, "Gray," 66.

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Although lacquer furniture and the craft of lacquering had been highly prized in eighteenth century Europe, they held no such status in early twentieth century Paris. Lacquer was regarded as exotic, a product of other cultures and other centuries. But for Gray, lacquer was like a "transitional object,"[18] a vehicle that allowed her to "separate" from her father who "painted mostly landscapes and portraits in the Italian manner,"[19] and to move into an innovative arena where she was something of a pioneer, especially as a woman. By taking up lacquer as a medium, Gray essentially sidestepped painting and sculpture, the imposed and imposing media of traditional Western art training. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar note about women and literature, all too often a "woman finds herself locked out of the societal power structure and locked into literary forms conceived by and written for men."[20] I would argue that the same could be said of subject matter and media in the visual arts, and that Eileen Gray, by choosing lacquer,

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[18] See D. W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 34 (1953), 433-456. For a discussion of his theory of transitional objects and their relationship to creativity, see Susan Deri, "Transitional Phenomena: Vicissitudes of Symbolization and Creativity," in Simon A. Grolnick et al., eds., Between Reality and Fantasy: Winnicott's Concepts of Transitional Objects and Phenomena (1978; Northvale, New Jersey and London: Jason Aronson Inc., 1988), 45-60. esp. 53. See also Susan Deri, Symbolization and Creativity (Madison, Wisc.: International Universities Press, Inc., 1984): 281-295.

[19] Adam, Gray, 12.

[20] See Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their book, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) as quoted in Shari Benstock, Women of the Left Bank, 7,

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was trying to avoid some of the preconceived patriarchal ideas about art. Lacquer both marginalized her and freed her. At least in the beginning, she was able to find her own niche and create her own rules.

Over the next several years, Gray designed lacquer tables, chairs, chests of drawers, screens, wall and door panels. By 1910, Sugawara was helping her with the lacquer work and, in addition, she employed a carpenter and a *polisseuse* (polisher).[21] She was even designing rugs, which were then woven by her friend Evelyn Weld.[22] Similar to her English predecessor Morris, Gray had turned from being a conventional artist to a craftsman, designer, and manufacturer. Gradually Gray became known for her innovative designs and superb lacquer work. She initiated the revival of Parisian-produced lacquer objects and, together with Jean Dunand, Leon Jallot, and others, created lacquer works including screens which became very popular in the era between the wars.

From the very beginning, however, Gray was type-cast as a furniture designer. Reviewers sometimes commented on the shapes, materials, and styles of her works, they rarely questioned or analyzed the content or meaning of her objects and room ensembles. Because of the bias against the decorative medium of lacquer, Gray's early work (1910-1919), especially her panel paintings and screens with provocative

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21 Adam, Gray, 63.
22 Ibid., 62-63.

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figural subject matter, have only recently begun to be studied.[23]

After 1908, French designers came under increased pressure to renew yet again the country's decorative arts tradition, to develop effective training and apprenticeship programs, and to surpass their European rivals in this field. As political enemies with Germany, the French were deeply perturbed as they saw their prominence in the area of luxury crafts and design being surpassed by the Germans.[24] Awed by the modern, integrated interiors presented by the invited Munich designers at the 1910 Salon d'Automne, many critics, politicians, and artists issued, in effect, a call-to-arms for the French designers "...to define and create a modern and uniquely French style,"[25] much as they had in the late nineteenth century. Art historians Yvonne Brunhammer and Suzanne Tise also note:

> the creation of a modern French style was all the more urgent in 1911 because of a government-sponsored project for an international exhibition of decorative arts to be held in Paris in 1915.[26]

This exhibition (ultimately postponed until 1925 when it became the defining Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes) was being developed by

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[23] Constant begins to delve into some analysis of Gray's early lacquer work. See her book, Gray, 15-35.

[24] See Nancy Troy's discussion of the political, economic, educational, and nationalistic factors which exacerbated the rivalry between France and Germany in the field of design during the early twentieth-century: Troy, Modernism, 52-67.

[25] Yvonne Brunhammer and Suzanne Tise, The Decorative Arts in France: La Société des Artistes Décorateurs, 1900-1942, trans. Jean-Marie Clarke (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), 26.

[26] Ibid., 26-27.

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René Guillère, the new President of the Société des Artistes Décorateurs in conjunction with other organizations dedicated to the resuscitation of French decorative arts.[27]

Though not French, Gray was a member of the Société des Artistes Décorateurs, and was undoubtedly aware of and possibly inspired by these exhortations as well as by the innovative approaches to interior designs such as those presented by André Mare and the Puteaux Group in their Maison Cubiste installed in the 1912 Salon d'Automne.[28] Designers such as Mare, Louis Süe, and André Groult, for example, were so-called *coloristes* and emphasized ensembles of bright and contrasting colors and pattern which were considered close to the hated German concepts whereas Leon Jallot and Maurice Dufrène, so-called *constructeurs*, derived their style from the French Art Nouveau tradition.[29] Yet the work Gray produced prior to World War I does not fit in either camp; it is unusual and idiosyncratic, a reflection more of her own inner state than of a new French national style the other designers were pursuing.

Gray's personal style was also driven in part by cultural necessities of her presumed homosexual orientation at this time in her life. Adam acknowledges, but does not

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27 Ibid., 27.

28 For extensive descriptions of the innovative, *coloriste* Maison Cubiste and its implications for French design, see Marie-Noelle Prädel, "La Maison Cubiste en 1912," Art de France, 1 (1961): 177-186; and Troy, Modernism, 79-96.

29 For the differences between the two types of designers, the *constructeurs* and the *coloristes*, see Troy, Modernism, 67-71.

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give dates or many specifics, pertaining to her lesbian relationships, whereas Constant is more forthcoming about Gray's affair with the singer, Damia.[30] As historian Peter McNeil observes, it is sometimes appropriate to adopt Robert Aldrich's term, 'homosocial' rather than 'homosexual' since 'homosocial is useful to refer to "'...close links, often exclusively so, between either men and women.'..." so that "'traces of sexual activity need not be proved before the subject can be explored.'"[31] For example, Adam notes that one of Gray's Paris roommates, Jessie Gavin, would often dress up like a man so they could frequent nightclubs together.[32] While such activity does not prove Gray's homosexuality, cross-dressing, although technically illegal in Paris, had been used by generations of lesbians (including Rosa Bonheur and Georges Sand) to gain access to the male world.[33] In early twentieth century Paris, this

[30] It seems, however, that when she met and came under the influence of Jean Badovici, an architect, an architectural critic, and the editor of L'Architecture Vivante, Gray probably expanded her sexual orientation during her close and intense relationship with him. At the same time she abandoned her early preferred medium of lacquer to pursue a career as an architect using modern materials including metals and plastics. Adam, Gray, passim., and especially 34, 68-70, 75-76, 88, 107-117, 191 and Constant, Gray, 9 and passim.

[31] Robert Aldrich as quoted in Peter McNeil, "Designing Women: Gender, Sexuality and the Interior Decorator, c. 1890-1940," Art History 17, 4 (December 1994): 635.

[32] Adam, Gray, 34.

[33] For articles and books on the issue and meaning of cross-dressing, see, for example, Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present (New York: Morrow, 1981); Jann Matlock, "Masquerading Women, Pathological Men: Cross-Dressing, Fetishism, and the Theory of Perversion, 1882-1935," Fetishism as Cultural Discourse,

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style was also cultivated by lesbians such as writer Radclyffe Hall and painter Romaine Brooks who wanted to get away from the asexual model of romantic friendship that was then prevalent, and replicate the structure of heterosexuality within lesbian relationships.[34]

There was a large lesbian community on the bohemian Left Bank in the 1920s, including such notables as poet Gertrude Stein and her companion Alice B. Toklas, writer Natalie Barney, dancer Ida Rubenstein, and singer Colette as well as Hall and Brooks. Although lesbianism was illegal, and was regarded with negativity in Parisian society at large, there was, fortunately for the adherents, a circle of supporters. In France, lesbians were not subjected to the harsh societal and judicial condemnation directed against gay men.[35] Indeed, women's same-sex couplings were often perceived with considerable ambivalence. Since women were generally assumed to have no sexual drive whatsoever, their close friendships were not as suspect or disturbing as those between men, although they were still suspect.[36] Historian Shari Benstock writes, "Although uncertain whether

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eds. Emily Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 31-61; James M. Saslow, "Disagreeably Hidden: Construction and Constriction of the Lesbian Body in Rosa Bonheur's Horse Fair," The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1992), 186-205); and Julie Wheelwright, Amazons and Military Maids: Women Who Dressed as Men in Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness (London: Pandora, 1989).

[34] Benstock, Women, 173.

[35] Ibid., 50-52,54-56.

[36] Faderman, Surpassing the Love of Men, 147-156.

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homosexuality was a biological accident or the product of social forces, virtually the entire medical establishment viewed it as an illness for which scientists sought a 'cure.'"[37] Gray's neighbor, Barney, who was famous for her literary salon, her poetry, and her promiscuity, worked tirelessly to reverse the image of lesbianism as sick, perverse, and something to be despised or cured.[38]

Whereas Barney flaunted her sexual preference, Gray, throughout her life, remained reticent about discussing her lovers and her lifestyle. And yet McNeil asserts that Eileen Gray's sexual orientation was important to her success:

> If the matter of sexuality is ignored, then the social networks in which women moved, the possible source of commissions and alliances, are also obscured. Eileen Gray, for example. mixed in Paris circles which included Romaine Brooks, Gabrielle Bloch and her lover Loïe Fuller, the singer Damia and Natalie Barney. Although Gray's biographer is coy regarding the designer's sexuality, the patronage of her lesbian associates undoubtedly assisted her venture, with Gaby Bloch taking charge of her business matters.[39]

At issue for Gray was not just her financial success, but also her aesthetic success which was similarly entangled with her homosexuality. There was no one apparent visual or literary style that adequately represented or articulated the moods and expression of this early twentieth century lesbian subculture. But although lesbian writers, for instance, lacked a voice, they used male heterosexual textual structures to express their difference. Thus, as

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37 Benstock, Women, 51.
38 Ibid., 268-307, esp. 289-290.
39 Peter McNeil, "Designing Women," 635.

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Benstock points out, Gertrude Stein was able to code her writings, using the language of patriarchy but subverting it through style. Benstock says,

> Stein dressed her celebration of lesbian eroticism in the garment of heterosexual grammar. The result was that for more than sixty years Stein's work was read as having *no* meaning, not read as having *double*--and exclusionary--meanings. Certainly no one suspected that this language simultaneously exposed the patriarchal assumptions of linguistic practice as it produced overdetermined texts according to that practice.[40]

I would argue that Gray, too, was engaged in a kind of secretive coding which pertains to issues of sensuality, sexuality, gender, and the body. Although her early works appear "readable" because they are figurative, and her later pre-1925 abstract objects such as the Block Screen seem "solved" by a straightforward, formalist analysis, in fact, all but the obvious meanings have escaped detection. The sexual content of her objects, for example, has been almost entirely overlooked by historians and critics.

Like Stein's writings, Gray's abstract works have been analyzed as having no meaning, rather than multiple ones. In both her book and an article on Gray, Constant has examined Gray's post-1925 furniture and architecture in terms of the symbolic and the subversive by highlighting Gray's use of all the senses in her materials, forms, and spatial arrangements.[41] Constant also noted that Gray wrote

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[40] Benstock, Women, 188. For Benstock's analysis of Stein's writing see pages 184-190.

[41] Constant, Gray, passim; and Constant, "E. 1027," 265-79.

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during the 1940s that, "The poverty of modern architecture stems from the atrophy of sensuality."[42] These concerns are all present in her early works. A detailed investigation of her early folding screens, wall panels, chairs, and tables, dated ca. 1912-15, which were created before she returned to England during World War I, reveals the symbolism she retained even as her work became more abstract.[43] The Block Screen, then, must be contextualized as an extension of her earlier symbolic interests and metaphors.

Gray experimented with several different styles and subject matter in these early paintings and objects, which often lack precise cataloguing and photographic documentation even in Adam's attempted catalogue raisonné. Because the works are often without firm dates, it is hard to establish a strict chronology of Gray's stylistic evolution. The panels and furniture dated 1912-1915 exhibit three main influences: Art Nouveau, classical and neoclassical art, and Japanese art, and reveal how Gray merged these styles with her unique lacquer medium and her personal explorations of sexuality, gender, and the body.[44]

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[42] As quoted in Adam, Gray, 216.

[43] Philippe Garner discussed notions of symbolism in Eileen Gray's work and career. Philippe Garner, interview by author, London, England, 22 November 1992. Caroline Constant also addresses the symbolic and subversive in Eileen Gray's art and architecture. See Constant, "E. 1027," 265-279.

[44] Adam's attempted catalogue raisonné does not include photographic documentation of each work (many works are missing). Because Gray did not date her work, dates could only be estimated. For example, Adam lists eight panels which date from c. 1912 through 1915, and he illustrates four of them (Adams, Gray, 58, 62, 76, and 77.) which are not necessarily the four he notes were exhibited at the

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Two works, a screen and a panel painting, both from about 1912, show how Gray incorporated influences of Aubrey Beardsley and possibly Gustav Klimt and Cézanne into her own personal vision and experimentation. The screen La Voie Lactée (The Milky Way) (1912) (fig. 43), was created for Gray's friend Florence Gardiner.[45] Now lost, the screen had four panels and was apparently made of midnight blue lacquer inlaid with mother-of-pearl.[46] An elongated figure strides across the two left panels, while the hair of the figure is the Milky Way, filled with countless stars trailing and fanning out across the screen to the right. The lean, small-breasted, slim-thighed figure (presumably female) reflects the preferred lesbian type as well as the influence of the English Art Nouveau painter Aubrey Beardsley and his affinity for idealized androgynous nudes.[47]

Salon de La Société des Artistes Décorateurs in 1913. (Ibid., 382.). This type of sketchy documentation tends to impede an analysis of Gray's oeuvre.

[45] Adam, Gray, 73, 381.

[46] A.S. "An Artist in Lacquer," Vogue (London) (Early August 1917): 29; Elizabeth de Clermont-Tonnerre, "The Laquer (sic) Work of Miss Eileen Gray," The Living Arts: A Portfolio Reflecting the Literary and Artistic Taste of Our Time (New York, London) 3 (March 1922): 147-148; Jean Badovici, "L'Art d'Eileen Gray," Wendingen series 6, 6 (1924): 12; and Adam, Gray, 73.

[47] Benstock, Women, 301-304; and Joseph Rykwert, "Eileen Gray: Pioneer of Design," Architectural Review (London), 152 (December 1972): 357. For a discussion of Beardsley's erotic meanings, see, for example, Charles Bernheimer, "Fetishism and Decadence: Salomé's Severed Heads," Fetishism as a Cultural Discourse, ed. Emily Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 77, 80; and Linda Zatlin, Aubrey Beardsley and Victorian Sexual Politics (London: Oxford University Press, 1990).

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Some evidence suggests that this screen commemorates Gray's 1912 trip to the United States with her sister Thora, Florence Gardiner, and Gaby Bloch, Gray's lover at that time.[48] Their journey included a train trip across the Rocky Mountains and La Voie Lactée seems to depict a mountainous night landscape.[49] The screen also implies and rejoices in the female connection to nature, a traditional theme for screenmakers. But, by Gray's time, the romantic vision between women and nature was changing; so was the imagery of women on screens, as evidenced by Bell's 1913 Bathers in a Landscape (see fig. 7 above).[50] Although Gray's figure is nude, she is not presented as an object for the male voyeuristic gaze. Symbolically larger than nature, she is in charge of herself and of the screen. Even though it is known only from a black-and-white magazine reproduction, La Voie Lactée remains a haunting, elegant, and enigmatic screen.

Equally haunting is Gray's unfinished panel painting with abstract areas surrounding a central section depicting several figures, probably female (fig. 44).[51] Although the whole is incomplete, the central frame of the panel shows four hands reaching up to the upper right corner of this

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48 Adam, Gray, 70.

49 No one has ever before mentioned this connection between La Voie Lactée screen and Gray's trip to the southwest of the United States.

50 Judith Collins, The Omega Workshops, 1913-1919: Decorative Arts of Bloomsbury (London: *Craftscouncil*, 1984), 35; Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 216-219; and Frances Spalding, Vanessa Bell (New Haven and New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1983), 121-122.

51 Adam, Gray, 77, 382.

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section. Two very abstracted, Modigliani-like, African-mask-inspired heads seem to go with these two sets of arms and hands. In the lower left corner of the central section is what appears to be a body seated on the ground, knees bent, with right arm following the contour of the right knee, the left arm stretched out to the left leg. While Adam seems to indicate that this panel may "have been influenced by the works of Gustav Klimt,"[52] it also contains a figure which recalls an image in the lower left corner of Paul Cézanne's The Large Bathers of 1898-1905.[53] Because the panel is unfinished, it is impossible to tell exactly what Gray had in mind for these figures. The two forms, whose gestures are so urgent and expressive, and who seem to be ascending into the sky, could be spirits or a mere daydream of the figure seated below. Possessing a light, expansive feeling, the panel shares the abstract style and ethereal tenor of La Voie Lactée.

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52 Ibid., 74.

53 It is important to note that Cézanne's The Large Bathers or earlier variants such as the oil on canvas Bathers, 1883-1885, in the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, inspired the figures in both Gray's panel and Bell's screen, Bathers in a Landscape. The importance of Cézanne's work for early twentieth century artists has been extensively discussed. See, for example, Silver, Esprit de Corps, passim. Clearly the retrospective of Cézanne's work at the 1904 Salon d'Automne in Paris and the inclusion of Cézanne's paintings in Roger Fry's 1910 London exhibition, Manet and the Post-Impressionists, left their mark on Gray, Bell and their contemporaries. Gray and Bell adopted Cézanne's bathers and his technique of facture to equalize and merge figure and nature rather than to juxtapose and highlight these two elements for the pleasure of the male erotic gaze.

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Another panel made by Gray around 1913 is completely different in style, subject, and influences.[54] It has a black lacquer surface with rose, red, silver, and ivory inlays, and depicts a Japanese lady in a landscape with a pet monkey on a leash and a figure of a child standing next to her. The frame with a flower in its upper left corner has been tentatively attributed to Suguwara.[55] It is not surprising that Gray, trained by a Japanese artisan in a Japanese medium, would try her hand at Japanese style and imagery. To my knowledge, this attempt is unique among her works,[56] even though she had been exposed to Japanese art including screens at the Victoria and Albert Museum and at 1900 Exposition Universelle.[57] In addition, her lover at the time, Gaby Bloch, had been the manager and ex-lover of the dancer Loïe Fuller.[58] According to Adam, Gray also knew Fuller and they shared a mutual interest in Japanese culture.[59]

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54 For dating of this work, see Adam, Gray, 62, 382. He dates this panel about 1913 on page 62 and then in his "Catalogue Raisonné" lists it as 1913/15. I feel that the 1913 date is more on target.

55 Ibid., 62.

56 The only other work which may be related in terms of an Asian theme is a fireplace panel entitled, Om omni padme Om, which are the first six syllables for a Buddhist chant. Adam lists this panel, which was exhibited in 1913 in the Salon des Arts Décoratifs, but there is no visual documentation. Adam, Gray, 382.

57 Ibid., 22.

58 Ibid., 68-69.

59 Ibid., 68. Fuller explained in her autobiography, Fifteen Years of a Dancer's Life, 207, "everything that comes from Japan has always interested me intensely." Fuller even sponsored a troupe of Japanese dancers on a tour around Europe at this time. One might speculate from this

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Another group of Gray's early works, in a neoclassical style, also focused on themes of sexuality and sexual ambiguity. In Le Magicien de la Nuit (La Forêt Enchantée) (1913) (fig. 45), three classically garbed figures are pushed into the foreground of a blue-and-red lacquer panel.[60] To the left is a robed female figure in profile with snakelike hair. In the center, a naked figure with a draped cloth over the left shoulder and a pointed hat quite reminiscent of Nijinsky's (fig. 46) in the scandalously erotic 1912 ballet L'Après-Midi d'un Faune holds a lotus flower, symbol of the female genitals.[61] This sexually ambiguous figure is presumably the "Night Magician." On the right a heavily robed figure of indeterminate sex, who might have stepped out of a John Flaxman relief, pulls at the covering of the central figure.[62] Gray's other classical and neoclassical sources undoubtedly included the Elgin marbles, Pre-Raphaelite paintings, Maurice Denis's murals for Le Théâtre de Champs-Elysées in Paris, and the costumes of

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evidence that Gray might have created the panel for, or in homage to, Loïe Fuller.

[60] Le Magicien de la Nuit was exhibited in the 1913 Salon d'Automne. See M.-Pillard Verneuil, "Le Salon de la Société des Artistes Décorateurs," Art et Décoration (1913): 91; and Adam, Gray, 76.

[61] According to the discussion and definition of lotus in Barbara G. Walker, The Women's Dictionary of Symbols & Sacred Objects (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), 429, the lotus flower in the ancient Indian, Egyptian, and Chinese cultures is, among other things, a symbol of the female, of the womb, the genitals (or *yoni*), and fertility. "Bearing bud, bloom, and seed pod together, a lotus is Virgin-Mother-Crone."

[62] Sarah Symmons, Flaxman and Europe: The Outline Illustrations and Their Influence (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984).

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dancers such as Ida Rubinstein and Isadora Duncan. But although this panel is neoclassical in garb, it is decidedly Art Nouveau and Ballet Russes in dramatic intensity. This is not simply a decorative scene; this panel seems to depict the beginning of a seduction. The tableau-like arrangement, the undercurrent of sexuality, and also the strong indications of androgyny and homosexuality recur here as in some of Gray's other early paintings. Issues of cross-dressing and sexual ambiguity are continually present in her early work.

Sometime between 1913 and 1915, Eileen Gray created another unusual panel (fig. 47). Surrounded by a brown lacquer frame, this red, silver, and blue-gray lacquer panel starkly presents two seemingly male figures fighting. With their cloaks flying, the figures, reminiscent of Japanese Kabuki actor or warrior prints, struggle over a knife.[63] The empty blue background accentuates the poignancy and drama of the scene which is nonchalantly observed from above by a female figure on the far left of the three balcony bays. Like a theatrical spectator in one of the upper tiers, this figure watches, clearly realizing that there is no stopping the struggle. If it were anything but a jealous quarrel between rivals, the observer would surely be reacting. And yet one cannot be sure. Instead the figure leans forward to see who is winning. The ambiguity about the meaning and

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[63] My thanks to Anne R. Fabbri for pointing out this connection to me.

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reason for this image, created for an audience for whom cross-dressing was *de rigeur*, is further emphasized by the purposeful androgyny of the figures.

As with the openings in the Block Screen, here Gray sets up an ironic game of looking and being looked at. Are we, as the viewers, like innocent passersby, who have chanced upon a fight? Are we the unseen audience in a theater watching a drama on stage? Or are we even further removed as the audience of a work of art about watching an actor watch a fight? These entwined levels of spectatorship and the conflation of real life and theatrical space will recur in the Block Screen ten years later. Despite the luxuriousness of the lacquer, this painting is not a pleasing decorative image, but an impassioned, provocative, operatic scene showing that Gray was not afraid to combine a "decorative" medium with serious subject matter.

Between 1913 and 1915 Gray designed and made the so-called Siren Armchair (fig. 48).[64] In French, *sirène* is the word used to indicate all mythological creatures who are part female and part animal. In English, on the other hand, a "siren" is one of a group of creatures in Greek mythology having the head and sometimes the breasts and arms of women but otherwise the forms of birds that lured mariners to destruction by their haunting singing. The creature on Gray's chair is actually a mermaid, an imaginary marine

[64] When this chair was in the gallery of New York dealer, Tony Delorenzo, he dated this chair as 1915 whereas biographer Peter Adam dates it 1913. See Adam, Gray, 59.

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creature usually represented with the torso of a woman and the tail of a fish.[65] The labeling in both French and English is important nonetheless since it emphasizes the nature of the chair as a seductive object, one which, at least metaphorically, lures and temporarily captures the sitter. The carving of the mermaid also seems to embody the two principal stylistic tendencies in Gray's work of 1912-15: the elongated, attenuated Art Nouveau-influenced figures, and the neoclassical images.

In 1914 Gray again intertwined classically inspired figures and enigmatic meaning in her magnificent screen Le Destin (figs. 49 and 50).[66] Although she covered the four-panel wooden screen in flat China-red lacquer as background on both sides, the screen reveals two completely different, and equally astonishing, silver-and-black images on recto and verso. Le Destin, or Destiny, is theatrically played out on the figurative side of the screen where a nude man, rushing in from the right, stops in horror at the sight of another nude person straining to carry on his/her shoulders an older, heavily robed figure. One immediately remembers the lines in Virgil's Aeneid that describe Aeneas carrying his father, Anchises, on his shoulders from the burning city

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[65] For the definition of *sirène*, see Denis Girard et al., eds., Cassell's French Dictionary, rev. ed. (1962; New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980), 684.

For the definitions of mermaid and siren, see Philip Babcock Gove, ed., Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster Inc., Publishers, 1986), 1414, 2127.

[66] Johnson, Gray, 16.

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of Troy. He travels to Latium in southern Italy, and his descendents, Romulus and Remus, found Rome.[67] Gray's image goes beyond the possible classical reference to Aeneas's destiny and alludes to the destiny which time, age, and chance holds for all of us.

It is evident that by now, Gray had thoroughly recognized the range of the folding screen's metaphoric potential. She used its physical properties to enhance and achieve her symbolic meanings in Le Destin. For instance, the abruptness with which the astonished figure stops is underscored by the isolation of his hand on the second panel from the right. The two-figure group is also detached, not only because there is no middleground or background, but because their mass is almost entirely contained within the second panel from the left. Whereas the panels of a folding screen structurally create visual articulation to symbolize movement, Gray works against that to establish stasis and thus even more tension in the scene much the way Goncharova does in her five-panel screen with iconic figures of Spanish women.

But Gray's image is also about change and flux, another characteristic of the screen's structure. Gray emphasizes this point on the screen's verso, which depicts a completely abstract image lyrically spinning into a vortex. This image

[67] As Troy burns, Aeneas says to his father, Anchises, "'Climb to my shoulders, father,/ It will be no burden, so we are together,/ Meeting a common danger or salvation.'" Rolfe Humphries, The Aeneid of Virgil: A Verse Translation, Book 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 56.

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is a complete contrast to the static and figurative recto image. Symbolically, the verso marks Gray's move away from her training in classical imagery and toward an interest in modernist abstraction. According to J. Stewart Johnson, Le Destin is a "*tour de force.*" Johnson explains,

> It is as if the artist, confident of her skill and imagination, were proclaiming her ability to move with equal ease in any direction she chose - either towards the sophisticated decoration espoused by such artists as Leon Bakst, Paul Iribe, and Georges Lepape, or towards rigorous modernism.[68]

It is undoubtedly Gray's finest work prior to World War I, and is important because it takes so many chances challenging the rules, an attitude which continues throughout the thirty-four screens she created in a variety of materials during her career.[69] No matter how beautiful the surface carving, the figural group is disturbing. Indeed, Gray said that she copied the drawing of a madman for one of the figures.[70] The tension of this image negates the purely decorative aspects of this work and heralded her continued thematic and visual innovations in the screen

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[68] Johnson, Gray, 16.

[69] In addition to using lacquer on at least twenty-seven screens, Gray created screens in painted wood, paint on canvas (1922-25), perforated metal mesh (1926-929), celluloid and metal (1930-35), and cork and wood (1970). Adam lists most of these screens. For many, their location is currently unknown. Several screens have surfaced after the publication of his list. Adam, Gray, 381-2.

[70] Adam describes the derivation of one of the figures in Le Destin bought from Gray's studio by the couturier, Jacques Doucet in 1913. "Eileen had been struck by a drawing of a madman she had seen at the famous La Salpêtrière hospital in Paris. She copied the main motif and 'added another figure to it,' using pewter against a deep red background." Ibid., 80.

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format. Although Gray never repeated the combination of figuration and abstraction on a folding screen in this precise manner, because of the voids in the Block Screen, the abstract and the human are allowed to interact randomly and superimpose themselves on one another.

Even this brief overview of some of the main themes of Gray's early work makes clear that her interest in symbolism went well beyond that of a designer of superficial, luxurious pictures in a medium that became noted and collected for precisely that. While Jean Dunand, Léon Jallot, and the other respected lacquerists in early twentieth century Paris tended to decorate screens, panels and other objects with pleasing landscape, animal, or purely ornamental imagery, far bolder references to classical, androgynous, exotic, and erotic themes dominate the first period of Gray's art.

One important source for these concepts in Gray's art must surely have been Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev's productions with his Ballets Russes which he initiated in Paris in 1909. Gray was living permanently in Paris at the time and according to her niece, Prunella Clough, Gray often attended the Ballets Russes.[71] Known for its lavish and

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[71] Adam remarks about the Ballets Russes that "[i]ts designers, especially Léon Bakst, strongly influenced fashion and decoration, with their splashes of color and Oriental patterns, and also left a mark on Eileen's designs." Later, in the 1920s, Gray's lover Damia urged her to try her hand at designing sets for the Ballets Russes. Ibid., 64, 108-11. Constant is more specific in her discussion of the impact of the Ballets Russes on Gray. "Inferring relationships among furniture, movement, and the

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exotic costumes and sets in styles which included classical, Russian, Near and Far Eastern as well as twentieth century avant-garde, the Ballets Russes's pieces, often designed by Léon Baskt as well as contemporary painters and sculptors, were sensuous and sometimes explicitly sexual in theme. In particular, Nijinsky in his 1912 ballet, L'Après Midi d'un Faune, epitomized on stage the classical ideal of male beauty and sensuality. According to contemporary reports, the end of his performance as the faun, love-sick for a wandering nymph, was clearly meant to signify masturbation and orgasm and shocked much of the audience.[72] A similar theme of implied eroticism is present also in Gray's works of this era including Le Magicien de la Forêt, the panel depicting the contemplative and floating women, and the Siren Armchair. Constant also finds that Gray's interior design and architecture were influenced by Nijinsky:

> Nijinsky's performances, merging masculine and feminine traits in a primitive eroticism that delighted Parisian audiences, had its counterpart in the overt sensuality that suffused Gray's particular union of furnishings and architecture,

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human body, Gray's choreographic concept drew inspiration from Serge de Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, simultaneously engaging dance, music, and decor." Constant, "E. 1027," 276, and n 47. She elaborates on these connections in her book, Gray, 18-9. See my discussion in this chapter of Gray's design of the Rue de Lota apartment as inspired by the Ballets Russes.

[72] For photographs of Nijinsky as the Faun and for a description of the scandal L'Après-midi d'un faune caused see, for example, Baron Adolphe De Meyer and Leslie George Katz, L'Après-midi d'un faune: Nijinsky, 1912 (New York: The Eakins Press Foundation, 1978); and Richard Shead, Ballets Russes (Seacaucus: The Wellfleet Press, 1989), 57-59, 62-63.

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> a quality that distanced her work from that of her 'functionalist' contemporaries.[73]

Like many of her contemporaries such as fashion and interior designer Paul Poiret,[74] Gray incorporated the lessons of the Ballets Russes: their manipulation of stage space, their emphasis on color, patterns, and materials, and their exploration of exoticism and eroticism, into her art, She applied them not only to the creation of paintings but also to alluring theatrical domestic interior design. Perhaps, too, it is not coincidental that artists such as Goncharova, Pablo Picasso, Giacomo Balla, and José-Maria Sert, who were commissioned by Diaghilev to create costumes and stage sets for various Ballets Russes productions, each subsequently designed at least one folding screen.[75] As I have discussed above, a folding screen as simultaneous painting, sculpture, and furniture can dominate and theatricalize the physical and psychological space of a

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[73] Constant, Gray, 19.

[74] Paul Poiret, the important early twentieth-century fashion designer, took the colors, the sensuality, the materials, and the styles of the Ballet Russes productions and transformed these elements into high-fashion clothing and domestic furnishings for his wealthy clients. See Palmer White, Poiret (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1973).

[75] For information on artists' folding screens which relate to their theatrical activities for Diaghilev, see: Komanecky and Butera, "Giacomo Balla," The Folding Image, 224-8; Virginia Dortch Dorazio, Giacomo Balla: An Album of His Life and Work, intro. Giuseppe Ungaretti (New York: Wittenborn and Company, 1969), n.p., Figs. 164-72; Giovanni Lista, Balla (Modena: Edizioni Galleria Fonte d'Abisso, 1982), 75-83; Mary Chamot, "Goncharova's Work in the West," Kunstlerinnen des Russischen Avantgarde (Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1979), 150; on Pablo Picasso: Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 209-10, 213 n 15; and Douglas Cooper, Picasso Theatre (orig. pub. Paris: Édition Cercle d'Art, 1967; New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1968), 47-9.

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room. The experience of designing for the stage clearly forced these artists to rethink how to animate domestic space.

Constant also suggests that Gray was influenced by the ideas of early twentieth century stage designer, Adolphe Appia.[76] Theater historian Richard C. Beacham explains:

> Appia emphasized the role of atmosphere and psychology in determining stage setting, elements which soon would come to be extremely prominent in scenic practice--most obviously in expressionistic productions, but, through more subtle manifestations in theatre everywhere.[77]

Although Gray made some designs on her own, she was never commissioned to develop stage sets. However, her next project convincingly reveals how she merged concepts of interior design and the theater to create a remarkable interior domain.

In 1919 Gray was commissioned to redesign the Rue de Lota apartment of Mme. Mathieu-Lévy, a noted fashion designer who worked under the name Suzanne Talbot.[78] Mme Mathieu-Lévy wanted her apartment to reflect her sophistication, her love of the unusual, and the style of the times. The apartment Gray created seems to incorporate aspects of both the contemporary fascination with the theatrical and the Goncourt brothers late nineteenth century

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[76] For a discussion of the impact of Adolf Appia's staging principles and Jacques Dalcroze's movement theories on Eileen Gray's work, see Constant, "E. 1027," 276-7.

[77] Richard C. Beacham, Adolphe Appia: Theatre Artist (1987; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 43.

[78] For a description of how Gray met Mme Mathieu-Lévy and developed her plans, see Adam, Gray, 95-6.

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idea of the domestic interior as a projection of a person's inner and often erotic state of mind.[79] Gray's Rue de Lota environment, a kind of "stage set for life," went beyond the ensembles or interior decorations devised by her *coloristes* or *constructeurs* contemporaries,[80] and established a dramatic and sexually charged space, which was completed, like the eighteenth century interiors, by the presence of a woman, Mme. Mathieu-Lévy.[81] And it was for this interior that Gray created the prototype for the Block Screen.

Gray's interior of the Rue de Lota apartment is no longer extant, nor is there a floor plan, but existing photographs show that Gray designed every aspect--the wall

[79] Gray's Rue de Lota interior was not like the Goncourt's personally created environment which was "psychologically self-fashioning" and the actualization of their interiority or nervous vibrations as Silverman explains in her book, Art Nouveau, 38. Instead, here the designer is like a playwright/director who works, *tabula rasa*, to project an atmosphere and an identity/role for the client.

[80] Yvonne Brunhammer, in her book, The Nineteen Twenties Style (1959; London: Paul Hamlyn, 1966), 71, has defined an ensemble as "...a combination of decorative elements which may be of no individual importance, and which have no other purpose than to contribute towards an overall effect. An ensemble is a setting and nothing but a setting..." In contrast, in Eileen Gray's ensemble work, every piece is important unto itself as well as within the whole.

[81] In a parallel context, Mary Ann Doane, discussing the impact of movies on women, cites a notation by Jeanne Allen that "...as early as 1916, Paramount's promotional journal printed an article describing 'the way in which fashionable women derive ideas for interior decoration by copying the sets presented in films.'" While the analogy is not exact, early twentieth century theater had a similar impact on contemporaneous design. Jeanne Allen, "Film Viewer as Consumer," Quarterly Review of Film Studies 5, 4 (Fall 1980): 487, as quoted in Mary Ann Doane, The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 25.

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paintings, the furniture, the lighting fixtures, and the rugs for this innovative and luxurious apartment.[82] Gray also designed the unusual hanging lamps and rugs whose abstract patterns, I believe, are as sophisticated as the shape and spatial relationships being devised by Russian Constructivist artists. Her goal was obviously to create a *gesamtkunstwerk*, or complete work of art, a goal which was crucial for many artists and designers in early twentieth century Europe.[83] From photographs and various descriptions, it seems as though Gray redesigned and decorated at least the salon and a hallway (fig. 51) leading from the salon to Mme Mathieu-Lévy's bedroom. The walls of this hall were covered with approximately four hundred and fifty thin wooden rectangles lacquered then textured with *sabi*, a powdered stone. Gray designed the end of the hallway in front of the bedroom doors with connected blocks that came off and away from the wall forming semi-detached, see-through, moveable structures, the ancestor of the Block Screen. The effect was meant to entice one down the hallway

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[82] See Adam, Gray, 96,98-101, 103; and Garner, Gray, 46-7, 64-5, for some contemporaneous photographs.

[83] Originally an operatic concept "...synthesizing music, poetry, gesture, scene and myth...," derived from the theories of the nineteenth century German composer Richard Wagner, the idea of the *gesamtkunstwerk* was incorporated into the visual arts. It was important to the work of the Vienna Secession, the Deutsche Werkbund, the Omega workshop, the Puteaux group and the Futurists as well as for subsequent groups of artists such as the De Stijl and the Bauhaus. It also was a concept and goal that occupied Gray during various projects in her life from 1919 on. Joseph Kerman, "Richard Wagner," Brief Lives: A Biographical Companion to the Arts, Louis Kronenberger, ed., (1965; Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 852.

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through the partially revealing, partially concealing, masking screens, through the double doors and into the bedroom.[84] It is significant for understanding Gray's subtle erotic metaphor that this initial block screen design sets up an interesting game of waiting and seduction, closure and disclosure, with the bedroom as the destination. In a later, undated quote, which probably pertains to her house designs, Gray described this "sensuous" process which applies equally well to entering an apartment or a room:

> The desire to penetrate...a transition which still keeps the mystery of the object one is going to see, which keeps the pleasure in suspense... Entering a house is like the sensation of entering a mouth which will close behind you...or like the sensation of pleasure when one arrives with a boat in a harbour, the feeling of being enclosed but free to circulate.[85]

Gray's approach always combined practicality, sensuousness of materials, concepts, emotions, and mystery.

The abstract patterns of gray, gold, and silver on the black entrance hall panels must have reflected the light and broken up the surface of the lacquer, a texturing which she eliminated in the but one of the subsequent free-standing Block Screens. This abstract texturing in the hallway deliberately anticipated the painting that covered the black lacquer screens/walls in the salon.[86] Gray painted lyrical

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84 Johnson, Gray, 20.

85 Adam, Gray, 217.

86 From descriptions and visual analysis, it appears that Gray created hinged panels, or screens as Peter Adam calls them, which were installed to cover or partially cover all four walls. A half-size free-standing screen stood to the left of the fireplace partially blocking a door. It is possible that she may have conceived of this notion of

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abstract shapes reminiscent of the verso of Le Destin across the black lacquer surfaces on all four walls of the salon (fig. 52). A reviewer for Harper's Bazaar, described this astonishing salon, exclaiming that "the bold high points standing out on the screen are mountains, for this artist of the Occident finds mountains as responsive to her treatments as the Orientals found those faithful old dragons."[87] The shapes also call to mind peaks of ocean swells, the flight pattern of birds, or even an abstract depiction of music, so lyrically do they flow over the surfaces.[88] But what these abstract images meant to Gray has yet to be deciphered.

Without trying to draw any qualitative analogies, I want to suggest that Gray's movement from figuration to abstraction parallels in some aspects the work and development of the Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky. Gray probably would have seen Kandinsky's work since he exhibited at least seven times in the various Paris salons between

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screen walls from the example of Japanese interior rooms which can be lined with both wall screens and folding screens. She may have seen examples of these arrangements in books, at the international expositions, or in an article describing the replica of a temple room and its screens donated from Japan to Paris: J.C. Balet, "Choses du Japon: Un don de la ville de Kioto à la ville de Paris," "L'Illustration (November 5, 1910): 308.

87 Unsigned article, "Lacquer Walls and Furniture Displace Old Gods in Paris and London," Harper's Bazaar (London), (September 1920): 130, as quoted in Adam, Gray, 102.

88 For the intertwining of abstract art and music, see, for example, Peter Vergo, "Music and abstract painting: Kandinsky, Goethe and Schoenberg," Towards a New Art: Essays on the Background to Abstract Art, 1910-1920 (London: The Tate Gallery, 1980), 41-63.

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1906 and 1912.[89] In addition, his essay, "Concerning the Spiritual in Art", published in German in 1911, was translated into English in 1914, and excerpts from it were published in the London magazine Blast 1 (1914) which was owned and produced by Gray's friend, Wyndham Lewis.[90] According to Constant, Gray owned a translation of Kandinsky's text, although when she acquired it is unknown.[91] Although the progress of Gray's furniture is more in keeping with the context of French luxury furniture of the 1910s and the 1920s, the abstract images on Le Destin and the Rue de Lota apartment paintings suggest that Gray was pursuing something aesthetic which was intellectually meaningful as well as pleasing to the eye. Constant suggests that Gray was attracted to Kandinsky's parallels between abstraction and music, which was also of interest to Gray's acquaintance, poet and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire, and

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[89] According to Peg Weiss, Kandinsky's works were exhibited in Paris in the 1906, 1908, 1909, and 1910 Salon d'Automne, and the 1909, 1911, 1912 Salon des Artistes Indépendants. Peg Weiss, "Chronology," Kandinsky in Munich (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1982), 304-6.

[90] Wassily Kandinsky, "Inner Necessity," trans. Edward Wadsworth, Blast 1 (June 20, 1914): 119-25, reprinted in Blast 1 (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981). See also Vivian Endicott Barnett et al., "Chronology," Kandinsky: Russian and Bauhaus Years (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1983), 350. Gray may also have been following the movement toward abstraction in the work of artists such as Robert Delaunay and Frantisek Kupka and in the theories of Wilhelm Worringer. For an overview of the dissemination of ideas about abstraction, see Susan Compton, "The Spread of information leading to the rise of abstract art in Europe," Towards a New Art: essays on the background to abstract art 1910-1920 (London: Tate Gallery, 1980), 178-98.

[91] Constant, Gray, 34,

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to the nonrepresentational artist François Picabia whom Gray admired.[92]

However, the issue of spirituality, also important to Kandinsky, has been mentioned in relation to Gray's work in an essay by Gray's lover at the time, architectural critic Jean Badovici, but not investigated by other historians or critics. Since no personal papers remain to inform us directly of a possible interest in the spiritual, one can only note the feeling of the work itself and Badovici's interpretations written in 1924. He describes the spiritual harmony in her work, writing:

> The furniture, the wall decorations, the general atmosphere appear to be like the components of a soul or the spirit of the inhabitant which will find itself complete and rested by the rhythms equivalent to its proper interior rhythm.[93]

The total effect of the Rue de Lota apartment was completed by the furniture Gray designed which included screens, at least one bookcase, a bed, tables, chairs,

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92 Ibid.

93 "Les meubles, les tentures, atmosphère générale apparaissent comme les composantes d'une âme ou l'âme de l'habitant se trouvera completée et reposée par des rythmes équivalents à son propre rythme intérieur." Jean Badovici, "L'Art d'Eileen Gray," Wendigen, series 6, 6 (1924): 13-14. In the same article Badovici notes the importance form and color plays in her art: "La forme et la couleur y jouent un rôle entièrement nouveau dicté par une clairvoyante appréciation des tendances de notre temps et des besoins de l'âme moderne." ("Form and color here play an entirely new role dictated by the clear appreciation of the trends of our times and the needs of the modern spirit.")

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several rugs of abstract designs, and quite exotic lighting fixtures.[94] In addition, according to Peter Adam:

> for the salon Madame Mathieu-Lévy asked her to design 'something extravagant' and Eileen, thinking of the languorous attitude the dancer Ida Rubenstein (a lesbian in Natalie Barney's circle) struck in the Ballets-Russes's Schéhérazade (she had kept two little reproductions of the Bakst designs), made the Pirogue sofa, a kind of *lit-de-bateau* (boat bed) in lacquer and various colors of tortoiseshell. The large cushions were in matte gold.[95]

Mme Mathieu-Lévy was so pleased with the effect that, as an advertisement for a new perfume, she had herself photographed in a seductive pose in the Pirogue sofa in front of the lacquer salon panels (fig. 53).[96] The impression of the entire apartment was one of luxury and exoticism. As Gray's friend, Elizabeth de Clermont-Tonerre wrote in 1922 in The Living Arts, "She aims to create interiors adapted to our lives, to the proportions of our rooms and the aspirations of our sensibility."[97] But Gray's clientele was of a particular type, seduced by her innovative, one-of-a-kind, pointedly sensual furnishings and paintings.

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94 For descriptions and pictures of furniture from the Rue de Lota apartment, see Adam, Gray, 92-105; Garner, Gray, 64-69, 71; and Johnson, Gray, 17-20. In his article, "Eileen Gray--Pioneer of Design," Arts Review 25, 4 (24 February 1973): 102, Brian Wallworth remarks, "And if Eileen Gray had painted on canvas the designs she uses for rugs as early as 1907, they would now be hailed as modern masterpieces."

95 Adam, Gray, 97, 99.

96 Ibid., 92-3.

97 Elizabeth de Clermont-Tonnerre, "The Laquer Work of Miss Eileen Gray," The Living Arts, 3 (March 1922): 147.

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To my knowledge Gray's creation of an all black *lacquer* interior for several rooms in a dwelling was unique, although black as an interior wall color had some precedent. For example, at their house at d'Auteuil, the Goncourt brothers had carefully conceived black and red walls. In 1914, Vorticist Lewis designed an interior salon (no longer extant) for Lady Drogheda in her home on Wilton Crescent in London. "In contrast to the nineteenth-century all-white interior, Lewis had all four walls and ceiling painted black."[98] Gray's use of black for the walls and abstraction for the designs in Mme Mathieu-Lévy's apartment, while clearly part of her own aesthetic progress and vision, may have been inspired by these earlier examples.

Another possible source for Gray's Block Screen and her domestic interiors is the work created by the Scottish designer and architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh, whose innovative architecture and furniture for Mrs. Cranston's Tea Rooms and for the Glasgow School of Art Gray would have known.[99] His use of vertical wooden slats to create

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[98] Jane Beckett, "The Abstract Interior," Towards a New Art: Essays on the Background to Abstract Art, 1910-1920 (London: The Tate Gallery, 1980), 113. See also the contemporaneous descriptions of this room in "Small Talk," and "Woman's Ways," The Sketch (11 March 1914): 320 and 321; and L.G. Redmond-Howard, "The Futurist Note in Interior Decoration," Vanity Fair (London) (25 June 1914): 32, 74

[99] Design historian Derek Ostergard mentioned the see-through dividing screens that Mackintosh designed for use in the interior spaces of Hous'hill and Nitshill near Glasgow. See Pat Kirkham, "Mackintosh Furniture and Interiors," Charles Rennie Mackintosh, ed. Wendy Kaplan (New York, London, and Paris: Glasgow Museums and Abbeville Press, Publishers, 1996), 247-48.

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stationary screens/room dividers such as in the 1904 Hous'hill (fig. 54), his manipulation of the square as a formal element in his designs of chairs (fig. 55) and tables, and his frequent choice of both black and white as colors for his early furniture constitute important visual precedents for the Rue de Lota entrance hallway pylons and especially for the subsequent variants of the Block Screen. Like Gray's Block Screen, Mackintosh's see-through, room-dividing screens created spatial division as well as visual teasing.[100] The delicately simple Japanese *shoji* screen is one of the ancestors of the square lattice configuration, which appears in both Mackintosh's furniture and Gray's Block Screen.[101] And according to recent critics, Mackintosh's work is replete with symbolic inferences of nature, growth, and sexuality, indicative, I believe, of the hidden metaphors that artists such as Mackintosh and Gray developed in furniture often considered devoid of content.[102]

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[100] Mackintosh scholar Roger Billcliffe describes the fixed screen dividing the living room and music room at Hous'hill saying it creates "...a subtle ambiguity, an illusion of two separate and finite spaces or, almost simultaneously, of one room contained within another with the two spaces flowing into each other and becoming one." Charles Rennie Mackintosh: the Complete Furniture, Furniture Drawings (New York: Taplinger Publishing, Co., 1979), 17.

[101] Billcliffe reiterates the influence of Japanese art and architecture on Mackintosh citing principally Japanese prints, the notion of the interpenetration of space, and the *shoji* partition. Ibid., 10. In her work both as a designer and as an architect Eileen Gray reveals that she was similarly influenced by Japanese art and architecture.

[102] Mackintosh scholar Thomas Howarth asserts that Mackintosh "...appears to have been impelled by an urge to express growth, root, stem, branch and flower--and almost

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Eileen Gray makes another contemporaneous inference with her Block Screen. Her use of angled see-through rectangles in the Rue de Lota hallway screens and then as rotating panels on the freestanding Block Screens comes close to emulating a Cubist effect. In painting, the notion of breaking up figure, form, and space into a series of faceted planes and shapes was initiated by Cézanne and subsequently developed by Picasso and Braque in their Cubist paintings, collages, and sculptures created after 1908. Although this Cubist influence is frequently cited as a characteristic of Art Deco, it is usually found there as stylized figures and/or angular, geometric patterns and ornamentation. In the Block Screen, however, a cubist effect occurs not on the panels themselves but rather on the visual field that is being observed through the breaks in the panels. The fragmenting of space and form, the partial glimpses of faces, bodies, and objects through the screen, allows for a kind of visual displacement which alludes to

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all his subsequent work can be analyzed in these terms." Thomas Howarth, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952), 31.

William Eadie, Movements of Modernity: The Case of Glasgow and Art Nouveau (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) analyzes the presence of sexual and erotic themes in Art Nouveau, in some of the subsequent applied arts created by artists such as Mackintosh, and in the early modernist theories of Wilhelm Worringer and Adolf Loos, for example.

Brett, C.R. Mackintosh, who discusses the complexity of Mackintosh's development and vision, elaborates on Mackintosh's symbolism of the human body, vegetation, gender and sexuality throughout all aspects of his work. In addition, various authors in the recent Mackintosh exhibition catalogue discuss masculine and feminine gender coding of objects and spaces, see Kaplan, ed. Mackintosh, passim.

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Cubist paintings and sculptures. In addition, looking through the Block Screen to view a kind of "Cubist roomscape" is playfully analogous to Renaissance perspectival grids used by artists to create linear perspective in their paintings. As depicted by Dürer in a fifteenth century woodcut, the grid is also sexualized, a barrier, in this instance, between the active male artist and the contemplated female model (fig. 56).

In 1923, as she was finishing the rue de Lota apartment, Gray was invited to exhibit an entire room of her work at the XIV^{e} Salon des Artistes Décorateurs. She chose to create a bedroom/living room discussed above, which included screens, a bed, a desk, stools, low tables, and several hanging and standing lamps. Gray devised the installation so that two white lacquer Block Screens flanked the fur-covered divan-bed as well as the black lacquer screen with a bold white geometric shape which was flattened against the wall behind the bed and the screens. According to Adam, Gray originally called the ensemble "simply Hall 1922, but she changed the name to 'Bedroom-boudoir for Monte Carlo-'to give it an exotic touch, 'hall' being rather dull, and Monte Carlo was all the rage.'"[103]

Most French critics gave the room sympathetic, if lukewarm, reviews. However, writer Gabriel Mourey, although respectful of her effort, preferred not to critique it: "I prefer not to comment on these objects, exhibited here,

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103 Adam, Gray, 133.

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which are respectable despite the many inclinations and some antipathy which I feel..." Another critic wrote that the room "of Madame Grey (sic) for Monte Carlo (is) maddening with its chrysalid lamps in parchment and wrapping paper. It is the daughter of Caligari in all its horror."[104] But De Stijl architect Sybold van Ravasteyn, recognized Gray's refreshing originality and wrote in a Dutch publication Bouwkundig Weekblad:

> A room by Mlle. Eileen Gray touches us more and expresses balance between "searching" and "finding." The relationship with "De Stijl" is eye-catching, less orthodox, less pure: French virtues have not been disregarded and feminine frivolity makes itself felt. The work heralds the new arrival of a Louis-free tendency even in France.[105]

As I discussed above, the term "boudoir" had great currency in France beginning in the eighteenth century. The aura of eroticism and luxury embodied by the word itself and the concept is equally present in Gray's boudoir, which doubles as a bedroom. Even though the two white block screens are installed close to, but project slightly out from, the wall, it is their deliberate flanking of the *bed* which serves to attach, at the very least, the suggestion of a titillating peek-a-boo through these supposed barriers.

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104 "...respectueux malgré tout de toutes les tendances et quelque antipathie que puissent m'inspirer celles qui s'y manifestent, je préfére ne pas me prononcer." Gabriel Mourey, "Le XIV[e] Salon des Artistes Décorateurs," L'Amour de l'Art 4, 5 (May 1923): 557-64; and Unsigned review, L'Intransigèant (Paris), (May 5, 1923) as translated and quoted from Adam, Gray, 135.

105 Sybold van Ravestyn, "Review of XIV Salon des Artistes Décorateurs," Bouwkundig Weekblad (July 14, 1923). Text quoted is as translated in Adam, Gray, 139.

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The Block Screen prototypes in the Rue de Lota apartment had led to the bedroom; in the Bedroom-Boudoir for Monte Carlo they pointedly flank the bed. But their subtle inferences must have escaped the audience. No contemporaneous critic even begins to hint at the metaphoric irony of these screens or at a possible reading of them in the context of the boudoir as an erotic space. To have positioned the Block Screens to create a more obvious erotic effect would have been completely out of keeping with Gray's restrained public personality. Screens which are traditionally meant to prohibit vision and conceal dressing and undressing people, here only partially do so. Gray's Block Screens are enigmatic, deliberately playful, and intentionally provocative.

Gray also chose to exhibit a black version of the Block Screen at the important 1923 Salon d'Automne although, to my knowledge, no photograph of this installation exists. The Block Screen was then being additionally featured in the shop called Jean Désert which Gray had recently opened in order to sell her own furniture, screens, and rugs. A perceptive reviewer for The New York Times grasped the innovation of Gray's work, without attempting any deeper analysis, saying of her furniture in Jean Désert,

> ...there are chairs oddly shaped for sitting, tables of fantastic attitudes, divans, lamps and screens in forms hitherto unguessed.[106]

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[106] Unsigned review, "Odd Designs at Art Studio of 'Jean Dessert' [sic]: Furniture in Bizarre Forms and Styles, " The New York Times (June 7, 1922) (source incorrectly listed

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Gray herself underscored the importance that she attributed to the Block Screen.[107] She included the Block Screen in the two major Salon exhibitions of 1923 and displayed it prominently in Jean Désert. She always kept at least one in her apartment. Each time she made a Block Screen she slightly changed the effect of each to add a unique aspect to an object which was part of a series.[108]

How then do we read the Block Screen? Did Gray merely devise a superbly crafted piece of abstract sculptural furniture that looks back to Mackintosh, Cubist manipulation of space, and the two-thousand-year history of Asian screens and lacquering techniques? Or did she also create an object whose intrigue simmers below its severe classical pose by subverting the functions and meanings of folding screens? At least in the Bedroom for Monte-Carlo, Gray placed her Block Screen within a symbolically charged yet a modernist and formalist environment which seemed to draw together various

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as the Chicago Tribune in Adam, Gray, 129, 392, but I found the clipping with the printed name of the paper in the Archives of Art and Design in Eileen Gray's files).

[107] I believe that it is the Block Screen that signaled Gray's passage to increasingly innovative interior and architectural designs, ideas which demonstrate that she was constantly renouncing the rules in favor of rethinking function, structure, and meaning for space as well as for objects as disparate as bathroom cabinets, tables, desks, and window blinds.

[108] In effect she was able to straddle the line slightly between handmade luxury furniture and mass-produced objects. She needed to be able to do this in order to make money, but, in fact, each object she did design took a long time to craft. She was able to produce some of her other designs, the Pirogue Sofa, the Bibendum Chair, the Transat Chair more than once, but usually each object in a series varied one from the other. See Adam, Gray, 381-91, for Gray's work and the versions of each design.

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influences: the eighteenth century notion of the feminized domestic interior; the Goncourts' theories on the interior as a "chambre mentale," in which objects reflect and evoke the tenant's state of mind, including their erotic fantasies; the Symbolist ideas of interpreting internal states of mind, dreams, and fantasies through visual art and words; and the theories of Freud on the importance of sexuality and the unconscious in the human psyche.

The perception of eroticism in Gray's Block Screen depends on its structural and visual as well as its intellectual qualities. Beyond its mutable sculptural format made possible by the rotating blocks and metal-rod hinging system, the Block Screen is not necessarily what it seems to be or says it is. Combining a structural and visual emphasis on solids and voids, Gray made an ironic play of closure and disclosure in the Block Screen which subversively functions partially as a barrier, partially as a window. Within the Bedroom for Monte-Carlo, the Block Screen's formal strategies acquire additional meanings. In the boudoir context, the two see-through screens, although placed near walls, surround a bed and hence *must* constitute a symbolic allusion to scopophilia, the pleasure of erotic looking. Freud relates scopophilia to a child's desire to discover the hidden thing his or her parents are doing. The open, flexible structure of the screens and their position in this bedroom allow the viewer to fantasize glimpses of potentially sexual bed scenes. Highlighting the ironic

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structural determinants and their latent meaning rather than the sexual act itself, Gray, with her Block Screen, transforms scopophilia from something salacious to something that might be called "intellectual eroticism". French writer Alain Robbe-Grillet has described this concept: "What interests me is eroticism, that is, sexuality to the extent to which it is filtered through the imagination; that is, to which it is an activity not of the sexual organs, but of the brain."[109]

Considered in the context of the Rue de Lota apartment, the Block Screen seems a logical leap from the attached screens she stretched into the hallway towards the bedroom. But considered in the context of the history of the folding screen, the Block Screen is a radical and rebellious object, more like something a Dada artist would create. The Block Screen is an appropriate contemporary of Duchamp's The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even (1915-23), since they are both comparably latent, erotic, and personally symbolic. Like the white screen installed by Dada artist Hugo Ball on the stage in front of an orchestra so that the audience was forced to imagine the musicians behind the barricade and could only hear the invisible orchestra, the Block Screen may intentionally be used subversively. The Block Screen is an object that frustrates the viewer, that

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109 Alain Robbe-Grillet, "What Interests Me is Eroticism, An Interview by Germaine Brée," Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts / Critical Texts (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979), 99.

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thumbs its nose at tradition, function, and expectation, that contradicts our commonly held idea of a folding screen. It constitutes a symbolic inversion which cultural anthropologist Barbara Babcock has defined as "any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms, be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, social and political."[110] We expect a screen to block things, to mask our seeing, to shield us from our projected desires. Gray's Block Screen, as do Man Ray's Screen and Conner's Partition, propels us to question issues of desire and sexuality.

But as both Garner and Constant have suggested, Gray always expressed herself through formal innovations as well as personal symbolism.[111] And Gray's inverted, Dada sense of humor reveals itself elsewhere in her work. Her interest in humorous and ironic puns and titles, reminiscent of Duchamp and Man Ray, turns up again when Gray is naming at least two of her chairs. Her 1925/26 Bibendum Chair, with its three fat semi-circular rolls of cushions as the backrest, slyly refers to the statues of the Michelin tire men still atop

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[110] Barbara Babcock, The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), XX, as quoted in Susan Rubin Suleiman, Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 157.

[111] Constant is the first Gray scholar to begin to thoroughly analyze in print the symbolism in Gray's architecture. See Constant, "E. 1027," 265-79, esp. 272-78 and Constant, Gray, passim.

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the early twentieth century Bibendum Building, which she undoubtedly saw when she was in London during World War I.[112] Her innovatively designed Transat Chair alludes to the chairs on (Transat)lantic ships. The name also sounds like transit, perhaps indicating it as a transitional piece, perhaps punning on the word sit (or sat in Transat). Within this context, one must then ask why Gray called her object Block Screen and not Brick Screen, Panel Screen, or Cube Screen? As Freud establishes in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, names, words, and phrases can contain hidden or unconscious meanings.[113] On one level, the title Block Screen is particularly ironic since the object does not really block drafts, light, or vision. And, on another level, the title may be an overt pun on the name of her former lover, Gaby Bloch.[114] The Block Screen, then, might be read as a coded metaphor for the larger issue of Gray's own sexuality, which she clearly felt needed protecting, filtering, and occasionally, exposing.

In 1921, just at the moment when Gray had finished the Rue de Lota apartment salon and was beginning to design the

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112 When I saw the Bibendum Building in November 1992, I knew immediately where Gray had procured her visual motif. I mentioned it when I spoke to Prunella Clough a few days later, and she said that she had never thought of it. The connection is mentioned in print for the first time to my knowledge by Julie V. Iovine in, "Modern on the Edge," The New York Times Magazine: Home Design 2 (April 10, 1994): 16.

113 Sigmund Freud, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, The Standard Edition, 6: 1-42.

114 At about the time the Block Screen was made, Gaby Bloch "stole" Gray's current lover, the singer Damia. See Adam, Gray, 115.

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hallway to the bedroom and the attached block screens there, she met Badovici. This encounter radically shifted Gray's aesthetic approach, subsequent work, and her sexual orientation. Until this time, Gray had had lesbian lovers such as Bloch and Damia.[115] Her artistic career had been principally centered around lacquer and the production of exotic, unique, handcrafted objects. Badovici was a proponent of Le Corbusier and modernist architectural theory, and edited the avant-garde magazine, L'Architecture Vivante. In addition to becoming her lover, Badovici encouraged Gray to attempt integrated architectural and interior designs and to work with steel and glass. In her first collaboration with Badovici, she combined these two industrial materials with lacquer doors on the facade of her own shop called Jean Désert which she opened in May 1922 to sell her lacquer products, rugs, and works by her contemporaries.[116] With Bloch as her manager and Badovici as her architectural consultant, the whole enterprise was a merger of the old and the new.

Without Gray's personal papers, the intricacies of various potential triangular situations, as elaborated in Marjorie Garber's sociological and literary study, Viceversa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life, are not known.[117] Garber quotes well-known lesbian and

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115 Ibid., 114-15; and Constant, Gray, 9.
116 Constant, Gray, 42-6.
117 See "Part IV, Bi Sex: The Erotics of the Third" in Majorie Garber, Viceversa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 423-528.

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feminist critic, Terry Castle: "'The central lesbian bond may be undermined or broken up, usually by/having one of the principles die...get married...or reconcile herself in some other way with the erotic and social world of men.'"[118] In some ways, Badovici had two rivals for Gray's attention: women and lacquer, and was, himself, an opponent of those earlier passions. Garber notes:

> The obstacle, or rival, could take many forms, play many roles: If, for example, the lover were a man, the rival might be another man, a woman, a possessive (or incestuous) parent, a religious or instructional figure who functions *in loco parentis* as an object of alternative desire, a career or other vocation that interferes with the completion or fulfillment of the courtship or - a particularly popular choice, at least until recently - God.[119]

While Gray had previously spurned all male attention, she had always wanted to create architecture and with Badovici's continued encouragement she subsequently designed many structures and created an apartment and two houses with him.[120]

It is not precisely known when Gray shifted her sexual orientation, or if in fact she adopted a bisexual, rather than a heterosexual, life. What Constant makes clear is that Gray named her shop:

> Jean Désert, assuming a male guise while invoking a remote locale. The name Jean Désert,

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118 Terry Castle, The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 85 as quoted in Garber, Viceversa, 427/428.

119 Ibid., 423.

120 Adam, Gray, 19-48; and Constant, Gray, 42-233.

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> which can be interpreted as 'Jean has gone, or deserted,' may allude to the elusive figure of Badovici, who contributed to the shop's realization. To avoid confusion concerning her role as proprietor of Jean Désert, Gray had a card made that read 'Jean Désert et E. Gray: Lacquers, Meubles Modernes, Decoration'...[121]

The issue of gender ambiguity, expressed in her early panel paintings and screens, resurfaces here.

Gray fittingly gave the black painted prototype of the Block Screen to Badovici who provided the impetus and means to a new way of thinking. Unlike other sexually-charged screens, Gray's Block Screen does not convey one sexual point of view or the gender of the artist. It changes with who is doing the looking and who is being looked at and/or fantasized about. Partially open, partially closed, without an image, it is available to chance and suggestion. It, too, is sexually ambiguous in meaning when we think about the act of looking, but not when we conceptualize the screen's physical structure.

Because we expect a screen to be solid, Gray's Block Screen is an "uncanny" object in the Freudian sense, arousing a sense of apprehension when one realizes one can not only see, but also be seen, through it. Once one gets beyond the surface beauty of the Block Screen, its effect is visceral: the skin of the screen has been punctured. Perhaps the ultimate sexual metaphor of the screen, then, is as a hymen, the membrane partially closing the external orifice of the vagina in a virgin. Through strenuous activity, the

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[121] Ibid., 43.

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hymen can develop holes, or through the first act of sexual intercourse, it is ruptured. When conceived of in this way, folding screens in general and the Block Screen in particular, must be considered as female, rather than phallic. Even Lucas Samaras's 1967 cut-out Screen (fig. 57) initially must be discussed in light of this vaginal metaphor, even as other layers of meaning persist for his screen.[122] Still, the Block Screen is not just an allusion to a perforated hymen; it is also a representation of all the orifices of the body, open to a flow in both directions. It is a masklike metaphor for the eyes and vision, for the condition of seeing. It is a weblike metaphor for receptivity, penetration, sexuality, and elimination. And it is a metaphor for Eileen Gray's approach to life and art, grounded in tradition, but subversive in its challenges to form, function, gender relations, and sexualized representation and viewing.

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[122] See my discussion of Samaras's cut-out Screen and its early designs in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 207, 284-87.

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CHAPTER V

SEXUAL MOTIVES AND MOTIFS IN MAN RAY'S 1935 SCREEN

> An effort impelled by desire must also have an automatic or subconscious energy to aid its realization.
>
> --Man Ray, "The Age of Light" (1934)

Desire and unconscious energy are characteristics that dominate the work of the American-born painter, sculptor, photographer, and filmmaker Man Ray (1890-1976). With a Dadaist's insight into the absurd and a Surrealist's embrace of the marvelous and uncanny, Man Ray was a saboteur of the status quo. He invented and used new media, and he subverted and upended traditional forms. The folding screen that he painted in 1935 is emblematic of these aesthetic conditions he established for himself, as well as his love of women and puns.

Man Ray's rarely seen Screen is a five-panel wooden folding screen painted greenish-black on both sides; it stands approximately six feet high and is about eight feet wide. Man Ray painted an image only on one side of the screen. Using unmodulated colors and minimal lines as though creating a drawing, Man Ray painted a confusing Surrealistic seascape where a mysterious woman, standing on a beach in front of the water, pulls a white dress over her head (see

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fig. 3 above).[1] Her bare white legs are exposed, but her torso and head remain hidden in the white tangled membranelike web of her clothing. At her feet, orange-red eyeballs, extending in a long line down to the blue water, gaze at her as she struggles. In the lower left foreground, a white spiral shape, resembling the inside of a conch shell, lies on the sand. In the middle left, six pairs of disembodied hands painted in gray are emerging from or being pulled into the green water in a three-tiered fountain. Arcing across the sky is a blazing white meteor that is about to plunge into the sea. A flock of ten birds, resembling angular lips, soars into the upper right portion of the screen. Taken together, the screen presents a

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[1] Portions of this chapter, particularly the thesis regarding the connection between Man Ray's Screen and Duchamp's Large Glass, were previously presented in my lecture for the Frick Symposium, "Motives and Motifs for Man Ray's 1935 Folding Screen," New York, April 1990.

Except for my own discussion in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 254-58, Man Ray's Screen has never received serious art historical or critical attention. For instance, it was not exhibited, mentioned, or illustrated in the 1988 Man Ray retrospective exhibition and its accompanying catalogue, National Museum of American Art, ed., Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray (New York: Abbeville Press, Publishers, 1988). The screen is briefly mentioned and/or illustrated in the following publications: G. Bussmann, "Überlegungen zur Malerei und zur den Objekten von Man Ray," in Man Ray: Inventionen und Interpretationen (Frankfurt: Kunstverein, 1979), 80; William Copley, Man Ray: Inventor/Painter/Poet (New York: New York Cultural Center, 1974), n.p.; Maurizio Fagiolo, Man Ray: Opere 1914-1973 (Rome: Il Collezionista d'Arte Contemporanea, 1973), 79; Jean-Charles Gâteau, Paul Éluard et la peinture surréaliste, 1910-1939 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, S.A., 1982), 228-29, 297; and Arturo Schwarz, Man Ray: The Rigour of Imagination (New York: Rizzoli, 1977), 72.

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disturbing landscape, brimming with strange images.[2] The dismembered body parts and disconnected objects suggest a kind of rebus and create an atmosphere of exposure, eroticism, danger, and death, a fleeting dream-image whose motivations and implications seem impelled by subconscious energy and sexual desires.

Earlier folding screens of women in nature symbolized fertility. Man Ray's Screen, blatantly revealing the sexuality of the partial nude, incites one to scopophilia. This object also erodes those sexual feelings through the juxtaposition of uncanniness, fragmentation, emptiness, and destruction, qualities in many Surrealist landscapes, which art historian Sidra Stich relates to the disaster of war.[3] This folding screen represents the classic Surrealist confrontation of Eros and Thanatos (Love and Death), and as I will show, the screen is the external manifestation of an interior confrontation about a woman Man Ray loved. No longer a decorative piece to ornament an interior, this modern, introspective object undermines the notion of both the traditional woman and the traditional screen.

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[2] Merry Foresta suggests that throughout his career Man Ray was interested in works that defied category, that hinted at one medium while being executed in another. See Foresta, "Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray," in Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray, ed. National Museum of American Art (New York: Abbeville Press, Publishers, 1988), 33, 44.

[3] Sidra Stich et al., "Anxious Visions: Surrealist Environments," Anxious Visions: Surrealist Art (Berkeley, California: University Art Museum, 1990), 86-95, has noted that landscapes in Surrealist works often echo the emptiness, fragmentation, destruction and disasterousness of war.

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Although this surreal landscape is an amalgam of images and themes that were often reiterated by Man Ray, the screen is a response to a particular text.[4] On the left hand side of the screen, on the base of the fountain, is the inscription: "par un poème d'Éluard" (from a poem by Éluard). In a 1970 letter to the screen's current owner, art dealer Giorgio Marconi, Man Ray wrote,

> The screen was made about 1935. It was inspired by a poem by Paul Éluard about me which appeared in my album of photographs and rayographs-1934. The screen is entirely of wood (rather heavy) painted in oil on a black background, the lines all in colors. Exhibited at the Cahiers d'Art 1935 and purchased by Mme Lise Deharme. She had to sell it...[5]

The poem that Man Ray refers to is one that Paul Éluard had composed in 1934 (at Man Ray's behest) for inclusion in the book Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934 (hereafter

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[4] Hal Foster remarked about the repetition in Surrealist art, "We might grasp the contradictory nature of the surrealist image as an effect of a repetitive working over of fantasmatic scenes by a mobile subject, a working over that is never purely involuntary and symptomatic or controlled and curative." Foster, Compulsive Beauty, 96.

[5] On the left hand side of the screen on the base of the fountain, Man Ray wrote an inscription, "par un poème d'Éluard" (from a poem by Éluard). Éluard's poem was printed in Man Ray's album, Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934. On the lower right hand side is Man Ray's signature with the date '35. When I interviewed her in June 1982, Juliet Man Ray confirmed that Man Ray had painted the screen as a response to the second verse of Éluard's poem titled "Man Ray." I subsequently received a photocopy of a letter from Man Ray to the Milanese art dealer Giorgio Marconi dated Paris, 24 April 1970, stating, "Le paravent était fait vers 1935. Il était inspiré d'un poème de Paul Éluard sur moi, paru dans mon album de photos et rayographies-1934. Le paravent est entièrment en bois (assez lourde) peint à l'huile sur fond noir, les lignes en toutes couleurs. Exposé au Cahiers d'Art 1935 et acheté par Mme Lise Deharme. Elle a du le vendre..."

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referred to as "the 1934 album").[6] This volume, assembled by Man Ray and published by the noted Surrealist collector James Thrall Soby, also includes writings by André Breton, Tristan Tzara, and Rrose Sélavy (Marcel Duchamp). These texts introduce and punctuate the book's main photographic themes: still lifes; naked women and body parts; women's faces; male portraits; and rayographs of inanimate objects.[7] Éluard's poem is a five-stanza verbal portrait titled simply "Man Ray." The poem reads as follows:

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[6] Schwarz writes, "In the 1930s Man Ray's fame rested more on his achievements as a photographer than on his paintings. He himself regarded photography mainly as a means of making a living in order to remain free to pursue the more interesting but less remunerative activity of painting." See Schwarz, Rigour of the Imagination, 14. Merry Foresta explains that Man Ray's motives for assembling his 1934 album were to promote the artistic side of his photography, to demonstrate the link between this aspect and his commercial work, and to remind American viewers and collectors what he had been doing in Paris. "It was as forceful a statement of his art to date as Man Ray could make." Merry Foresta, "Foreword," in Man Ray: Self-Portrait (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1988), 9. It was Man Ray himself who described his book Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934 as his "album." See the text of Man Ray's letter dated 24 Avril 1970 in footnote 5 of this chapter. Curiously, there is little mention of his album and no mention of Screen in his autobiography, Self-Portrait, 167.

[7] The 1934 album is divided as follows: the cover (a color photograph which included studio props of hands, a polygonal sphere, a glass ball, a round finial, a bust of Man Ray, and the head of a real woman, a Lee Miller look-alike according to Sandra Phillips, "Themes and Variations: Man Ray's Photography in the Twenties and Thirties," in Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray, ed. National Museum of American Art (New York: Abbeville Press, Publishers, 1988), 212); the reproduction of a portrait of Man Ray by Picasso; a text "The Age of Light" ("L'Age de Lumière") by Man Ray followed by twenty-four black and white photographs of still lifes; the poem, "Man Ray" by Paul Éluard followed by eighteen photographs of naked women and body parts; "Les Visages de la femme" ("The Visages of Woman) by André Breton followed by twenty-four photographs of women's faces, some well-known, most not; "Mann vor dem Spiegel" (Man Before the

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Man Ray

The storm of a robe which falls
Then a simple body without clouds
So come and tell me all your charms
You who have had your share of happiness
And who often bewails the dismal fate
    of the one who made you so happy
You who have no desire to reason
You who know not how to create a man
Without loving another

In the ebb and flow of a body which undresses
Resembling the breast of twilight
The eye forms a chain on the neglected dunes
Where fountains hold in their clutches naked hands
    within their claws
Vestiges of a bare forehead pale cheeks
    beneath the eyelashes of the horizon
A rocket-like tear betrothed to the past
To know that light was fertile
Childish swallows mistake the earth for the sky.

The dark room where the stones of cold are bare
Do not say you have no fear
Your look is level with my shoulder
You are too lovely to preach chastity

In the dark room where even the wheat
Is born of greediness

Remain unmoving
And you are alone.[8]

Mirror") by Rrose Sélavy (a.k.a. Marcel Duchamp) followed by eighteen portraits of well-known male contemporaries; a text "Quand les objets revent" ("When Things Dream") by Tristan Tzara followed by twenty rayographs from 1921-28.

[8] The English translation is taken directly from the bilingual text in the book Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934. The original French version is found in the same edition of the book and reads as follows:

L'orage d'une robe qui s'abat
Puis un corps simple sans nuages
Ainsi venez me dire tous vows charmes
Vows qui avez eu votre part de bonheur
Et qui pleurez souvent le sort sinistre de celui
    qui vows a rendue si heureuse
Vous qui n'avez pas envie de raisonner
Vous qui n'avez pas su faire un homme
Sans en aimer un autre

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Like many Surrealist poems, Éluard's "Man Ray" defies precise interpretation. It is certainly not a conventional portrait of the artist, but it attempts to capture a sense of Man Ray's professional, romantic, and emotional life. It is narrated from the point of view of a close friend who knew the intimate details of the artist's relations with women and was deeply acquainted with Man Ray's art and preferred images. In his analysis of the poem, scholar Jean-Charles Gâteau proposes that the women/woman ("vous" and "tu" are both used) that Éluard mentions in the first stanza are/is a model(s) who posed for Man Ray.[9] In fact, in the 1934 album, Éluard's poem is followed by eighteen photographs of mostly unclothed women or parts of their

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Dans les espaces de marées d'un corps qui se dévêt
A la mamelle du crépuscule ressemblant
L'oeil fait la chaîne sur les dunes négligées
Ou les fontaines tiennent dans leurs griffes des mains nues
Vestiges du front nu joues pâles sous les cils de l'horizon
Une larme fusée fiancée au passé
Savoir que la lumière fut fertile
Des hirondelles enfantines prennent la terre pour le ciel

La chambre noire où toes les cailloux du froid sont à vif
Ne dis pas que tu n'as pas peur
Ton regard est à hauteur de mon épaule
Tu es trop belle pour prêcher la chasteté

Dans la chambre noire où le blé même
Nait de la gourmandise

Reste immobile
Et tu es seule.

9 For an analysis of this poem, in part different from mine, see Jean-Charles Gâteau, Paul Éluard et la peinture surréaliste, 1910-1939 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, S.A., 1982), 228-29.

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bodies. Yet the poem immediately focuses on the emotions of the women/woman and Man Ray (the object of the portrait) and their responses to happiness, fate, and unfaithfulness.

The second stanza veers away from any discussion of emotion and describes a surreal scene. This is the specific stanza that Man Ray interpreted in his Screen. According to Gâteau, both the image on Screen and the poem itself also constitute an allusion to a montage created collaboratively by Man Ray and Max Ernst in 1925.[10] In the final three stanzas, in which the "you" is now familiar and singular ("tu" as opposed to the previous "vous"), Éluard describes a dark room, which could be both a room without light or hope and/or the place for developing photographs. The "you"

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10 "Au-dessus d'un frottage d'Ernst, horizon de dunes dentelées qui domine une mer étalé, brillent, étoiles de cils et fascinants comme un astre double, les deux yeux de Gala photographiés par Man Ray. On peut même y chercher des *vestiges du front*, et interpréter les sourcils comme des *hirondelles*. *L'oeil fait la chaîne* peut s'entendre 'forge la chaîne qui m'enchaîne.' Ce montage servit ensuite de couverture pour la *Femme visible* de Salvador Dalí. Trop d'éléments du poème convergent à designer cette photographie pour qu'on puisse l'écarter." ("Above a frottage of Ernst's, horizon of jagged dunes which rise above a still sea, shine stars of eyelashes and as fascinating as a double star, the two eyes of Gala photographed by Man Ray. One can also find there traces of the face and interpret the eyebrows as swallows. The eye makes a chain which can be understood as "make the chain which ensnares me.' This montage thus serves as the cover for the Visible Woman of Salvador Dalí. Too many of the elements of the poem converge to create this photograph for one to dismiss it.") Gâteau, Paul Éluard et la peinture surréaliste, 229. While pointing out similarities between the cover and the screen, Gateau says that the montage served as a cover for La femme visible by Salvador Dalí, and implies that Man Ray may have been directly influenced by the montage. For an image of this rare cover, see Mundy, Jennifer, ed., Surrealism: desire unbound (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002; London: Tate Publishing Ltd., 2001), 149.

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presumably to whom Man Ray (through Éluard) was speaking is ultimately left alone. Because of the language ambiguities, the object of the poem shifts from the formal and/or plural and general "you" to the familiar, singular one, and I believe that Éluard's emphasis is on the "you" who dominated Man Ray's life at this time: Lee Miller (fig. 58). This poem is like a dialogue Man Ray is having, not with many women, but with one woman. As Man Ray's assistant and a skilled photographer herself, Miller was part of Man Ray's darkroom and his life; she was his model (fig. 59) and his lover from 1929 to 1932. After their relationship ended, he mourned her loss for several years. Even in 1935, Lee Miller was, I believe, the inspiration behind Man Ray's Screen. Man Ray's friend and assistant, Dr. Lucien Treillard, said he thought this could well be correct since Lee Miller was the love of his life.[11]

Man Ray was well aware that he was not alone in choosing the folding screen as an artistic vehicle. He had probably seen the screens designed by Robert Chanler that

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[11] Dr. Lucien Treilllard, interview with the author, 23 October 1994.

However, Gâteau says that the screen was made for Lise Deharme, a Surrealist poet, but according to the letter dated April 24, 1970 (see footnote 5 in this chapter), from Man Ray to the dealer, Giorgio Marconi, this was not the case. Man Ray claims that Lise Deharme bought, but did not commission, the screen, and therefore had no influence over its creation. I believe the screen to be an intensely personal piece, a work that goes beyond a superficial illustration of the poem, and instead reveals some of Man Ray's most intimate feelings and anxieties. As stated in Man Ray's 1970 letter, the screen was exhibited at the Gallery of the Cahiers d'Art in 1935 and then subsequently purchased by Lise Deharme.

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were exhibited at the 1913 Armory Show in New York and at his exhibition in Paris in 1927.[12] He was also probably familiar with screens made by his contemporaries Pablo Picasso in 1918-19 and Yves Tanguy in 1928 and 1932.[13] At the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industrielles Modernes in Paris or in the Parisian galleries of the 1920s and 1930s, Man Ray also undoubtedly viewed screens by the noted designers Jean Dunand, Eileen Gray, and André Mare.[14] Man Ray must also have seen the reproduction

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[12] Chanler visited Man Ray in the late 1920s, possibly during the run of Chanler's 1927 exhibition (Man Ray included almost no dates in his Self-Portrait). See Man Ray, Self-Portrait (1988), 123. For a description of Chanler's screens at the Armory show, see Komanecky "A Perfect Gem of Art," 108-9.

[13] In the early 1920s, Man Ray visited Picasso in order to photograph some of his recent work. At that time, Man Ray may have seen the double-sided geometric screen Picasso painted in 1918-19 (Zervos, 266). According to Claude Picasso, one of his heirs, this screen always remained in Picasso's studio. See Man Ray, Self-Portrait (1988), 177.

Yves Tanguy is known to have painted two screens: one, an eight-panel screen from 1928, now divided into two parts; and another in 1932. See my catalog entry on the 1928 Tanguy screen in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 250-53. Later, other Surrealists such as Salvador Dalí and Diego Giacometti would make or decorate folding screens, some of which were commissioned by a designer close to the Surrealist circle, Jean-Michel Frank, who sometimes designed screens for his own interiors. See Leoppold Diego Sanchez, Jean-Michel Frank; Adolphe Chanaux, trans. John D. Edwards, (Paris: Éditions du Regard, 1980), 208-9.

[14] Man Ray may have used the matte greenish-black oil paint on the background of his Screen not only as a reference to photography but also as a sly allusion to the shiny, black and deep-green lacquers so painstakingly applied to Art Deco screens. In his autobiography, Self-Portrait (1963), 133, Man Ray mentions attending the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industrielles Modernes in 1925 (Eileen Gray was not invited to exhibit at the 1925 Exposition). A Man Ray photograph of the exhibition buildings, Fragments d'une conference, was published in La Révolution surréaliste, 4, (July 15, 1925): 25 which also contained a condemnatory article about the

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of a nineteenth century Scrap Screen (fig. 60) with hundreds of collaged images of lovers that was published in La Révolution surréaliste in June 1926 facing a love poem by Robert Desnos. And he would certainly have known the three images of screens in Max Ernst's 1934 collage book Une Semaine de Bonté which visually coded the screen as a sexual barrier (fig. 61).[15]

In French, the word for screen, *paravent*, describes only one of its functions: to block the wind. Traditionally, however, people also utilized screens to section off areas of a room or to create private spaces for undressing, changing clothes, or bathing. A stereotypical turn-of-the-century image depicts a woman draping her underclothes over the top of a screen while her male guest waits. Despite its overuse, this clichéd picture does record a fundamental symbolic function of the screen, to act as a physical barrier between female and male. As Bonnard made explicit in

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Exposition and Art Deco style written by Louis Aragon. Man Ray's attitude toward the style may have been questionable; his interest in objects for the domestic environment was not. See Malcolm Haslam, The Real World of the Surrealists (New York: Rizzoli, 1978), 141.

For information on screens by Dunand and Mare, see Felix Marchihac, Jean Dunand: His Life and Works (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991); and Victor Beyer, André Mare et la Compagnie des arts français (Strasbourg: Imprimerie ISTRA, 1971). Mare organized the 1912 Salon d'Automne presentation of the Maison Cubiste. Marcel Duchamp and his brothers Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon, who designed the facade, all participated.

[15] The Scrap Screen is illustrated in La Révolution surréaliste, 2, 7 (June 15, 1926): 13. For images of screens separating women from men see Max Ernst, Une Semaine de bonté, A Surrealistic Novel in Collage (Paris: Éditions Jeanne Bucher, 1934; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1976), 95, 101-2.

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his painting Man and Woman, the screen is a metaphorical hymen protecting the woman from the man's penetrating gaze. By painting a woman who is undressing on the front of the screen, Man Ray both illustrates the imaginings of the male viewer and challenges the screen's prim bourgeois function of concealing sexuality.

Man Ray's use of the screen as a device was related both to the Far Eastern tradition of screen-making and to his own interest in Dada object-making. Although Man Ray made Screen completely functional, where its first owner Lise Deharme placed this eroticized object is not known, and what effect it had on its surrounding space has not been discussed or documented to my knowledge. Several of Man Ray's early Dada objects combine the same sense of avant-garde transgression and sly *double-entendre* presented in Screen: the unwinding Lampshade (1919) that blocks no light; the threatening Cadeau (1921), an iron with nails on the bottom, which is horrifyingly impractical as a gift; and the visually as well as audibly hypnotizing metronome with a glued-on eye, The Object to Be Destroyed of 1923. But his 1935 Screen also contains a narratival element and is more closely linked to such nominally functional Surrealist objects as Salvador Dalí's 1936-37 Mae West's Lip Sofa, which was purportedly based on the artist's fantasies about the actress's mouth.[16]

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[16] Dawn Ades, Dalí and Surrealism (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982), 164.

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The Surrealists were not necessarily interested in the decorative arts per se, but they were committed to imposing the unsettling Surrealist viewpoint on every environment, using paintings, prints, sculpture, non-functional objects, fashion, and furniture.[17] The philosophical pronouncements by Salvador Dalí and André Breton on the goals of Surrealist objects underscore Man Ray's screen strategy. In his essay "The Object as Revealed in Surrealist Experiment" (1932), Dalí claimed, with typical Surrealist specificity, "[T]he surrealist object has undergone four phases so far." Of these, the most pertinent to Man Ray's Screen are Dalí's second and third phases: "2. The object assumes the immovable shape of desire and acts upon our contemplation (dream-state articles); 3. The object is movable and such that it can be acted upon (articles operating symbolically)."[18] In a similar argument in his 1936 treatise "The Crisis of the Object," André Breton explained that his goal for Surrealist objects was "no less than the objectification of the activity of dreaming, its passage into reality."[19] The essence of Man Ray's Screen is

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[17] See Lewis Kachur's book, Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 2001), for an in-depth discussion of Surrealist interweaving of media to create an environment.

[18] Salvador Dalí, "The Object as Revealed in Surrealist Experiment," This Quarter 5, no. 1 (September 1932): 207. The first and fourth phases were: 1. The object exists outside us, without our taking part in it (anthropomorphic articles); 4. The object tends to bring out fusion with it and makes us pursue the formation of a unity with it (hunger for an article and edible articles).

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precisely its visible articulation of a dream scenario as well as the conceptual overturning of inherent and metaphoric purpose. Its function was practical as well as philosophical.

Man Ray's gesture of painting a partially naked woman--the object of sexual desire--on the outer surface of a folding screen had several ramifications. Nude or erotic women were very common in the history of easel painting, but as we have seen, the imagery of women on folding screens remained extremely tame and discrete until the late nineteenth century. Then some screens became erotically suggestive and finally more definitively sexual, as demonstrated by the woman's bare breasts on Seguin's The Pleasures of Life and the couples making love on Bonnard's Pair of Three-Panel Screens. The artist's intentionality is also key. Although there are naked bodies on Vanessa Bell's Bathers in a Landscape screen, there is purposefully nothing erotic or sexual about these figures. Man Ray's Screen, however, begins to reveal the disturbing sexual disjunction

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19 André Breton, "The Crisis of the Object" (1936), in Surrealists on Art, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 53. Whitney Chadwick explains, "Just as the dream is always the expression of unfulfilled desire, so the Surrealist object is the projection of these same desires onto actual objects." Whitney Chadwick, Myth in Surrealist Painting, 1929-1939 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 83. For his interpretation of the Surrealist object, see also Saranne Alexandrian, Surrealist Art, trans. Gordon Clough (1969; New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 148. Alexandrian says, "Surrealism imposed the object on modern art, and brought it into competition with sculpture, which was thus forced to redefine itself on the basis of the object." Ibid., 140.

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of a woman whose sex is revealed but whose head is not. The screen may no longer be a barrier hiding naked bodies, but it is now hiding other secrets. This image does not reflect the erotic desires of the audience as had earlier screens. Man Ray's Screen is an expression of his own projected and repressed surreal yearnings. It also established a precedent, setting up future possibilities for the use of the screen as a vehicle for overtly sexualized images as, for example, on Francesco Clemente's Screen #1 and on Nancy Mitchnick's Adam and Eve Screen.

Ironically, for Man Ray, screens were not just metaphors for sexuality, they were also functional studio props; throughout his career, he used a blank folding screen in his studio for his models' privacy. In his autobiography, Man Ray recalls that in 1921 the first time he invited Kiki, the famous Montparnasse singer, to visit his studio to be photographed, she undressed behind a screen. The next time she came, she again undressed behind the screen, but when she emerged, they quickly collapsed into lovemaking; they remained lovers for six years.[20]

Three decades later, Man Ray still associated screens with his love of women. In 1952, after returning to Paris from a twelve-year stay in Los Angeles, he painted a second folding screen, Twenty Days and Nights of Juliet (fig. 62). He was inspired when his wife Juliet went to the beach with

[20] Man Ray, Self-Portrait (1988), 119-20. See also Billy Kluver and Julie Martin, Kiki's Paris: Artists and Lovers 1900-1930 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989), 108.

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friends for almost three weeks while he stayed to work in Paris. He described in detail why and how he made the screen:

> Among the objects and paintings that accumulated there stood always in the studio the large blank screen, no longer serving any purpose since there were more permanent partitions for kitchen, bath and bedroom. It seemed to challenge me to attack it, but I bided my time. Not until an inspiration came or an event that might prod me, would I tackle this virgin surface...
> ...Alone now in the vast studio, it seemed to me that I had twice as much time on my hands. And the white screen accentuated the emptiness. I began by dividing it up into forty rectangles, like a chessboard... filling in each panel with an improvised motif that was neither abstract nor figurative. One could see anything one wished in these panels. I alternated their values, light and dark, as in a chessboard.[21]

It is significant that in describing a screen that represented his love for his wife, Man Ray uses language that equates the screen with the female body, describes it as an object to be conquered, and reports that he "attacked" the "virgin surface" of the screen to paint the primarily abstract images.[22] This is also similar to his approach to playing chess.

Man Ray's Paravent (Screen) (fig. 63), a 1944 tempera on paper drawing, also presents the screen as a signifier for the female body by showing a man struggling to be free

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[21] Man Ray, Self-Portrait (1988), 302-3. For an analysis of the aggressive and sadistic psychology behind the game of chess and a profile of those who play it, see Peggy Schrock, "Man Ray's Perpetual Sadism," Art International (Paris) 9 (Winter 1989): 66; and Schwarz, The Rigour of Imagination, 80.

[22] For a discussion of this sexist view of the act of painting, see Nead, The Female Nude, 56.

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of the screen which seems to have ensnared him. If we read the screen, here, as a vulvar object, this could be seen as a variant of the *vagina dentata*, the Surrealist image of a castrating female. Man Ray's 1935 Screen, then, is part of his sustained interest in the screen as a sexual metaphor.

Man Ray frequently photographed nude women, and many of these photographs show women with their arms raised over their heads like the partially nude figure on the 1935 Screen. This pose appears in earlier art historical sources as well as in Man Ray's own work. The figure on the screen resembles, for instance, his 1923 standing nude photograph of Kiki (fig. 64).[23] And when Man Ray photographed Éluard's wife, Nusch, for the illustrations for the book he and Éluard compiled, Facile (1934), he captured her in poses similar to those on the screen (fig. 65).[24] Indeed, scholar

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[23] Man Ray's sources for this classic pose were many. Roger Shattuck mentions as possible references a Nadar photograph of a nude Christine Roux (ca. 1855) and Ingres's La Source (1856). See Roger Shattuck, "Candor and Perversion in No-Man's Land," in Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray, ed. National Museum of American Art (New York: Abbeville Press, Publishers, 1988), 323-24. Robert Pincus-Witten notes that in his photograph Le Violon d'Ingres (1924), Man Ray posed Kiki in the manner of one of Ingres's nudes from The Turkish Bath (1862; The Louvre, Paris). Man Ray may well have used a figure in the same painting as the source for his standing nude photograph of Kiki of 1923. At the far left of Ingres's painting is a dancing nude woman in the classic position of her arms raised and her hands hiding her face.

[24] Man Ray and Paul Éluard, Facile (Paris: Éditions GLM, 1935). Renée Hubert describes Man Ray's photographic conceptualization of Nusch, Éluard's lover and muse: "Man Ray refuses the limitations that outer reality might have imposed and that would have undercut his emphasis on flux, surprise, variation. Although he photographed the woman who inspired Éluard's love lyrics, Man Ray aspired no more than the poet to make her immediately recognizable or to

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Jean-Charles Gâteau claims that poet Lise Deharme, the first owner of the screen, told him in 1969:

> Man Ray painted in 1936, in white strokes on a black background, for [me], a large folding screen in five panels inspired by a poem by Éluard. One sees Nush [*sic*] undressing in front of a fountain, and in the background, a large tear-rocket-comet ('an ejaculation' said Nush [*sic*]). All the metaphors are taken literally...[25]

But Man Ray purposefully made the woman's identity ambiguous, and there are reasons to doubt Deharme and hence Gateau's account, since they err in the most basic ways. The screen is dated 1935 (not 1936) in the lower right corner of the far right panel of the screen. In addition, Gâteau repeatedly spells Nusch's name incorrectly. He states that Lise Deharme told him about the screen in an oral interview 31 October 1969. It is possible that Deharme may have misremembered details about the screen which had been painted thirty-four years prior to her conversation with Gâteau. In addition, Man Ray wrote that the screen was

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distinguish her from others. Painter and photographer masterfully bypassed everything that could be construed as characterization. Rather, the model becomes the mediator of beauty, thus acquiring universality." Hubert, Surrealism and the Book (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 74.

[25] Jean-Charles Gâteau has discussed the 1935 screen more extensively than anyone else. He cites conversations with poet Lise Deharme as the source for the fact that Nusch was the model for the figure in the screen: "Man Ray a peint en 1936, au trait blanc sur fond noir, pour Lise Deharme, un grand paravent en 5 panneaux inspiré du poème d'Éluard. On y voit Nush [*sic*] se devêtant devant une fontaine, et à l'arrière-plan, une grande larme-fusée-comète ("tâche de foutre" disait Nush [*sic*]). Toutes les metaphores sont prises au pied de la lettre (témoignage oral de Lise Deharme, 31.10.1969)." Gâteau, Paul Éluard et la peinture surréaliste, 229.

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exhibited at the gallery of the Cahiers d'Art and then subsequently sold to Deharme; he did not create it specifically for her.[26] Giorgio Marconi bought it from Mme Deharme.

Variants of the woman's pose on Screen run through Man Ray's oeuvre, though frequently the woman's head has been deliberately cropped by Man Ray, or her arms, hands, or position obscure her face. Six of the eighteen photographs of women's bodies from the 1934 album show a torso but no head. Although there had never before been a "headless" female figure on a folding screen, this disturbing decapitation can be seen in many works by other Surrealists, such as in one of several images of headless women created by Max Ernst in his 1934 collage book Une Semaine de bonté, in Maurice Tabard's 1929 photomontage Hand and Woman, and in Brassai's photographs of phallic-looking, nude female torsos (fig. 66).[27] Xavière Gauthier has mitigating words for this Surrealist attitude toward the female body: "This act of violence through which the metamorphosis of the body is accomplished, could be either revolution or it could be

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[26] When I went to the offices of the Cahiers d'Art in Paris in 1994, I was told that exhibition records from that time were not available for consultation. I was unable to determine whether that meant they did not exist or they did not make them available to scholars.

[27] See Rosalind E. Krauss, "Photography's Exquisite Corpse," in In the Mind's Eye: Dada and Surrealism, by Dawn Ades et al. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 44, 58; and Hal Foster, "Violation and Veiling in Surrealist Photographyz; Woman as Fetish, As Shattered Object, as Phallus," in Surrealism: desire unbound, ed. Jennifer Mundy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002; London: Tate Publishing Ltd., 2001), 203-225.

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art."[28] But Sidra Stich observes that a "headless seductress engages both Eros and Thanatos," desire and death--themes which permeate Man Ray's Screen.[29]

Like many Surrealists, Man Ray responded to André Breton's 1935 dictum regarding convulsive beauty ("Beauty will be veiled-erotic, fixed-explosive, magic-circumstantial or it will not be.") by producing images that displayed a sexual eroticism in the midst of the life-death duality.[30] The seminude figure in Man Ray's Screen combines the notion of "fixed-explosive," as demonstrated in Ray's photograph

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[28] "Cet acte de violence, par lequel s'accomplit la metamorphose du corps, ce peut être la révolution et ce peut être l'art." Xavière Gauthier, Surréalisme et sexualité (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 58. Within the context of Surrealism, the sabotaging of the classical nude, the academic apex, was considered both a revolution and the creation of a new art.

[29] Stich, "Anxious Visions," 44. For an introduction of how Eros and Thanatos pervaded Surrealist art, see Whitney Chadwick, "Eros or Thanatos--The Surrealist Cult of Love Reexamined," Artforum 14, 3 (November 1975): 46-56.

Another theme, which also suggests Eros and Thanatos, is that of the decapitated head, a topos that Man Ray explored frequently, including on the original cover for his 1934 album where the head of a Lee Miller look-alike (see footnote 7 above) is seen in the lower center. Originally alluding to the head of John the Baptist, this theme re-emerged as a Symbolist icon such as in work by Odilon Redon. Peggy Schrock refers to a 1930 Man Ray photograph, Hommage à D.A.F. de Sade in Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution, 2 (October 1930): hors texte, noting that it "relied heavily on established symbolist imagery. The severed head symbolized the silenced muse, and the closed or blinded eyes suggested a turning inward which has been associated since antiquity with the 'blind seer.'" See Schrock, "Man Ray's Perpetual Sadism," 63. See also Anna C. Chave, Constantin Brancusi: Shifting the Bases of Art (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 40-65.

[30] "La beauté sera érotique-voilée, explosante-fixe, magique-circonstancielle ou ne sera pas." André Breton, "La beauté sera convulsive," Minotaure 5 (December 15, 1934): 16.

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Explosante-Fixe (fig. 67), with that of the "veiled-erotic," as in a cropped image of Lee Miller's torso (fig. 68); in a photograph of Lee Miller published in the 1931 portfolio, Électricité (fig. 69); or in the silver print Reflections (fig. 70), published in the 1934 album.[31] As Foster notes, in Surrealist photographic practice, "[t]his violent arrest of the vital ...speaks...of the sadomasochistic basis of sexuality posed by the death drive theory."[32] And, he adds, the veiled-erotic image:

> concerns an uncanny trace of a prior state, i.e., of the compulsion to return/to an ultimately inanimate condition: ...its fundamental import is psychic: the shot that arrests one is an uncanny fore-image of death.[33]

The dress of the woman in Screen also resembles a shroud, an object which is alluded to by the black shawl which appears on Bruce Conner's Partition.

The motionlessness and the inanimate, deathlike state of the veiled woman is underscored throughout the work of the Surrealists. Dalí's article on specters and phantoms in Minotaure (Dec. 15, 1934), includes two haunting photographs by Man Ray of figures robed head to foot seen from the

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31 Électricité was a portfolio of photographs commissioned by the Paris electric company and published in 1931. Man Ray took the photographs exclusively of Lee Miller. See Phillips, "Themes and Variations," 210. In his article "L'Amour Faux," Hal Foster reminds us that "Man Ray's nudes are frequently veiled by curtains, stockings or shadows." Foster, "L'Amour Faux," Art in America 74, 1 (January 1986): 21.

32 Foster, Compulsive Beauty, 27.

33 Ibid., 27/28.

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back.[34] In the same issue of Minotaure is an article by René Crevel that describes a Surrealist fantasy about a woman/mannequin whose dreams lead her to the true secret about men.[35] The article includes drawings showing faceless female mannequins swathed in and trapped by their thickly draped dresses. These mannequins are closely allied to the figure on Man Ray's screen; his draped model hovers between life and death, an intimation of Breton's marvelous and Freud's uncanny.[36] Similarly, the disposition of the woman on Screen is an image for Man Ray of sexual anxiety caused by the Eros-Thanatos tension.

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[34] Salvador Dalí, "Les Nouvelles Couleurs du Sex-Appeal Spectral," Minotaure 5 (December 15, 1934), 20-1.

[35] René Crevel, "La Grande Mannequin cherche et trouve sa peau," Minotaure 5 (December 15, 1934), 18-9.

[36] Phillips discusses Man Ray's interest in both the male and female mannequin figures. Phillips, "Themes and Variations," 183-84. Man Ray would have been familiar with Freud's and Breton's ideas about mannequins. In some ways Man Ray has situated his female screen figure to seem mannequin-like. In his essay on the "The Uncanny," Freud discusses the notion of the mannequin which appears to be alive by discussing "The Sandman" story and describing a paper on the uncanny by an earlier colleague. "Jentsch believes that a particularly favourable condition for awakening uncanny feelings is created when there is an intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, and when an inanimate object becomes too much like an animate one." Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny (1919)," The Standard Edition, 17: 233.

Breton remarked, "The marvelous is not the same in every period of history: it partakes in some obscure way of a sort of general revelation only the fragments of which come down to us: they are the romantic ruins, the modern mannequin, or any other symbol capable of affecting the human sensibility for a period of time." André Breton, Manifesto of Surrealism (1924), in Manifestoes of Surrealism, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 16.

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When the Surrealists hid or veiled women's faces, they did this not only to create another incest barrier, but also to debase the woman's site of intelligence and avert her gaze. In Max Ernst's 1924 landscape Woman, Old Man, and Flower, the woman is not facing the viewers, so we are metaphorically denied access to her expressions, thoughts, and emotions. René Magritte painted several canvases that depict women with their heads wrapped. Some scholars believe that this is an allusion to his mother's loss of rationality and subsequent suicide. But the veiled head projects other symbolic meanings as well. In Western iconography a woman's gaze is often deemed a site of erotic power and the origin of love. If veiled, of course, the gaze has no such effect. The power of a woman's eyes, the temptation she represents, can also emerge in the unconscious depiction of incest fantasies. According to Freud and his disciple Otto Rank, the attempt to repress incest fantasies is signaled by veiled and unrecognizable heads.[37]

Photo historian Honor Lasalle notes that in Surrealism "the gaze itself is male; the woman is denied the power of a returning gaze of her own, just as she is denied a

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[37] My thanks to Professor Laurie Schneider Adams who pointed out to me the meaning of this image. In Totem and Taboo, Freud writes about the universal taboo against incest. See Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo (1912-13)," The Standard Edition, vol. 13, 1-17; and Otto Rank, The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation, trans. Gregory C. Richter (1912; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 197.

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completeness of body."[38] Thus, in Surrealist iconography, the woman is always the "signifier for sexuality and a metaphor for desire."[39] American artist Carrie Mae Weems updates this Surrealist tenet by confronting it with irony. The shrouded female figure of Eve on her 1993 screen, The Apple of Adam's Eye (fig. 70), although ultimately a symbol of sensuousness, is not debased as the words on the screen explain. The recto says: "She'd always been the apple/Of Adam's eye." The text on the verso reads: "Temptation my ass, desire has its place, and besides, they were both doomed from the start." This tongue-in-cheek acceptance of desire, of using the veiling to enhance it, is in complete contrast to earlier screens, and especially the Man Ray.

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[38] Lasalle, "The Sightless Woman in Surrealist Photography," Afterimage 15, 5 (December 1987): 4. As I quoted in Chapter One, page 17 and n 32 of this dissertation, in 1975, Laura Mulvey discussed Woman as the object of the male gaze. Although the gist of her article is directed toward analyzing film, her ideas are equally applicable to Man Ray's--and, indeed, to the Surrealists'--notions of women and the act of looking. See Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 19.

[39] Lasalle, "The Sightless Woman," 5. In the same article, Lasalle characterizes and contextualizes this type of quintessential Surrealist endeavor in this way: "The excessive use of the woman as an instrument of surrealism's self-proclaimed revolution may determine the degree to which the 'surrealist revolution' successfully challenged conventional notions of representation. Throughout surrealism there exists a reliance on the erotic as a means of surpassing the real, of tapping the power of a physical response in the viewer in order to shock, and thereby destabilize and disorient. The use of language and images that focus on the body and on sexual relationships is meant to liberate the sexuality of the artist and the spectator, and become a means of liberating representation from the conventions that the surrealists hoped to subvert. Of those conventions, the most fundamental is that of the arrangement and representation of gender." Ibid, 4.

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Routinely in nineteenth and especially twentieth century art, the female (nude) figure has been portrayed in such a way in order to establish the woman as passive sexual object and the man as active conquering creator. As I have shown, this aligns women with nature, reproduction, and nurturing, and men with culture, production, and intellect. But Weems has avoided this since she is a female artist painting a woman in this position, and she does not shy away from voyeurism, temptation, and desire. Man Ray does not mitigate his surrealist scenario in any way. What is unusual for screen imagery is how Man Ray's woman, although in the midst of a landscape, is not linked with reproduction or nurturing, only sexuality.

The draped woman in Man Ray's Screen is sexually available; she is all body, ready for corporeal--but not mental--delectation. Since she is sightless and metaphorically dis-armed, she is momentarily powerless to struggle physically or rationally against male domination.[40]

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[40] Although in classical Greek art, statues of ideal women were shown without pubic hair, John Berger later reads Western female nudes in another way that is also germane to Man Ray's female figure on Screen. Writing about Bronzino's Allegory of Time and Love, Berger says of the central figure of Venus, "Her body is arranged in the way it is, to display it to the man looking at the picture. This picture is made to appeal to his sexuality. It has nothing to do with her sexuality. (Here and in the European tradition generally, the convention of not painting the hair on a woman's body helps towards the same end. Hair is associated with sexual power, with passion. The woman's sexual passion needs to be minimized so that the spectator may feel that he has the monopoly of such passion.) Women are there to feed an appetite, not to have any of their own." See Berger, Ways of Seeing, 55.

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As the French feminist writer Hélène Cixous forcefully states:

> Obviously, if women have remained in this state of acceptance, of passive complicity with the bad trick that has been played on them since the beginning of time, if they have allowed themselves to be subjugated, raped, killed, always forced back to the bed-coffin, it's because things have been planned in such a way that they cannot escape this state; and this is accomplished by cutting off their heads where thought resides, by taking away from them the means of raising their consciousness. One can say that culture has always managed to reserve sublimation for men, to reserve thought for men, and to give women a stupefying antieducation.[41]

Man Ray's fascination with the powerless woman is underscored by his interest in the notorious libertine writer the Marquis de Sade. Man Ray was attracted to Sade's ideas of a perfect world as one where a woman is an object and is totally subjugated by a man and his desire for pleasure often arising from pain, especially hers.[42] In his photograph Hommage à D.A.F. de Sade (ca. 1929), Lee Miller's seemingly "decapitated" head is displayed in a bell jar as a

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[41] Hélène Cixous, "Rethinking Differences, An Interview," trans. Isabelle de Courtivron, in Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts/ Critical Texts, ed. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks (New York: Cornell University Press, 1979), 79.

[42] For Man Ray's interest in the Marquis de Sade, see Pierre Bourgeade, Bonsoir, Man Ray (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1972), 76-78; Roger Shattuck, "Candor and Perversion," 323-330; Phillips, "Themes and Variations," 212, 215; and Schrock, "Man Ray," 66, 68, and passim. For a more general discussion of the Surrealists' interest in the Marquis de Sade, see Chadwick, "Eros or Thanatos," 27, 49 and passim. For an introduction to Sade and his ideas, see Simone de Beauvoir, "Introduction," trans. Annette Michelson, in Marquis de Sade: Selected Writings of the Marquis de Sade (New York: Grove Press, 1953), 1-79.

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trophy. The sadistic desires suggested in this and other works were apparently sometimes enacted in his life since according to Sandra Phillips, "more than once ... [Man Ray] proudly commented on violently/abusing women."[43]

This sense that the woman on Man Ray's Screen is trapped in an artist-made web is radically different from the images of women on any prior screen. Man Ray's anxiety about women, or one woman in particular, seems graphically conspicuous. What Man Ray controlled in artworks and what he had in real life, however, were sometimes different things. Phillips emphasizes that Man Ray must have been especially disturbed by the elusiveness of Lee Miller.

> She was intelligent, supremely independent, and creative in her own right. She was a challenge to him, and her sexual freedom deeply hurt him. Also intimately tied to fashion, both as a photographer and a model, she must have reinforced the strange relationship between reality and fantasy, the metaphors of fashion, that Man Ray developed. The fragmented or disembodied/female figure that had interested him sporadically as a theme now almost obsessed him.[44]

Man Ray's desire to dominate Lee Miller was expressed frequently in both photographs and paintings, but perhaps nowhere more acutely than in his 1928-29 photograph, Lee Miller Wearing Collar with Seabrook (fig. 71).[45] This image

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[43] Phillips does not give a date or a direct quote from Man Ray. Phillips, "Themes and Variations," 212, 215.

[44] Ibid., 211-12.

[45] Man Ray had helped his friend William Seabrook make this deliberately painful collar/necklace for Seabrook's wife. Man Ray then recorded the object in an 1928-29 photograph Lee Miller Wearing Collar with Seabrook. See Man Ray, Self-Portrait (1988), 156.

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relates to a series of sadomasochistic photographs of women in leather head masks and collars (fig. 72) taken by Man Ray's friend, the adventurer William B. Seabrook. Seabrook's photographs were published in 1930 in Documents alongside an article on women and alchemy by the Surrealist writer Michel Leiris. Although Leiris admitted that the leather trusses were a cruel punishment for women, he argued that the women ought to be willing to participate if it satisfied a man's desire for power and cruelty:

> Beyond what she suffers under the leather, that she is annoyed and humiliated (this is what must satisfy our desires of power and our fundamental cruelty), her head--sign of her individuality and her intelligence--is insulted and negated.[46]

Moreover, Leiris said the he found the masking and collaring of a woman erotic and mysterious:

> The partner admires her body, rendered much more magnificent by the absence of her face, which makes her both more truthful and more imperceptible, and transforms her gradually into a sort of thing in itself obscure, enticing, and mysterious.[47]

In her essay, "Corpus Delicti," art historian Rosalind Krauss theorizes that Georges Bataille's concept of the

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[46] "Outre qu'elle souffre sous le cuir, qu'elle est vexée et mortifiée (ce qui doit satisfaire nos désirs de puissance et notre fondamentale cruauté), sa tête--signe de son individualité et de son intelligence--est insultée et niée." Michel Leiris, "Le 'caput mortuum' ou la femme de l'alchimiste," Documents 8 (1930): 465.

[47] "[L]e partenaire admire son corps, rendu encore plus magnifique par l'absence de visage, qui la fait à la fois plus véridique et plus insaisissable, et la transforme graduellement en une sorte de chose en soi obscure, tentante et mystérieuse." Ibid., 466. See also Stich, "Anxious Visions," 43, for her translation and discussion of this article.

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informe (formless) underlies many of the Surrealist images.[48] Bataille states that "formless is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world....What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere."[49] Like the women in leather masks, the woman on Man Ray's screen is deliberately amorphous, undefineable, without form or identity. In Bataille's universe, this shapeless figure has no rights and is therefore "legitimately" subject to domination.

Sexual tension, first visible in Vuillard's 1902 Four-Panel Screen, is thoroughly intensified by Man Ray's screen composition. By reversing the function of the screen to reveal rather than to conceal, Man Ray wants to show us something specific. On one level, he is pointedly showing us the woman's sex. Freud argues that there is often something uncanny about the female genitalia:

> It often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *unheimlich* place, however, is the entrance to the former *Heim* (home) of all human beings...There is a joke saying that 'Love is home-sickness'; and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: 'this place is familiar to me, I've been here before,' we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body. In this case, too,

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48 Rosalind Krauss, "Corpus Delicti," L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985), 64-65.

49 Georges Bataille, "Formless," Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 31.

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> then, the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimlich*, familiar; the prefix 'un' is the token of repression.[50]

Hal Foster analyzes this Freudian notion of "homesickness" in relation to Surrealist artistic practice:

> This uncanny homesickness is evoked in important apprehensions of the surreal, as is the primal fantasy of intrauterine existence. Indeed, all the primal fantasies according to Freud (seduction, castration, the primal scene or the witnessing of parental sex, as well as intrauterine existence) are active in surrealist reflections concerning subjectivity and art. And whenever we encounter such reflections certain questions will recur: are these fantasies defined in terms of heterosexual masculinity? Are the uncanny and the surreal as well? How does sexual difference, difference vis-à-vis castration, impact upon this apprehension?[51]

This suggests that Man Ray's Screen and its curious depiction of the woman may allude to (or reveal) an unconscious fear of castration, like the "dying," impotent, phallic creature with the head of a fish and legs of a woman lying on the beach (a cousin to Man Ray's Screen figure) in René Magritte's painting Collective Invention. Although the viewer is encouraged to focus on the woman's sex, what is demonstrated in this process is her "lack." In Freudian terms (accepted by the Surrealists),[52] what is being represented by the cloaked woman is her lack of a penis. According to Freud, the very sight of this lack elicits a

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50 Freud, "The Uncanny," The Standard Edition 17: 245.

51 Foster, Compulsive Beauty, 8.

52 The theories of Sigmund Freud were known and embraced by many of the Surrealist artists including Man Ray. For a table delineating the dates of the translations of Freud's essays in French, see Elisabeth Roudinesco, La Bataille de cent ans: Histoire de la psychanalyse en France (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 1: 477-79.

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fear of castration in a young boy.[53] The boy both accepts and rejects the lack. For some men, it is then necessary to create a fetish object which stands in as the woman's absent penis. As Krauss has pointed out, some of the Surrealist nudes with cropped heads and bodies become quite phallic; this is the case with the female figure in Man Ray's Screen. In such cases, Krauss argues, "the female body and the male organ have each become the sign for the other."[54] Man Ray's debased and formless figure suddenly acquires a quite different connotation as a phallic symbol and a fetish. A folding screen image such as Man Ray's necessarily leaps beyond the traditionally gentle, non-perverse depictions of women on screens. Now the screen no longer hints at its sexual significance; instead the screen's ability to hide, and deceive, becomes metaphorically entangled with Man Ray's desire to lust after, and yet visually expunge, the woman.

Ironically, if the woman on Man Ray's screen were to remove her dress, she would expose a very different source for this image: Botticelli's Birth of Venus, a symbol of love and fertility, a potent muse, a favored Surrealist reference.[55] This is the emblem that Man Ray is keeping

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[53] Sigmund Freud, "The Infantile Genital Organization: An Interpolation into the Theory of Sexuality (1923)," The Standard Edition, 19: 142-45.

[54] Krauss, "Corpus Delicti," 95; see also Foster, "L'Amour Faux," 121.

[55] A photograph of a painting by René Magritte, Je ne vois pas la cachée dans la forêt, which presents an unclothed woman in the pose of Botticelli's Venus, was reproduced surrounded by Surrealist artists with their eyes closed, and appeared in La Révolution surréaliste, 5, 12 (December 15, 1929): 73. This work is discussed as an example of men as

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under wraps, in control. But even this swaddling of garments does not guarantee the artist's/viewer's dominance. It only adds another layer of symbolism to mask the fertility goddess because her clothing resembles and alludes to the confusion of snakes around the head of Medusa. In "Medusa's Head," his 1922 essay on castration anxiety, Freud wrote, "To decapitate = to castrate. The terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something."[56] Man Ray's woman must be decapitated because she has become threatening; she is, like Medusa, a symbolic "vagina dentata," the ultimate Surrealist castrator. This

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the subject and woman as the object for men's imagination in Susan Suleiman, "A Double Margin: Women Writers and the Avant-Garde in France," Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), 24.

In his screen, Man Ray parallels his woman with the Venus figure in both the Botticelli and the Magritte paintings. But the row of open eyes in Screen direct a greater emphasis toward voyeurism. Man Ray's female figure is still presented as a muse, albeit a threatened and threatening one. Writing about the classical iconography of the birth of Venus, Barb says, "There can be no doubt that the original idea was the birth from the shell and that the sea-shell as symbol of the vulva was particularly fitted to represent the uterus of the Sea, that primeval metra which we have met in the cosmogionical systems of the Gnostics." Barb, "Diva Matrix," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 16, 3-4 (July - December 1953): 205. Whitney Chadwick writes, "But if the image of woman extended through Surrealism as a potent symbol of creation, the source of both life and art, the Surrealist attitude toward her in this role was somewhat ambivalent. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, a number of Surrealist artists would struggle with their conflicting attitudes toward the procreative female." See Chadwick, Myth in Surrealist Painting, 26. See also Kachur, Displaying the Marvelous, 109, 116-117, for examples of the use of Botticelli's Birth of Venus, and Venus in general, in Surrealist art.

[56] Freud, "Medusa's Head (1922)," The Standard Edition, 18: 273.

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reading of Man Ray's screen figure as a Medusa is reinforced in the color photograph Man Ray used as the cover for his 1934 album. Here, invoking the myth of Medusa, the "decapitated" head of a Lee Miller look-alike with open eyes rests on her arm, while Man Ray is presented as a "stone" portrait bust (fig. 73).[57] In a psychoanalytic sense, Man Ray is thus forced to "castrate" the woman on the screen--through symbolic decapitation and displaying her phallic lack--to try to prevent her from doing the same to him. This is such a powerful and unique image precisely because it tries to insist on the folding screen's scopophiliac properties while undercutting the power of the screen as a vulvar object.

Despite the fact that the woman in Screen is made sightless, two of the main themes of this sexual screen are the signification of the eye and "the gaze." There are many eyes on Man Ray's Screen, but significantly none belonging to the woman. The open, unblinking eyes on the beach are hypnotic. They repeat the motif of the eye that Man Ray pasted to the arm of a metronome in 1923 to form the Object to Be Destroyed (retitled Perpetual Motif in a 1972 remake). But they also bring to mind the first photograph in Man Ray's 1934 album, a shot of an isolated eye. This is an obvious--even clichéd--reference to the camera lens, the gaze, and the self-referential "I" of the artist.[58] But Man

[57] Phillips, "Themes and Variations," 212.

[58] Man Ray remade his metronome with an eye on it six times during his career. Merry Foresta, "Perpetual Motif,"

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Ray often returned to this symbol of the eye. In his 1926 film Emak Bakia, an eye makes a pointed appearance on the camera lens. When Man Ray's 1932 version of Boule de Neige is shaken, "snow" falls over a photograph of Lee Miller's eye.[59]

Art historian Jeanne Siegel notes that the eye had multiple charged meanings for the Surrealists.[60] It is the "third eye" of spiritual understanding, an image of

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9. Barbara Zabel remarks about Perpetual Motif, "Man Ray's love for punning and puzzles also tempts us to read the eye as the first person pronoun, thus emphasizing the work's autobiographical significance and Man Ray's own sense of detachment. Man Ray thus presents himself as Dadaist/Surrealist/photographer/object maker with restless, per//petual energy, product as well as victim of the machine age, observer of, as well as participant in, the avant-garde." See Barbara Zabel, "Perpetual Motif," Archives of American Art Journal 28, 4 (1988): 29/30.

[59] Phillips, "Themes and Variations," 198-99. Biographer Neil Baldwin says of Boule de Neige, "Perhaps the 'eye' of Lee Miller was the photographer's eye, and by separating it from her body, Man Ray was reclaiming authority over her sovereignty as an artist." Baldwin feels that, in essence, after Jean Cocteau had chosen Lee to star in his first film, Blood of a Poet, Man Ray never forgave her. "She had become a rival, and a talented one." See Neil Baldwin, Man Ray: American Artist (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., Publishers, 1988), 169.

[60] "By isolating and magnifying one part, it gains in intensity, as it does in a dream where it can appear as a highly charged and condensed symbol." Jeanne Siegel, "Image of the Eye in Surrealist Art and its Psychoanalytic Sources, Part One: The Mythic Eye," Arts Magazine 56, 6 (February 1982): 104. As an intense and highly charged image, the eye was employed in the work of the nineteenth-century caricaturist J.-J. Grandville and the Symbolist Odilon Redon, two artists of great interest to the Surrealists. Georges Bataille, for example, discussed and illustrated Grandville's image of the all-seeing eye in a 1929 article on the eye, "Chronique: Dictionnaire: Oeil," Documents 4 (1929): 216-17, 220; Robert Desnos and M. Griaule also wrote about the eye for this "dictionary" piece. See Siegel, "Image of the Eye," 105, for more on J.-J. Grandville and his impact on the Surrealists.

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castration typified by the blinding of the eyes in the Oedipus myth, and/or a symbol of "phallic" power as evidenced by the gaze of Medusa.[61] In his novel, Story of the Eye, Surrealist writer and theorist Georges Bataille posits the eye as a referent for both eggs and testicles. This notion of a multisexed eye is explored in by Man Ray in his other work including a 1923 rayograph, Monsieur...Inventeur, Constructeur, 6 Seconds.[62]

Man Ray's eye motif took on an even more intimate meaning in the early 1930s. Around 1930, an unknown photographer captured Man Ray and Lee Miller together. Even though they are dressed up as though for an evening out on the town, Man Ray is seen looking through a camera, with Lee Miller, the assistant and love object, standing by his side. The photograph is inscribed on the reverse, "For Lee--this

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[61] Siegel, "Image of the Eye, Part One," 104. Freud also writes, "[A] study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated." Freud, "The Uncanny," The Standard Edition 17: 231. For an in-depth study of the meaning of the eye, the gaze, and its gradual loss of its elevated position as the most important sense, see Martin Jay, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), esp. 332-33 (for a discussion of Freud's presentation of eye symbolism).

[62] Eyes are equated with eggs and testicles, among other things, in Georges Bataille, Story of the Eye, trans. Joachim Neurgroschel (1928; San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1987). For a discussion of this imagery, see Michele H. Richman, Reading Georges Bataille: Beyond the Gift (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 88-91; and Jay, Downcast Eyes, 220-22. Siegel mentions that Otto Rank contended that "the sexually symbolic meaning of the eye extends much further than the Oedipus myth and it is equally symbolic for the male and female genitals." Siegel, "Image of the Eye, Part One," 106.

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souvenir--hoping we shall always see eye to eye. Love, Man."[63] But by 1932, Miller had fallen in love with someone else. After their bitter breakup, Man Ray tried in various ways to "obliterate" Lee Miller's eye. He remade his 1923 Object to Be Destroyed using a photograph of Lee's eye.[64] He titled the new work, Object of Destruction, and when he published a drawing of the work (fig. 74), he offered the following instructions for its demolition:

> Cut out the eye from a photograph of one who has been loved but is not seen anymore. Attach the eye to the pendulum of a metronome and regulate the weight to suit the tempo desired. Keep going to the limit of endurance. With a hammer well aimed, try to destroy the whole with a single blow.[65]

Jeanne Siegel also relates the slicing of the woman's eye in the opening scene of Luis Buñuel's and Salvador Dalí's 1929 film Un chien anadalou to Man Ray's Object of

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63 Jane Livingston, Lee Miller: Photographer (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 2, caption for p. 21.

64 Baldwin, Man Ray, 168; and Penrose, Lee Miller, 41-42.

65 This drawing was reproduced in This Quarter 1 (September 1932): 55. Man Ray expressed his desire to dominate or hurt Lee Miller in several of his other photographs and paintings. Once, Man Ray grabbed a photograph of Lee which he had taken, "pinned (it) to the wall with its throat slashed by a razor and (added) streams of scarlet ink cascading from the wound." See Penrose, Lee Miller, 30-32. For other instances in which Man Ray metaphorically subjugated Lee Miller, see Phillips, "Themes and Variations," 215. In a most ironic gesture, following their breakup, Man Ray subsequently gave Lee back her "eye" in the form of a photograph with the following poem written on the reverse: "Postscript October 11, 1932:/ With an eye always in reserve/ material indestructible.../ Forever being put away/ Taken for a ride... / Put on the spot.../ The racket must go on--/ I am always in reserve." Penrose, Lee Miller, 40.

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Destruction; she argues that both are metaphors for rape.[66] This sense of violence and violation is also present in the chain of eyes in Man Ray's Screen. The ocular sockets traverse the landscape like a long row of footlights illuminating the sightless, disrobing "actress." Man Ray may have been reminded of the repetition of eyes in a Max Ernst drawing (fig. 75) from Une Semaine de bonté published in the December 15, 1934 issue of Minotaure.[67] But in Man Ray's version, the eyes are not raised but are positioned, seemingly for erotic emphasis, on the sand below the woman. Lined up like strange tropical fish, the eyes, like those of the screen viewers, stare at the undressing woman in a scopophiliac orgy.[68] But when the screen is folded, the eyes

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[66] Siegel, "Image of the Eye, Part One," 106. Also commenting on Man Ray's scenario for the Object of Destruction, Siegel says, "Not only the destruction of the eye is involved; the eye pinned to the pendulum elicits a basic Freudian principle in dream formation, that of displacement, where a body part which often moves upward is displaced by another. In this instance, the vagina, moving in synchronization with the phallus has been transposed to the eye." Ibid., 104.

[67] E. Tériade, "Aspects Actuels de l'Expression Plastique," Minotaure 5 (December 15, 1934), 45. Max Ernst originally created this drawing for his 1934 book, Une Semaine de Bonté (1934; New York: Dover Publications, 1976), 196. In discussing repetition in Surrealist art, Renée Hubert remarks, "Surrealist art often uses repetitive devices referring to the unending chain of events that characterizes both the dream and the creative process/...Repetition also raises, at least implicitly, the problem of originality versus imitation." Hubert, Surrealism and the Book, 55/56.

[68] In his "Three Essays on Sexuality (1905)," Freud discusses the essence of scopophilia, the pleasure in looking. "Visual impressions remain the most frequent pathway along which libidinal excitation is aroused...The progressive concealment of the body which goes along with civilization keeps sexual curiosity awake...It is usual for most normal people to linger to some extent over the inter-

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also stare out at the viewer who then becomes the object of the erotic gaze.[69] One large eye, isolated on the far right panel, reminds the viewer of his or her position: simultaneously consuming and being consumed, similar, in fact, to the issue of looking and being gazed at through Eileen Gray's Block Screen.

Man Ray's exaggerated repetition of the eyes suggests the psychological threat that Woman represents (and that the screen traditionally should have hidden). As Freud states, "Doubling as a preservation against extinction has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or multiplication of a

/mediate sexual aims of a looking that has a sexual tinge to it; indeed, this offers them a possibility of directing some proportion of their libido on to a higher artistic aim. On the other hand, this pleasure in looking (scopophilia) becomes a perversion (a) if it is restricted exclusively to the genitals...or (c) if, instead of being *preparatory* to the normal sexual aim, it supplants it." Freud, "Three Essays on Sexuality: I. The Sexual Aberrations, 'Touching and Looking,'" The Standard Edition 7: 156/157.

[69] By painting the eyes so low on the ground, and the birds, which are a thinly disguised flock of mouths, so high in the sky, Man Ray may have been subtly deferring to Éluard and to poetry. Strangely, too, the eyes occupy a low position and, hence seem to indicate demoted status. Georges Ribémont-Dessaignes, a Dada and Surrealist poet, painter and novelist, published an article in 1923 in which he said, "Sight is the lowest sense, so low that it should simply be worn under the sole of one's boot. It is the enemy of poets." See Ribémont-Dessaignes, "Dada Painting or the Oil-Eye," The Little Review (Autumn-Winter 1923-24): 10. This was an attitude that is parallel to André Breton's in his 1924 Manifesto of Surrealism, in which he emphasized that poets were more capable of producing Surrealist works than visual artists. Breton also calls Éluard, "our great Éluard." Later in the text, when defining Surrealism, he lists Éluard among other poets and writers (there are very few visual artists) as those who had "performed acts of ABSOLUTE SURREALISM." Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 17, 26.

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genital symbol."[70] A psychoanalytic interpretation of the eyes on Man Ray's screen, then, might suggest that he felt castrated by Miller and, as a result, wanted to destroy her visual potency. In his biography of Man Ray, Neil Baldwin claims that following Lee's departure, Man Ray

> threatened to do her harm, and let word out around the quarter that he had a pistol and just might use it. When Lee did not come back, Man Ray degenerated into extended graphic complaints on paper, de-facing drawings of her image with erratic scrawls and scribbles. He retreated into "breaking her up" by fragmenting the visual representation of her body. Her eye was a favorite target...Man Ray drew Lee's eyes and mouth in his notebook and then wrote her name on top of them so many times they were unrecognizable.[71]

As might be expected, the screen also contains allusions to Man Ray's contradictory feelings for Miller. The flying lips in the upper corner are another eroticized and not-so-subtle symbol for a woman's genitalia, one common in Man Ray's work at the time. In the 1934 album, Man Ray included an untitled solarized photograph of a mouth (fig. 76), and in the same year he completed, A L'Heure de l'observatoire--Les Amoreux, also known as The Lips. Man Ray had been working on this huge painting, a sensual image of an enormous mouth floating in the sky, for about two years.[72] As Baldwin explains, "The Lips relied on a

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70 Freud, "The Uncanny," 17: 235.

71 Baldwin, Man Ray, 168; and Penrose, Lee Miller, 40.

72 Man Ray painted the mouth so that the lips would remind the viewer of a female and male pressed in a tight, full-length body embrace. For Man Ray's description of the creation of A l'heure de l'observatoire--Les Amoureux, see Self-Portrait (1988), 206-10. He wrote a sensual poetic text

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reference central to Surrealist philosophy, the devouring woman."[73] Significantly, the photograph taken of Man Ray reclining in front of The Lips shows him holding a pointer in a phallic position aimed at a chess board, where the queen is all-powerful (fig. 77).

Initially, Man Ray had used Kiki's lips as a guide, but ultimately, even though they had been apart for two years, he repainted it using Lee's lips, thereby creating a sign of both the glory and the horror of their past relationship.[74] Although the flying lips in Screen cannot be specified as Lee Miller's, I think it highly likely that she was uppermost in his mind, and that the image signals both the erotic and castrating aspect of a woman, as well as the artist's desire for her.[75] Even in the 1937 publication Les Mains Libres by Man Ray and Éluard, Lee Miller's image appears, titled "Le Mannequin." It is paired with Éluard's poem which expresses what was surely Man Ray's desire to still control Lee Miller and their relationship: "Sole garland stretched/From one edge to the other of

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to accompany this painting when it was first reproduced; part of it reads, "It is seven in the morning, before satisfying an imaginary hunger... that your mouth comes to replace all these indecisions...Your mouth itself becomes two bodies, separated by a long, undulating horizon." Man Ray, "A l'heure de l'observatoire--Les amoureux," Cahiers d'Art 10, 5-6 (1935): 127.

[73] Baldwin, Man Ray, 172.

[74] Man Ray, Self-Portrait, 255; and Penrose, Lee Miller, 42.

[75] Although some would argue that it would be unusual for Man Ray to still be obsessed with Lee Miller in 1935, three years after their breakup, they continued to correspond, and according to Baldwin, she preoccupied his thoughts and his art. See Baldwin, Man Ray, 168-75, esp. 174.

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girlhood/Tiny bridge of perfection/First love of a schoolboy/concealment of distances."[76]

Adding further to the screen's erotic imagery is the white comet arcing across the greenish-black sky. This streak of light is similar to effects that Man Ray achieved in his innovative rayographs (fig. 78), some of which were prominently featured in his 1934 album. While the Éluard poem describes this streak as a tear, perhaps emphasizing Man Ray's sadness at losing Miller, Man Ray's representation of the meteor raises additional interpretations. Daniel Schneider reminds us that the mythic figures of Icarus and Phaeton fell to earth for directly confronting the gods: "All such myths are projections of punishment for forbidden oedipal desires or taboo sexual looking."[77] This ejaculatory and self-referential "ray" alludes to secret lusts and also operates as a menacing, subversive image.[78] Man Ray paints the falling comet so that the mark/semen from the artist's paintbrush/penis visually and metaphorically pierces the woman's body.

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[76] Man Ray and Paul Éluard, Les Mains Libres (Paris: Éditions Jeanne Bucher, 1937), 78. The poem in French reads, "Unique guirlande tendue/ D'un bord à l'autre de l'enfance/ Petit pont de perfection/ Premier amour de l'écolier/ Suppression des distances."

[77] Daniel E. Schneider, The Psychoanalyst and the Artist (New York: International Universities Press, 1950), 289.

[78] For an analysis of the visual representations of semen in art, see John Paul Ricco, "Queering Boundaries: Semen and Visual Representations from the Middle Ages and in the Era of the AIDS Crisis," Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History, ed. Whitney Davis (New York: The Hayworth Press, Inc., 1994), 57-80.

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If the "ray" is a punning reference to the artist's name, so are the many disembodied hands, or *mains* ("man"). On the screen, these hands emerge in pairs from the water of a fountain; in each pair, one hand struggles upward, like the signal of a drowning swimmer, while the other tries to pull it under the water. The tension and panic suggested here echoes that of the woman trapped in her own garment. The disturbing fountain from which the hands emerge seems like an ironic allusion to two of the readymades of Man Ray's close friend Marcel Duchamp. Like Duchamp's Bottlerack, Man Ray's fountain rises in circles of phallic members; and of course, the iconography of the fountain itself alludes to Duchamp's famous reemployed urinal, Fountain.[79]

In Man Ray's work, the hand is so common that it almost functions as a signature. On the cover of the 1934 album, an isolated hand rises up on the left hand side of the photograph. And in a 1937 drawing for Les Mains Libres, Man Ray depicted a giant hand clutching the tiny figure of a woman, in a scene eerily reminiscent of King Kong grabbing the helpless Faye Wray in the 1934 film.[80] The cover of Minotaure for December 1934 had echoed the same image from

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[79] For the discussion of the cut-off hand as an image of castration see Freud, "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex (1924)," The Standard Edition, 19: 175; and Rank, Incest, 238.

[80] From 1936 to 1937, Man Ray created a series of drawings for which Éluard wrote corresponding poems. The collected drawings and poems were published as Les Mains Libres (1937). Appropriately, the drawing of the hand grasping the woman faces Éluard's poem Pouvoir (Power).

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King Kong, while inside the magazine a feature article offered a Surrealist interpretation of the film.[81] Other illustrations in the same issue of Minotaure further enhance and contextualize the meaning of Man Ray's pervasive use of the hand: Max Ernst's drawing of hands (fig. 79), originally published in Max Ernst's Une Semaine de bonté, accompanies Tériade's essay "Aspects Actuels de l'Expression Plastique"; and anonymous photographs of hands illustrate Georges Hugnet's "Petite Rêverie du Grand Veneur."[82] But perhaps the most provocative images in relation to Man Ray's hands are the photographs of coral from Australia's Great Barrier Reef that are juxtaposed with Breton's essay "La Beauté sera convulsive."[83] A combination of soft living animals and hard skeletal remains, the coral intimates the inanimate in the animate. Moreover, the phallic, fingerlike spikes of coral represent the third key embodiment of Breton's notion of convulsive beauty arising from magic-circumstantial images.[84]

Yet another sort of signature is included in the lower left corner of the screen: there, the shell shape, often a symbol of female fertility and the womb, also suggests a

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81 Jean Lévy, "King Kong," Minotaure 5 (December 15, 1934): 5. The cover of this issue of Minotaure, designed by F. Borès, shows a limp female figure lying in the palm of a huge hand.

82 E. Tériade, "Aspects Actuels de l'Expression Plastique," Minotaure 5 (December 15, 1934): 45; and Georges Hugnet, "Petite Reverie du Grand Veneur," Minotaure 5 (December 15, 1934): 30.

83 Breton, "La Beauté Sera Convulsive," 11.

84 Ibid. 13, 16.

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depiction of Man Ray's well-known Lampshade. The spiral motif of the shell and the unwinding lampshade is replayed in many rayographs including one in the 1934 album showing a section of film unwinding chaotically (fig. 80).[85] In another rayograph, Man Ray pairs a spiraling lampshade with a corkscrew for a pun on sexual intercourse; the lampshade hints ambiguously at both vaginal and penile symbolism.[86] Finally, the seashell/lampshade, like the folding screen itself, serves as a metaphor for a concept that was critical to Man Ray's work and to folding screens in general: simultaneous concealment and revelation.

Like Duchamp, Man Ray was fond of multileveled visual and verbal puns. His screen, as I have analyzed it, is an elaborate, self-reflexive rebus. He has alluded not only to himself--by the inclusion of the hands ("mains") and the comet ("ray") and some of his signature images (i.e., hands, lampshade, veiled woman)--but also to his fellow Surrealist artists and writers. By employing a covert vocabulary of shared signifiers, the Surrealists not only created new visual forms but also engaged in an ongoing visual dialogue. In Man Ray's Screen, it is this notion of intertextuality

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85 Henry Martin says the Lampshade belongs to "the general genre of work in which an object is displaced or deranged in order to allow the perception of previously hidden or marvelous aspects of itself." See Martin, "Man Ray: Spirals and Indications," Art International 15, 5, (May 20, 1971): 65. For a view of the spiral shape as a more visceral image, see also Susan Fillin-Yeh, "Three Heads and Other Mysteries: Man Ray's Photographs of Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Stella," Arts Magazine 62, 8 (April 1988): 101, 103 n 22.

86 Phillips, "Themes and Variations," 183.

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layered on the accumulated meaning of the screen that is most intriguing and produces the intense sexual implications of this object.

The key allusion in Screen is perhaps the least apparent. An earlier work, which clearly informed and influenced Man Ray as he painted his screen, also suggests a woman doing that which the screen should be hiding: stripping.[87] For, certainly, Man Ray's Screen is a direct response to Duchamp's already famous The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even, 1915-23, also known as the Large Glass (fig. 81).[88] Man Ray and Duchamp first met in New York in 1915, the year Duchamp began work on the Large Glass.[89] Ray was fully aware of Duchamp's progress on the work, as

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[87] As part of his description of the Bride in the Large Glass, Duchamp writes: "The motor with quite feeble cylinders is a superficial organ of the bride; it is activated by the love gasoline, a secretion of the bride's sexual glands and by the electric sparks of the stripping. (to show that the bride does not refuse this stripping by the bachelors, even accepts it since she furnishes the love gasoline and goes so far as to help towards complete nudity by developing in a sparkling fashion her intense desire for the orgasm." Marcel Duchamp, "The Green Box," The Writings of Marcel Duchamp, eds. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (orig. pub. as Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 43.

[88] To my knowledge, no one else has mentioned that Duchamp's The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even should be analyzed in light of the screen metaphor. I first proposed this connection in my essay, "The Screen as Metaphor" in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 207.

[89] Mason Klein discusses the friendship and collaboration between Duchamp and Man Ray. See "Conspiracy Theories," in Conspiratorial Laughter, A Friendship: Man Ray and Duchamp, ed. Leslie Tonkonow (New York: Zabriskie Gallery, 1995). For an analysis of the Large Glass on which I base some of my ideas, see Richard Hamilton, "The Large Glass," in Marcel Duchamp, ed. Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 57-68.

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testified by their collaborative 1918 photograph of one part of the work, Dust Breeding.[90] Man Ray and Duchamp collaborated on numerous other projects, including the single issue of New York Dada, the founding of Société Anonyme (with Katherine Dreier), the construction of the Rotary Glass Demisphere, Anemic Cinema and other films, and the photographic documentation of Duchamp's alter-ego Rrose Sélavy.[91]

During 1934 and 1935, Man Ray would have had good reason to be thinking again about the Large Glass, which Duchamp had left "permanently incomplete" in 1923. Duchamp was living near Man Ray in Paris and was often working on the detailed notes for the Large Glass which filled The Green Box, published in 1934.[92] In addition, an article

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[90] Dust Breeding was published in Littérature, nouvelle série, 5 (October 1, 1922): between pages 10 and 11. The caption hinted at its erotic intention, "Voici le domaine de Rrose Sélavy/ Comme il est aride--Comme il est fertile/ Comme il est joyeux--Comme il est triste." ("Here is the domain of Rrose Sélavy/ How it is arid--How it is fertile/ How it is joyful--How it is sad.") It was signed, "Vue prise en aéroplane par Man Ray--1921 (View taken in an airplane by Man Ray--1921). Fillin-Yeh says that "Dust Breeding, 1918, illustrates the sex life of an invented life-form--meiotic dust particles which Duchamp later fixed to the surface of the Glass." See Fillin-Yeh, "Three Heads," 101.

[91] For a detailed dual chronology which documents their many collaborative efforts, see Leslie Tonkonow, "Chronology," in Conspiratorial Laughter, A Friendship: Man Ray and Duchamp, ed. Leslie Tonkonow (New York: Zabriskie Gallery, 1995), 21-36. In October 1994, when I interviewed Dr. Lucien Treillard, formerly an assistant to Man Ray, he emphasized the reciprocity of Man Ray's and Duchamp's influence and collaborations.

[92] For a complete publication in book form of the translation of these notes, see Marcel Duchamp, The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even, ed. Richard Hamilton, trans., George Heard Hamilton (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., Ltd., 1960).

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about the Large Glass by André Breton was published in the February 1935 issue of Minotaure.[93] Later, Man Ray recalled Duchamp's efforts during this period, saying, "I was intrigued by this preoccupation with putting his earlier work on record, making it permanent in the form of a publication."[94] This project may have inspired Man Ray to assemble a similar sort of retrospective in his 1934 album.

Duchamp's Large Glass does not fold, nor is it moveable, but it nonetheless must be analyzed in light of the screen metaphor. Like a traditional folding screen, the Large Glass functions as a physical barrier. Considered as a window, a door, or a giant X-ray plate, when set up in Katherine Drier's livingroom (fig. 82), the Large Glass also had an architectural function. It served as a partition that visitors had to walk around as well as look through, accentuating the aspects of concealment and revelation.[95] And, since it also had an image applied to its surface, Duchamp himself "...hinted that one way he thought of the

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93 André Breton, "Phare de la Mariée," Minotaure 6 (February 15, 1935): 45-49.

94 Man Ray, Self-Portrait (1988), 191. See also Baldwin, Man Ray, 185-86.

95 Katherine Dreier and Matta Echaurren wrote of Duchamp's Large Glass, "Painting--glass--mirror--these are the three substances in dynamic interrelation to the final image of the Glass. While we gaze upon the bride--there appears through the glass the image of the room wherein we stand and on the radiation of the mirror design lives the image of our own body." Katherine S. Dreier and Matta Echaurren, "Duchamp's Glass, La Mariée Mise à Nue par ses Célibataires, Même, An Analytic Reflection," orig. pub., New York: Société Anonyme, Inc., 1944 in Marcel Duchamp in Perspective, ed. Joseph Masheck (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), 108.

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Large Glass was as an enormous photographic (glass) negative."[96] The Large Glass was, in effect, an inherent contradiction: a see-through screen.[97]

Like Duchamp's other "architectural" works, such as Glider Containing a Water Mill in Neighboring Metals, 1913-15; Fresh Widow, 1920; Door, 11 rue Larrey, 1927; and Étant Donnés, 1946-1966, the Large Glass was ambiguous and contradictory. Curiously, all these works have hinges incorporated into their structures.[98] In two instances in The Green Box Duchamp reveals his fascination with hinges, a key element of most folding screens. In one note, Duchamp writes:

> Perhaps make a hinge picture. (folding yardstick, book...) develop/ the principle *of the hinge* in the displacements 1st in the plane 2nd in/ space./ Find an *automatic description* of the hinge./ Perhaps introduce it in the Pendu femelle.[99]

Hinges are also integral for another concept he was exploring. There is another note which documents Duchamp's fascination with the so-called Wilson-Lincoln effect.[100]

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96 Quoted in Fillin-Yeh, "Three Heads," 98.

97 "The transparent glass field literally became 'the window' that the picture-plane of illusionistic painting had been posited to be." William S. Rubin, Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1968), 21.

98 For a philosophical discussion of the hinges in Duchamp's work, see Jean-François Lyotard, Duchamp's TRANS/formers, trans. Ian McLeod (1977; Venice, Cal.: Lapis Press, 1990), 125-31.

99 Marcel Duchamp, Salt Seller: The Writings of Marcel Duchamp (Marchand du Sel), eds. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 27.

100 Duchamp, Salt Seller, 65; and Jean Suquet, "Possible," in The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp, ed. Thierry DeDuve, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 125.

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This phenomenon occurs when two different images are printed on the alternating panels of a surface folded like an accordion (or like a screen): from the extreme left, the viewer sees one image (say, President Wilson), and from the extreme right, the viewer sees a completely different image (say, President Lincoln).[101] Even singular images on screens such as Man Ray's are affected by the folding and the angle at which they are viewed as discussed above. Many artists such as Bruce Conner have represented two different scenes on the front and back of a screen. Duchamp, however, was clearly thinking about two different images on the same side of a "hinge picture."

Although Duchamp ultimately abandoned the dualistic hinge idea for the Large Glass, he achieved a corresponding effect by using a top and bottom panel. His binary division of the Glass into male and female regions reinforced his metaphors of philosophical, psychological, and sexual conflict.[102] Both Duchamp's Large Glass and Man Ray's Screen

[101] Arturo Schwarz reads this Wilson-Lincoln phenomenon as the collision of Eros and Narcissus which gives birth to the two-headed Janus representing virtue and vice. Although his in-depth sexual and incestual reading of The Large Glass troubles scholars and associates, I believe there is a certain validity to his arguments. See Arturo Schwarz, The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1978), 177.

[102] At various times, Duchamp spoke out about the primary importance of eroticism in his work, that he thought it was the basis of everything and needed to be brought out. See Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp, trans. Ron Padget (1967; New York: DaCapo Press, Inc., 1971), 88. In an unpublished interview with George Heard Hamilton and Richard Hamilton for the BBC, Duchamp said, "Eroticism is a subject very dear to me, and I certainly applied this liking, this love, to my Glass. In fact, I thought the only excuse for

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thematize gender conflict in a way that draws the viewer into the physical and psychological space of that conflict which, in turn, theatricalizes the domestic interior.[103] Viewers cannot help being engulfed by the spectacle of eroticism presented in Duchamp's Large Glass and Man Ray's Screen. On many levels the Large Glass is precisely about exposure, even if its sexual meaning is hidden to the uninitiated.[104] If Man Ray, on the other hand, chose to create a more explicit image of his desired woman, like Duchamp, he insisted on coding its meaning in an elaborate visual puzzle. But Man Ray's Screen is a greater affront to

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doing anything is to introduce eroticism into life." This is quoted in Schwarz, Complete Works, 80. Some scholars read this gender division on The Large Glass as a reference to an Assumption of the Virgin or as a Petrarchan conceit of exalting the woman and placing her figuratively on a pedestal.

[103] Schwarz remarks that Duchamp was intrigued by abolishing the distinction between artist and layperson which I believe parallels the placement of The Large Glass on the floor in the physical realm of human beings rather than hanging isolated on a wall. See Schwarz, Complete Works, 41. This highly charged space is also described by Man Ray's friend, Antonin Artaud, in his Notes on the Stage from "Theater of Cruelty-First Manifesto" from 1932-33. "We abolish the stage and the auditorium and replace them by a single site...which will become the theater of action. A direct communication will be re-established between the spectator and the spectacle, between the actor and the spectator, from the fact that the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, is engulfed and physically affected by it." Antonin Artaud, "Theater of Cruelty--First Manifesto," The Theater and Its Double, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), unpaginated.

[104] "Works as diverse as the Large Glass, Anemic Cinema and Étant Donnés can be seen as springing from a fundamental preoccupation with eroticism as a hidden but powerful force: the sexual theme of the Large Glass is invisible (revealed only in the notes which accompany it) but all-important." Anne d'Harnoncourt, "Introduction," in Marcel Duchamp, ed. d'Harnoncourt and McShine, 36.

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bourgeois propriety; not only does it portray the woman blatantly stripping bare in the center of the screen, but it also forces the viewer to confront the gender-based powerlessness and fetishistic implications embodied by this headless image. This is not a classical or Renaissance nude but the visualization by the male artist of a means to control the opposite sex and/or the uncooperative love object. From the point of view of eroticism, Man Ray's Screen is like Duchamp's earlier Nude Descending a Staircase (1912), which was shocking because "nakedness" (which social rules then required to be kept out of view) was seen to be descending into the public domain.[105]

Certain specific images in the sexual iconography of Man Ray's Screen echo elements in Duchamp's Large Glass, or in the notes for it. For instance, the clothing that engulfs Man Ray's woman has its parallel in the garment that the bride wears in the Large Glass; according to Duchamp scholar Arturo Schwarz, this bridal gown has the Medusean effect of both pulling the bachelors closer and keeping them at bay.[106] The detached eyes, hands, and lips in Screen may be interpreted as belonging to the woman but Surrealist disjuncture also allows that they might belong to male onlookers. Like the bachelors in the Large Glass, these disembodied parts watch the woman but are ultimately

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[105] Eric Cameron, "Given," in The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp, ed. Thierry Deduve (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 18.

[106] Schwarz, Complete Works, 84, 176.

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thwarted from touching, kissing, and seducing her. The long row of eyes on Man Ray's screen is directly analogous to Duchamp's *témoins occulistes*, or "eye witnesses" (these "Peeping Toms," as artist Richard Hamilton dubs them, are similarly placed below the bride in the lower panel of the Large Glass).[107] In both works castration is threatened and implied through various symbols.[108] And the white streak across the sky, the phallic tear/comet/semen emblem of masculinity, is comparable to the curious "illuminating gas" of Duchamp's bachelors.[109]

Like Duchamp's The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even, Man Ray's 1935 Screen is a sophisticated screen painting of multilayered and profound psychosexual iconography. Long-neglected in Man Ray's oeuvre, perhaps because it was considered a "decorative" object, the screen begs to be reevaluated as one of the most complex works from his most prolific period. Paul Éluard's portrait-poem about Man Ray influenced the imagery the artist tried to assemble on his screen. This floor-standing object constitutes a

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107 "The 1918 supplement to the project was a witness to the events of the glass--a Peeping Tom. A *témoin occuliste* is, in French law, an eyewitness. But it is also a chart used by opticians for eye testing." See Richard Hamilton, "The Large Glass," 66.

108 Duchamp wrote, "Each of the 8 malic molds is cut by an imaginary horizontal plane at a/ pnt. called the pnt. of sex." I read this as a castration image. Duchamp, Salt Seller, 51.

109 See Duchamp's notes on the illuminating gas, Ibid., 48-53. See also Arturo Schwarz, "The Alchemist Stripped Bare in the Bachelor, Even," in Marcel Duchamp, ed. Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 91-92.

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retrospective of Man Ray's own themes and motifs which parallel those of the photographs he was collecting for his album Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934. In the screen, whose structure is itself a collection of five hinged pieces, Man Ray took advantage of the disjointed narrative possibilities of the fragmented Surrealist landscape to produce a scene that embodies the clash between Eros and Thanatos, and which echoes themes in Duchamp's Large Glass as well as concepts from other Surrealist artists and writers. Finally, in Screen, Man Ray seems to have created a semi-autobiographical rebus concerning his failed personal relationship with Lee Miller. In so doing, he presents the viewer with a screen image of the quintessential Surrealist woman: one who is desired but feared, one who must be conquered in art even if she cannot be controlled in life.

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THE FOLDING SCREEN AS SEXUAL METAPHOR IN TWENTIETH CENTURY WESTERN ART: AN ANALYSIS OF SCREENS BY EILEEN GRAY, MAN RAY, AND BRUCE CONNER

by

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CHAPTER VI

GAZING AT THE GRIMY GAUZE: BRUCE CONNER'S PARTITION, A SIXTIES SCREEN

From 1961 through 1964 Bruce Conner, an American artist and filmmaker, created a thickly encrusted, double-sided, three-panel folding screen titled Partition (fig. 4 & 5). As described in the catalogue of his 1999 exhibition, 2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story Part II, Partition's pointed wooden panels are each 71 inches tall and 37 inches wide.[1] Partition's materials are listed as: "nylon stockings, fringe, jewelry, artificial flowers, fabric, paint, string, paper collages, straw hat fragment, metal, mirrors, paper, feathers, aluminum foil, wax, offset lithograph on paper, tinsel, found objects, etc," Conner's dizzying entanglement of these and other junk items on the structure of this altarpiece/folding screen produces the complex, and sometimes indecipherable, meanings of this, his largest assemblage.[2] When considered polyphonically within the context of Conner's own life, his oeuvre and that of his contemporaries, and the cultural and political underpinnings of the late-Fifties and early-Sixties Cold War era, Partition theatrically displays themes of sexuality,

1 Conner, 2000 BC, 249.
2 Ibid.

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religion, societal and nuclear disintegration, the hallucinogenic, and the celebration of the sacred and profane within art and life.[3]

As with many of Conner's assemblages, which were created primarily between 1958 and 1964, Partition's surface is often impenetrable, a composition of used but undigested,

[3] Despite the fact that this is Conner's largest extant assemblage, Partition, now in the collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, has been virtually ignored in the art historical literature until my catalogue entry in Komanecky and Butera, The Folding Image, 273-276. Partition was exhibited in Conner's two early museum exhibitions at the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University (1965) and at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia (1967), but was not discussed in the essays for those catalogues. In March 1966 Charles Alan mentions in a letter to Conner, "A friend of Robert Fraser, Kaspar Koenig (did you ever meet him), was here and said Robert is so crazy about PARTITION that he is thinking about buying it. Have you heard from him?" Charles Alan, New York City to Bruce Conner, (San Francisco), 8 March 1966, Bruce Conner Papers, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution, Reel 1092.

When, for reasons of disgust with museums, curators, and commercial galleries, Conner decided to stop exhibiting his assemblages, Partition was one of the objects he listed in his letter to Charles Alan saying, "I am planning on a half-price garage sale fire sale there this year and burn the things that I don't sell is why it is fire sale." Bruce Conner, San Francisco to Charles Alan, New York City, 7 January 1968, Bruce Conner Papers, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution, Reel 1092.

The burning did not take place; in a letter of 10 January 1970, Partition is listed as being in storage in a garage in Conejo and for sale for $ 3,500. Bruce Conner, San Francisco to Charles Alan, New York City, 10 January 1970, Bruce Conner Papers, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution, Reel 1092.

In 1981 Partition was acquired by the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, through the Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco. Partition was recently exhibited in three out of four venues for Conner's 1999-2000 major exhibition. In the accompanying catalogue, it was illustrated in color and merely mentioned but not discussed in Boswell's essay, "Bruce Conner: Theater of Light and Shadow," 2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story Part II (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1999), 44.

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bits and pieces of life. Indeed, Conner never considered his assemblages as finished and said, "I expected to never stop altering them or changing them."[4] Like watching Conner's films made up of collaged frames of old recovered film footage, one's experience of Partition is constantly transitory, never fixed. In 1990 Conner remarked about his works including the assemblages:

> The work contains a balance of decay or change and the demand for attention. They had inherently a concept of change, the alteration of imagery over a period of time. In a way it's like a cinematic approach. My paintings and collages and other works that I've done incorporate elements that you cannot see from one viewpoint. All these elements become part of your memory, your emotions and that constitutes the whole work.[5]

As critic and art historian Thomas Garver noted in 1974, in Conner's work "'meaning' rises subliminally rather than intellectually."[6]

The act of studying Conner's Partition in order to write a detailed description of the piece is an attempt to find coherence and linearity within purposeful chaos. It is hard to stay focused on each element with so many others competing for visual attention. Conner teases the viewer by hiding things or wrapping up "presents" you can never open,

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[4] Conner said "I never considered any of these collages or assemblages finished--they were dated at the time I hung them on a wall." Bruce Conner and Robert Dean, "A Conversation with Bruce Conner and Robert Dean," Bruce Conner: Assemblages, Paintings, Drawings, Engraving Collages 1960-1990 (Los Angeles: Michael Kohn Gallery, 1990), n.p.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Thomas Garver, "Introduction," Bruce Conner Drawings 1955-1972 (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco: M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, 1974).

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like Man Ray's 1920 cloaked and tied Dada work, The Enigma of Isidore Ducase. Ideas about, and connections between, the screen's collaged objects flow in and out of consciousness, an even more frustrating viewing experience than that of watching Conner's montaged movies.

Having extensively examined the actual screen five separate times, I still feel as if I do not know the piece, that I cannot have a dialogue with it in its entirety. Conner's images on a movie screen are revealed sequentially over time whereas there is no clear order for viewing the objects on this two-sided folding screen. At least half of them are always invisible and hence are exposed only through time *and* space. It is the viewer who must move, but without a map for this veiled landscape.

Partition's elements initially look randomly collected and improvisationally stuck on its surface. Yet Conner's approach seems to be a controlled stream of consciousness, more akin to surrealistic or existential theater where events or images only *appear* to be random. What Conner wants to present on this altarpiece/folding screen is a visualization of a metaphor for a mental nuclear explosion, that is, a conglomeration of scattered, non-integrated images that have collected in his mind and are revealed in this multi-layered form as if he is having a vision or a drug induced hallucination. Through the act of gazing at this non-linear narrative and circulating around the screen

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standing zigzag on the floor, the viewer becomes a participant in this personal theatrical event.

Partition is a work incorporating aspects both of beauty and decay. A rainbow of colors from the many glued junk pieces are muted by the golden overlay of Conner's then-signature material: stretched, shredded, and bunched nylon stockings. Each of the six panel sides of this visually pulsating piece is intrinsically different. Conner's imagery on the now-labelled front side (recto) of the screen seems to focus principally on gender and sexual references whereas the themes on the now-labelled back (verso) are more focused on religious subjects with allusions to or images of death, Transfiguration, and Christ.

On the top left of the left hand panel on the recto (fig. 83), purple velvet material with gold fringe, ripped near the top, hugs the top left side of the diagonal edge. Dusty black lace topped with white candle wax forms a parallel strip on the top right diagonal edge of this panel. Slightly underneath these two strips of material is the half-brim of a straw sombrero splashed with red paint. This acts like a half-halo as it surrounds a blue-denim colored offset lithograph with what looks like a sword handle, similar to a cross, appearing in a circle. Fake pearl necklaces and bits of puzzle pieces are arranged to visually echo the left, bottom, and right edge of this circle.

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Below it, about a third of the way down the panel, nipple-like imitation white pearl and ruby-centered pins or earrings are placed on either side of the end of the semi-circular hat. Red Christmas tinsel is hanging to the right below the hat and to the right of the right-hand pearl and ruby object. Gold tinsel is in clumps just below the red tinsel. Below that, Conner stretched nylons to reveal more of the blue lithograph background print which seems to cover much of the panel underneath.

Conner ran a red and gray twisted string across the center of the panel. Below and to the left is a sack made from stockings with pointedly gender-coded blue and pink objects and ribbon tangled in it. Since Conner's son was born during their stay in Mexico, the pouch could be both a uterine and a testicular reference. It is about six inches wide and three inches high in the center. Next to this pouch, which is about two-thirds of the way down on the panel, is a waterfall-like dangling earring of blue rhinestones, with unstrung pearls randomly scattered, an ejaculatory reference, across the panel to the right where there is another earring near the string. On the rest of the lower panel, shredded web-like stockings cover over the blue lithographed paper. Near the middle, a clear strip of rhinestones cascades down to a pearl and ruby-centered jewel, like the ones in the middle of the screen. From the lower left edge across to the above-mentioned earring, Conner placed another stocking pouch which contains unknown

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materials and objects. It extends across one-third of the screen and is about six inches high.

The two stuffed nylon pouches on this panel are similar to other pouches Conner made for his other assemblages and he has specifically acknowledged, as I will discuss below, their testicular reference. By containing other objects, however, these could be interpreted in multiple ways. The Mexican sombrero and phallic, ejaculatory, and testicular references signal masculine presence, whereas the jewelry, stockings and fringed material signify the feminine, and make this panel side a potent gender mix.

The center panel has stockings and dripped candle wax at the top covering a blue and green painted strip on the top of the panel. From the left side, slightly below the top hangs a phallic-looking honey mustard colored melted candle about twelve or fourteen inches long which points to the lower right. At the top under a loose skein of stockings is a playing card of the king of hearts and just below that is an offset lithograph of collaged print images in reddish ink on brownish cream paper. There is no clear image although putti in clouds are in the center of the print. To either side of the putti are biblical-looking figures, creating a triptych-like arrangement of an altarpiece which echoes what this screen was originally intended to be. Further at the top right are the beige half-shells of a maraca tangled in stockings suspended from the top. From that also hangs the whitish grey mass of a feather duster. Below the center

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image of putti, strings of fake pearls are draped across the middle part of the panel and are entangled with string in the center and more gold Christmas tinsel and other pearl necklaces on the left.

From one third of the way down the panel almost to the bottom, a piece of wallpaper with yellow background and then a piece with bright green background, both with navy and red polka dots on it, is revealed through the other layers of junk. In the middle of the panel is a square of gold foil, a possible reference to the gold backgrounds of Renaissance altarpieces and/or to the gold leaf backgrounds of many Japanese folding screens. To the center right a clump of white string and yellow yarn is bound in a nylon stocking pouch about four inches high and eight inches wide. Next to it, a green, red, and blue maraca with a palm tree painted on it hangs, handle down, and could be construed as both a phallic and breast-related object, a partial visual echo to the phallic candle on the upper left of this panel. More clumps of nylons are below the maraca on the right edge. In the center another long, limp nylon cylindrical bunch of stockings hang with lingerie straps to its left. Dangling from these stockings is an approximately fourteen inch long red fringed piece of material, perhaps a menstrual reference.

A now dust-covered light blue ruffled-lace lingerie and stocking bag, a telling focal point suggestive of women's undergarments, is precariously suspended in front of the

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screen with bra straps, strips of black lace, string, and brown-edged nylon pieces among other tethers. On the center panel, slightly further to the left, is shredded and tangled string with pieces of pearl necklaces swagged on top. A piece of red wallpaper with stylized white daisies and a shredded stocking overlay is on the far left side. In amongst the layered nylons in the lower quarter of the panel are random puzzle pieces, two black spider-like feathery clumps, each about one inch in diameter, and an eliptical-shaped yellow bead from a child's toy. On the lower far right edge are wedged and pocketed clumps of stockings.

Black nylon material from the other side peeks over the top edge of the right panel on the screen's recto (fig. 84). Shredded goldish fabric hangs down from the left. A peacock tail feather hangs from the top point of the panel above another rectangle of black material with silver brocaded threads. To the right of that are various colored felt one inch squares in red, navy, gray, lavender, green, black, and turquoise shielded by layers of stockings. Faded blackish and purple wallpaper with a large lavender pattern is the background covering for the top half of this panel. About one quarter of the way down in the center of the panel, there is a hole, one inch in diameter, coming through from the verso. Slightly to the left of this perforation, pushed from the other side of the side of the screen, the tip of a white candle protrudes, penis-like, from underneath the wallpaper. Off to the left, is a patch of red, green, and

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blue patterned and quilted material while red material drapes down along the left edge of the panel. To the right, shredded nylons and a piece of six-sided white beehive-webbed lace hangs from the center just above and overlapping a series of eleven match boxes which horizontally bisect the panel. Red foil is twisted among the lace and red paint covers the fifth and sixth match boxes with white doily bits covering the seventh and eighth match boxes. Above this center line, near the right edge, a white pearl is glued above a piece of black fur. Below that are six vertically stacked match boxes with a Renaissance male portrait on one. A clump of tangled string completes this grouping of objects.

Below the center line of match boxes there is a collage of black and white cut-up engraved images which are so confused that it is impossible to specifically identify figures or scenes. Like the cut-up collaged print on the center panel, this melange of engraved images prefigures a type of work Conner would do later in his career.[7] The rest of the lower half of this panel is relatively vacant of

[7] Peter Boswell details Conner's use of collaged wood engravings in his assemblages, as independent pieces, and as series during his career. Their subject matter is often based on Christ and religious imagery. Boswell notes that Conner has two approaches, either to use one main image as a base and add subtle changes or, to put so many bits and pieces together so that the collage becomes, as Boswell writes, "a dense labyrinth of black and white from which images emerge unexpectedly. In either case, the images have a metamorphic character, and thus the viewer's process of discovery is closely related to the experience of the assemblages and movies." Boswell, "Theater of Light and Shadow," 33.

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objects other than the ubiquitous wallpaper covered with shredded nylons. However, there is a gold metal fan three inches in diameter on the right, just below the center, and a circle of pearl pieces three-quarters of the way down on the left edge. Lower down, almost to the bottom towards the center, is another nylon pouch with pieces of trapped material. Along the bottom edge under several layers of stockings is another collage of engraving pieces which appears as line patterns with no discernible image. As with the other panels, Conner has pulled, draped, stretched and patterned nylon stockings to both reveal and conceal all the other various objects he has adhered to the work.

The verso of the screen is very different from the side just described. This side has a greater emphasis on Christ and religion, whereas sexual imagery predominates on the recto. The verso underscores the fact that Conner began Partition as a triptych altarpiece with religious imagery and that he expanded the object's function, conception, and materials to suggest the wide implications of a dressing/undressing barrier/folding screen.

Like the other two panels of the verso, the left panel is painted black (fig. 85). Sporadic areas of this panel are covered with bits of various wallpapers. Black see-through material is draped, shawl-like, over blue and red wallpaper across the top portion of the panel to almost halfway down the left edge where a piece of white material also falls. From near the top point of the panel black beads and a black

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necklace hang down on top of the black material. In contrast to the colors on the rest of the screen, this prominent black material evokes death and mourning.

About a quarter of the way down on the panel is a brooch. Right below that is the one inch hole and further to the right the other end of the white candle, both of which were also visible on the right panel of the recto. Slightly below that, in the center area, are two more nipple-like brooches with pearls. Below that the stockings are fewer and thinner than they were on the other side of the screen and they reveal a green and brown wallpaper covering. Pearl necklaces are draped and swagged in the center in a circular configuration reminiscent of a stomach or intestines. Three pieces of red reflector plastic are placed to the right, center and left below that circular configuration. Along the bottom edge, Conner placed strips of mirrored glass and in the middle a brooch with white rhinestones. Compared to the other side of the screen, Conner stretched relatively few layers of beige nylons, particularly in this lower section of the left verso panel.

Because of the possible displaced body parts on this panel and the Christological images in the adjacent center panel, the black covering on the upper edge could perhaps allude to the covered crosses of Lent and to the Crucifixion and death of Christ. This would be similar to how the side panel of an altarpiece often contains scenes from different aspects of the life of Christ. The desire to project ideas

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onto this work arise because of the amorphous nature of the objects and their arrangement, and is similar to the rebus-like reading that occurs when examining Dada and Surrealist works like Man Ray's 1935 Screen.

The central panel of the verso is perhaps the most important panel of the screen because it combines the religious, spiritual, and sexual elements of the piece in an ironic and unpredictable way. All across the top pointed edge of this panel there are several inches of shreds of stockings stretched over from the other side. Right under that, in the top middle of this panel, Conner attached to the black painted background a beige with redish-brown ink offset lithograph whose image he had constructed from several other engravings. This is the collage technique he used with the images on the recto and has used throughout his career. In the center of the composition Conner put Christ in heavily draped garments with his left arm stretched towards heaven and a long thin cross leaning against him. A dove, the image of the Holy Spirit, hovers in a mandala shape directly above him. To the right three disciples are huddled, staring at Christ. Other areas of the print are abstract patterns which had been cut and pasted together before the offset process occurred to form the mountain and cloud background and the two triangle shapes at the bottom of the composition.

The central image most likely represents the Transfiguration of Christ, where Christ appears on Mount

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Tabor before his disciples Peter, John, and James. "There, before their eyes, Christ was transfigured. His garments became shining white with a heavenly radiance, and there appeared and talked with Him the prophets Moses and Elias."[8]

This riveting Christian image of the essence of holiness is also part of other spiritual indications on this panel. To the immediate left of the image there are pieces of black and white wallpaper which cover and cut off in part a seated Indian figure (possibly a Hindu God?) that has black hair, a black upraised right hand, and bright red pants on, all against a bright lime green background. Like many Beat poets, musicians, and artists, Conner was interested in Zen Buddhism and its spiritual teachings, and this image probably references this aspect of his life. It is noteworthy that while the image of the Transfigured Christ occupies the upper center of the center panel, the Indian figure is also given an adjacent place of prominence, perhaps indicative of the way Conner was investigating both the Christian and Zen Buddhist spiritual paths.

Bits and pieces of colored and black and white wallpaper form an abstract random pattern and run down below the Indian image to the bottom edge of the screen. Particularly from the center down, stretched and shredded stockings form a spiderweb-like overlay. This collage of wallpapers and stockings works its way down from top to

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[8] This description is based on passages in Luke 9: 34ff according to George Ferguson, Signs and Symbols in Christian Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 84.

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bottom on the right hand side of the panel, too. But from the top right of the panel, Conner has slung what looks like an unraveled string mop and embedded it with paper flowers: brownish peach colored roses and white daisies with yellow centers. Strands of the mop move to the center below the Transfiguration image and collect there. Down and slightly to the left of the clumped string is a 2 1/2 to 3 inches long pear shaped lump of pinkish honey colored melted candle wax with the string above and below it. The mass of string then drips down in a tangled clump, perhaps an ejaculatory reference, into the middle third of the panel and then drifts to the right, almost a defilement of what lies below it.

The most riveting part of the assemblage is the area where Conner has pushed back the tangles of string to reveal a color print of Christ. Exposed is the left eye of Christ, the left side of his face and curly beard, the center and left side of his chest. Here, his left hand pulls back his skin, as though it were cloth, to reveal a red flaming heart horizontally encircled with entwined thorns and topped by a tiny cross in the light aura that surrounds the whole heart. As a symbol in Christian art, "the heart was considered to be the source of understanding, love, courage, devotion, sorrow, and joy...The flaming heart suggests the utmost religious fervor."[9] It is an ironic juxtaposition with the nylon stockings, the ejaculatory string, the lace edging

[9] Ibid., 48.

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which swags under this figure of Christ to the bottom of the panel. The nylons part from around Christ's image as though the dirty, decayed, wrapped layers of a mummy have been cut to disclose the body underneath. Yet here the viewer spies a voyeuristic Christ gazing out, showing off his most sacred part. Perhaps Conner wants us to read this image in a straightforward way, but it is difficult because of the unseemly concoction of surrounding objects. Is this Conner's quest to understand spirituality, love, and death within the gauzy context of femininity and sexuality? How do these images function as parts of the whole of the screen and must they do so? Or will the meaning merely arise subliminally as we further contextualize this altarpiece/folding screen?

In contrast, the right panel of the verso (fig. 86) is relatively empty of images and objects. Wax from candles that Conner had stuck originally to the top of the screen had dripped down and covered the center of the top edge that has black lace underneath. Three (for the Holy Trinity?) desultory yellow paper flowers also hang down from the top. Black paint covers the entire panel as silver splotches like stars peek through the gauze of the stockings. About a third of the way down, a pearl necklace swags to the left and the right above a circle of gold foil with splotches of greyish-silver paint. Underneath the foil, Conner pulled back the covering of stockings to present eight rows of irregular rectangles of mirror pieces. These form a block in the middle of the central portion of the panel. Gold leaf or

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gold paint is splashed randomly across the mirrored bits. A piece of string from the central panel dangles across the lower third of the panel and is attached to the far edge of the screen. Below that Conner pulled apart a hole in the stockings exposing the black paint background. Under that and to the right rectangles of gold foil and blue foil break through the stockings.

Conner used the rectangular bits of broken mirror to create a reflective circle in which the viewer sees his or her fragmented image. Conner's use of mirror pieces here relates ironically to a slightly later work, Looking Glass, 1964 (fig. 105), in which hundreds of collaged pin-up girls stare out at the viewer from below a garment covered assemblage. On Partition, the use of mirror seems a symbol of self-examination and self-questioning in the face of spiritual, religious, and sexual issues, yet the fragmentation of that mirror subverts this purpose, and suggests that our image of ourselves is never a whole one but is rather constructed from many parts, an idea germane to Conner's thinking and way of working.

This detailed description merely enumerates the things that Conner assembled on Partition. According to Conner himself and the art historical literature and criticism about his work, there were many experiences and ideas which influenced his assemblage work and Partition in particular. By exploring myriad aspects of Conner's life, his interests, and contemporary aesthetic approaches, and by examining some

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larger theoretical and philosophical issues, I will try to uncover the deeper themes of this altarpiece/folding screen and show how it expands the notion of the screen as a sexual metaphor.

Conner has noted that he began Partition during a year-long sojourn in Mexico in 1961-1962.[10] Several of the Fifties Beat writers such as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsburg, Philip Lamantia, and Conner's college friend Michael McClure, had gone to Mexico for creative inspiration and for a physical, spiritual, and/or metaphoric refuge.[11] The rambling, broken lines and thought of the individual choruses in Kerouac's 1957 poem "Mexico City Blues," like the elements and sections of the assemblages Conner created in Mexico, seem at once premeditated, worked on, and yet improvised, both indebted to the syncopation of jazz music, the real inspiration for Beat art.[12] Allen Ginsberg's poems, "The Reply," The End," and especially "Magic Psalm," all of which he said "record visions experienced after drinking

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[10] Bruce Conner, telephone interview with author, 29 April 1983.

[11] Mexico figures as a place, a theme, and a dream in the poetry of Allen Ginsberg in works such as "Siesta in Xbalba" and "Return to the States" in his collection, Reality Sandwiches (1963; San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1992), 21-39.

[12] David Sterritt remarks that it was bebop jazz that set the stage for improvisation in jazz as well as the other arts. He singles out Bruce Conner's films, especially the first two, A Movie and Cosmic Ray, as having a close affinity with bebop jazz. David Sterritt, Mad To Be Saved: The Beats, the '50s, and Film (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 51-53.

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Ayahuasca, an Amazon spiritual potion,"[13] reveal an intense mix of hallucinogenic, spiritual, transcendent, base, everyday, and sexual stream of conscious imagery that is paralleled by Conner in Partition and many of his other Mexican-inspired assemblages.[14] Conner was not alone in his sources of inspiration, but was unique in the materials and means he chose to convey the issues and conflicts of Beat artists.

According to Conner he went to Mexico for three main reasons. He wanted to live and work inexpensively there.[15] He left the United States to avoid the threat of a nuclear attack which was ever-present during the Cold War as a real and a psychological horror.[16] Conner also wanted to explore the visions offered by eating the hallucinogenic "magic

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[13] Allen Ginsberg, Kaddish and Other Poems (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1961), 100.

[14] See Boswell, "Theater of Light and Shadow," 42-53, for a discussion about Conner's sojourn in Mexico and for images of several of the works he made there labeled for the first time, "Hecho en Mexico," in this retrospective catalogue.

[15] In an interview with Paul Cummings, Conner talks about going to Mexico in order to live cheaply. He also says that he had met Timothy Leary in New York City before going to Mexico. Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Cummings, Microfilmed transcript of tape recording, New York City, 16 April 1973, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution, Reel 3197, 22-23.

[16] Ann Charters notes the shared experience for the Beats "which was historical and political, based on the tumultuous changes of their times: the historic events that began with America's dropping the atomic bomb on Japan to bring World War II to an end, and the political ramifications of the ensuing Cold War and wave/or anti-Communist hysteria that followed in the United States in the late 1940s and the 1950s." Ann Charters, "Introduction," The Portable Beat Reader, ed. Ann Charters (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), xvi/xvii.

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mushrooms" that could be found only in Indian villages in Mexico.

As Conner stated in 1984,

> I went to Mexico for many reasons. One of them was that I was sure the bomb was going to drop and we'd be annihilated. So I'd go to Mexico and figure out how to live in the mountains after the bomb dropped. I got rid of all my worldly goods and decided to change my life forever, and my wife and I got into the car and drove off for Mexico. What I found, though, in retrospect, was that I was basically running away from death.[17]

And he also commented, "Mexico is a wonderful place to go if you're running away from death, because they celebrate it with bells and parades and everything else."[18] Conner would have been at home with parades to celebrate many situations, and so would have been open to the seemingly idiosyncratic interweaving of Mexican life and art. Solnit quotes Conner explaining that a group of Beat poets and artists who were members of Conner's club, the Rat Bastard Protective Association, staged a pre-Happening event in San Francisco at the end of the Fifties:

> 'One time the Rat Bastards and Dave Hazelwood and the poets decided to organize a parade through North Beach with banners and standards...It was totally unannounced, and all of a sudden there were about two hundred people walking down Grant Avenue and across Broadway. There was a poetry duel between Philip Lamantia and some bullshit poet who had moved in from New York for about two months to take advantage of the publicity there was about North Beach...'[19]

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17 As quoted in Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 97
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 71.

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The integration of the religious, transcendental, and sacred with the sexual, the utilitarian, and the profane recurs continually in Conner's art. In an essay published in 1970, performance theorist Richard Schechner articulates an approach to art that seems descriptive of Conner's non-mimetic artistic activites.

> Art is cooked and life is raw. Making art is the process of transforming raw experience into palatable forms. This transformation is a mimesis, a representation...In non-mimetic art the boundaries between 'life' and 'art' - raw and cooked - are blurry and permeable.[20]

Schechner further explains that primitive people's approach to life/art is generated from the blurry and the permeable. He then outlines "yearnings which have triggered not only an interest in primitive peoples but artistic movements that concretize that interest..."[21] Schechner divides those yearnings into four categories: wholeness, process and organic growth, concreteness, and religious transcendental experience, and then fully describes how these yearnings had been/were being actualized and manifested in North American culture. Many of Schechner's performance ideas and activites seem to describe and document Conner's approach to life and his art processes in the late Fifties and early Sixties:

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[20] This is an approach that links the civilized with rural-tribal traditions. Richard Schechner, "Actuals (1970)," Performance Theory, rev. and exp. ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), 38 [Originally published as Essays on Performance Theory (Ralph Pine for Drama Book Specialists, 1977).]

[21] Ibid., 39.

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> *Wholeness*. Participatory democracy, self-determination on the local, national, and international levels...Total theater, intermedia, integrated electronic systems, McLuhanism...
>
> *Process and organic growth*. ...An end to the assembly-line approach to the production of goods and the conformism of people. Animosity toward the police, the military-industrial complex. 'Process, not product.'...Turn people into artists, not on to art...Ritual art, all-night dances.
>
> *Concreteness*. Down with theories, abstractions, generalizations, the 'biggies' of art, industry, education, government, etc...Street and guerrilla theater...Dig the physicality of experience. Sensory awareness, involvement, and expression. Happenings, earth art, concrete poetry and music, pornography.
>
> *Religious transcendental experience*. Mysticism, shamanism, messianism, psychedelics, epiphanies. Zen, yoga, and other ways to truth through participation or formulation, as in macrobiotics, yoga, and mantra chanting. Eschatological yearnings: what is the meaning of life? Make all experience meaningful. Sacralize everyday living. Sung poetry, encounter groups, experimental theater, marathons, T-groups, performances made in and by communities, tribalism, rock festivals, drugs, trips, freak-outs, ecstasies.[22]

Conner's embrace of primitive yearnings is expressed in the densely layered imagery of Partition. The themes were initially ecclesiastical and magical, in keeping with Conner's perceptions of the strong Catholic and mystical themes present in Mexican life and art, as well as with Conner's own interests at the time.[23] He was particularly "intrigued by (Mexican) ceremonial altars which used everyday materials in devotional settings,"[24] and which

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[22] Ibid., 39-40.

[23] Bruce Conner, Telephone interview with author, 29 April 1983.

[24] Philip Brookman, "California Assemblage: The Mixed Message," Forty Years of California Assemblage (Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles, 1989), 78.

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could be seen in the most profane and unlikely of places. In 1983 Conner recalled to interviewer and art historian Peter Boswell:

> 'The collages and assemblages that I did in Mexico were a direct extension of what I saw happening there. I would go by an auto-repair garage and in the midst of greasy tools and objects on the wall would be a shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe. A picture of the Virgin. Right next to it might be a monkey wrench, and an electric lightbulb, and plastic flowers, and a pin-up of a half-naked girl. Pictures of family, souvenirs, all sorts of objects there.'[25]

In response to these observations not only did Conner produce assemblages titled La Virgen(1962) (fig. 88) and Guadalupe (1962), but as Boswell also notes:

> In this spirit, Conner created a series of works made by painting and collaging items in his home including a suitcase, a pair of shoes, a pillow, a folding screen, a globe, and the footlocker that served as his newborn son Robert's crib.[26]

The pointed-top panels of Partition, reminiscent of Gothic altarpieces, were designed by Conner and then built out of cedar wood by a Mexican craftsman.[27] This hinged object was functional: Conner used it in his Mexican apartment as a room divider between his kitchen and dining

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[25] Bruce Conner, Interview with Peter Boswell, June 15, 1983 as quoted in Boswell, "Theater of Light and Shadow," 44.

[26] Ibid.

[27] "My three part partition is six feet high, is three pieces I designed and had carpenter make in mexico, each part is about two and half feet wide." Bruce Conner, Wichita, Kansas to Charles Alan, New York, New York, 28 February 1963, Charles Alan Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution.

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area. However, as Conner explained to me, he initially intended Partition to be a kind of tripartite altarpiece with images of Christ from Mexican popular prints and candles on the top edges of each panel.[28] Partition also served as a backdrop for his symbolic Last Supper (1961) (fig. 89) table (no longer extant), an object which addresses both Christianity and atomic annihilation.[29]

Garver described the Last Supper table as

> a work which is equally difficult to accept graciously. A small table has been covered with/black forms of wax which appear to be food burned or putrefied beyond recognition...(which reflects) the artist's concern with the ultimate extinction of humanity through a cataclysm of its own making. The artist here has become an eschatological Madame Tussaud to make a somber statement on the fate that awaits atomic adventurers.[30]

A photo taken in Mexico during 1962 shows Conner reenacting the Christian communion ritual at the Last Supper table with his wife Jean and guests in front of Partition. What is now described as the verso of the screen was the side facing the Last Supper table (fig. 90).

In a letter to his gallery dealer where he references a similar kind of photograph, if not this exact one, he wrote,

> I am enclose (sic) a photo that show (sic) what we are look (sic) like now. Left to right is Alan Russo, Yvonne Bond, Jean, Beth who was in Cosmic Ray and me with a mousetack (sic) and blunk out

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28 Bruce Conner, telephone interview with the author, 29 April 1983.

29 Ibid.

30 Garver, Bruce Conner: Sculpture, n.p.

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> eye bowls. It is our apartment with unfinished partition in back of Jean I am working on.[31]

About a month later, Conner wrote again to Alan about the Last Supper table, and in this letter reveals some of the multi-layered intersections of his art, his personal life, and his sacrilegious and sexual approaches, which echo the imagery in the final version of Partition.

> Jean and I have painted a few things on our table, I put words on it that said
>
> EATMEAT
> THE LAST
> SUPPER
>
> in big white letters and boy did I get it. Beth came here (she star in Cosmic Ray) and we took Mescaline together and I sat at my place at table and everybody ate except me because I was dying that night and they were eat me. And then I ran the silent version of Cosmic Ray and burnt my nerve ends. And you would think this a very funny house then because I have two girlfriends and one wife in two rooms and ZIP ZAP electrical run through walls.[32]

Conner's interest in the Christian spiritual tradition was augmented by his fascination with various types of cosmic awareness, some of it drug-induced, and in 1962 he wrote to his gallery dealer, Charles Alan, that he was "traveling to the magic mushroom villages with Tim Leary (harvard Psychiatrist [sic]) and eating them and making movies of the villages."[33] Conner's 1959-67 movie, Looking

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[31] Bruce Conner, Napoles, Mexico to Charles Alan, New York, New York, 16 August 1962, Charles Alan Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution.

[32] Bruce Conner, Napoles, Mexico, to Charles Alan, New York, New York, 19 September 1962, Charles Alan Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution.

[33] Bruce Conner, Napoles, Mexico to Charles Alan, New York, New York, 25 June 1962, Charles Alan Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution.

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for Mushrooms was one result; another was his 1962 drawing, Mushroom (fig. 91). The spiritual intermingling of Christianity within all the sacred and profane aspects of Mexican life would also have been revealed to Conner when participating in the magic mushroom ceremonies. A fascinating article documenting the magic mushroom ceremony had appeared in the May 13, 1957 issue of Life Magazine. It was written by R. Gordon Wasson, a vice-president of J.P. Morgan & Co., who was an amateur mycologist. In the long first paragraph of the article, Wasson writes:

> On the night of June 29-30, 1955, in a Mexican Indian village so remote from the world that most of the people still speak no Spanish, my friend Allan Richardson and I shared with a family of Indian friends a celebration of 'holy communion' where 'divine' mushrooms were first adored and then consumed. The Indians mingled Christian and pre-Christian elements in their religious practices in a way disconcerting for Christians but natural for them. The rite was led by two women, mother and daughter, both of them *curanderas* or shamans. The proceedings went on in the Mixeteco language. The mushrooms were of a species with hallucinogenic powers; that is, they cause the eater to see visions. We chewed and swallowed these acrid mushrooms, saw visions, and emerged from the experience awestruck. We had come from afar to attend a mushroom rite but had expected nothing so staggering as the virtuosity of the performing *curanderas* and the astonishing effects of the mushrooms. Richardson and I were the first white men in recorded history to eat the divine mushrooms, which for centuries have been a secret of certain Indian peoples living far from the great world in southern Mexico. No anthropologists had ever described the scene that we witnessed. [34]

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[34] R. Gordon Wasson, "Secret of 'Divine Mushrooms,'" Life Magazine (May 13, 1957): 100-107, 109-110, 113-114, 117-118, 120.

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Although to my knowledge this article has never been mentioned in relationship to Conner, it is quite possible that because of this fifteen page magazine spread Leary and Conner, as well as many others, initiated their search for Mexican mushrooms that produce visions similar to those of peyote and mescaline, two substances Conner was also using to achieve mind-altering states.[35]

His response to Mexican Catholic imagery, hallucinogenic visions, and nuclear fragmentation are specifically visible in the contemporaneous creation of works such as his traveling altarpiece Suitcase, 1961-63 (fig. 109), Last Supper table, 1961, Señorita, 1961 (fig. 110), Cross, 1962 (fig. 111) and Partition. These pieces reveal a collage of Christian images and symbols created in Conner's non-integrated means of working with non-traditional materials and echo the juxtapositions of everyday life and sacred religion, Indian ritual, and Christianity he had observed.

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[35] For a summary of the history of the psilocybin mushroom, Wasson's contribution to its understanding, the influence of Wasson's Life Magazine article and his other writings, a summary of his experiences after taking the mushrooms, and an extensive bibliography on this subject, see Peter Stafford, Psychedelics Encyclopedia, 3rd exp. ed., (Berkeley: Ronin Publishing, Inc., 1992), 224-279.

Aldous Huxley recorded his experiences of taking mescaline in a book, The Doors of Perception, (1954; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1990) and then broadly analyzed these trips, their creation of the heaven and hell of mystical and visionary experience, and their relationship to art, in a companion book, Heaven and Hell (1954; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1990). Both books would have been known and widely read, possibly also by Conner and his friends.

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Conner has not explained why he began Partition as an altarpiece and then developed it as a folding screen. It is unclear if the shift was for a functional, conceptual, thematic and/or material reason. The need for a floor-standing room divider has often prompted artists to create screens for themselves. From the evidence and the photograph mentioned above, the altarpiece stood on the floor as a divider in Conner's Mexican home. It was also the symbolic backdrop for the Last Supper table. The very title, Partition, calls into question what Conner is sectioning off; is it just space or is it religion from sexuality or religion from spirituality. As I have discussed in earlier chapters and elsewhere, the folding screen carries a multitude of historical, social, and especially sexual connotations which some artists enhance through their screens' structure, imagery, and/or intention. In the case of Partition, Conner spent three years intermingling objects and materials pertaining to daily life, religion, death, transcendence, and sexuality on a structure which still metamorphoses between the sacred and the profane. He arrived at an object which cannot be categorized but which simultaneously intertwines opposing themes within a heavily sexualized background.

Practically speaking, Conner's source for materials for his assemblages was substantially different in Mexico than it had been in San Francisco, and thus the meanings and ideas he was formulating were necessarily different. From

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Mexico in late 1961 or early 1962 he typed to his dealer, "I am depressed about the work I'm doing here and feel I should be doing something more. I don't have the comfort of being surrounded by dozens of my workd (sic). I haven't collected what I should need to work with."[36] Conner's friend, Lamantia, saw him in Mexico City and remembered "Conner's excitement over Mexico City's witches' open-air market with its arrays of bizarre materials," but according to Solnit, "Conner recalls discovering that in Mexico nothing was thrown away, that the Third World didn't produce the kind of debris he and [George] Herms had rejoiced in during their San Francisco days."[37] Nonetheless, Garver has remarked that Conner

> discovered the tawdry religious articles made and used by the Mexican peasant. This material, and Mexican stuffs generally, found their way into his work, which consequently became somewhat more colorful. He also changed the surface quality of his assemblages, and the objects used in them were not altered as much as in his earlier work, their explicit nature now being allowed to remain relatively unchanged.[38]

Culling for used materials, according to Conner, "represented aesthetics that grow out of poverty."[39] Whether a result of actual economics or an attitude against the materialist waste of the U.S. culture, Conner cultivated the "junk" aesthetic.

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36 Bruce Conner, Napoles, Mexico to Charles Alan, New York, New York, undated (probably late 1961 or early 1962), Charles Alan Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution.

37 Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 118.

38 Garver, Bruce Conner: Sculpture, n.p.

39 Conner and Dean, "Conversation," n.p.

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From 1961 to 1964, as Conner moved from Mexico to Wichita, Kansas, to Brookline, Massachusetts, and worked on Partition, evolved from a religious altarpiece to a folding screen. In a letter of February 28, 1963, Conner wrote to his dealer saying,

> My three part partition is six feet high, is three pieces I designed and had carpenter make in mexico, each part is about two and half feet wide. I have been gluing on it since I had it made in Mexico a year from last December. I am trying to get nylon stockings and other stuff from San Francisco since I have discovered that I am always looking around my studio for those things and they aren't there.[40]

To further underscore Conner's intense, indeed fetishistic, need for stockings, female undergarments, and erotic materials, Solnit quotes an appeal (date unpublished, sometime during 1963-1964) Conner put into a University of Chicago art festival publication prior to his show there:

> I am turning to nylon stocking assembling and would appreciate small dignified announcement in school paper that I have a nylon stocking fetish and place dignified receptacle for contributions at the exhibit of my work. It is very difficult to obtain them by legal sources. I would appreciate. I will also hope (but not request openly) to get brassieres, panties, dirty photos, jewelry, feathers, psyloceben (sic), smoke writers in the sky, lamp posts.[41]

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[40] Bruce Conner, Wichita, Kansas to Charles Alan, New York, New York, 28 February 1963, Charles Alan Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution.

[41] Bruce Conner as quoted in Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 63. In a 1974 interview, Conner noted his participation as an artist-in-residence in 1963 at the University of Chicago after his return from Mexico. They wanted him to show his movies and have an exhibition of his collages. The announcement must be related to this show held April 27-May 11, 1963. Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, San

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By the time he had completed Partition, he had added string, sequins, bits and pieces of jewelry, fabric, wallpaper, mirror, feathers, ribbons, laces, as well as nylon stockings. Initially, the original altarpiece format dictated the religious iconography; the object's subsequent redefinition/title as a folding screen/Partition invited the additional layers of sexual themes; thus the dual functional aspects of Partition symbioticly amplified some of its meanings. As Joan C. Siegfried notes about his early Sixties work: "Conner's new respect for the object's integrity has at least two consequences discernible in works completed in 1962 and 1963; the object may either dictate the theme of a collage or it may determine the shape of an assemblage."[42] Partition incorporated both strategies and is a defining piece for that moment of his career.

The materials and imagery that Conner used in Partition had several purposes: to present a "surrealist reassembling of Catholic catechism;"[43] to evoke the horror of capitalist waste; to suggest the decay and disarray of contemporary society;[44] and to allude to the complexities of female sexuality. These themes, echoing issues raised by Conner's

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Francisco, 12 August 1974, microfilmed transcript of tape recording, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution, Reel 3949, page 41.

[42] Siegfried, Bruce Conner, n.p.

[43] Bruce Conner, Telephone interview with author, 29 April 1983.

[44] Philip Leider cogently remarked, "Disordered sexuality with its persistent association of disordered society is thematic in Conner's work." Philip Leider, "Bruce Conner: A New Sensibility," Artforum 1, 6 (August 1962): 30.

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contemporary, the psychological, political, and social philosopher, Herbert Marcuse in his treatise, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (1955), constantly recur in Conner's late 1950s and early 1960s assemblages.[45] The unique physical, functional, and symbolic folding screen format of Partition, moreover, broadens and deepens Conner's complex message. On the screen, the iconography is clearly divided between the recto which features male and female references, and the verso, which focuses more on religious imagery, featuring the black shawl/mourning shroud and two prints of Christ. Both sides of Partition are united, however, by the gauzy cocoon of torn and stretched stockings.

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[45] Marcuse contemplates concepts of capitalistic work-driven civilization as an inhibitor of human sexual and creative freedom and as a promoter of militaristic violence and death. Among other things, he proposes the need: to realign the balance of Eros and Thanatos; to redirect the repression and sublimation of the reality, performance, and pleasure principles; and to transform the libido "from sexuality constrained under genital supremacy to eroticization of the entire personality." Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (1955; Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 201. For a full discussion of these issues, see Ibid., 197-237.

Although Conner claims that he never read any of Marcuse's work (Bruce Conner, Telephone interview by author, 9 November 1994), Marcuse's ideas seem to resonate in Conner's own desires to see a society which celebrates and supports and does not distort or pervert human drives and sexuality.

According to Maurice Berger, Marcuse's Eros and Civilization was "the theoretical cornerstone" for the New York City art world in the mid-Sixties which believed in Marcuse's argument that the repression of sexuality was politically motivated. Maurice Berger, "Objects of Liberation: The Sculpture of Eva Hesse," Eva Hesse: A Retrospective, org. by Helen A. Cooper (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 129.

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Partition's references to Christianity and other religions mixed with fragmented and discarded worldly objects which suggest decay and death represent an extremely unusual combination of motifs in the history of folding screens, but not in Conner's art. As art historian Sandra Starr has pointed out, all of Conner's assemblages resemble reliquaries. The bits and pieces of flotsam he attaches to his artwork are like the relics of a saint's body preserved in a holy shrine. Lovingly collected and preserved, saints' relics are, according to the Catholic Church, meant to conjure up the living whole and to unite "this world and the next in a single context."[46] This analogy between religious talismans and Conner's Partition is particularly apt since the screen began as an altarpiece. What is arresting is that the stockings, broken jewelry, lingerie bag, and other feminine references have the same reliquary feel. With Conner, it is sometimes difficult to know if he is sensitive to women's search for identity, if he is ambivalent, or if he is exploitative. Whatever the specific meanings of these symbols, Partition certainly reflects Conner's views on women and sexuality. The main issue, then, is what are those views and how were they formed?

Conner was born in 1933 in McPherson, Kansas, but was raised in Wichita. He said that he "went through a Modigliani period in high school" while also looking at the

[46] Sandra Leonard Starr, Lost and Found in California: Four Decades of Assemblage Art (Santa Monica, California: James Corcoran Gallery, 1988), 10.

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work of Picasso and Mondrian.[47] At the University of Nebraska, he majored in Art and English, and was fascinated by Klee, Dadaism, Rembrandt and Goya. "I was interested in all sorts of things," Conner notes, "pre-Raphaelites as well. I was taking art history courses and I was being deluged with different attitudes and images. I could not really recreate what my interest at that time was."[48] His love of archeology and paleontology was most evident in his earliest artwork, however; it was manifested through "a relief of shapes like seashells, crustaceans, things that you might find in Permian strata. I built up small details with oil paint and then oil washes on top of it."[49] Conner continued to layer his work in Partition.

Conner was also influenced by so-called folk art and by collages and constructions of amateur artists. He was drawn to scrapbooks and homemade scrapwork objects.[50] But he also

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47 Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Cummings, 16 April 1973, Reel 3196, page 5.

48 Ibid., 6.

49 Ibid., 7. The layered strata approach to objects and images, is how his art manifests itself, especially in his drawings. See Thomas H. Garver, Bruce Conner Drawings 1955-1972 (San Francisco: The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1974), passim.

50 While some scrapwork objects were thematic collections of pictures such as Lord Byron's Boxing Screen, other more self-conscious Victorian domestic pieces often have meanings far beyond their surface appeal. Beginning with the Cubists, twentieth century artists have continued to make collages and assemblages. The dynamic visual juxtapositions possible with these two forms were exploited by the Dada and Surrealist artists such as Man Ray whose 1935 Screen re-employs similar strategies albeit with paint. In Los Angeles, the existence of Simon Rodia's Watts Towers (1921-1954), the presence of Man Ray from 1940 to 1952; the arrival of other Surrealists displaced during World War II; and the 1941 opening of a branch of Julien Levy's gallery

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knew the fine-art collages of Kurt Schwitters and Max Ernst which he saw in reproductions, and the paintings of the American trompe-l'oeil artist William Harnett (the Wichita Art Museum had one of his works). In a 1991 interview, Conner recalled,

> William Harnit (sic) and the 19th Century still life artists probably had as much influence on me as Schwitters because they assembled objects and these objects had meaning. Many times that had literal meaning, mortality, life, death, philosophy, even certain flowers represented certain virtues and emotions.[51]

Like the still-life paintings Conner describes, his own collages and assemblages also derive from the tradition of seventeenth-century *vanitas* paintings. In Georges de La Tour's The Penitent Magdalene ca. 1640, a skull, a mirror, and a burning candle, as well as a string of pearls and jewelry dropped on the floor (perhaps an indication of her former life as a prostitute) symbolize human vanity and the

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where he showed Surrealist art, inspired California artists who in turn influenced Conner and his collage and assemblage contemporaries such as George Herms, Wallace Berman, Jess, and Ed Kienholz. Starr, Lost and Found, 10, 12; Brookman, "California Assemblage," 77; Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, "The House That Collage Built," American Art 7, 3 (Summer 1993): 89. See also Varnedoe and Gopnik, High & Low, passim.; Seitz, The Art of Assemblage; Diane Waldman, Collage, Assemblage, and the Found Object (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1992).

[51] As quoted in Marc Selwyn, "Bruce Conner: Marilyn and the Spaghetti Theory," Flash Art (International Edition) 24, 156 (January/February 1991): 96. In a 1974 interview Conner said that he wrote a paper in 1954 at Nebraska University, "...drawing relationships between Peto and Harnett and relating them to collages dealing with the surface and object." Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, 12 August 1974, Reel 3949, page 19.

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brevity of life.[52] Conner uses similar objects on Partition and in other assemblages to suggest similar themes.

After receiving his B.F.A. from the University of Nebraska, Conner studied at the Brooklyn Museum Art School and then did some graduate work at the University of Colorado. In 1957, after Conner married his college girlfriend, Jean Marilyn Sand Stedt, they moved immediately to San Francisco which was home to a college friend, poet Michael McClure. Restless for a sympathetic environment, Conner made the move to San Francisco for other reasons as well. In the Mid-west, there were no psychiatric deferments from the army; in San Francisco he was able to find the right psychiatrist to write a deferment letter.[53] His absolute horror and fear of the military as an agent of death and destruction manifested itself not only in his personal decisions, but also in his artistic subject matter. Decay and post-nuclear holocaust destruction appear in Partition and other assemblages such as Last Supper, Child (1959), and Couch (1963).[54]

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[52] Starr noted that in the seventeenth century Dutch still life paintings secular images replaced the religious ones, but implied a similar memento mori theme. Starr, Lost and Found, 10.

Jacques Thuillier notes that in this version of La Tour's The Penitent Magdalene, the Magdalene retains some sense of her courtesan life, possibly because of the jewelry and her brocaded dress. Jacques Thuillier, Georges de La Tour (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), 158.

[53] Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, 12 August 1974, Reel 3949, page 3.

[54] Siegfried, Bruce Conner, n.p.

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Despite the fact that he was already exhibiting at the Charles Alan Gallery in Manhattan, Conner says he hated New York, that it was too claustrophobic, too unfriendly for him.[55] Although New York was clearly the artistic center of the United States in terms of dealers, collectors, museums, and money, Conner's move to San Francisco offered him the type of artistic freedom he would not necessarily have found in Manhattan in the mid-1950s. As Solnit explains:

> For California artists it was a magic interval between provincial isolation and full assimilation into the American avant-garde, and the utter/lack of outside interest and support left them free to make an art as daring, as experimental, as uncommercial, as ephemeral, and as personal as they could imagine.[56]

Part of the reason this artistic freedom was possible was the result of the atmosphere created by jazz musicians and the Beat poets and artists such as Gregory Corso, Robert Duncan, Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti (and his City Lights Bookstore) Jess, Kerouac, and McClure, many of whom lived in and/or visited San Francisco.[57] One of their themes was the search within themselves and within the everyday for spiritual understanding.[58] As Kerouac explained: "'The Beat

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[55] Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Cummings, 16 April 1973, Reel 3197, page 15; and Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom and Serge Guilbaut, tape recording, San Francisco, 29 March 1974, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution, tape 1, side 1, counter # 95.

[56] Solnit, Secret Exhibition, viii/ix.

[57] For an overview of Beat culture and concerns see, Phillips et al., Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-1965.

[58] Critic Neil Chassman describes the inclusion of the everyday in the art of the Beat poets such as Jack Kerouac

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Generation is basically a religious generation.'" In another interview he further stated: "'We're not Bohemian, remember. Beat means beatitude, not beat up. You *feel* this. You feel it in a beat, in jazz--real cool jazz or a good gutty rock number.'"[59]

Another way they looked for the spiritual was often through an exploration of "...all kinds of religions and mystical cults--Zen, the occult, yage, peyote, LSD, Catholicism, the Cabala--to attain an ecstatic radicalism, which they then transmitted through their art."[60] Although Conner had attended the Plymouth Congregational Church as he was growing up, he has said that later he was interested in other spiritual beliefs including Zen Buddhist philosophy

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and Allen Ginsberg, an approach which parallels that of some of the visual artists of the period:

> The Beat poets do incorporate the junk of life into their works. They reveal what is normally considered the trivia, commonplace, raw and nauseating elements of existence. By no means is this a mere substitution of the paraphernalia of one class for that of another; downtrodden replacing aristocratic. Rather, it is an affirmation that habitual ways of encounter tend to too narrowly define the significance which things have...'Debased objects' (junk) are incorporated in a largely non-judgemental fashion.

Neil A. Chassman, "Poets of the Cities: Levelling of Meaning," in Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Poets of the Cities: New York and San Francisco, 1950-1965 (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 1974), 22.

[59] John Chellon Holmes, "The Philosophy of the Beat Generation," Esquire 49, 2 (February 1958): 35.

[60] Phillips, "Beat Culture: America Revisioned," 30.

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which was interpreted and disseminated by writers important to Conner such as Alan Watts.[61]

Conner's quest for cosmic and spiritual awareness began quite early and gradually took several forms, in part to recapture a seminal experience he had as a young boy. It is significant that Conner, who oversaw all aspects of his recent major exhibition and its catalogue, used the following account, one of his most personal quotations, as a preface to begin 2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story, Part II. His recollection is placed opposite his July 1975 black and white drawing, Stars, an image meant to invoke the infinite heavens.

> It was when I was about eleven years old. I was in my room in the house in late afternoon. Sun was shining through the window. I was lying on the floor and I was looking out across the rug at the light on the floor. I went into a state of consciousness which I couldn't describe afterwards. I changed. I changed physically. I changed conceptually, and it took hundreds of years. I changed and grew old, through all kinds of experiences, in worlds of totally different

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61 In a published interview, Conner notes he was attending Plymouth Congregational Church in Wichita when he was twelve years old. John Yau, "Folded Mirror," On Paper Magazine 2, 5 (May-June 1998): 32.

Conner's interest in Zen may account for his embrace of non-hierarchical materials and subject matters. As Alan Watts noted, "For in Taoism and Zen the world is seen as an inseparably interrelated field or continuum, no part of which can actually be separated from the rest or valued above or below the rest." Alan Watts, "Beat Zen, Square Zen, Zen," This is IT and other essays on Zen and Spiritual Experience (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 91, (First published Chicago Review (Summer 1958). During a 1974 interview, Conner mentions this essay and Alan Watts's weekly radio shows on Zen Buddhism as being important influences on him. Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom and Serge Guilbaut, 29 March 1974, Tape 1, side 1.

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> dimensions. And then I became aware of myself being in the room. Here I am, in a room, and I'm enormously old. How can I ever get up? I'm practically disintegrated. I am an ancient person. My bones are falling apart. I can't move. And then I slowly become aware of the rug. I look at my hands and they're not old. I knew I was an old ancient person, but I didn't look that way. I didn't understand what had happened and I wanted to talk to someone about it. I couldn't. There weren't words to describe the experience. The only thing I could think of saying was that it was like a dream. It wasn't a dream, but very real. It wasn't science fiction. There were so many things that were unknown secrets, that adult society knew, that they didn't let children know about. I thought this was one of them.[62]

As a result of this occurrence, Conner began to explore books which put him directly in touch with the ideas of alchemy, the cabala, mysticism, and the occult. He has also acknowledged looking at the pictures in a 1928 book by Manly P. Hall entitled The Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy: The Secret Teachings of All Ages, which is filled with mystical and collagelike images of strange creatures and scenes illustrating the texts explaining these various philosophies.[63] These texts and types of mystical investigations in general, had a direct effect on Conner's subsequent collages and drawings.[64] The influence of these

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[62] Bruce Conner, 2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story Part II (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2000), 22-3.

[63] Manly Palmer Hall, An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy: being an interpretation of the secret teachings concealed within the rituals, allegories and mysteries of all ages (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, Incorporated, 1928). Conner also mentions looking at books by Robert Fludd on the cabala and alchemy. Yau, "Folded Mirror," 32.

[64] Bruce Conner, Interview by Thomas H. Garver, tape recording, San Francisco, 10 January 1973 Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution, tape 2, side 2,

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readings and the juxtaposition of bizarre and illogical images to intimate meaning would later dovetail with his extensive knowledge of mystical traditions in Symbolism, Dada, and Surrealism.

In her essay for the 2000 BC catalogue, curator Joan Rothfuss quotes a similar description of the same visionary event Conner experienced and remarks that he said "it slipped from his conscious memory until 1958, when he tried peyote for the first time and realized that he was 'in very familiar territory. I'd been there before.'"[65] His recollection reports of a vision and a state of mind that Conner later partially re-experienced through peyote.

By the mid-twentieth century, scientific research into peyote (known for centuries by the Southwest and Mexican Indians) and mescaline had begun to attract attention. Books such as Aldous Huxley's The Doors of Perception (1954), Robert De Ropp's Drugs and the Mind (1957), and David Ebin's The Drug Experience (1961) further informed the public and popularized hallucinogenic experiences.[66] Even if Conner did not read these specific texts or the earlier Life Magazine article on "divine mushrooms" mentioned above, he knew of

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counter # 584; and Greil Marcus, "Bruce Conner: The Gnostic Strain," Artforum 31, 4 (December 1992): 75.

[65] From the unpublished transcript of Conner's lecture on the experience, given at the Natsoulas/Novelozo Gallery, Davis, California, January 19, 1990 as quoted in Ruthfuss, "Escape Artist," 161.

[66] Stafford, Psychedelics Encyclopedia, 114-115.

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the substances' visionary potential and repeatedly tried all three.[67] According to Boswell, Conner

> is quick to point out that he rarely worked under the influence of peyote or psilocybin ('If you take a psychedelic substance there is no art-it doesn't exist'), but would draw or make his assemblages afterwards in an effort 'bring back' reports from this foreign territory.[68]

Conner was also a contemporary of such innovative artists as Wallace Berman, Jay DeFeo, Edward Kienholz and Herms in California, and Robert Rauschenberg, Jim Dine, Allan Kaprow, and Samaras in New York. As such, he was caught up in the movement to find new ways to address aesthetic, personal, and social concerns in an art form radically opposed to the dominant painting style of the Abstract Expressionists. For Conner and others, the techniques of assemblage "challenged conventional ideas of workmanship, originality, value, purity...(and) brought the dump into the gallery and the manufactured and accidental into the realm of handicraft."[69]

Solnit suggests that assemblage art was also an attempt to deal with the sense of chaos these artists might have experienced growing up during World War II and beginning their careers in the postwar 1950s.[70] She notes:

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67 Phillips, "Beat Culture," 30.
68 Boswell, "Theater of Light and Shadow," 44.
69 Solnit, Secret Exhibition, ix.
70 As poet Robert Creeley explained, "'coming of age in the forties, in the chaos of the Second World War, one felt the kinds of coherence that might have been fact of other time and place were no longer possible." Ibid.

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> (Assemblage) dealt with abandonment, redefinition, juxtaposition, fragmentation, and ideas of order. It proposed an order that was neither absolute nor eternal, but conditional and personal...and it challenged the hierarchies of value in American culture.[71]

Norman Mailer's 1957 essay, "The White Negro," describes a Fifties hipster and the reasons he would want to drop out of society and use drugs. To partially explain such behavior, Mailer immediately acknowledges the profound impact on people's consciousnesses of the destructive power of the atom bomb: "Probably, we will never be able to determine the psychic havoc of the concentration camps and the atom bomb upon the unconscious mind of almost everyone alive in these years."[72] A plethora of authors including Corso, Ginsberg, Kerouac, and McClure, wrote poetry and reminiscences that emphasize the impact that fear of the atom bomb had on their lives during the initial Cold War era of the Fifties and Sixties.[73] Conner expressed similar sentiments through a style of working: disintegration and the junk aesthetic, and through direct images such as the mushroom cloud in his 1958 film, A Movie.[74]

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Norman Mailer, "The White Negro," The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade, edited by Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert (New York: Praeger, 1984), 94 (First published Dissent 4, 3 (Summer 1957).

[73] See, for example, Gregory Corso's poem, "Bomb", in The Portable Beat Reader, ed. Ann Charters (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 174-178. (First published as a broadside, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1958.)

[74] In 1958 a mushroom cloud appeared as a key image in his first film, A Movie. See Bruce Jenkins, "Explosion in a Film Factory: The Cinema of Bruce Conner," In 2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story, Part II, ed. Walker Art Center (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1999), 187-194.

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Critic Barry Schwabsky has argued that Conner's assemblages such as The Bedroom (1959) and The Marcel Duchamp Travelling Box (1963) (fig. 94)) tackle issues on a more personal and psychological level, so that he

> conjured a dark Freudian symbology, rife with overt evocations of neurotic sexuality, random violence, inbred religion, and a morbid desire for dissolution of consciousness--the whole Gothic stew that's been central to American culture's artistic self-diagnosis from Edgar Allan Poe on.[75]

It is a description that could also apply to Partition.

As both a functional folding screen and an artwork made with quotidian materials, as both aesthetic object and social critique, Partition further eradicates the divide between art and life. Although manifested in ways very different from the art of William Morris, the French Post-Impressionists, Art Nouveau artists, the Puteaux group, the Art Deco designers, the Dadaists, and the Surrealists, once again Conner and many contemporaries dedicated themselves to merging art and life.[76]

As late as 1989 Conner again employed the Atom Bomb in his artistic imagery. For the cover of the paperback edition of the catalogue, 2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story Part II, Conner approved a reproduction of his 1989 offset lithograph and photocopy collage entitled Bombhead, showing the half-torso of a man with a uniform jacket, a tie with a tiny emblem of the Atomic Energy Commission on it, and an atom bomb mushroom cloud sprouting from the body in place of a neck and head. While not titled Self-Portrait, it comprises several of the artist's main themes and concerns.

[75] Barry Schwabsky, "Documents for a Secret Tradition: Bruce Conner," Print Collector's Newsletter 24, 6 (November/December 1993): 176.

[76] For a discussion of the mingling of art and life in Beat art, see Ray Carney, "Escape Velocity: Notes on Beat Film," in Phillips et al., Beat Culture, 195, 197.

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For example, Edward Kienholz, a Los Angeles assemblagist, developed theatrical three-dimensional narrative tableaux such as Roxys, 1961-62, The Illegal Operation, 1962, and Back Seat Dodge '38, 1964, which starkly mingled art and life, eroticism, sexuality, and abjection.[77] Similar to Kienholz, Conner also utilized domestic objects such as a chair, highchair, couch, clock, and suitcase as aesthetic material within his assemblages. However, in contrast to Kienholz, Conner also employed other furniture such as the table in Last Supper and the screen in Partition as both format and *functioning* object. Here the theatricality arose through daily use, private "performances," and special events such as Conner's parodied reenactment at the Last Supper table in front of the altarpiece/folding screen/partition Partition. Conner also generated other types of artistic events in San Francisco with a goal to merge art and life. He organized the above-mentioned parade and prepared the slide and film visuals for light shows at concerts in the Avalon Ballroom. According to Boswell, these events tended to place the focus on the performance process and experience rather than on the material art object.[78]

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[77] Rosetta Brooks, "Roxys," "The Illegal Operation," and Back Seat Dodge '38," in Kienholz: A Retrospective, by Walter Hopps et al., (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art in association with D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 1996), 90-95, 104-105, 114-115.

[78] For information on his unannounced parade see, Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 71. For a discussion of his slide and film performances with the North American Ibis Alchemical

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Partition's capacity to function as part of a "stage set" for a private satirical scenario such as the Last Supper reenactment suggests its inherent theatricality, its intimate subversiveness, and its relationship to early Happenings,[79] which were a slightly more organized and sometimes well scripted New York equivalent to San Francisco events such as Conner's parade or Ginsberg's often recounted first reading of his breakthrough poem "Howl" in 1955.[80] In Kaprow's 1959 Happening, 18 Happenings in 6 Parts, for example, "Some of the wall-areas were covered with painting or collaged material, panels of roughly painted words, or rows of plastic fruit."[81] In addition, slides and films were projected onto the walls, music and everyday sounds were broadcast, and audience members were even encouraged to participate in pre-determined seat-shifting.[82] Kaprow's goal in such Happenings became a virtual credo for the era: "The

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Light Company see, Boswell, "Theater of Light and Shadow," 70.

[79] "In California the rise of assemblage sculpture, of a proto-pop art and of multimedia events akin to Kaprow's happenings all took place without the contextualizing and publicizing of criticism." Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 55.

[80] For various accounts of that evening at the Six Gallery see Appendix II in Allen Ginsberg, Howl: Original Draft Facsimile, Transcript & Variant Versions, Fully Annotated by Author, with Contemporaneous Correspondence, Account of First Public Reading, Legal Skirmishes, Precursor Texts & Bibliography, ed. Barry Miles (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986), 165-168.

[81] Adrian Henri, Total Art: Environments, Happenings, and Performance (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 91, 93.

[82] For a script of 18 Happenings in Six Parts, see Michael Kirby, Happenings: An Illustrated Anthology (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1965), 53-83. Pre-determined painting also occurred during this Happening (one time the assistants were Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns).

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line between the Happening and daily life should be kept as fluid and perhaps indistinct as possible."[83]

The viability of the folding screen as a twentieth century object lies in this same capacity to suggest many metaphors and to mediate between art and life. Conner's Partition, like all his assemblages, literally and figuratively recombines treasures and trash, and seems to waver between a critique of society and an expression of self. This approach, somewhat different from the New York-based artists such as Kaprow and Robert Rauschenberg, was shared by other San Francisco assemblage artists, Berman, Joan Brown, De Feo and Herms.[84] Solnit states:

> The California work was insistently both high and low, refusing the segregation that divided popular from high culture, spirituality from the street, and this perhaps is its principal resemblance to the poetry of the Beats, of Ginsberg and Kerouac.[85]

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[83] Allan Kaprow, "The Happenings are Dead: Long Live the Happenings," Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 62. [First published Artforum 4, 7 (March 1966): 37.]

[84] "...Conner's work in particular makes it clear that assemblage was nothing more--or less--than a working method that could be used to approach any medium at all. Only such a methodological rather than a material definition makes it possible to approach the breadth of what was going on in California in the 1950s." Rebecca Solnit, "Heretical Constellations: Notes on California, 1946-1961," in Phillips et al., Beat Culture, 84.

[85] New York based artists Rauschenberg, Johns, and Dine created assemblages by attaching materials to their canvases often preserving the discreteness of each object, using them for anti-aesthetic reasons, often to subversively mimic painting strategies. In contrast Solnit describes the California artists' intentions:

> "Assemblage was a technique that could bring together the disparate ingredients of these artists' experience without imposing a false coherence, that could let the materials speak both

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Solnit records Conner's recollection that DeFeo, for example, "...wrapped the (Christmas) presents in string, colored paper, lace, and jewelry and hung them from the ceiling, which spurred Conner to experiment with hanging assemblages."[86] Solnit documents that the burlap sacks full of trash swaying on the local garbage trucks reminded Conner of "'big pendulous testicles or organs.' He replicated them on a smaller scale by stuffing nylon stockings with other stockings or odds and ends."[87] To further the tension in his work, Conner ironically re-employed female gender-coded articles of clothing such as stockings to create these testicular shaped pouches which appear in his assemblages including Partition.

For Conner, such abstracted images of bodily forms were also encouraged by his growing penchant for eating peyote.

> of their original intent and the artist's--and the tension in between. It was a methodology that acknowledged the urban environment of man-made materials endlessly decaying, becoming obsolete or out moded, being replaced and accreting, a distinctly American environment...Its practitioners understood that to make from scratch, to start from nothing, is only to contribute, while to recontextualize what has been made is to critique.

"Solnit, "Heretical Constellations," 85.

86 Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 62. For further discussions of San Francisco artists who influenced Bruce Conner, see Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Cummings, 16 April 1973, Reel 3197, page 16; Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, 12 August 1974, Reel 3949, page 18; and Robert M. Murdock, "Assemblage: Anything and Everything. Late 50s," The Poets of the City, ed. Dallas Museum of Fine Arts (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 1974), 37.

87 Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 62.

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Solnit quotes Conner as explaining that the first time he took peyote in 1958,

> 'I experienced myself as this very tenuously held-together construction--the tendons and muscles and organs loosely hanging around inside--and it seemed like at any moment disaster could strike and you could fall apart. I mean, you were just held together by this thin skin and strings of flesh. And shortly after that I started working on a number of named pieces, but the first one was Snore, which has all these organlike lumps of things.'[88]

Some of the lumps and attenuated tendonlike strings visible in the 1960 assemblage Snore (fig. 95) are also present in Partition, where one has the feeling that the artist's guts, and the screen's "private parts," have been hung out for examination. Although he had not done research per se on peyote, mescaline, and magic mushrooms, the conclusions that LSD researcher Stanislav Grof reached, based on his observations of patients on LSD trips, parallels the results Conner was searching for and experienced when he took these other drugs. In his 1976 book, Realms of the Human Unconscious: Observations from LSD Research, Grof explains:

> At the present time, I consider LSD to be a powerful unspecific amplifier or catalyst of biochemical and physiological processes in the brain. It seems to create a situation of undifferentiated activation that facilitates the emergence of unconscious material from different levels of the personality.[89]

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88 Ibid., 63.

89 Stanislav Grof, M.D., Realms of the Human Unconscious: Observations from LSD Research (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1976), 32.

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With the direct link between a peyote experience and the imagery in Snore, it is possible to say that Partition and his other assemblages partially represent the active expression and materialization of the experiences Conner had while in a hallucinogenic state.

Grof also observed that the LSD trips tended to trigger feelings, memories, fantasies, and visions which he felt related to the stages of birth, particularly a stage in which one had been "stuck" during delivery. Understanding this, according to Grof, helps to explain a patient's personality, beliefs, and the issues they are grappling with. While I recognize the associative leap I am making, I believe it is useful to describe Conner's creation of Partition's surface as a possible manifestation of his being psychologically linked to a birth stage which Grof has termed Basic Perinatal Matrix Three (BPM III), the pushing stage. Grof describes the phenomenology of BPM III as results from LSD sessions in the following way:

> intensification of suffering to cosmic dimensions; borderline between pain and pleasure; 'volcanic' type of ecstasy; brilliant colors; explosions and fireworks; sadomasochistic orgies; murders and bloody sacrifice; active engagement in fierce battles; atmosphere of wild adventure and dangerous explorations; intense sexual orgiastic feelings and scenes of harems and carnivals; experiences of dying and being reborn; religions involving bloody sacrifice (Aztecs, Christ's suffering and death on the cross, Dionysos, etc.); intense physical manifestations (pressures and pains, suffocation, muscular tension and discharge in tremors and twitches, nausea and vomiting, hot flushes and chills, sweating, cardiac distress,

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problems of sphincter control, ringing in the ears).[90]

While not every concept has a visual link on Partition, some seem quite indicative of the imagery, intentions, and metaphors of the screen and are intertwined with other ideas and experiences which inform Partition.

In the catalogue for the landmark Museum of Modern Art exhibition, The Art of Assemblage in 1961, curator William Seitz wrote: "Figuratively, the practice of assemblage raises materials from the level of formal relations to that of associational poetry."[91] When deciphering assemblage works, then, the question is often where to draw the line between formalism and iconography.[92] In Conner's case, the found objects attest to his general interest in ephemeral materials, as well as his specific interest in particular personal, political, social, and even universal themes.[93]

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90 Ibid., 103

91 William C. Seitz, The Art of Assemblage (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 84.

92 Leider has written that, for Conner, his materials maintain their discrete meanings as random, discarded, devalued objects, and that these "...omnipresent dead objects are 'momento mori,' pure and simple." I disagree with this and read the work as being far more complex. Leider, "Bruce Conner," 30.

93 "Conner's films, too, utilized repetitions of details and sequences of a banal sort, juxtaposing dissimilar imagery in such a way as to relate specific events or ideas to a much wider social or visual context. The films move so rapidly that effort to sense linear plot-line is submerged into an image structure of such profusion and obscuring density that 'meaning' rises subliminally rather than intellectually." Garver, Bruce Conner: Sculpture, n.p.

Conner, himself, said of his films, "I don't intend that you see everything that's going on...Sometimes it's just the rush of images that's important." quoted in Scott Macdonald, "I Don't Go to the Movies Anymore: An Interview with Bruce Conner," Afterimage 10, 1-2 (Summer 1982): 20.

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In a 1974 interview Conner explained that discarded materials were all around him in San Francisco:

> In San Francisco, the city was doing a thing called redevelopment, which meant they were tearing down all the Victorian buildings in the city. I'd go through those buildings and bring back objects and make them into collages. I'd go through thrift stores and second-hand stores and find things that people had no value for. I thought they were beautiful; I'd bring them home. And I figured that one way at least of dealing with them was to make them into works of art.
>
> I would go to the Salvation Army. I'd get a great big cardboard box full of feathers off women's hats for a dollar and fifty cents. A huge box full. Now you couldn't get even one of those feathers for less than seven fifty or ten dollars. The same thing with costume jewelry. I went to the Salvation Army once and they had three card tables loaded with earrings, necklaces, brooches, V.F.W. buttons, cufflinks, bracelets. I asked, 'How much for all this?' They said, 'Three dollars.'[94]

Later in the same interview Conner said: "These objects had an implied life of their own: you know like Victorian designs of wood grains, cloth patterns, images of some kind of nostalgic import. Objects have some kind of spirit in themselves..."[95]

But Conner's collection of the past was provoked by another impulse as well. As Conner's friend, Brown has said, "I guess there was a rebellion basically against slicker materials. There was a delight taken in using ratty

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For a general discussion of this "stream-of-conscious" technique in mid-century film, see Ann-Sargent Wooster, "Why don't they tell stories like they used to?," Art Journal 45, 3 (Fall 1985): 205.

[94] Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, 12 August 1974, Reel 3949, page 17.

[95] Ibid.

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materials. The rattier the better."[96] Conner wanted his work to be fragile, yet heroic, sculptures that would require new attitudes toward conservation since disintegration and transformation would be integral to their meaning.[97] This "junk art" or "funky art" was created mainly for other artists since few dealers or collectors yet appreciated the work. Process and the act of creation were what was most valued by assemblage artists, a stance reinforced by the time-sensitive materials they used.[98]

Conner's exaltation of the everyday was also reflected in his growing interest in Zen Buddhism. Inspired by Alan Watts, who produced weekly radio shows and writings on Zen, Conner and other Beats adapted the tenets of Zen Buddhism in their own esoteric ways. Zen appealed to the Beats for several reasons:

> It was not premised on the existence of God to justify its beliefs and practices; and it esteemed nonrational, nonlogical states of mystical awareness (which tied in with the Beat interest in consciousness-altering drugs.) At the same time, it was a religion that valued ordinary experience.

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[96] Joan Brown, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, San Francisco, July 15, 1975, microfilmed transcript of tape recording, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution, reel 3196.

[97] Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, 12 August 1974, Reel 3949, page 9.

[98] Solnit quotes assemblagist Harold Paris who wrote about Fifties "funky art" versus Sixties "funk art," "'Almost imper/ceptibly, funk art has grown away from the funky art of the fifties. Funky art said that material was worthless, that only ideas were important (funky artists showed their art and then often threw it away) and that the value of art was in its making. The meaning of the art was not in any way related to the intrinsic worth of the materials. Funky artists were essentially assemblage people.'" Secret Exhibition, 67-68.

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> Zen.../had a Whitmanesque love of the prosaic, the mundane, the everyday.[99]

A key point for the Beats was Watts's view that in Zen "the spiritual is not to be separated from the material, nor the wonderful from the ordinary." As Watts wrote: "The immediate, everyday, and present experience is IT, the entire and ultimate point for the existence of the universe."[100] In Partition, Conner's embrace of Zen Buddhism is suggested in the choice of certain materials, the notion of constant disintegration, and the allusion to sexuality, all of which are in utter conflict with the Christian images of worship which refer to past holy events and the hope for life after death.

The non-logical and non-rational states of Zen pervade Partition which also visually parallels the literary technique of stream of consciousness. Bits and pieces, found by chance or bought on purpose, are stuck on the screen here and there, mixing together in a material flow. This technique is not unlike the long run-on sentences in Conner's letters. There the words are attached to one another, are mistyped, are not corrected, signaling perhaps a Zen state of mind, dyslexia, or a drug induced state, mixed with a stream-of-conscious approach to the world. This attitude, which permeates Partition, almost defies the desire of critics, myself included, who want to pull together, synthesize, and carefully construct the threads

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99 Carney, "Escape Velocity: Notes on Beat Film," 194/195.
100 Watts, This is *It*, 11.

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and clumps of Conner's life and art into a neat package. There is no containment, only ambivalence and flow.

As Ruthfuss writes:

> Bruce Conner is hard to pin down. He has cultivated a certain slipperiness that has nothing to do with duplicity but seems to have grown out of his unwillingness to become, so to speak, solid (that is graspable; *syn.* ossified, deadened, habituated).[101]

Rothfuss also notes the importance to Conner of free will and states:

> For Conner, freedom implied the possibility that many selves with conflicting ideas could reside with the same consciousness. Metamorphosis was seen as nothing more than a natural affirmation of one's freedom and hinted at an ability to be intangible but also larger, and more disruptively present, than society might find appropriate.[102]

Conner's desire not to be categorized or pinned down, his insistence on mixing the sacred and the profane in both his life and his art, has its parallels in the carnivalesque in medieval life as described by the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin, it was essential for medieval people to periodically satirize and demonize the pillars of society, the Church and the aristocracy, through masquerades, parades, and theater, usually at times of

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101 Ruthfuss, "Escape Artist," 160. I see this evidenced in the fact that long established dates of his work have been changed in his 2000 BC catalogue, incidents he recounts in interviews often change and are dated differently one from the next, and art historians and critics are circumspect when discussing certain issues in his work such as his attitudes towards women and the effect of hallucinogenic drugs on his work.

102 Ibid.

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Carnival. But the outrageous ribald, ironic, and blasphemous behavior toward religion, the upper classes, and political institutions and government described by Bahktin as *de rigeur* for medieval life had not been officially condoned for several centuries and particularly not in the 1950s or 1960s. Conner's impromptu parade, his slide and movie shows for San Francisco concerts, his artistic seal of approval issued from the group he founded (the Ratbastard Protective Association), and the religious and lustful subject matter of his assemblages are all part of the Beat and Conner's rebellion against conservative societal dictums. Conner, in what Schechner would call his primitive personality, was able to fully express both the sacred and profane aspects of his personality. Thus he produced works such as Partition which have a canivalesque range, subversively questioning the role of Christ and of women so that the viewer remains undecided about Conner's attitudes and meanings.

Boswell also comments on the weaving of the spirit and the body in Conner's assemblages such as The Temptation of St. Barney Google, 1959 where he enmeshes glittering baubles, symbolic of faith, in discarded tawdry materials:

> Amid the plethora of found objects (or perhaps, more properly, 'lost objects,' since most of them have been either discarded or recovered from Salvation Army and secondhand stores) are wadded socks, tangled undergarments, and torn and shredded nylon stockings. These items, worn close to the skin and suggestive of the most intimate corporeality, are frequently juxtaposed with erotic images plucked from men's magazines. Yet, set amidst these tawdry materials and intimations

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> of passionate mayhem are pieces of costume jewelry and fragments of mirrors that shine out from the obscurity of the assemblages, glittering baubles that evoke their one-time wearers' yearnings/to rise above their everyday lives. In The Temptation of St. Barney Google (1959) images and objects representative of St. Anthony's celebrated temptations are wrapped with skeins of nylon. But within this same obscurity, myriad bits of mirror and ersatz pearls shine with reflected light, brightening the composition and relieving the work's sense of dark oppression by symbolizing the tormented saint's faith.[103]

Nylon stockings are the primary signifier of the sexual theme in Conner's screen and his other early assemblages.[104] In 1961, critic Jill Johnston, writing about works like The Bride (1960-61) tried to explain the effect the stockings had at that time:

> These old desecrated stockings are Conner's trademark. They smother, strangle, decorate, and connect with a chaotically perfumed past, a past to commemorate with monuments of death, a past to exorcise by making a grotesque laughing stock of possibly once cherished mementos from a further past of foolish illusory finery. Conner is lively with diabolical schemes. The question is, how dead can he get?[105]

In 1974 when asked if the stockings on his assemblages carried any special meaning, Conner replied:

> The stockings became tools that could be used in a lot of different ways; they could be used like screens on different surfaces. You could get spatial effects. They could become spider webby.

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[103] Boswell, "Theater of Light and Shadow," 69/70.

[104] Thomas Garver remarks on Conner's use of other means of construction: "Tidbits of feminine undergarments are also used but in an engineering manner, detached from their original function. These materials designed to glorify the female suddenly become structural members used, like steel cables in a bridge, to bind the construction together." Garver, "Introduction," Bruce Conner: Sculpture, n.p.

[105] J. (Jill) J. (Johnston), "Bruce Conner," Art News 60, 7, (November 1961): 14.

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> They could relate to women's garments and that whole erotic make-up of things which do not have any inherent erotic quality to them. Like all those photographs of naked ladies and such. Sometimes their effect is exactly the opposite of what people claim they're supposed to be.[106]

And sometimes it seems that Conner is unwilling to be pinned down to a meaning, almost as though he does not remember his appeal ten years prior for a collection box for stockings because of his fetish for them and other female accoutrements.

Especially in Partition, the stockings may be read as a metaphor of sexual perversion and promiscuity. Certainly, the jewelry, the lace, the bra straps, and the lingerie bag all add to the sexual aura of Partition's stockings. But, in Partition, the metaphor of the stockings is intensified not only because of their cultural history and use but also because of the inherent and historical sexual symbolism of the screen itself. The stockings on Partition parallel the sexual disrobings in precisely the same way as do the hanging kimonos on the Japanese Takasode screens or the cropped legs, stockings, and high-heels on Screen (1965) by British Pop artist Allen Jones (fig. 96). Furthermore, these works refer to the complex history of the folding screen's use as a dressing (or undressing) partition and as a barrier between one desiring person and another.

While a reading of the undulating folding screen as a vulvar image or as a hymen (in its capacity as a barrier),

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106 Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, 12 August 1974, Reel 3949, page 22.

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might seem problematic, Conner's gauzy veil of stockings on Partition reinforces that reading. Here, the stockings, which most women would only wear if they were perfect, are torn, shredded, and stretched, and should be read as violated, "non-virginal" objects. In Conner's assemblages stockings also refer to excrement, organs, and bondage implements. The stocking is both a sheath covering part of a woman's body and an ironic allusion to condoms covering a man's penis. If we parallel Pollock's dripping paint with urination, identify male artists as using the paint brush/phallus to paint/caress female nudes, and propose Jane Kaufman's sewing of hundreds of feathers and glass beads onto the velvet surface of her (vulvar) screen, Untitled, as an autoerotic metaphor, we cannot ignore Conner's physical involvement with the stretching, tearing, bundling of all those used stockings and the role this plays in the meanings of Partition.

As Solnit observes: "Conner...never ignored the element of fetishism in stockings."[107] In an essay on language, texture, and a queer reading of Henry James's The Ambassadors, Renu Bora describes different categories of fetishes:

> Fetishism can also, however, lie not in the shine but in a kind of fluffy, hairy, feathery, furry, suede leathery coarseness--displaced genitalia, epidermal fuzz, fragmented integuments. These fetishes depend on the emergence of fairly homogeneous tactility from otherwise 'flat' or hybrid surroundings. As if from two dimensions

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107 Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 63.

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> grew a mossy third, invoking the problematic, fractal strain between dimensions. The very meaning of softness (for TEXTURE), the feeling, is dependent on the dusty approach of a surface toward disintegration, a powdery departure from a a surface toward disintegration, a powdery departure from a plane. As a liminal instance of softness, imagine perhaps stroking either a thousand-year-old feather or a powder puff's residual blush.[108]

The fetishism of the further decayed, and now dusty, stockings stretched all over the screen and draped around the images of Christ has even intensified over time.

According to Freud, one of the functions of a fetish is to substitute for the penis. In the classic Freudian scenario, the little boy believes his mother has a penis just as he does, and is horrified to discover she does not.[109] To console himself, the boy becomes fascinated by a fetish object, which can be any object that functions as a phallic substitute and comforts him against the ensuing fear of castration. Nylon stockings are prime fetish objects.[110] As Freud explains:

> Thus, the foot or shoe owes its attraction as a fetish, or part of it, to the circumstance that the inquisitive boy used to peer up the woman's legs toward her genitals. Velvet and fur reproduce--as has long been suspected--the sight of the pubic hair which ought to have revealed the

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[108] Renu Bora, "Outing Texture," in Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 104.

[109] For a discussion of the fetish in modern art, see Donald Kuspit, "The Modern Fetish," Artforum 27, 2 (October 1988): 132-140.

[110] Phyllis Grenadier says that based on clinical studies, "'articles of clothing are the most common (fetishes) and include soft silky feminine undergarments.'" Phyllis Grenadier, "The Fetish and the Transitional Object," The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child 24 (1969): 150 as quoted in Kuspit, "The Modern Fetish," 138.

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> longed-for penis; the underlinen so often adopted as a fetish reproduces the scene of undressing, the last moment in which the woman could still be regarded as phallic.[111]

As a partition between a male viewer and an undressing female, the folding screen can also be a "last moment" barrier to the sexual truth about a woman. The power and fascination of Conner's Partition lie in the layers of stockings which both attempt to cover up the vulvar screen and act as phallic substitutes for the woman's lack.[112]

The stockings may also be read in a slightly different, yet still sexually suggestive way. Nochlin has noted that in many nineteenth-century paintings, such as in Manet's Ball at the Opera (1873), "the detached parts of female bodies constitute a witty rhetorical reference, a substitution of part for whole, to the sexual availability of lower-class and marginal women for the pleasure of upper-class men."[113] In the United States in the 1960s, however, the links

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[111] Freud, "Fetishism (1927)", The Standard Edition, 21: 155.

[112] The stockings are like the phallic snakes, which are the mythologized substitute for the castrating Medusa's hair for which Conner employed rubber hosing in his 1960 version of Medusa.

Freud explains the substitution clearly. "The hair upon Medusa's head is frequently represented in works of art in the form of snakes, and these once again are derived from the castration complex. It is a remarkable fact that, however frightening they may be in themselves, they nevertheless serve actually as a mitigation of the horror, for they replace the penis, the absence of which is the cause of the horror. This is confirmation of the technical rule according to which a multiplication of penis symbols signifies castration." Freud, "Medusa's Head (1940 (1922))," The Standard Edition, 18: 273.

[113] Linda Nochlin, "Women, Art, and Power," Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 13.

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between sexual availability, morality, class, and traditional gender roles were far more ambiguous, if still conventionalized. Thus, while the stockings in Partition could refer to the objectification of women, they could also constitute (as Conner claims) a viable social critique. He feels that many times men turn emblems of femininity

> into weapons, racks and pinions, to attack the woman. Women wear all this armor that is incontrovertibly transformed into weapons against them. They're perceived as exploiting power, a sexual power or feminine power. And I thought it seemed like going out of your way to deform yourself, although it also seemed totally socially acceptable. And then there's the fact that people would take the same imagery and convert it into the opposite of what the intent was.[114]

This accords with the way in which sex was viewed and discussed during the nineteen fifties. J. Ronald Oakley discusses the hypocritical approach to love and sex in a chapter, "Women, Love, and Sex in Eisenhower's America:"

> Confused as they were about romantic love, Americans were even more confused in their attitudes and practices regarding sex. Nationwide, lip service was given to an unofficial Puritanical code...This code existed in the midst of a society permeated with sexual hypocrisy and titillation. Female clothing was designed to tease, to suggest the great treasures underneath, yet to promise more than the woman was supposed to give.[115]

As Oakley points out, the 1953 start of Playboy magazine, the publication of Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey's reports on Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (1948) and Sexual Behavior in the

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114 Yau, "Folded Mirror," 34.

115 J. Ronald Oakley, God's Country: America in the Fifties (New York: Dembner Books, 1986), 302

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Human Female (1953), the publication of Peyton Place (1956) and Nabokov's Lolita (1958), and movie stars like Marilyn Monroe and Brigitte Bardot all helped to demystify sex. But Oakley also says that most women were not yet ready to rebel against their pre-defined roles as inferior beings.[116]

In a long statement recorded in 1974 for the Archives of American Art, Conner explained how he thought American consumer society made women distort themselves and practice a form of deception. This statement is worth quoting at length since it forms a sort of ideological guide to the ideas Conner had addressed in Partition just a decade earlier.

> I was fascinated with women. What kind of objects that are encumbering women, whether they were supposed to be thin, tall, blonde, fat, whatever variable. I saw around me women who gathered together all these accretions on themselves, like a decorator crab that goes along the sea floor and continues to glue little bits of rock and shells and objects, or a metal pop top, but it has a purpose. Maybe its defensive, maybe its offensive, maybe it's an assumed disguise for one purpose or another. In any case, it's a form of deception. I had an awareness of these imageries, textures, the attributes, the relics of the saints that these women became. These are the crosses that women must bear. These are the images that they are compelled to adopt. To totally alter themselves, even more so these days, to even go and chop off big chunks of their bodies. I think it's pitiable, at times endearing, at times erotic, but this kind of imagery becomes even more pronounced as the day progresses. If you look at a 24 hour day, erotic impulses in this society draws toward the nighttime. And the nighttime embellishes the

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116 Ibid., 303-310.

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> ability to theatrically alter your image and project another image.[117].

Here, Conner admits that he is fascinated by women, all varieties of women. However, he characterizes women as "decorator crabs," accumulating baubles and geegaws to enhance their attractiveness and to form a deceptive masquerade. The screen, a female-coded object, is, for Conner, the stand-in for the woman, only in this case *Conner* gets to do the primping and the decorating. Conner then describes the range of sexual attractions, such as the nylon stockings and the jewelry, and their possible uses for disguise or deception. He recognizes that the urge to dress in a sexually attractive way may result from either external social pressure ("defensive" reasons) or a woman's own internal desire ("offensive" reasons). It may also represent a form of acting or theater imposed upon them by a society (read "male-dominated society") that wants women to look and act provocatively. Some viewers might read Partition as sexually provocative as well, but it is Conner's goal to create an elaborate masquerade costume and leave the interpretation open-ended.[118]

Interestingly, Conner conflates women and saints in this statement, explaining that women's sexual props are

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[117] Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, 12 August 1974, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution, Reel 3949.

[118] Early on, Conner rejected critics who wanted to impose their own concepts and ideas on his work. This included McClure, who wanted to write a book about Conner. Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Cummings, 16 April 1973, Reel 3197, pages 19-20; and Selwyn, "Bruce Conner," 96.

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like the attributes of the saints, and arguing that the sexual images women are suppose to aspire to are the crosses each woman must bear. But Conner's interpretation of how women respond to the eroticization of their bodies is curious. He finds their actions "pitiable" and "endearing," but also "erotic" and "theatrical." Intellectually, he is sympathetic; sexually, he is aroused. Conner's Partition produces the same kind of mixed message. It seduces the viewer with erotic imagery, but underneath, it is an altarpiece. One possible allusion of this sacred/profane duality is to the Mary Magdalene who was initially a prostitute before becoming a follower of Christ and a Saint.

Female and sexual liberation as well as transcendence are also the subjects of Conner's 1966 film, Breakaway, based on the song by Toni Basil who is featured in the film. "The song, *Breakaway*, a pop declaration of one woman's independence, speaks of personal freedom in fairly commonplace terms: 'Everyday I'll wear what I want and do what suits me fine.'"[119] As art historian Mona Hadler points out, sculptor Lee Bontecou and other Sixties artists, used the female body as an site of social protest not as a pornographic image.[120] Conner adopts a similar strategy in

[119] Jenkins, "Explosion in a Film Factory", 200.

[120] For example, Mona Hadler writes that the nature of Lee Bontecou's abstract sculpture "is not simply political or sexual (as has often been maintained), [but that it] derives in part from Bontecou's employment of the body as the site of social protest." Hadler also investigates both Bontecou's and David Hare's use of mixed media to create references to the body in their art. "Lee Bontecou's "Warnings," Art Journal 53, 4 (Winter 1994): 56. See also Mona Hadler,

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this film and possibly in Partition. Critic Bruce Jenkins describes Conner as manically filming Toni Basil dancing and changing costumes. Conner then edited these sequences to build a film showing a woman "breaking away from social and sexual oppression."[121] Because of the rapidity of the zooming, cutting, and montage work, Jenkins feels that Conner shows Basil at times "breaking free of her clothing" and at others transforming "into a series of blurred, ghostlike images that evoke a distinctly ethereal otherworldliness" so that "the film begins to take on a metaphorical and metaphysical quality."[122] Similarly, Partition is materially grounded in its mixed media surface, yet its religious imagery suggests other sentiments.

Art critic Lucy Lippard notes that in body art: "Usually the artist's own body is the medium, but at times, especially in men's work, other bodies are used, envisioned as extensions of the artist him/herself."[123] She also quotes Lea Vergine from her book, Il Corpo Come Linguaggio, who says that body art began "with Yves Klein's use of nude women as 'living brushes.'"[124] This is something that Conner imitated when he was teaching and invited fourteen nude female models to come to a school party as

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"David Hare: A Magician's Game in Context," Art Journal 47, 3 (Fall 1988): 199.

121 Jenkins, "Explosion in a Film Factory," 201.

122 Ibid.

123 Lucy Lippard, "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: Women's Body Art," Art in America 64, 3 (May-June 1976): 73.

124 Ibid. See also Lea Vergine, Il Corpo Come Linguaggio (Milano: Prearo, 1974).

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performers/guests/art objects.[125] While Conner uses women's bodies in his performance films such as Breakaway and Marilyn Times Five, he does not use images of actual bodies in Partition. However, the articles of (mostly female) clothing are only one step removed. Lippard reiterates Vergine's point that male artists are jealous of women's ability to procreate. Lippard also quotes art critic Max Kozloff saying that artist "Herman Nitsch, in a destructive male imitation of the constructive female ability to give birth, smears blood and animal guts on himself and other men, calling this a 'birth...like a crucifixion and resurrection together.'"[126] Conner's attempt to align female procreativity and artistic production is directly visible in a 1990 (possible) self-portrait entitled The Artist (fig. 97) where the man's face has been replaced by a gaping orifice/birth canal with an umbilicallike cord for a tongue. The hairy, fibrous, sinewy postpartum innards recall the fringe, string, bra straps, lace, stockings, and other materials Conner draped and collaged on Partition and other

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125 One year, when Conner was teaching at the San Francisco Art Institute, he took the money left over from the budget for his class for live models and hired fourteen naked women to come to their end of the year party. According to Conner, he wanted these naked women to help inspire the students' fantasies, such as a harem fantasy. Images were projected onto as well as painted on these women. According to Conner, the female students in his class "didn't mind." Looking back, one might well rhetorically ask where were the naked male models? Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, 12 August 1974, Reel 3949, page 5.

126 Lippard, "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth," 79 which quotes Nitsch from Max Kozloff, "Pygmalion Reversed," Artforum 13, 3 (November 1975).

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assemblages such as La Virgen, Cross, and Señorita, and are a reminder of Grof's perinatal matrices.

With the threads of sex, birth, death, religion, creativity, spirituality, and hallucinogenic visions intertwined on the screen and in Conner's life, it seems that the ecstatic and cosmic transcendent possibilities of each arena are the unstated subject. According to Bakhtin, this type of mix has its antecedents in the medieval culture of folk humor where sex, pregnancy, birth, and death are conceived in an endless cycle and are also seen within the larger cosmic order, the realm that Conner was/is seeking in life and art.[127]

The tension and irony of Partition comes from the fact that a screen is also a teasing dressing and undressing partition, thus the viewer who closely examines Partition is forced into the role of a voyeur even as Partition participates as an Artaudian actor. This tension animates the theatricality of Partition. The space around it is sexually-charged, and Partition signals the act of looking or "the gaze" in part by inhibiting it. Similar to Gray's Block Screen and Man Ray's Screen, Conner's Partition alludes to some of the sensations of gazing at, for example, erotic tableaux in nineteenth century brothels. Historian Laure Adler has described these nineteenth century brothel

[127] Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1968; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 26-7. (Originally published as Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable, Moscow: Khudozhestvennia literatura, 1965.)

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scenes and the "extent to which voyeurism and its devices usurped the place of more traditional pleasures in the sophisticated house of prostitution." As she notes:

> 'Most observers of the period agree that the sexual demands of the rich were progressively transformed: consumption of the sexual act was abandoned in favor of visual orgasm...The house of ill-fame began systematically to offer tableaux vivants; in the interior of the grand salon a kind of erotic machinery set up by the madame was installed; on a large black carpet naked women were seated in suggestive poses, lit from behind by candelabras; on a rotating floor the women made their appearances...To satisfy the voyeurs, the habitual holes pierced in the shafts of walls or inside closets no longer sufficed; through the skillful arrangement of *pinned sheets or wall hangings* (emphasis mine) or thanks to tubes stuck into partition walls and used by some as listening trumpets, by others as magnifying glasses, the spectator could watch and participate, seated in an armchair in the room next door.'[128]

In metaphorical terms, Gray's Block Screen represents the peep holes themselves, although rather enlarged; Man Ray's Screen shows us the naked female body which one might have seen at such a brothel show; and Conner's screen makes palpable those things that would have adorned the prostitutes and their theatricalized, sexualized environment prior to their erotic show.

A problem arises, however, for the female viewer of Partition. Sexual difference has been defined for a woman in

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[128] Laure Adler, La Vie quotidienne dans les maisons closes, 1830-1930 (Paris: Hachette, 1990), 130 as quoted in Emily Apter, "Cabinet Secrets: Peep Shows, Prostitution, and Bric-a-bracomania in the Fin-de-siecle Interior," Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 42.

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stark terms, and largely against her interests. But she may also imagine herself in the role of seductress. Or she may understand the social commentary being attempted by the artist, and accept his critique. Or she may regard Conner's position as equivocal: showing sympathy for the women bound by social stereotypes as well as possessing an unseemly obsession with the tawdry lingerie and baubles. In Partition, she is confronted by *fragments* of a potentially erotic costume and scraps of religious iconography. Is her presumed role the virgin or the whore, the Virgin Mary or Mary Magdalene? Are these her only options? And, if so, should she be outraged or fascinated?

Although Conner claims that patriarchal society creates demeaning roles for women and "has established that men work hard, earn money, kill, and die and that women have babies, fuck, and have no brains," it is sometimes difficult to separate his own position from that which he attributes to society.[129] From one viewpoint, Conner has used the stockings, jewelry, and lingerie to create his own sort of brothel scene or ritual fetish object. As Freud explains in "Totem and Taboo" (1913), in some voodoo rituals in order to hurt an enemy:

> One gets possession of some of his hair or nails or other waste products or even a piece of his clothing and treats them in some hostile way. It is then exactly as though one had got possession of the man himself; and he himself experiences

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[129] Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, 12 August 1974, Reel 3949, page 23.

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> whatever it is that has been done to the objects that originated from him.[130]

While one feels a strong temptation to touch the surface of the work, at the same time one is repelled by it. From the pulled and torn nylons and the bits of jewelry arises a sense of violence toward or violation of women. With the accumulated objects, the accumulated dust and grime over time, there is also a sense that the sexually saturated screen is tawdry, soiled, perhaps even abject. Here, the nylon stockings, the jewelry, and the shawl, which normally cover or touch parts of the female body, have become psychologically and sexually forbidden articles. And, as Freud reminds us, "Anyone who violates a taboo by coming into contact with something that is taboo becomes taboo himself and then no one may come into contact with him."[131]

This desire to caress or touch the sexualized other, or, in this case, its fetishistic substitute, is also addressed in Conner's experimental films of the late 1960s and early 1970s. In his film Marilyn Times Five (1968-73), for example, Conner specifically critiques the sexual exploitation of Hollywood stars such as Marilyn Monroe. What is seemingly a pornographic film of Monroe suddenly turns into a critical investigation of the tension between a star's public image and private persona. The film repeats and adds graphic sequences including those with a bottle of Coca-Cola and an apple that Conner inserts into scenes

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[130] Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo (1913)," The Standard Edition, 13: 81.

[131] Ibid., 27.

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appropriated from a stag film starring a Marilyn Monroe lookalike. Over this scenario, Conner laid a soundtrack that repeats the intimate song, "I'm Through With Love," which he claims tells the movie star's story and shows us how two parts of a personality do not necessarily coincide, a concept he holds for himself as well. Speaking about Monroe, Conner commented: "She was an icon. I was aware of it while she was alive, not after she was dead. She had created an image she couldn't control and it didn't belong to her. Ultimately, it destroyed her."[132]

In Partition, Conner suggests a similar ambivalence toward women's sexual roles. But where is his critique of the male-dominated society that he argues perpetuates the eroticization and sexualization of women and their roles? In an analysis of the role of the male artist in the nineteenth century, Nochlin observes:

> The topos of the artist in his studio assumes that being an artist has to do with man's free access to naked women. Art making, the very creation of beauty itself, was equated with the representation of the female nude. Here the very notion of the originary power of the artist, his status as creator of unique and valuable objects, is founded on a discourse of gender difference as power.[133]

As a twentieth century male artist, Conner may be participating in this same equation even though Partition displays no naked woman. The screen takes as its subject the social construction of the feminine, alludes to dressing and

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132 Bruce Conner as quoted in Selwyn, "Marilyn," 96.
133 Linda Nochlin, "Women, Art, and Power," 17.

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undressing as the provocative and even deceptive elements of feminine sexuality, then situates the male artist as the master over woman, the object of his creative scrutiny.[134]

Another assemblage screen, created at about the same time as Conner's, provides an effective comparison to Partition since it shares similar attitudes toward male-dominated representations of gender and, by means of adhered fragments of clothing, uses the screen as a metaphor for the body and sexuality. This 1964 screen, Robert Rauschenberg's Gold Standard (fig. 98), is particularly appropriate since Partition also deals with male sexuality and male imagery, but more subtly and to a much lesser degree than with its female sexual symbols.

Gold Standard, a "combine-painting" (Rauschenberg's word for assemblage) was created during a five-hour onstage performance at Tokyo's Sogetsu Experimental Theater. During the performance, "Twenty Questions to Bob Rauschenberg," Rauschenberg adhered to six panels of a blank, traditional gold-leafed Japanese screen a variety of seemingly random objects. On the far left panel, amid paint, a speedometer, and a photograph of a clock, Rauschenberg attached to a narrow wooden box a Sony tape carton stuffed with a leather bag which gives the appearance of an appendage: an arm, a leg, or possibly a penis. On the second panel are a pair of oil-soaked leather gloves, a transfer image of the Japan

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[134] See footnote 125 above where women are treated as art objects within a happening/performance/party run by Conner.

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Times, and a colorful fragment of an obi, a sash for a kimono. Although the obi is traditionally worn only by women, in Japanese Kabuki and Noh theater it is worn by male actors who play all the female roles. The obi simply could be a Japanese cultural symbol, a reference to Rauschenberg's interest in the theater, or a sly and complex allusion to gender ambiguity and his own homosexuality. On the third panel, Rauschenberg intermeshed gestural painting and found objects such as a restaurant sign, toys, electrical plugs, and a written question from the audience. Attached to the center of the screen is a leash leading to a corporate logo, the RCA Victor dog, who sits on a bicycle seat waiting to hear, as the famous slogan said, "His *Master's* Voice" (emphasis mine). On the fourth panel from the left, a man's necktie hangs from an inverted sawhorse "leg" amid four Coke bottles (all classic phallic indicators). The thin flexible "neck" of a lamp with a bare lightbulb (another phallic reference) arcs above the fifth panel of the screen which is a mixture of gold leaf and gold paint. On the last panel, the artist suspended a pair of men's paint-covered work boots from a metal rectangular "seat."

Just as Conner's Partition meditates on social perception of female sexuality through the use of discarded female apparel, Rauschenberg's Gold Standard is, among other things, a found-object portrait of a man. Here, Rauschenberg defies a strictly vulvar reading of a folding screen, and projects the screen as a metaphor for the male skin and

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body. But Gold Standard is also a commentary on the mutual artistic influences between the United States and Japan, and an assertion of the then-current American aesthetic (and monetary) dominance. The performance/object was created because of a prior discussion between Rauschenberg and Japanese critic/moderator Yoshiaki Tono as to what constitutes an interview. Rauschenberg decided to respond to questions from the audience about his life and art by creating a work of art or, in a sense, a visual "self-portrait."[135]

In his analysis of Rauschenberg's 1954 combine Bed, art historian James Leggio shows that Rauschenberg's work often symbolizes the body. Leggio points to:

> ...surfaces showing its impress; empty clothes or bedclothes impregnated with its stained residue; canvas aspiring to the texture of skin; a pillow as an abstraction of the head it supported; and geometric pieces of cloth indicative of the gender of the person who sewed them or of the person they covered. In all of these, the painting becomes a surrogate, a sign for a corporeal presence that is elsewhere.[136]

The gloves, tie, and boots on Rauschenberg's Gold Standard bolster Leggio's analysis of the skin/cloth symbiosis and

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[135] Virginia Fabbri Butera, "Robert Rauschenberg's Gold Standard: The Folding Screen and Performance," unpublished paper delivered at the 1984 F.I.T. Symposium on Contemporary Art in New York City. Gold Standard, owned by the Sogetsu Museum of Art, is almost completely undiscussed in the Rauschenberg literature. Walter Hopps and Susan Davidson et al. Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1997): 152.

[136] James Leggio, "Robert Rauschenberg's Bed and the Symbolism of the Body," Essays on Assemblage, ed. John Elderfield (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 102.

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emphasize how that screen, like Conner's, projects a gendered and a sexualized metaphor of the body.

While the stockings, jewelry, and parts of female lingerie and clothing cue the viewer to the feminine body on Partition, the masculine elements are not as immediately self-evident. Yet the phallic dangling candles and maraca handle, the testicular pear-shaped wax and stuffed nylon pouches, the ejaculatory string mop, pearls, and feather duster, the brilliant colors of a peacock tail feather, and the half-circle of a sombrero provide a plethora of male references. Conner further entwines specific masculine images into the feminine web of stockings by inserting a King of Diamonds playing card, a matchbox cover with a Renaissance male portrait, the male Indian figure or God, the several images of Christ's disciples and most powerfully, the two images of Christ: transfigured and exposing his heart (the ultimate King of Hearts). While both Rauschenberg's and Conner's screens are rooted in the material and the bodily, Conner's screen tries to suggest a possible transcendence to the religious and spiritual realms. The actual cluttered physical reality of Conner's screen (compared to the sparseness of Rauschenberg's) also ironically lends Partition an aura closer to the abject.

Theorist Julia Kristeva has defined abject as "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous,

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the composite."[137] This notion of the abject, this attitude of negativity and perversity was applied differently by Conner in Partition than by Rauschenberg in Gold Standard. Art historian Helen Molesworth has suggested that for Rauschenberg "the origin of the work of art is the artist's body--in the pressing and the smearing, in the dailiness of bodily functions, in the question, 'What kinds of marks can I make?'"[138] She associates Rauschenberg's use of materials in his early combines with bodily rhythms and fluids, particularly excrement, semen, and blood, or the "urine-yellow" of Gold Standard. But the difference between Partition and Gold Standard is this: while nylon stockings are meant to be clean, perfect, without stains or runs, work gloves and boots are intended to get dirty. The further defilement of used stockings by Conner is transgressive. His immersion in abjection has many motives and may well represent, at least in part, a social critique of the construction of female sexuality and man's role in it.

With reference to Rauschenberg's Bed, James Leggio also argues: "If clothing can be analogized as a textured, skin-like membrane, so can canvas. Through much of the history of western art, the cloth of Veronica's veil, the vera icon,

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[137] Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4 as quoted in Jack Ben-Levi, Craig Houser, Leslie C. Jones, and Simon Taylor, "Introduction," Abject Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art, Selections from the Permanent Collection (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993), 7.

[138] Helen Molesworth, "Before Bed," October 63 (Winter 1993): 79.

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has seemed to be an analogue of Christ's skin."[139] This interpretation opens the possibility that Partition is redemptive because of its altarpiece origins and its images of the Transfigured Christ and Christ with the open, flaming heart. However, looking at these images within a heavily sexualized context undercuts a straightforward reading. When Conner equated women with saints in his 1974 statement, he implied that women's socially enforced eroticism is as burdensome to them as Christ's and the Saints's travails were to them. In Partition, Conner seems to be saying that religion is as seductive and false as trumped-up eroticism but, that ecstasy, and perhaps even redemption, may be found through either pursuit, or possibly within the realm of the hallucinogenic

In Partition, Conner underscores the deceptive nature of Christianity as did Freud in, The Future of an Illusion (1927), and philosopher Herbert Marcuse in his treatise, Eros and Civilization (1955). However, Conner also recognizes its attraction. As a result he tends to undercut Christianity in his artworks through irony and horror. Conner tries to debunk the whole salvation myth in such works as Cross, with its wrapped and blackened symbol, and Suitcase (indebted to Duchamp's The Green Box), a portable altar whose images and meaning cannot be nailed down.

One of Conner's contemporaries, artist Wallace Berman, promulgated the importance of religion for discovering the

[139] Leggio, "Robert Rauschenberg," 94.

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meaning of life. Like Kerouac, his focus was on "beatitude." As Solnitt makes clear:

> Berman's assertion of the centrality and power of religious imagery and ritual had the same kind of impact that blasphemy once did...His religious works discarded modernist notions about the artist as creator of a self-sufficient mythology and about the present being free of the past or superior to it. They pointed at something beyond themselves and drew their meaning from that beyond. 'Art is love is God' was the epigram he placed on Semina and other works of the period; it is both an impossible equation and an assertion of the interdependence of the three.[140]

Conner's approach was far more cynical, however. He felt that understanding a work of art was like trying to come to grips with certain religious concepts: the meaning is endlessly circular. As he said:

> It's like this whole dialogue going on through the religious texts and the pronouncements of the Church. It's always body-spirit, spirit-body; bodies turn into spirit, turns into body. It keeps changing. A big circle. If you go far enough on the circle of relationship, you come to the opposite.[141]

But Conner's constant awareness of the Christian promise of salvation left him continually confronting the issue of death.[142] In many of his collages and assemblages of this period, he presents the endless tension between sex and death, Eros and Thanatos. On the back (a side Conner

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[140] Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 21.

[141] Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, 12 August 1974, Reel 3949, page 10.

[142] In 1962 critic C. Perkins reviewed Conner's only show at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles and wrote, "Whether bitter, tinged with pathos, or of a rococo mood, all of the pieces deal in one way or another with the decay of life." C. Perkins, "Bruce Conner," Artforum 1, 3 (August 1962): 6.

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never intended to exhibit) of an abstract mixed media collage painting, Untitled from 1954-61 (fig. 99), for example, Conner has glued a notice for an induction physical for the military and stickers such as "FRAGILE" and "WARNING: YOU ARE IN GREAT DANGER" on a carefully organized selection of dozens of clippings of nude and partially-nude women. It is not clear if the women are in great danger because of Bruce Conner or because of the military which Conner despises.[143] Or is it Conner himself who is threatened by both the military and his own sexual desire? Conner's mix of pin-up girls, female-coded objects, and violence, alludes to the sado-masochistic line between pleasure and pain, between sexuality and violence.[144] Marcuse made clear the role of the military:

> In a repressive civilization, death itself becomes an instrument of repression. Whether death is feared as constant threat, or glorified as supreme sacrifice, or accepted as fate, the education for consent to death introduces an element of surrender into life from the beginning--surrender and submission. It stiffles 'utopian' efforts. The Powers that be have a deep affinity to death; death is a token of unfreedom, of defeat.[145]

Another example of Conner's fascination with sex and death is his hanging assemblage Black Dahlia, 1960 (fig. 100) which refers to the infamous murder of a prostitute in

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[143] Conner describes the military as an "...institution that permeates every aspect of our lives and is an untouchable malicious monster that is designed to destroy life. It destroys the fruit of the womb. It hates women, it hates children." Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 64.

[144] For a discussion of this work, see Boswell, "Theater of Light and Shadow," 28.

[145] Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, 236.

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Los Angeles in the 1930s. Solnit describes the disturbing work:

> A magazine image of a nude female, seen from the rear, with her waist encircled by a tight black belt, is the centerpiece of this work. An ostrich plume slithers up one side like a centipede, and a collection of tawdry treasure stuffed into a skin of stocking crowds the lower half of the work. Nails stud the upper edges of the image and are driven directly into the photograph of the nude woman. Conner explains the piece as a dialogue between the victim and her murderer.[146]

Yet, Conner, as the artist reconstructing the murder, seems to present himself as a stand-in for the murderer.[147] In the imaginary dialogue between murderer and victim, the woman is simultaneously attractive and repellent to the man. She has a sexual hold on him. In the murderer's mind, then, only degradation and death are appropriate for this seductive but deceptive woman.[148] The problem for the viewer is that it is unclear where Conner's critique lies in both Black Dahlia and Partition. Here Conner's trangressions of formal aesthetic practices via assemblage are a metaphor for the transgressive meaning he wishes to convey.[149]

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[146] Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 65.

[147] Bruce Conner, Interview by Paul Karlstrom, 12 August 1974, Reel 3949, page 12.

[148] To defend his assemblages which show naked women, underwear, stockings, etc. from those who insist it shows that he hates women, Conner said: "What I'm showing there isn't women, it's garter belts and halters and nylon stockings and false eyelashes, and falsity. You know, it's a false mask. I see them as demonic devices." The problem is to try to figure out what Conner's thoughts and attitudes are towards women. Bruce Conner as quoted in Solnit, Secret Exhibition, 65

[149] In Linda Nochlin's essay "Courbet's Real Allegory: Rereading 'The Painter's Studio,'" in Courbet Reconsidered, by Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn

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In Partition, death is a less obvious theme than in Untitled and Black Dahlia, but is present nonetheless.[150] All three of Partition's verso panels are painted black as the primary background color. The black shawl which covers the top of the verso's left panel which is to the left of the Transfiguration, could be a mantle of mourning or a reference to the black-robed self-flagellating penitent girls that Conner saw during Holy Week in Mexico in 1962 and described in a letter to Charles Alan.

> Mexico was desert Easter everyone went to Acapulco and Vera Cruz. And I ate peyote on Good Friday and finished a collage...earlier in the week we were in Taxco where we saw night procession of penitente girls black robes, hoods carrying large candles bent near to the ground in naked feet chains on ankles, cruffixions (sic), candles, drums, saxophones, bells, copal incense, angels. The Good Friday collage is for them.[151]

The very materials on Partition themselves reek of disintegration, decay, and death. Alluding to the theme of vanitas, the brevity of beauty and life, which seems to punctuate Conner's work, Partition predicts its (and our) slow crumble into dust. Another reference to death is more

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Museum, 1988), 36, she notes, "Following Susan Suleiman's complex analysis of the centrality of the concept of transgressiveness in the strategies of modernism...we are invited by a certain modernist discourse, or, perhaps, more accurately, a postmodernist one, to read the transgressive content of the work as a metaphor for the transgressive formal practices involved."

[150] See a discussion of death and desire as inherent in the collage process in Robin Lydenberg, "Engendering Collage: Collaboration and Desire in Dada and Surrealism," Collage: Critical Views, ed. Katherine Hoffman (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1989), 282-284.

[151] Bruce Conner, Napoles, Mexico to Charles Alan, New York City, 26 April 1962, Charles Alan Gallery Papers, Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institution.

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abstract. While the screen and many of its objects must be read as a metaphor for female sexuality, the maraca handle hanging down like a flaccid penis could refer to the French colloquial name for postcoital detumescence: le petit mort or the little death.

With death as the point of intersection, Partition thus addresses the body-spirit issue that Conner himself seems to struggle with in his religion, art, and life.[152] On Partition, the mortal flesh wins; the ecclesiastical altarpiece is superseded by the secular folding screen. Sexual referents literally cover the religious ones (although Conner does allow Christianity to partially poke its way through the tiers of eroticized trash). This parallel allure of women and Christ is delicately balanced on an object that is itself a physical symbol of both attractions.

Partition's mix of gender roles, sexuality, religion, and death confronts several inflamed topics of the early 1960s. In an essay, "Libraries Full of Tears: The Beats and the Law," Maurice Berger explains the censorship of the Beats' art and writing:

> The Beats representation of homosexuality, bisexuality, and interracial liaisons, their/advocacy of free sex and drugs, and their expressed desire to test the limits of cultural acceptability made them as vulnerable to censorship as any artists of this century...The widely reported Beat prosecution also paralleled

[152] See Peter Boswell's in-depth discussion of Conner's body/spirit struggles in his art in "Theater of Light and Shadow," 67-81.

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> and contributed to the gradual liberalization of moral and sexual attitudes then taking place during a period when district attorneys regularly prosecuted Playboy magazine and young innocents could still be scandalized by the sight of Elvis' gyrating hips.[153]

A folding screen inherently signifies both closure and disclosure: Conner's Partition blatantly reveals what censorship and the bourgeois status quo sought to suppress. Partition opens up and flaunts its "wares/wears" to protest the censorship of sexuality, obscenity, and eroticism by evoking those very things. Conner's technique of layering sexually tinged objects over religious materials is so transgressive as to imply the screen's own transgressive intentions. Partition is perfectly positioned to challenge censorship because it is already a desecration both of an altarpiece and of a Western folding screen which earlier had elided ideal women and nature. Continually provocative, Partition itself was almost censored. The National Gallery of Art, ever mindful of Congressional funding, *very* reluctantly agreed to exhibit this sexually suggestive and religiously compromised screen in The Folding Image exhibition I co-curated in 1984, and even then insisted on installing it so that the verso, with the images of Christ, was very close to the wall so that viewers could not walk around and comfortably look at that side of the screen.[154]

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153 Maurice Berger, "Libraries Full of Tears: The Beats and the Law," in Phillips et al., Beat Culture, 124/125.

154 When I was preparing this exhibition, I was told that Partition seemed too sexually offensive for the National Gallery of Art to exhibit. When I indicated that it was an important part of the show, the designer suggested that we exhibit it upstairs and away from the rest of the works.

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In the mid-1950s in Japan, Gutai artists Saburo Murakami and Kazuo Shiraga adopted a transgressive strategy when using folding screens in their art/performances to defy sexual, artistic, and societal norms. To oppose traditional Japanese art, they shot arrows and thrust spears into, burned holes into, and leapt through paper screens (fig. 101) so as to "break through" the past and assert a new order in art, and hopefully society.[155] With the screen as a venerated as well as female object, and the tearing of paper considered in Japan "...a symbol of violence, destruction, and danger," their actions must also be understood as symbolic violation, a meaning, if not the means, which is shared by Conner's Partition.[156]

In the creation of a transgressive yet functional screen using everyday, principally feminine, objects and materials, Conner created a work of art which, like so many sexual screens before it, stands in complete opposition to the abstract, intellectual, and masculine ideals of a certain type of modern art. On Partition, the ephemeral, ever-disintegrating nature of its materials, its multilevel and multi-part decentered subject matter, the overwhelming

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Ultimately, because of my insistence, it was exhibited in the main body of the show.

[155] Allan Kaprow, Assemblage, Environments & Happenings (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1966), 215-216, 220; and Barbara Bertozzi and Klaus Wolbert, Gutai: Japanische AVANTgarde/Japanese Avant-Garde, 1954-1965 (Darmstadt: Mathildenhohe, 1991), 40-41, 182-183.

[156] Harriet Janis and Rudi Blesh, Collage: Personalities, Concepts, Techniques (Philadelphia, New York and London: Chilton Book Co., 1969), 270.

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symbolism of the body in fragments, the insistent tawdry indicators of female sexuality, the non-potent presence of male symbols, and the object's intense theatrical masquerade significantly amplifies the reading of a folding screen as a sexual metaphor.[157] His screen not only entangles the viewer as a scopophilic voyeur but it also profoundly questions societal attitudes toward preestablished female gender roles, and dwells in an intersection between sexuality, religion, death, and cosmic vision. This complex mix is further aggravated by the multiple metaphors and meanings offered by the altarpiece/folding screen structure which Conner chose. The result is that Conner's Partition is the most visually and intellectually complex and the least penetrable sexual folding screen of the twentieth century.

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[157] See Michael Fried's denigration of art which approaches theater in his article, "Art and Objecthood," in Minimal Art: Critical Anthology, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1968), 116-147. First published Artforum 5, 10 (June 1967): 12-23.

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CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

> One reason the body is an/obsessional site of critical discourse and artistic practice is its ambiguous status--both constructed and natural, semiotic and referential. And this ambiguity is always treated in different ways.[1]
>
> --Hal Foster, 1994--

Given its functionality, its versatility, its history, and its self-referential meanings, the folding screen offers an unusual perspective for the presentation and questioning of sexuality and gender hierarchy. Even in the early history of screenmaking, Chinese and Japanese artists implied sexual meanings with or smuggled illicit concepts into their folding screens. This ancient pattern of intertwining formal iconographic allusions to eroticism was later seized upon by Western artists influenced by the craze for Japonisme at the end of the nineteenth century. Those artists used folding screens to both continue and reinvent early erotic imagery, to produce new metaphors, and to invent new means that would challenge conventional views about human sexuality and gender.

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[1] Hal Foster as quoted in Round Table, "The Politics of the Signifier II: A Conversation on the *Informe* and the Abject," October 67 (Winter 1994): 12/13.

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The early Chinese Figures of Ladies screen, for example, with its juxtaposition of women and nature and its implications of earthy fertility (even in this depiction of aristocratic women), sets a visual and symbolic precedent that reappears throughout the history of Western screen making. Traditional notions of the iconicity or passivity of women are ruptured by the twentieth-century descendants of the Figures of Ladies such as Spanish Women by Natalia Goncharova or Screen by Man Ray.

The frequent use of female as well as overtly sexual imagery on folding screens supports my theory of the folding screen as a vulvar (as opposed to a phallic) object. The traditional function of the screen as a barrier, here interpreted in terms of vulvar iconography, makes the folding screen into a metaphorical hymen, an especially powerful image for Eileen Gray's pierced Block Screen as well as an ironic subtext for both Man Ray's Screen and Bruce Conner's Partition. But more generally, the folding screen has often been employed by artists to suggest sexual seduction. Reminiscent of the ancient weavings hung as room dividers and intended to restrict sexual access to a man's wife and daughters, folding screens were often used to shield a woman from the gaze of a desiring man (and also, ironically, to hide a woman and her lover from detection). Countering this deceptive function, avant-garde artists, such as Gray, Man Ray, and Conner purposefully designed their screens to reveal what should, by all bourgeois

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standards, remain hidden. This play of hiding and revealing underlies the historic use of the screen as a dressing partition. The imagery of draped kimonos on traditional Japanese Takasode screens alludes to this sometimes titillating function. All subsequent screens, particularly those that show naked bodies (such as Man Ray's Screen) recall and critique this conventional use of the screen.

The not-so-subtle subtext of all these sexual metaphors is a repudiation of earlier presentations of the female as a passive, devalued sex, constantly entwined with nature but not ideas. The advent of modernism radically altered these images while often leaving their social consequences intact. The portrayal of women, and their place in the gender hierarchy, did evolve somewhat throughout the twentieth century, though perhaps nowhere so pointedly as on the vulvar folding screens.

In addition, three other aspects in the development of modernism affected the creation of sexual folding screens. First, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century project of reintegrating fine and applied arts, spurred initially by William Morris, Japanese art and culture, a rediscovery of French eighteenth-century aesthetic goals, and the development of Art Nouveau, meant that functional folding screens were reemployed by even the most important artists for the expression of fundamental human themes such as sexuality. Second, through their collecting and writing, the Goncourt brothers in Paris helped promote this newly

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important status of decorative arts and demonstrated how to create a psychologically and sexually saturated interior environment through the display of suggestive objects. Third, the erotically-charged domestic space was further influenced by the sensuality of theatrical presentations of the Ballets Russes, for example, and during the early part of the twentieth century architects and interior designers purposefully gender coded and sexually infused their environments. A folding screen, especially a sexually suggestive one, was sometimes a key component in such theatricalized domestic interiors. These approaches to the domestic interior and functional objects continued throughout the decades of the twentieth century (witness the screens of Man Ray and Bruce Conner, for example).

By choosing screens by Eileen Gray, Man Ray, and Bruce Conner for this study, I have tried to demonstrate how the collective history of the folding screen offers a unique locus for questioning sexuality and identity, demonstrates new social attitudes toward women, repositions women in the hierarchy of representations of gender, disrupts notions of bourgeois propriety in relation to sexuality, and signals the centrality of the domestic within the social politics of modernism. Eileen Gray's 1923 Block Screen is a good example of a screen that questions the modernist enterprise through subtle functional, structural, and visual ambiguities. Like Gray herself, this screen does not "fit in;" it forces viewers to revise all conceivable approaches to folding

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screens. When seen either in isolation or as part of the elaborately orchestrated interior that Gray designed for the Bedroom-Boudoir for Monte Carlo, the powerful theatricality and symbolism of the Block Screen is unmistakable. By contrast, Man Ray's 1935 Screen seems at first fairly conventional. Yet its Surrealist fragmentation, bristling sexuality and erotic signifiers, and scopophilic intent destroy any pretentions that this is a traditional bourgeois domestic object. And, although Man Ray's purpose in creating the screen was clearly to control the female object of his desire, the effect of this collage of rebuslike body parts is to amplify the artist's own castration anxiety, and to actually increase the woman's apparent strength. Finally, Bruce Conner's statements critiquing the social role of women embellish and in some ways contradict his assemblage screen Partition. Female erotic display, encouraged to a certain extent within Conner's more liberalized milieu of Beat Generation artists, is repetitively portrayed but tarnished and condemned on a screen that hides nothing. Discarded female accoutrements are heaped in with images of religion and symbols of death. One result of this layering is a constant questioning of female gender and sexual roles. But the hypocrisy of religion, including the cult of the Virgin, is also challenged metaphorically by burying the religious images under the secular elements. The result is a folding screen that is a site of philosophical conflict for both the artist and the viewer.

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This investigation has been undertaken with the intent to examine a particularized group of folding screens which reveal multifaceted aspects of human sexuality in relation to fine art and functional objects. My study suggests that there is a constant shifting and repositioning of artists' investigations of sexuality and gender which is made far more important by the conditions and history of the folding screen. Although initially devalued as a "feminine" decorative arts object of the domestic interior, through a contemporary rereading, the folding screen has been shown to be a complex, metaphoric structure capable of helping us question our most fundamental attitudes toward gender and sexuality.

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1. Pierre Bonnard (French 1867-1947), Man and Woman, 1900, oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 28 3/8," Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

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2. Armand Seguin (French 1869-1903), The Delights of Life, 1892-1893, oil on canvas with painted and gilded frame, four-panel folding screen, 62 5/8 x 101," Private Collection, New York.

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3. Man Ray (American, 1890-1976) Screen, 1935, oil on wood, five-panel folding screen, 70 1/2 x 98 7/16," Collection of Giorgio Marconi, Milan.

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4. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Partition (recto), 1961-64, mixed media on three wood panels, hinged together, 71 x 111 x 33" overall, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

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5. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Partition (verso), 1961-64, mixed media on three wood panels, hinged together, 71 x 111 x 33" overall, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

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6. Francesco Clemente (Italian, born 1952), Screen #1 (recto), 1982, watercolor on paper, four-panel folding screen, 72 x 92 1/2," Courtesy Sperone Westwater Gallery, New York.

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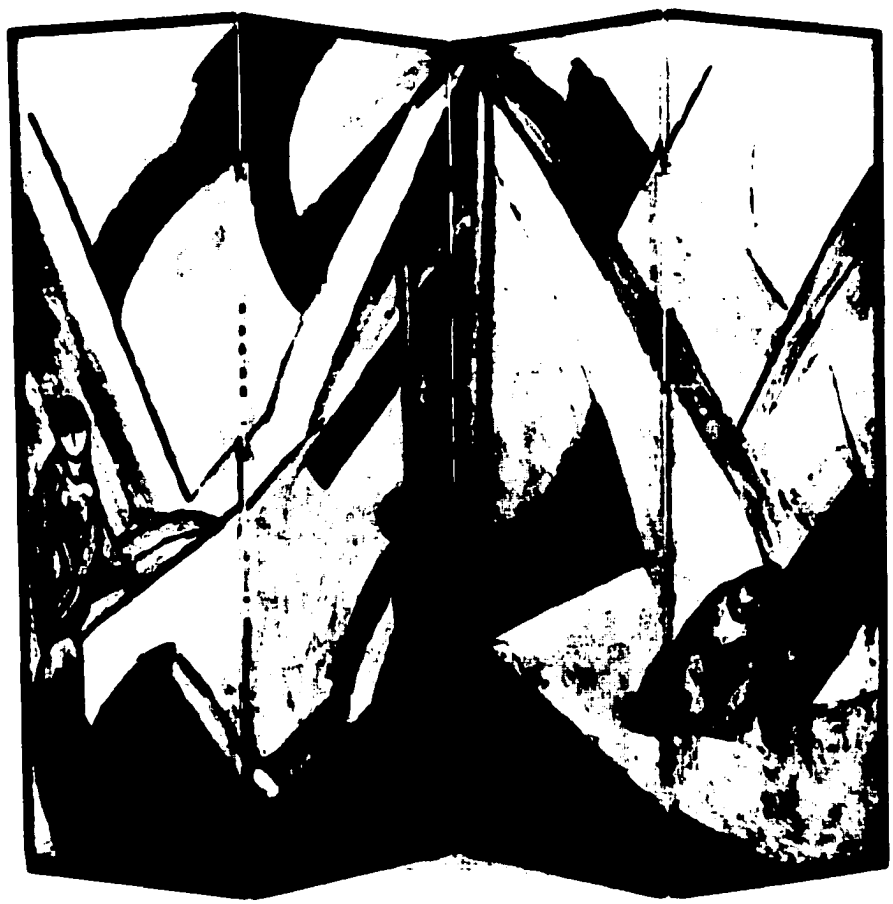

7. Vanessa Bell (English, 1879-1961), Bathers in a Landscape, 1913, gouache on paper mounted on canvas, four-panel folding screen, 70 3/8 x 79 1/2," Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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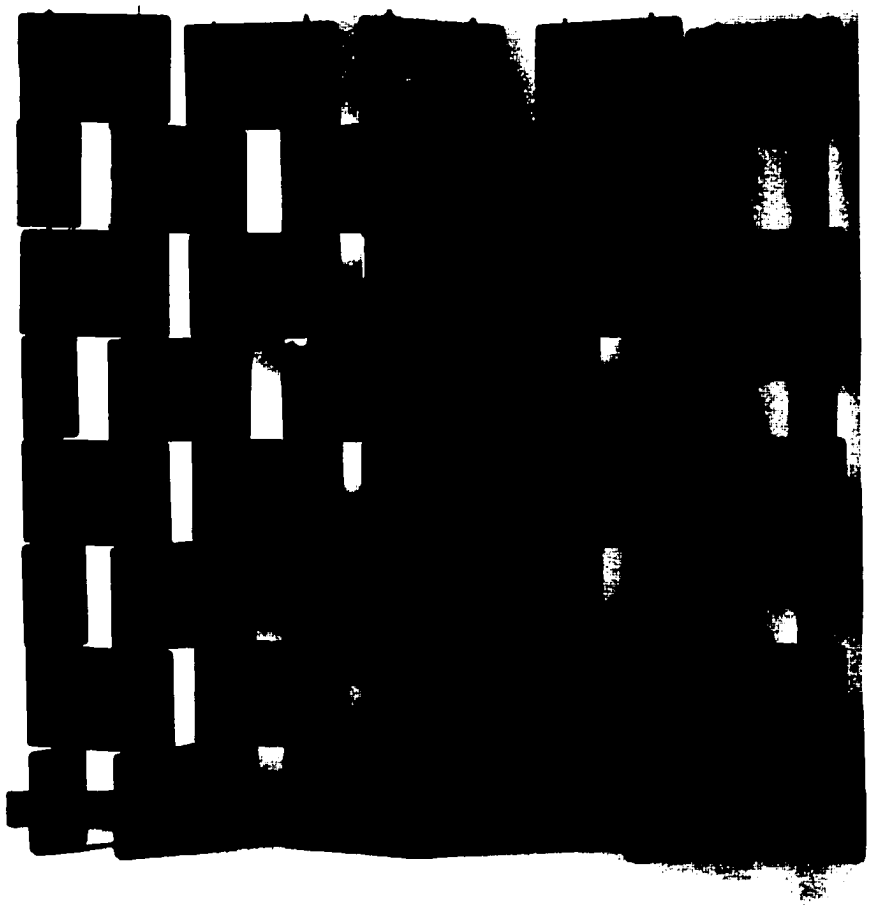

8. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, c. 1923, black lacquered wood with metal rods, eight rows high, 71 1/2" x 70 1/4," Private Collection.

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9. Natalia Goncharova (Russian, 1881-1962), The Spanish Dancers, 1920, oil on wood, five-panel folding screen, Sophia Loren, Geneva.

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10. Jane Kaufman (American, born 1938), Untitled, 1985, coquille feathers and glass beads on green velvet with rosewood frame, two-panel folding screen, 72 x 119," Collection of the artist.

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11. Nancy Mitchnick (American, born 1947), Adam and Eve Screen (recto and verso), 1984, oil on wood, two-panel folding screen, 96 x 41," Collection of Suzanne Feld Hilberry and Richard H. Kandarian, Birmingham, Michigan.

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12. Unknown Artist (Chinese), The Figures of Ladies Screen (detail), 752-756, colors on paper, Shoso-in, Nara, Japan.

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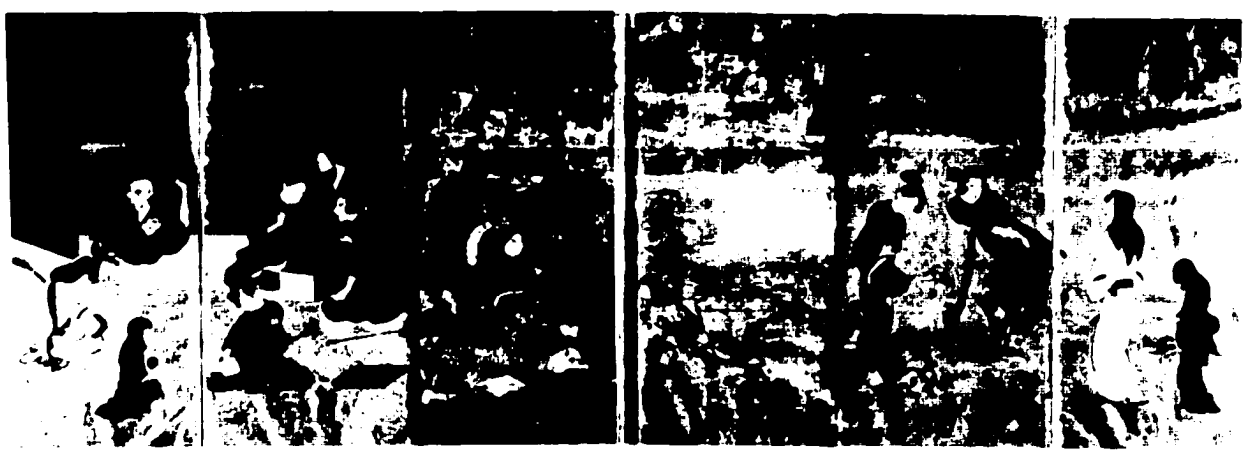

13. Unknown Artist (Japanese, Early Ukiyo-e School, The Hikone Screen, c. 1640s, colors and gold on paper, six-panel folding screen now mounted flat, Ii Collection, Shiga Prefecture.

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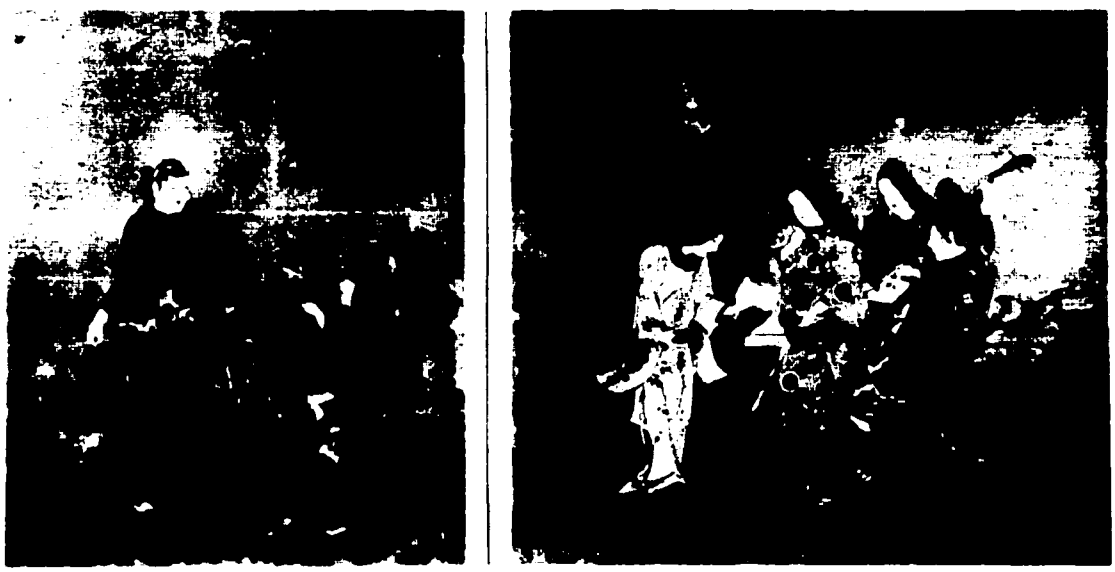

14. Unknown Artist (Japanese, Early Ukiyo-e School), Princess Sen and Her Lover, c. early 1620s, colors and gold wash on paper on two-panel folding screen, Collection of the Tokugawa family, Japan.

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15. Unknown Artist (Japanese, Edo Period), "Tagasode (Whose Sleeves?)," early 17th century, color on gilded paper on six-panel folding screen, 67 1/4 x 150," Collection of Mary Griggs Burke, New York City.

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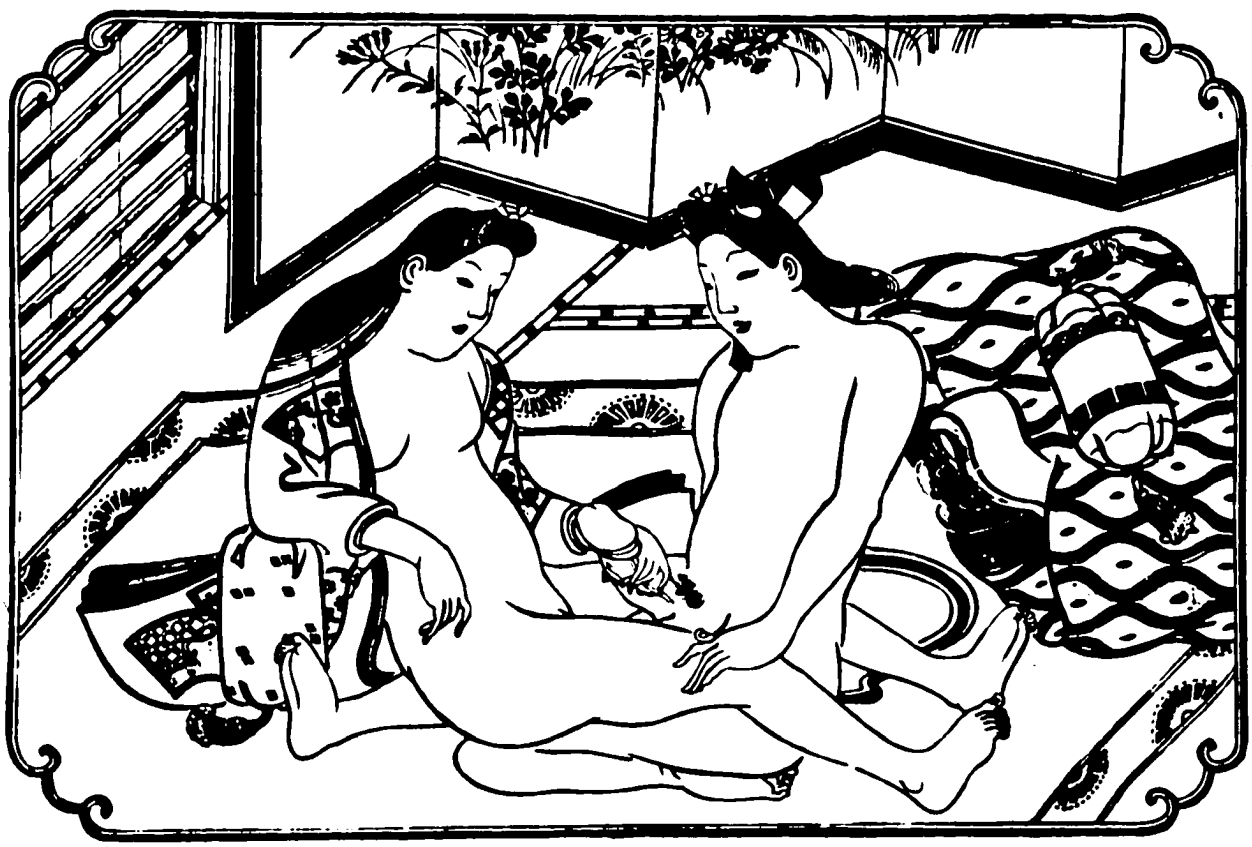

16. Moronobu (Japanese, d. 1694), Lovers, Tan-e woodblock print with hand-coloring, ca. 1680s, oban size, Tokyo National Museum.

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17. Nicolas Lancret (French, 1690 - 1745), Les Quatres Heures du Jour, ca. 1730, oil on canvas, four-panel folding screen, 75 1/2 x 92," Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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18. Unknown Artist (English, 18th century), A True Picture of the Famous Skreen, ca. 1721, engraving, Published in the London Journal, no. 85, ca. 1721, The Pierpont Morgan Library.

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19. Unknown Artist (English, 18th century), Ladies in Contemporary Dress, early 18th century, Queen Anne period, painted wood, life-size, present whereabouts unknown.

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20. Jane Carlyle (English, 19th century), Four-Panel Screen, collage, Collection of The National Trust, England.

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21. William Morris (English, 1834-1896), Three-Panel Screen, ca. 1860-1887, wool, silk, and gold thread on serge with oak frame, 67 x 84," The Castle Howard Collection, Yorkshire, England.

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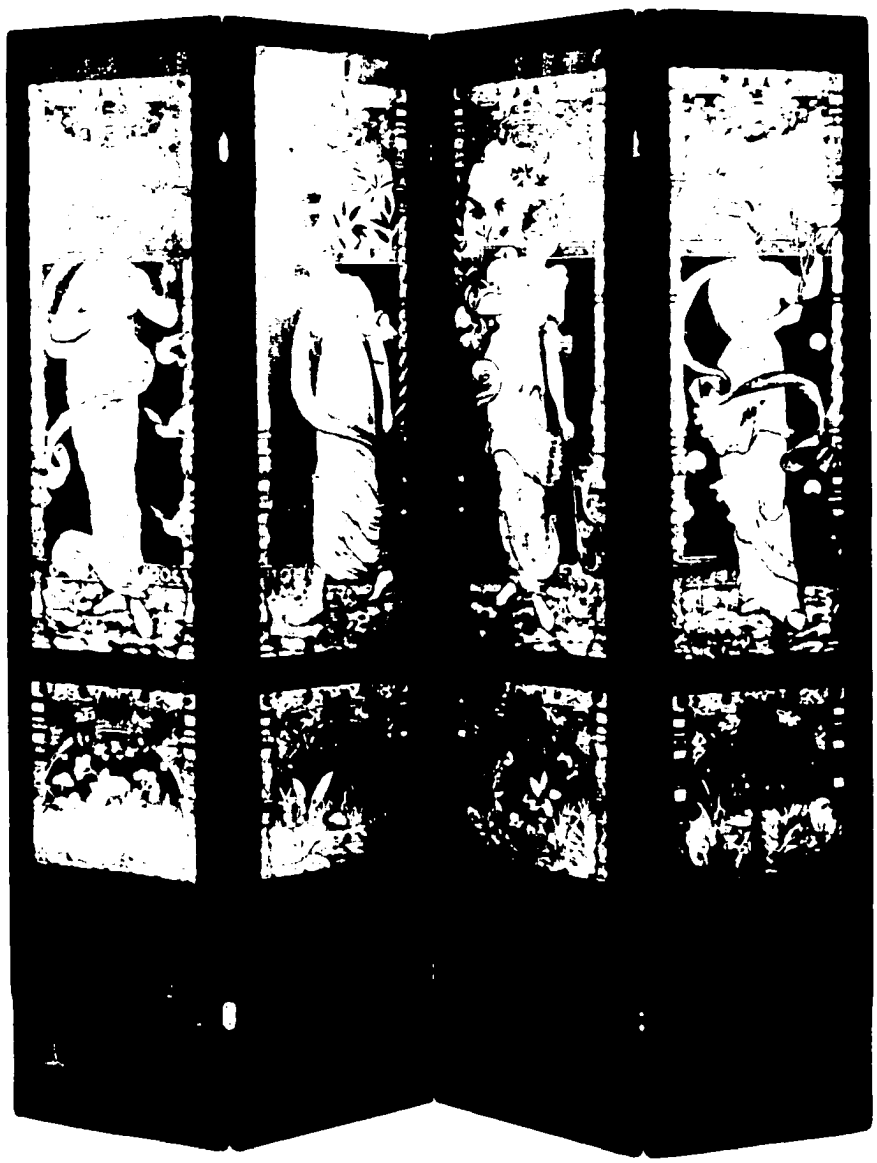

22. Unknown Artist (after Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones) (probably American, active ca. 1875-1900), Four Elements, ca. 1885, oil on pine with ebonized wood frame, four-panel folding screen, 71 x 66 1/4," Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Frangiamore, Atlanta, Georgia.

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23. Sir Laurens Alma-Tadema (Dutch 1836-1912); and Lady Laura Epps Alma-Tadema (English, 1852-1909), Portrait of the Epps Family (recto), 1870-1871, oil on canvas, six-panel folding screen, 72 x 186," Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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24. James Abbott McNeill Whistler (American, 1834-1903), Blue and Silver: Screen with Old Battersea Bridge (recto), 1872, tempera on brown paper mounted on canvas, two-panel folding screen, 76 3/4 x 71 3/4," Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, Birnie Philip Bequest.

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25. Émile Bernard (French, 1868-1941), Les Quatres Saisons (recto), 1891, tempera on linen, four-panel folding screen, 66 x 97 1/2", Courtesy of Galerie Bellier, Paris.

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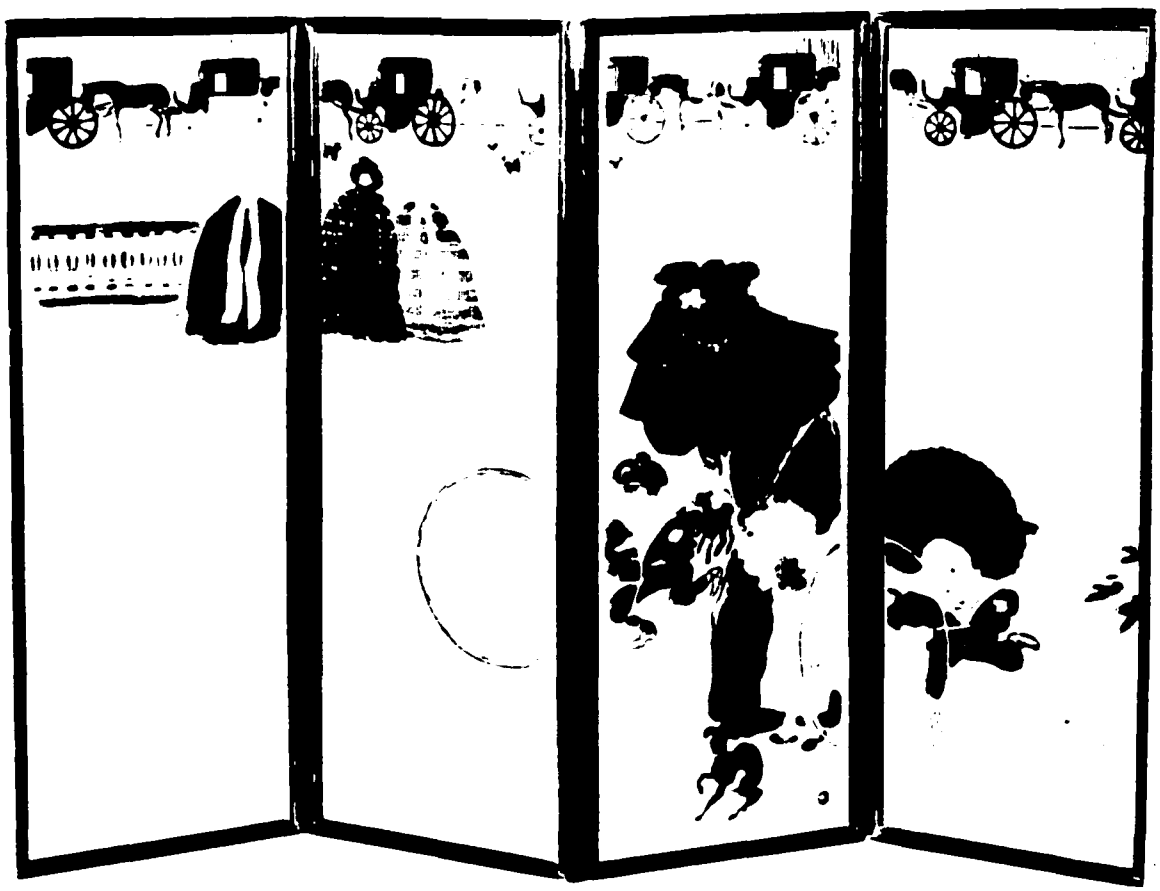

26. Pierre Bonnard (French 1867-1947), Promenade des nourrices, Frise des Fiacres, 1896, color lithograph, four-panel folding screen 59 x 78 3/4", Private Collection.

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27. Edouard Vuillard (French, 1868-1940), Five-Panel Screen (The Dressmakers), 1892-1893, distemper on linen, Private Collection, London. Photograph of original state of screen, Antoine Salomon.

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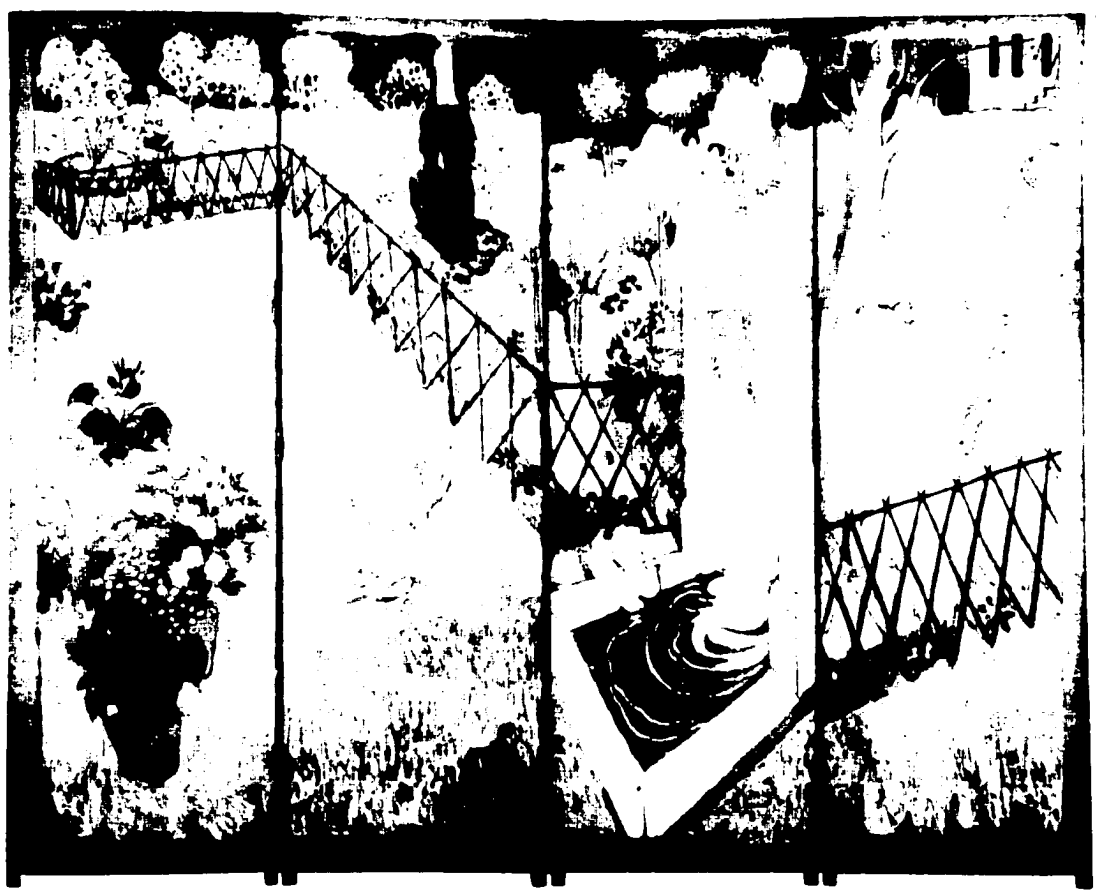

28. Maurice Denis (French, 1870-1943), Screen with Doves, ca. 1902, oil on canvas, four-panel folding screen, 63 3/4 x 80 3/8," Private Collection, St. Germain-en-Laye.

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29. Thomas Wilmer Dewing (American, 1851-1938), Morning Glories, oil on canvas on a multilayered panel with gilded wood and gesso frame, three-panel folding screen, 74 1/2 x 77," Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh.

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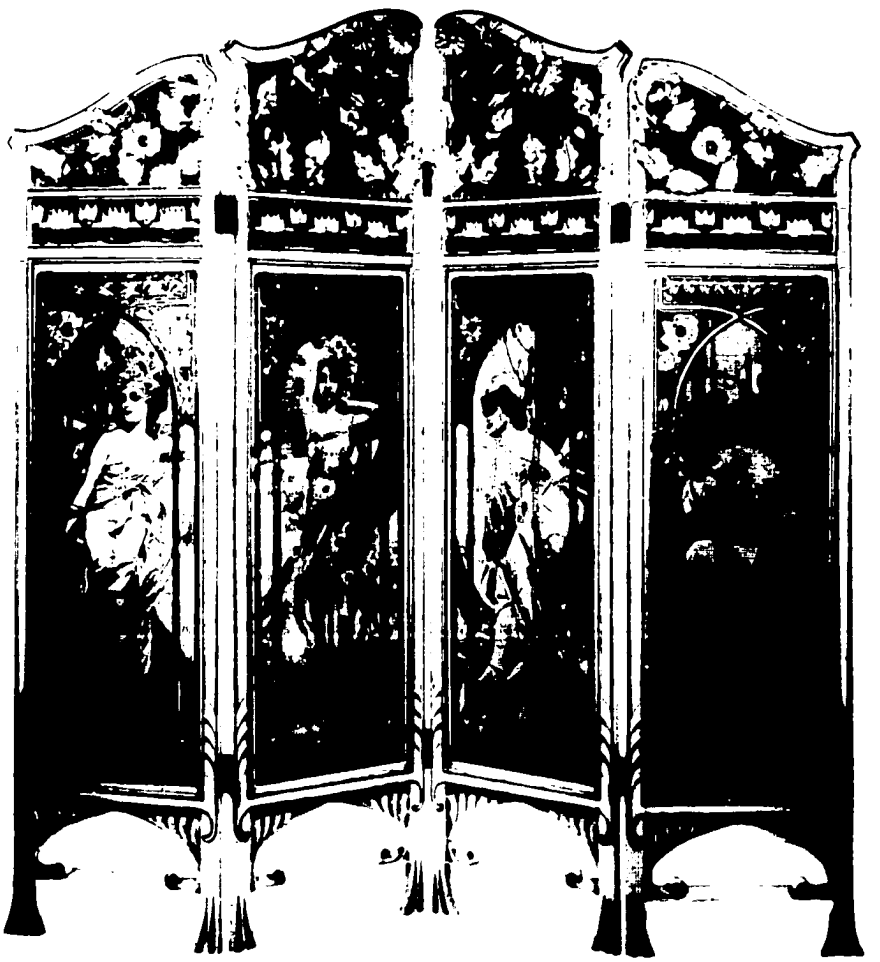

30. Alfons Mucha (Czechoslovakian, 1860-1944), Four Times of Day, color lithographs mounted in painted and gilded wood frame by Josef Rous (Czechoslovakian, 1872-1942), four-panel folding screen, 74 3/8 x 76 3/4," Mestské Museum, Zamberk, Czechoslovakia

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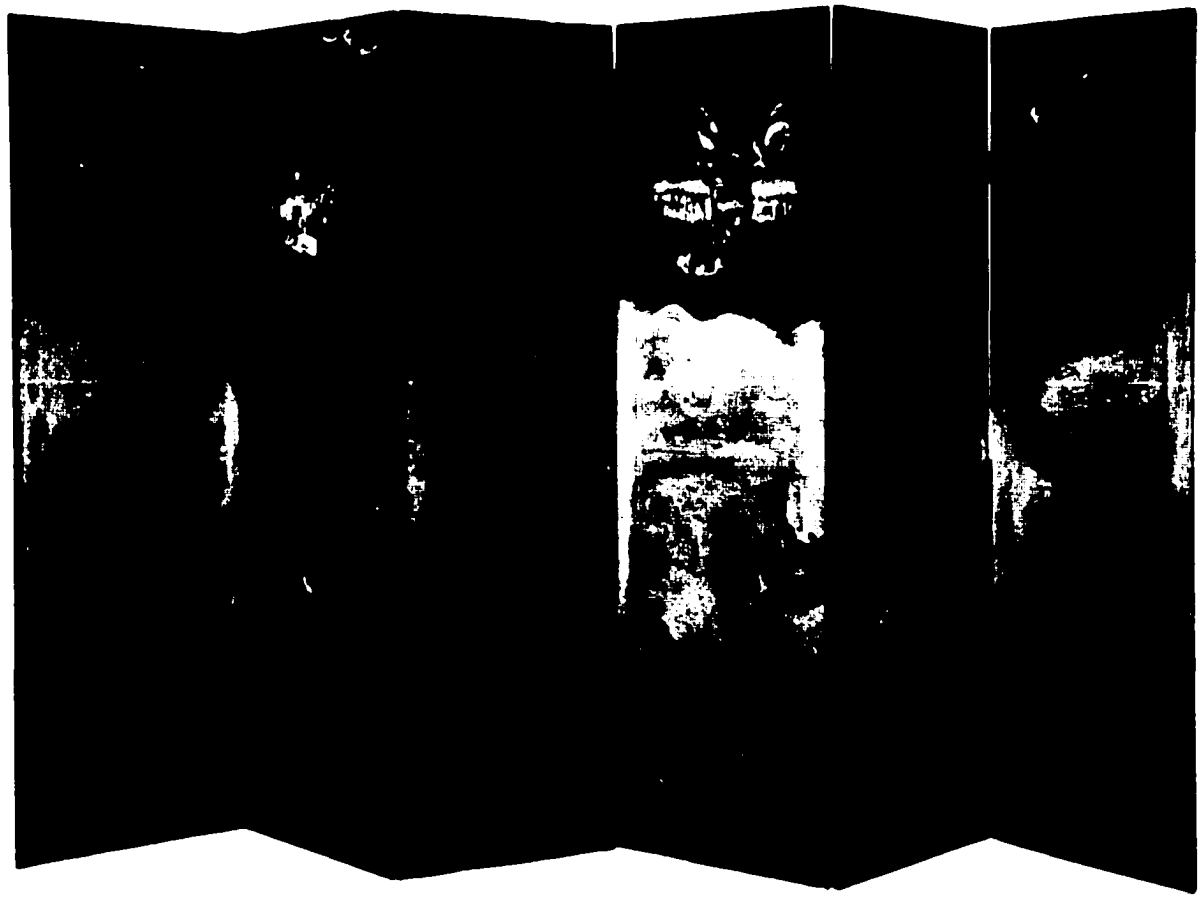

31. Pierre Bonnard (French, 1867-1947), Pair of Three-Panel Screens, 1902, oil on paper mounted on canvas, 63 3/8 x 159 7/16," both screens, Musée du Prieuré, Saint Germain-en-Laye, France.

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32. Edouard Vuillard (French, 1868-1940), Four-Panel Screen, ca. 1895, distemper on canvas (remounted as a wall painting), 47 1/4 x 66 15/16," Private Collection, London.

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33. Unknown Photographer, Installation photograph of Boudoir de l'Art Nouveau Bing by Georges de Feure (French, 1868-1943) as seen in Bing's Art Nouveau Pavilion at the Exposition Universelle of 1900 in Paris. Three-Panel Screen, 1900, with brocades by Anais Fauré, embroidered silk with gilded wood and gesso frame, 46 7/8 x 40 1/4," at rear right, now in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.

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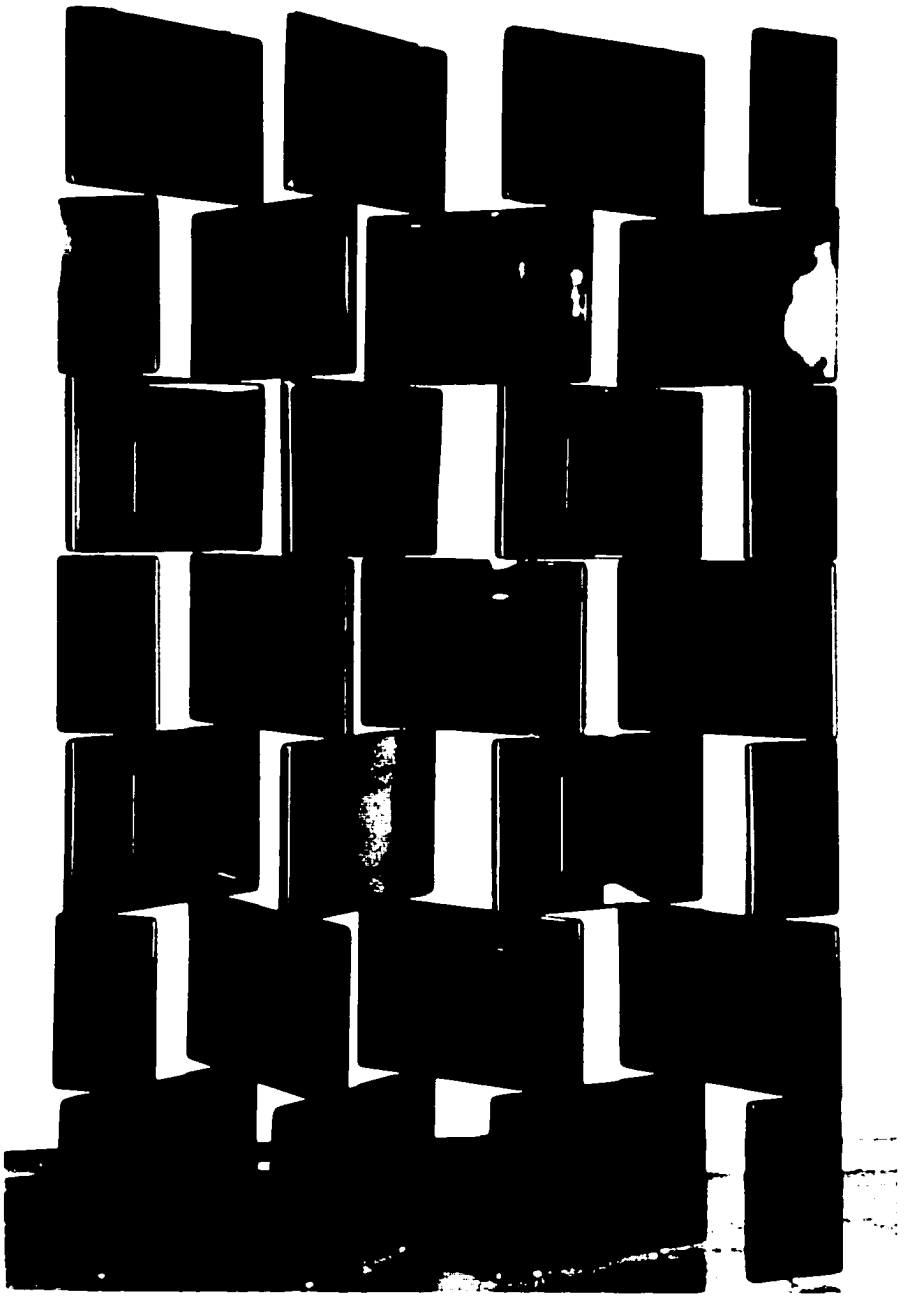

34. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, 1971, black lacquered wood with raised panels with metal rods, seven rows high, Victoria and Albert Museum.

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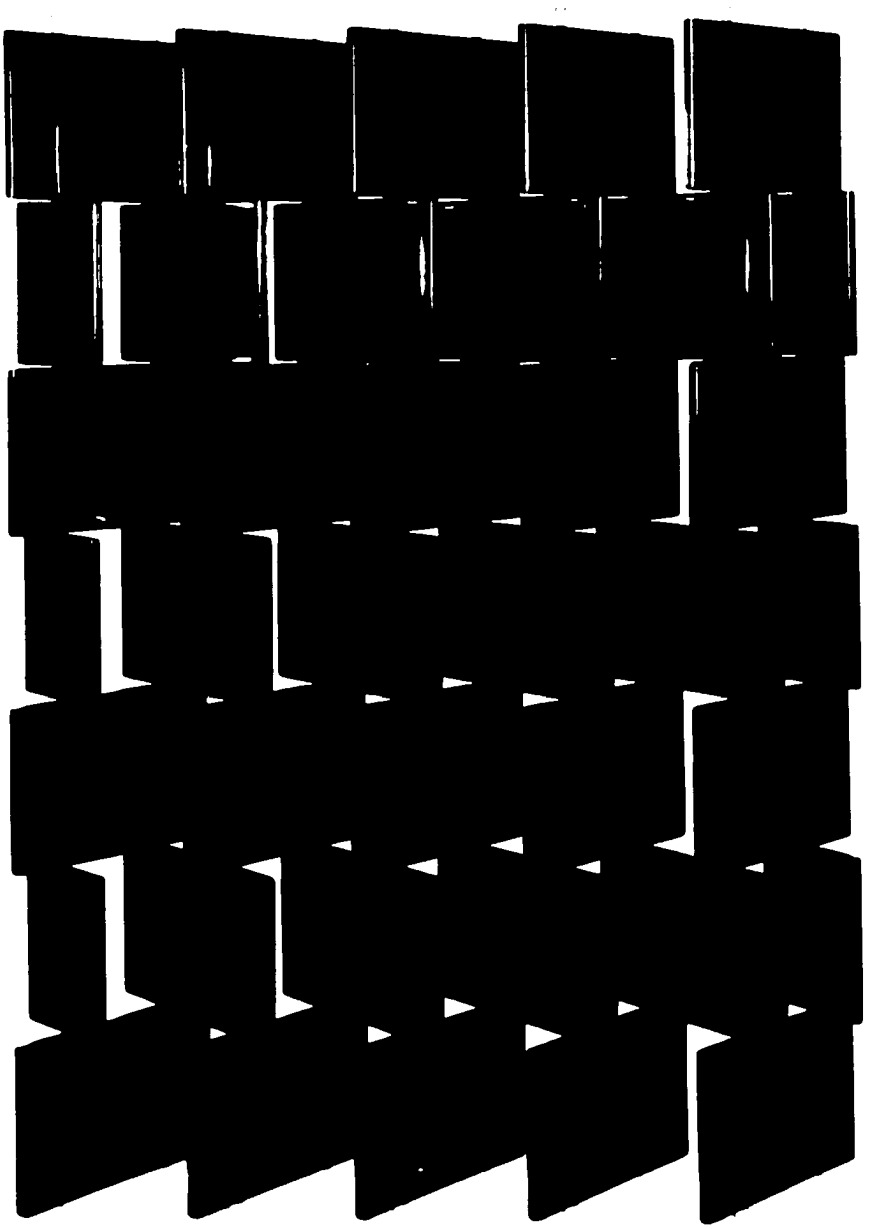

35. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, c. 1923. black lacquered wood with metal rods, seven rows high, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

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36. Unknown Photographer, Installation shot of Eileen Gray in her apartment in Rue Bonaparte with Block Screen, now in a Private Collection.

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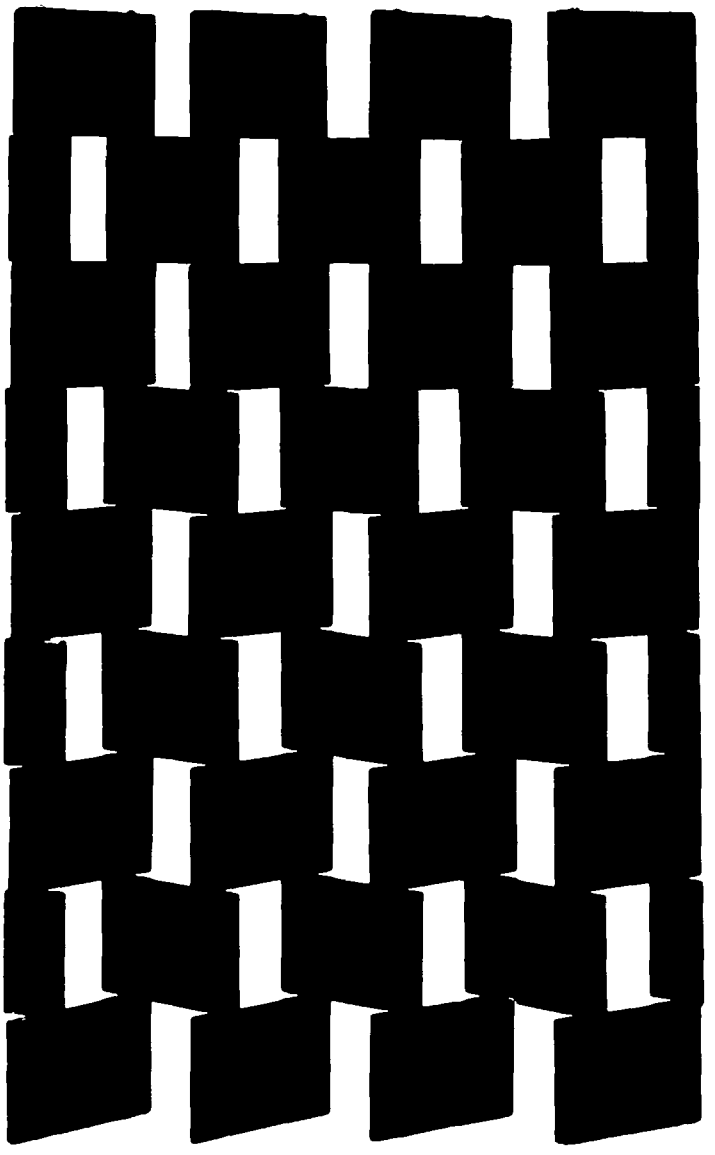

37. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, c. 1923 black lacquered wood with raised panels with metal rods, nine rows high, Private Collection.

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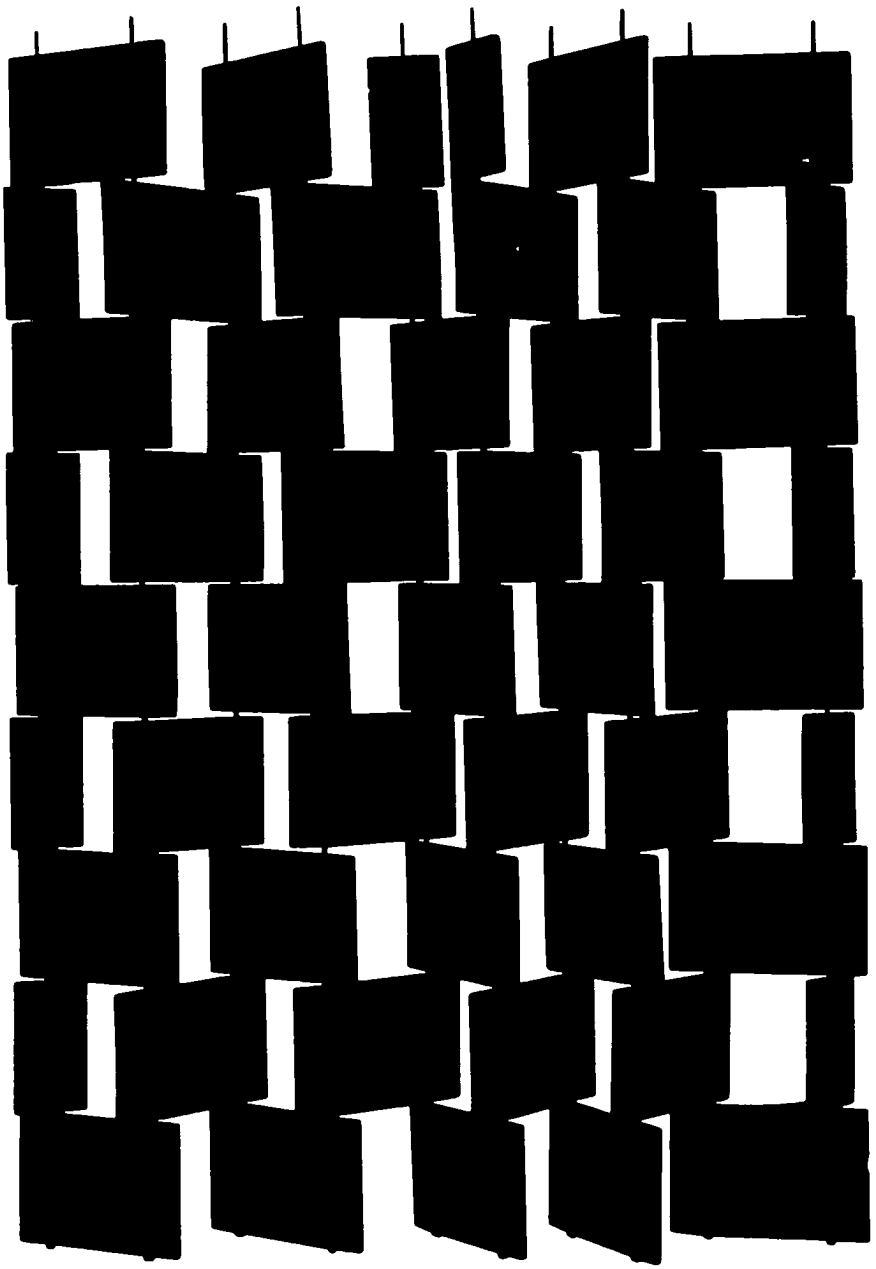

38. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, c. 1922, black painted wood with metal rods, nine rows high, Collection Caroline Constant.

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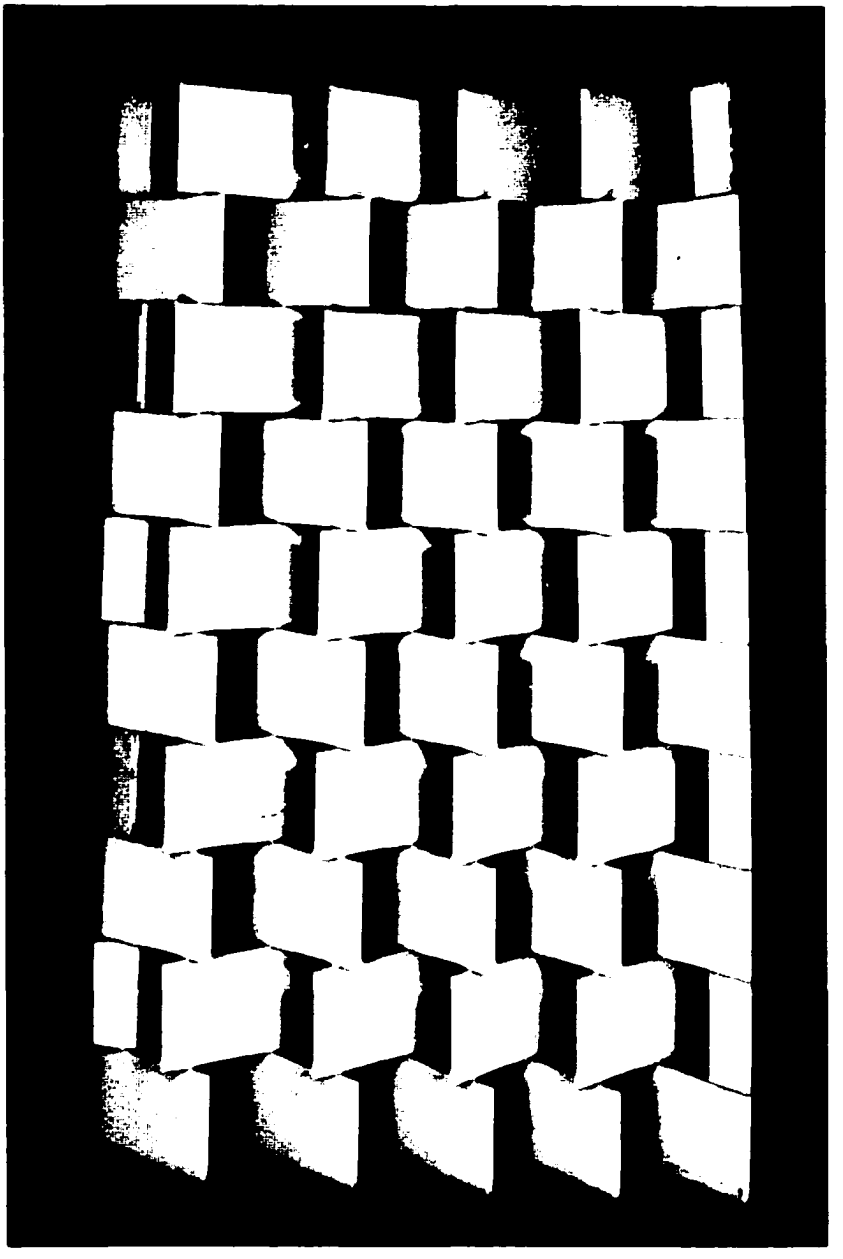

39. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Block Screen, c. 1923, white painted wood with metal rods, ten rows high, Collection Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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40. Unknown Photographer, Installation photograph from the 1923 XIV^{e} Salon des Artistes Décorateurs of the Bedroom-boudoir for Monte Carlo showing two white Block Screens, black and white geometric wall screen, bed, desk, stool, tables, assorted lighting fixtures, and rugs all designed by Eileen Gray.

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41. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Pair of Block Screens, white lacquer, Rue Bonaparte apartment, c. 1923, current location unknown.

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42. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Study of a Nude, c. 1900, drawing, Private Collection.

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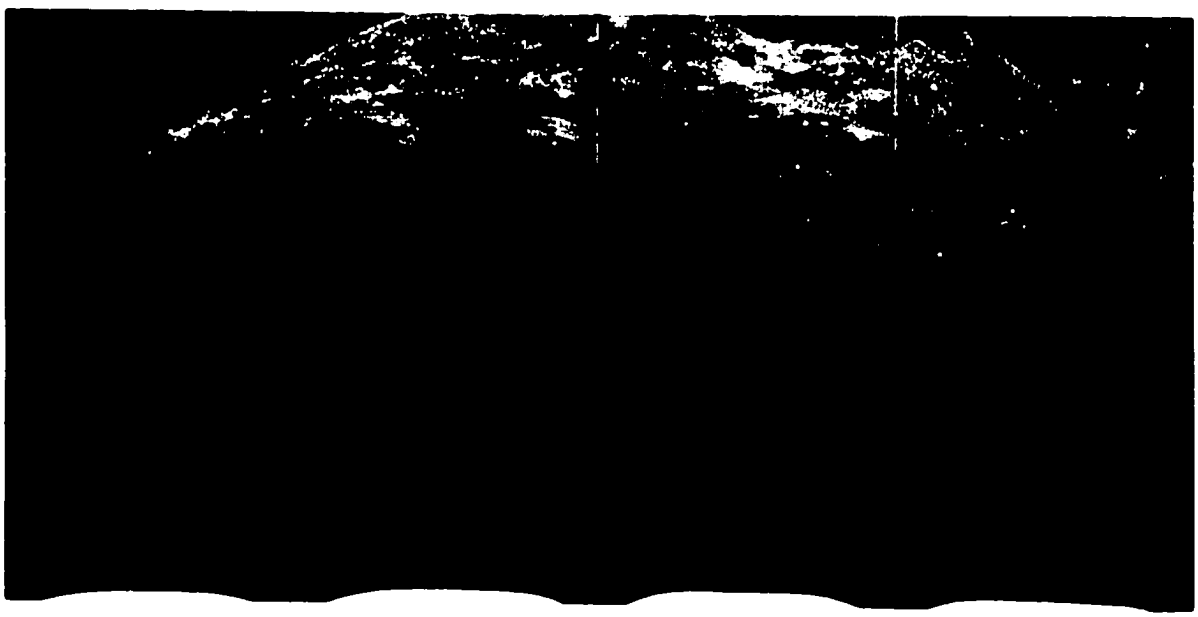

43. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), La Voie Lactée (The Milky Way), 1912, blue lacquered wood with mother-of-pearl inlay, Four-panel folding screen, Illustrated in Vogue and Wendigen, Location unknown.

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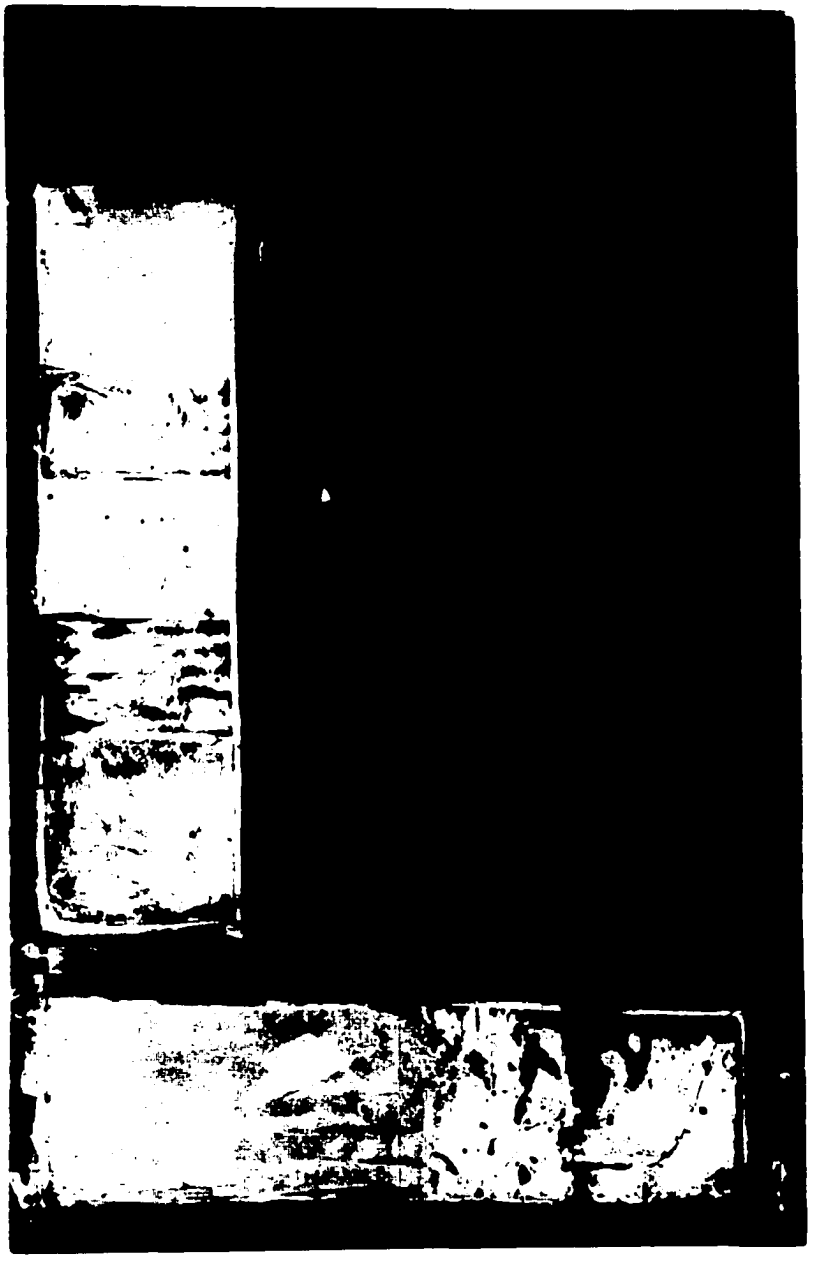

44. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Door panel with sitting and soaring figures (unfinished), c. 1912-1913, blue and red lacquered wood, Private Collection.

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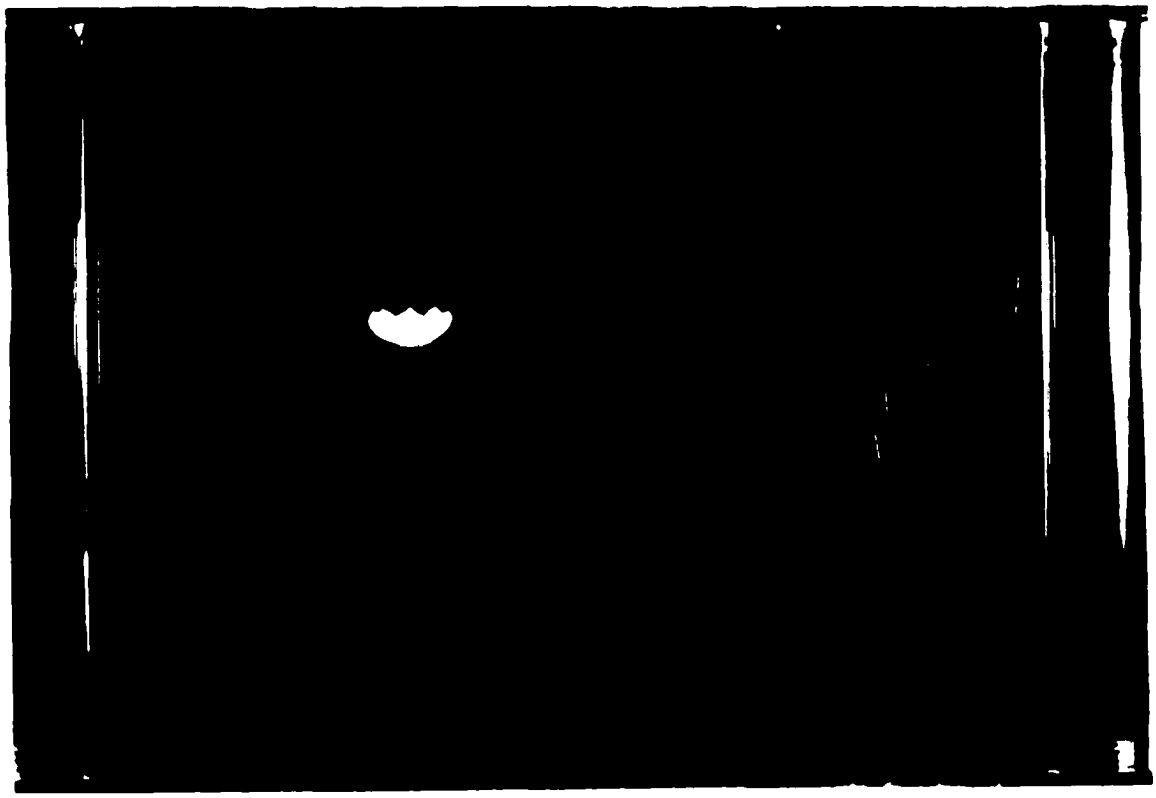

45. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Le Magicien de la Nuit or (La Forêt Enchantée), 1912, blue lacquer with mother-of-pearl, Michel Perinet, Paris.

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46. Bert (active, early-twentieth century), Portrait of Nijinsky in L'Après-Midi d'un Faune, photograph, Private Collection.

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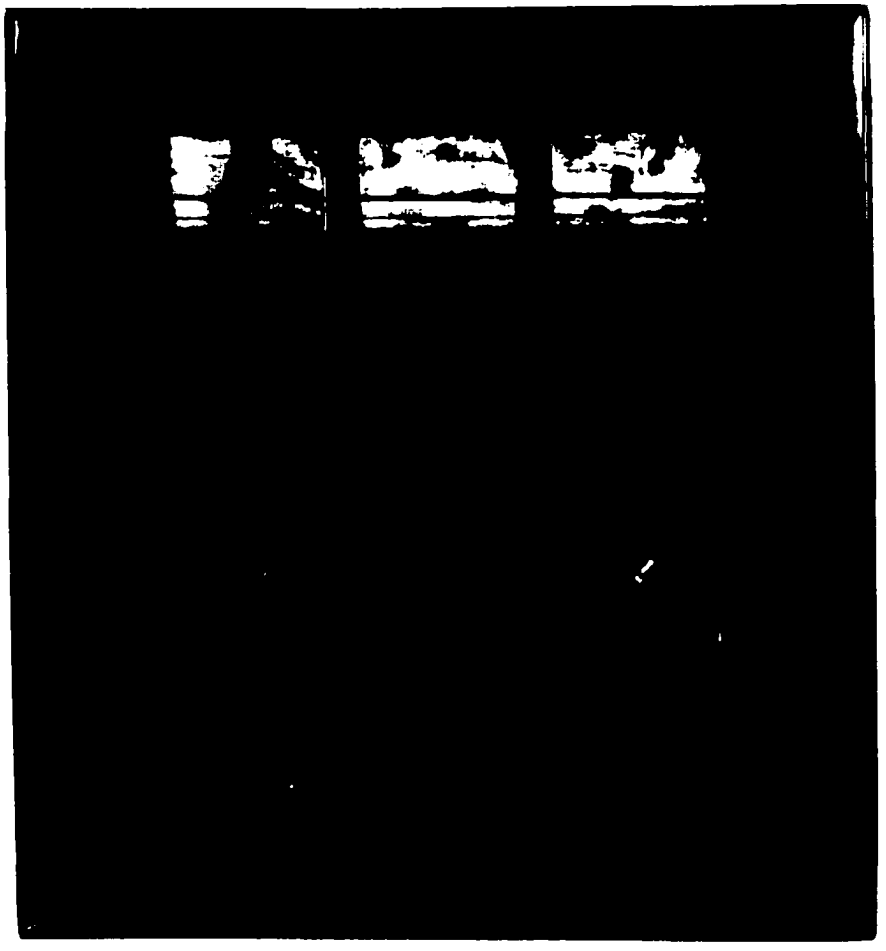

47. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Door panel (Figure watching two people fight), c. 1913-1915, brown, red and silver lacquer, Courtesy of DeLorenzo Gallery, New York.

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48. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Siren Armchair, c. 1913-1915, black lacquer with carved mermaid and seahorse, Private Collection.

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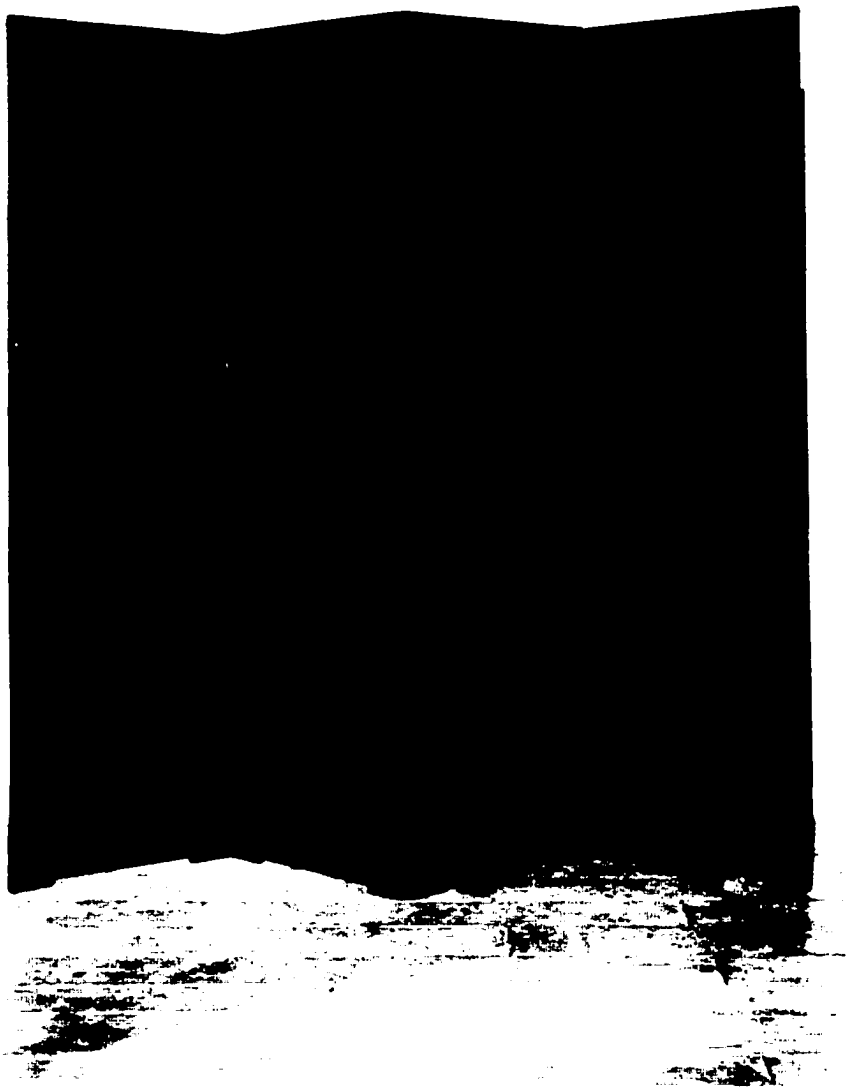

49. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Le Destin (recto), 1913, red, silver, and black lacquer, 78 1/4 x 84," Private Collection.

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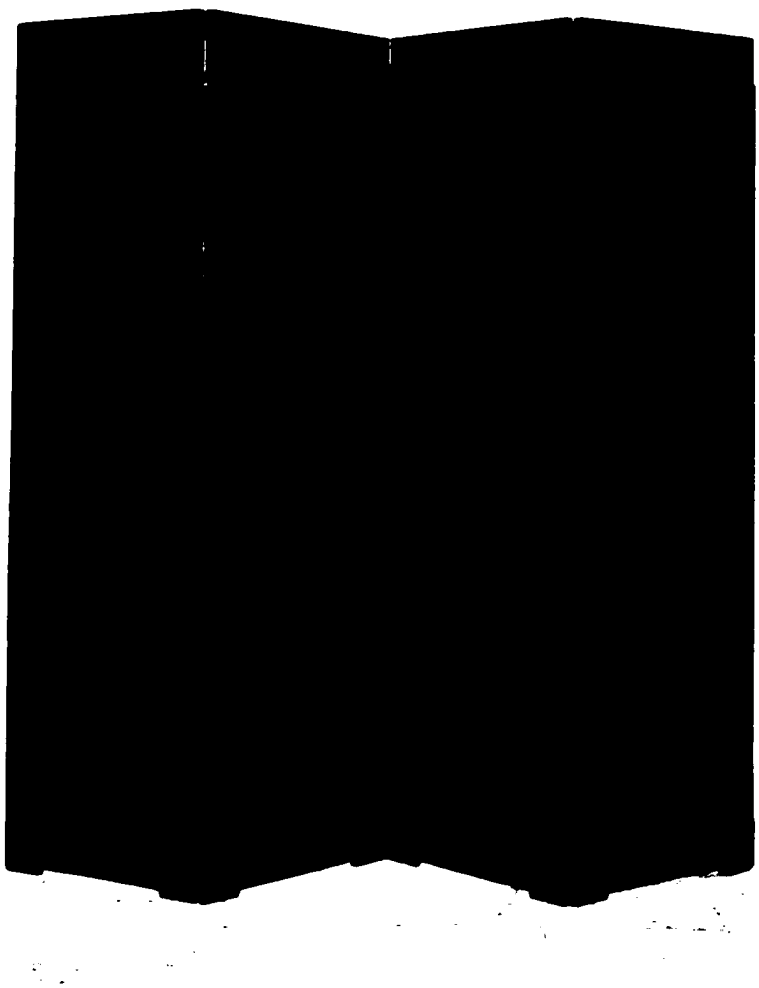

50. Eileen Gray (Irish 1878-1976), Le Destin (verso), 1913, red, silver, and black lacquer, Private Collection.

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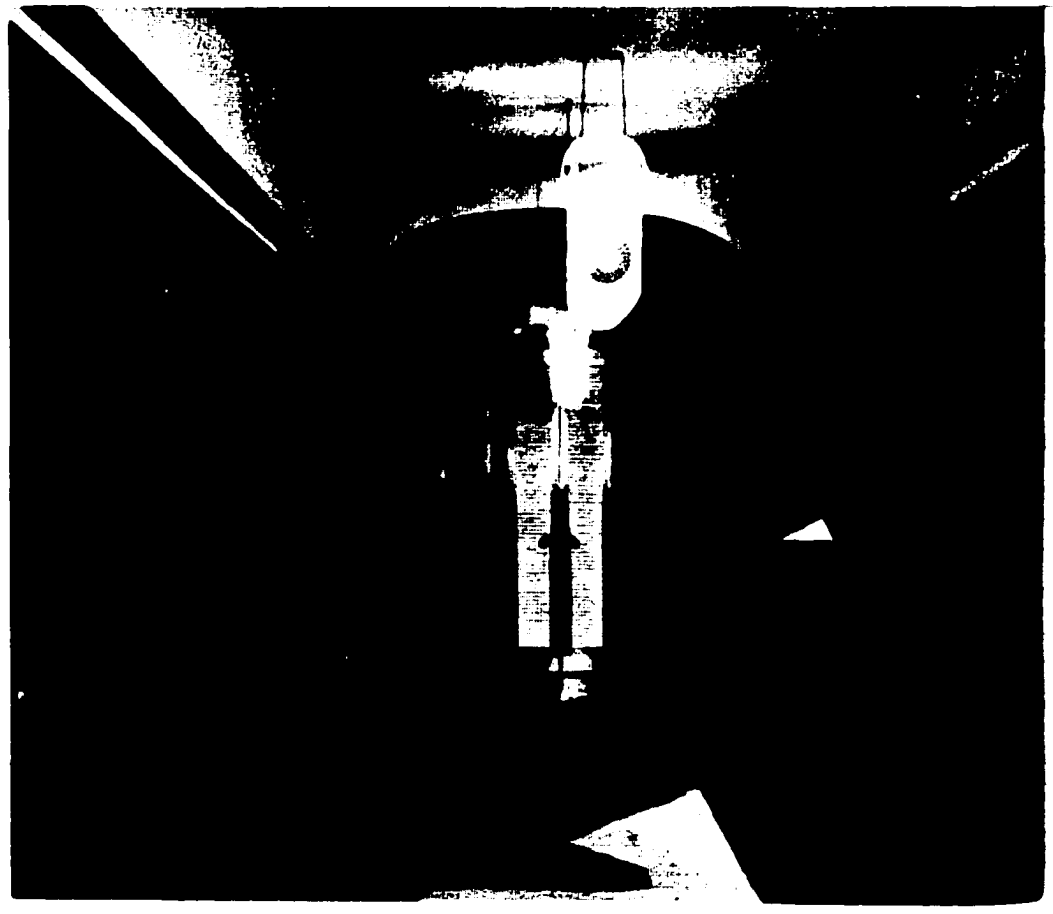

51. Unknown Photographer, Photograph of entrance-hall in the Mathieu-Levy (Rue de Lota) apartment designed by Eileen Gray, c. 1922-1923. Interior no longer extant.

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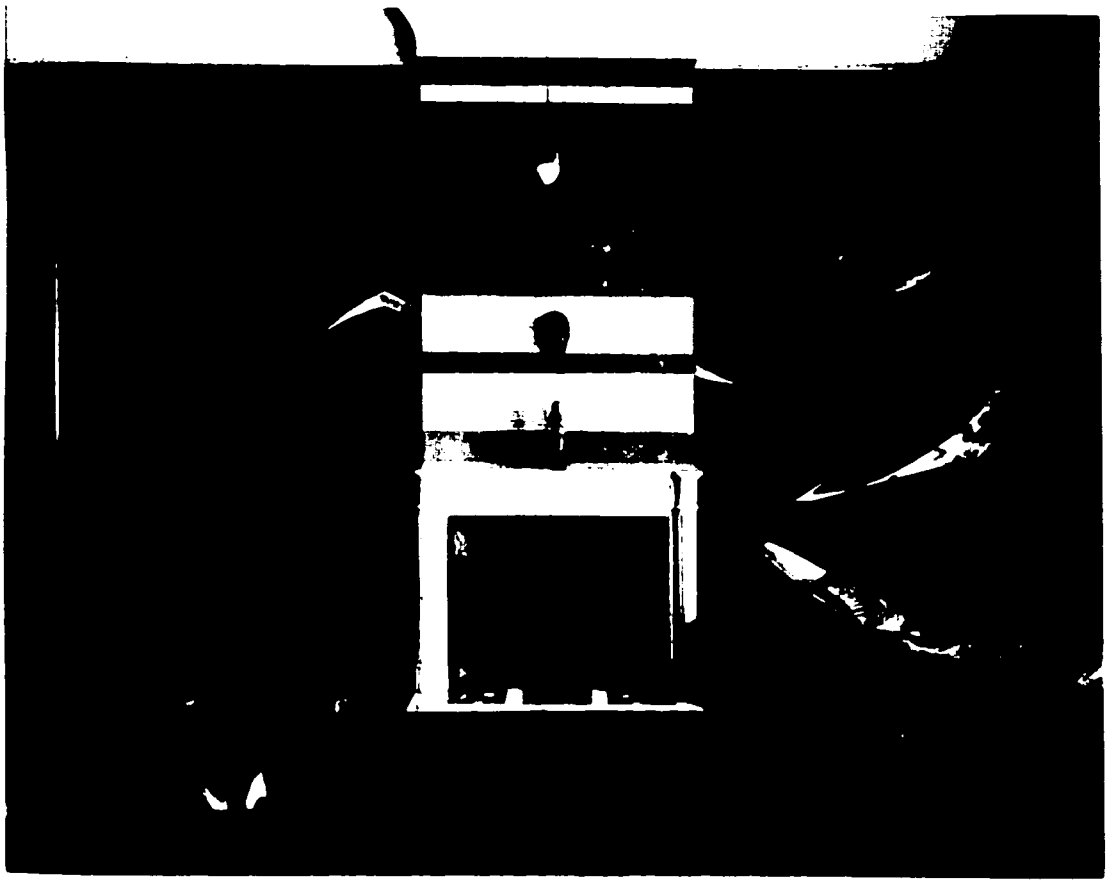

52. Unknown Photographer, Photograph of the salon with lacquered wall screens, standing folding screen, Pirogue Sofa, and hanging ostrich-shell lamp in the Mathieu-Levy (Rue de Lota) apartment designed by Eileen Gray, c. 1921-1923. Interior no longer extant.

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53. Unknown Photographer, Mme. Mathieu-Levy with perfume bottle in Pirogue Sofa in front of wall screens in Rue de Lota apartment salon, c. 1922-1925, Interior no longer extant.

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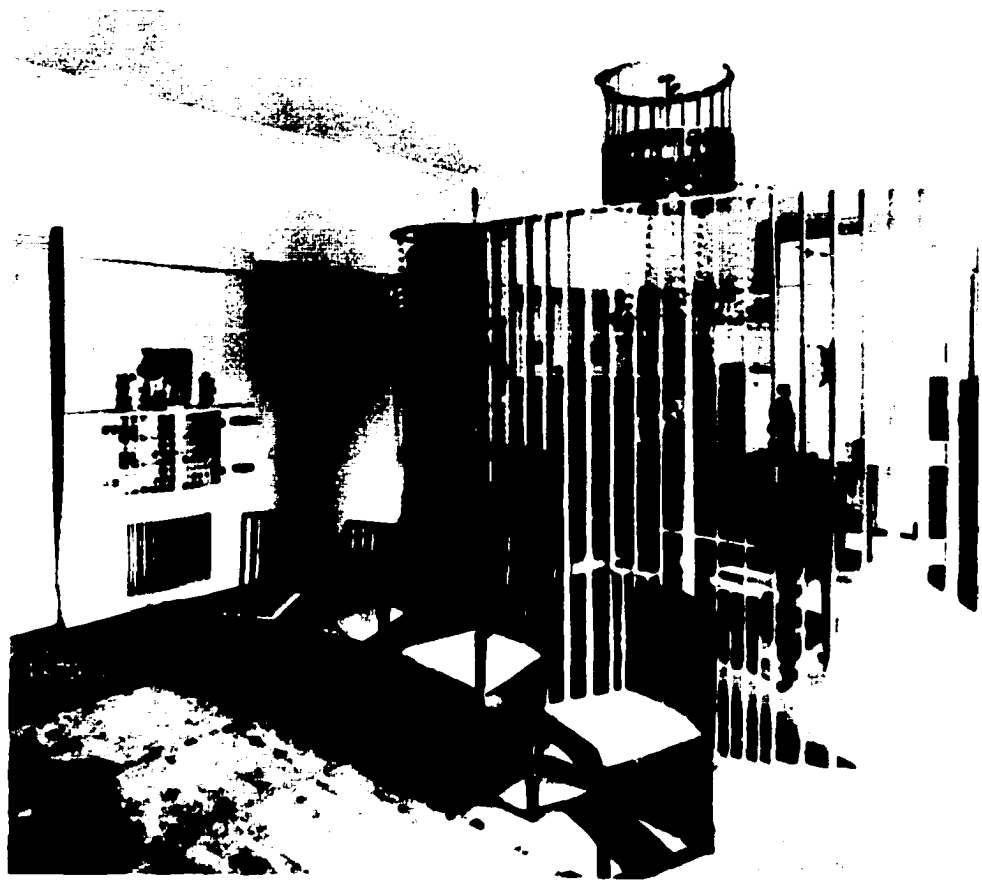

54. Charles Rennie Mackintosh (Scottish 1868-1928), Drawing-room and curving, vertical-slatted painted wood screen at Hous'hill, 1904, Nitshill, Glasgow.

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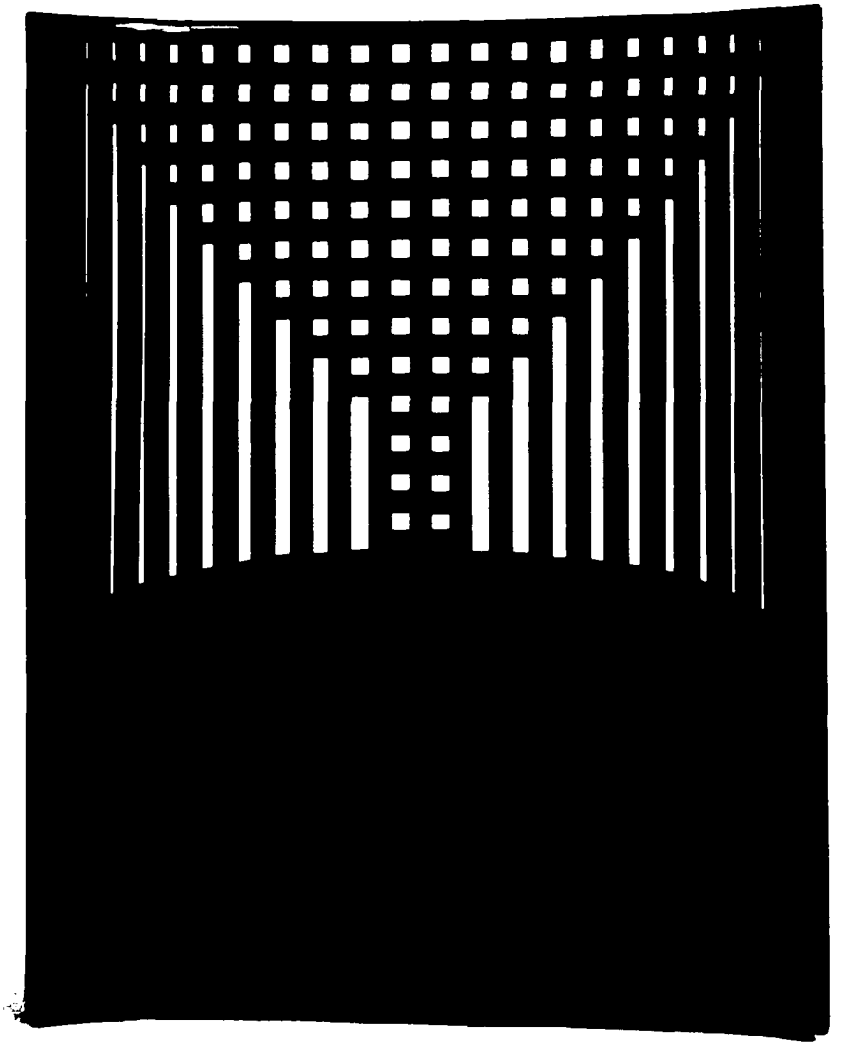

55. Charles Rennie Mackintosh (Scottish 1868-1928), Curved lattice-back chair for the Order Desk at the Willow Tea Rooms, Glasgow, 1904, ebonised oak, Glasgow School of Art.

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56. Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471-1528), Draughtsman Drawing a Reclining Nude, 1525, woodcut, published in Teaching of Measurement with Compass and Ruler (Nuremberg: Hieronymous Formschneyder, 1538). Uffizi Galleries, Florence.

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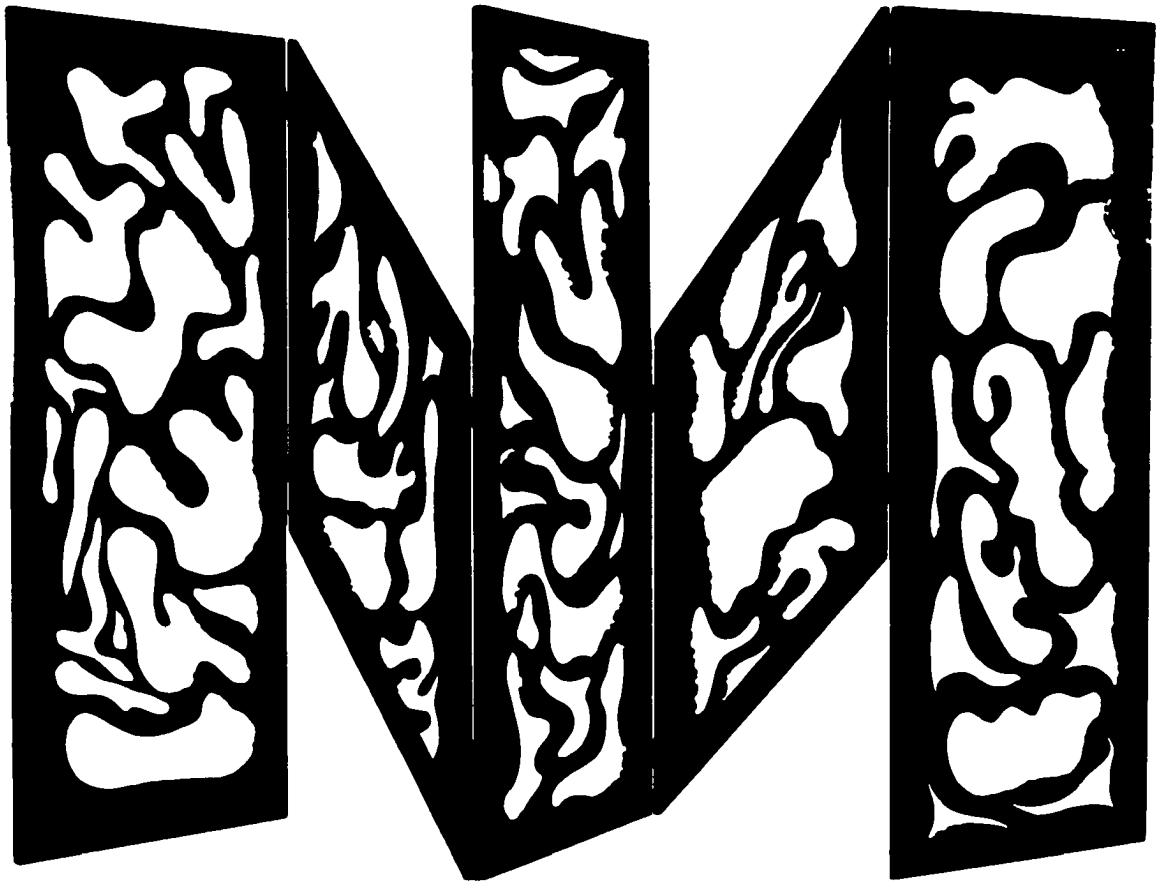

57. Lucas Samaras (American, born 1936), Screen, 1967, painted wood, five-panel folding screen, 59 1/4 x 139 1/2," Collection of the Artist.

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58. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Lee Miller, 1930-1931, silver print, published in Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934.

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59. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Lee Miller (Neck), ca. 1930, gelatin silver print, A. & R. Penrose Collection.

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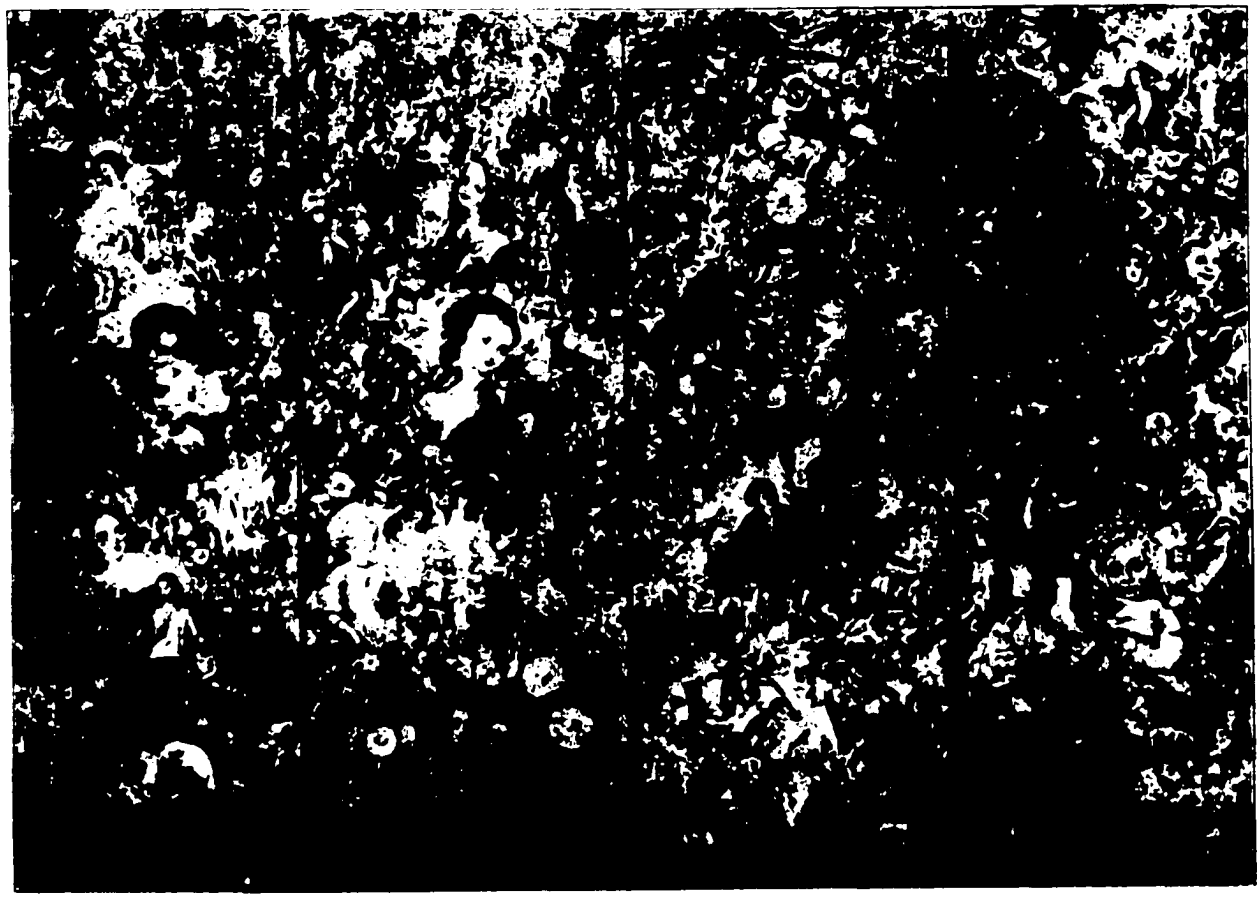

60. Unknown Artist (probably French), Scrap Screen, 19th century, collage, reproduced in La Révolution surréaliste 2, 7 (15 June 1926): 13.

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61. Max Ernst (German 1891-1976), Collage from Une Semaine de bonté: A Suurealistic Novel in Collage (Paris: Éditions Jeanne Bucher, 1934; New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1976).

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62. Unknown Photographer. Installation shot of Man Ray and Juliet Man Ray's apartment with Twenty Days and Nights of Juliet, 1952, oil on canvas, five-panel folding screen, 96 x 120."

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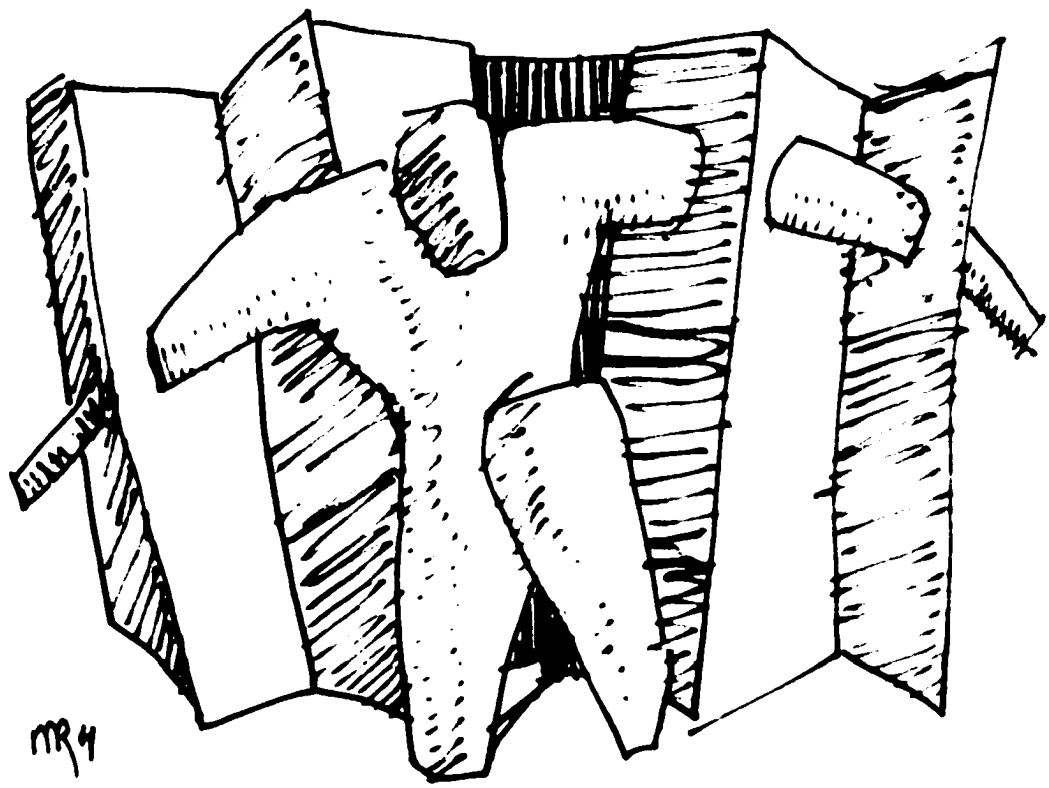

63. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Paravent, 1944, tempera on paper, Private Collection.

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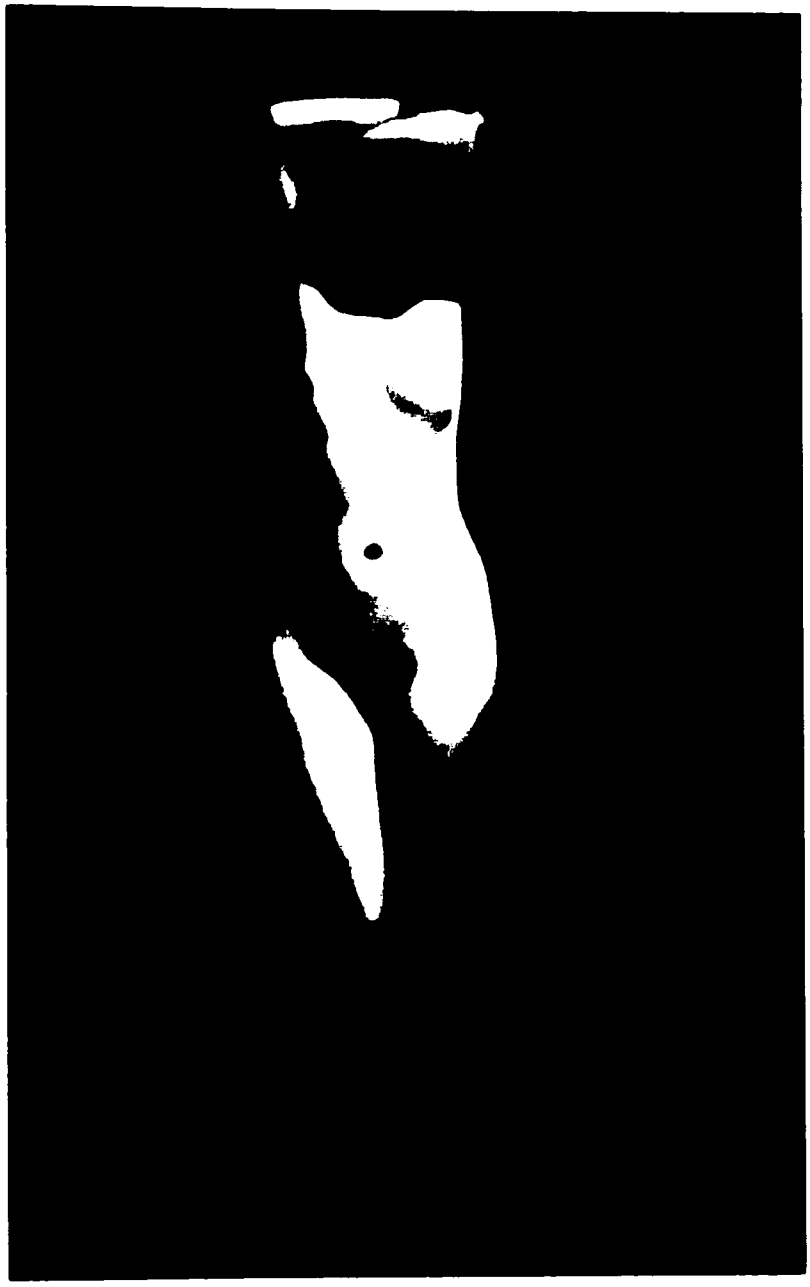

64. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Untitled (Kiki), 1923, photograph, Collection of Roger Therond, Paris.

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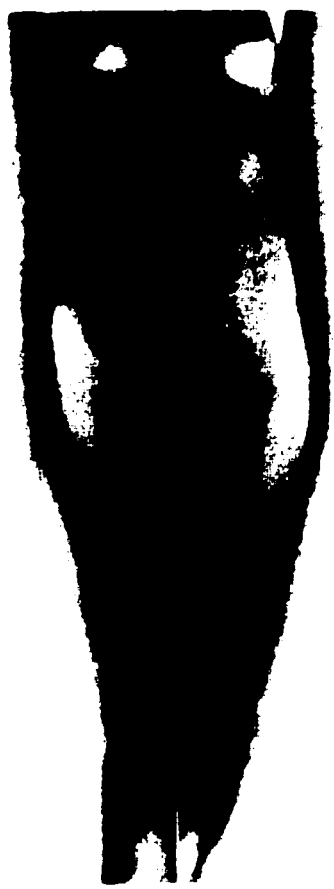

65. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Torso (Nusch), 1935, published in Facile (Paris: Edition G.L.M., 1935).

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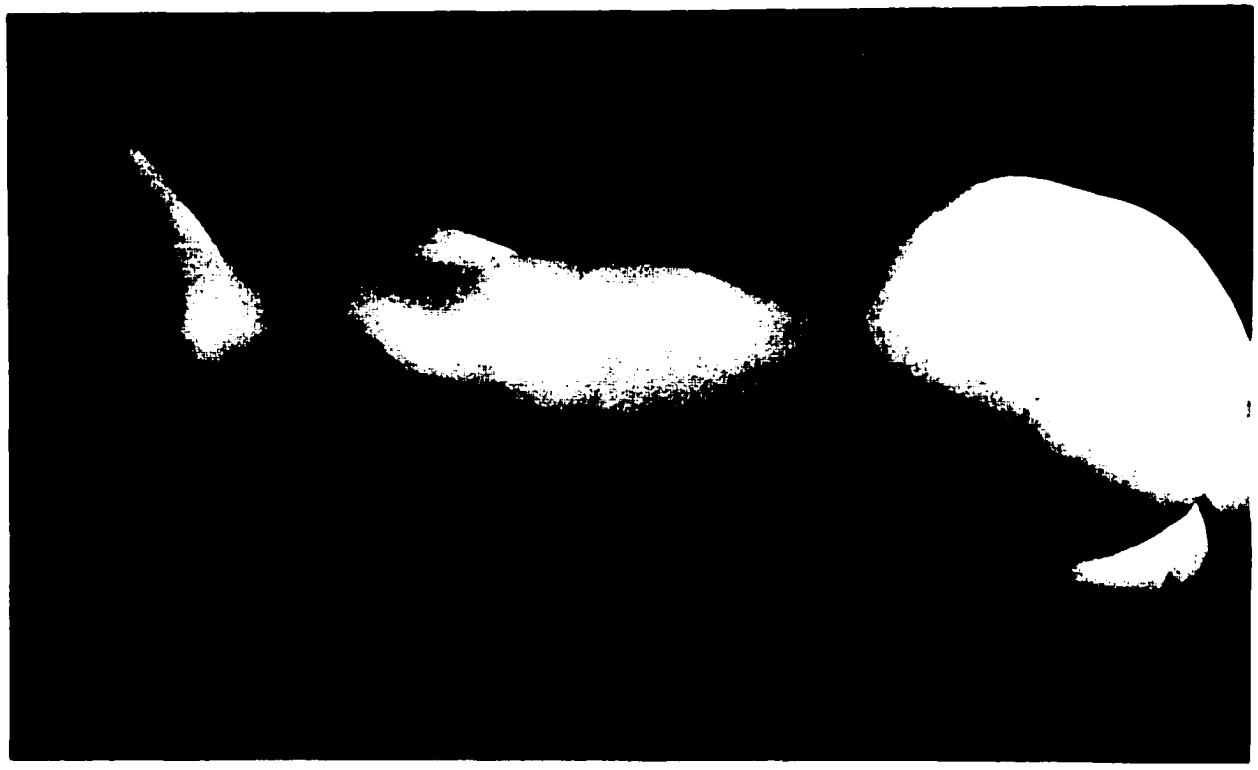

66. Brassai (Hungarian 1899-1984), Untitled, 1933, photograph, Collection of Rosabianca Skira, Geneva.

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67. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Explosante-Fixe, photograph published in André Breton's article, "La Beauté sera convulsive," Minotaure 5 (1935): 8.

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68. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Untitled, 1931, gelatin silver print, Lee Miller Archives.

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69. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Torso (Lee Miller), 1931, photograph, published in Electricité.

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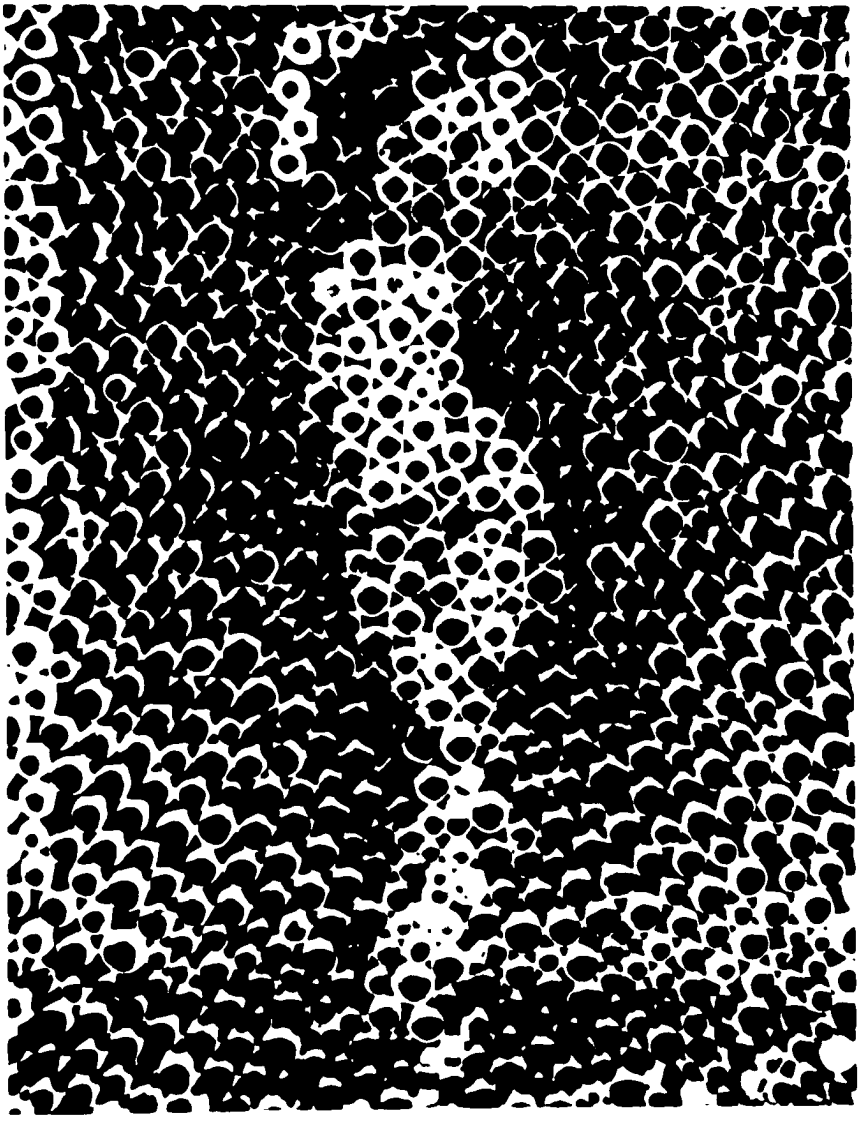

70. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Reflections, 1932, silver print, published in Photographs By Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934.

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71. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Lee Miller Wearing a Collar with Seabrook, 1928-1929, photograph, Man Ray Trust ADAGP.

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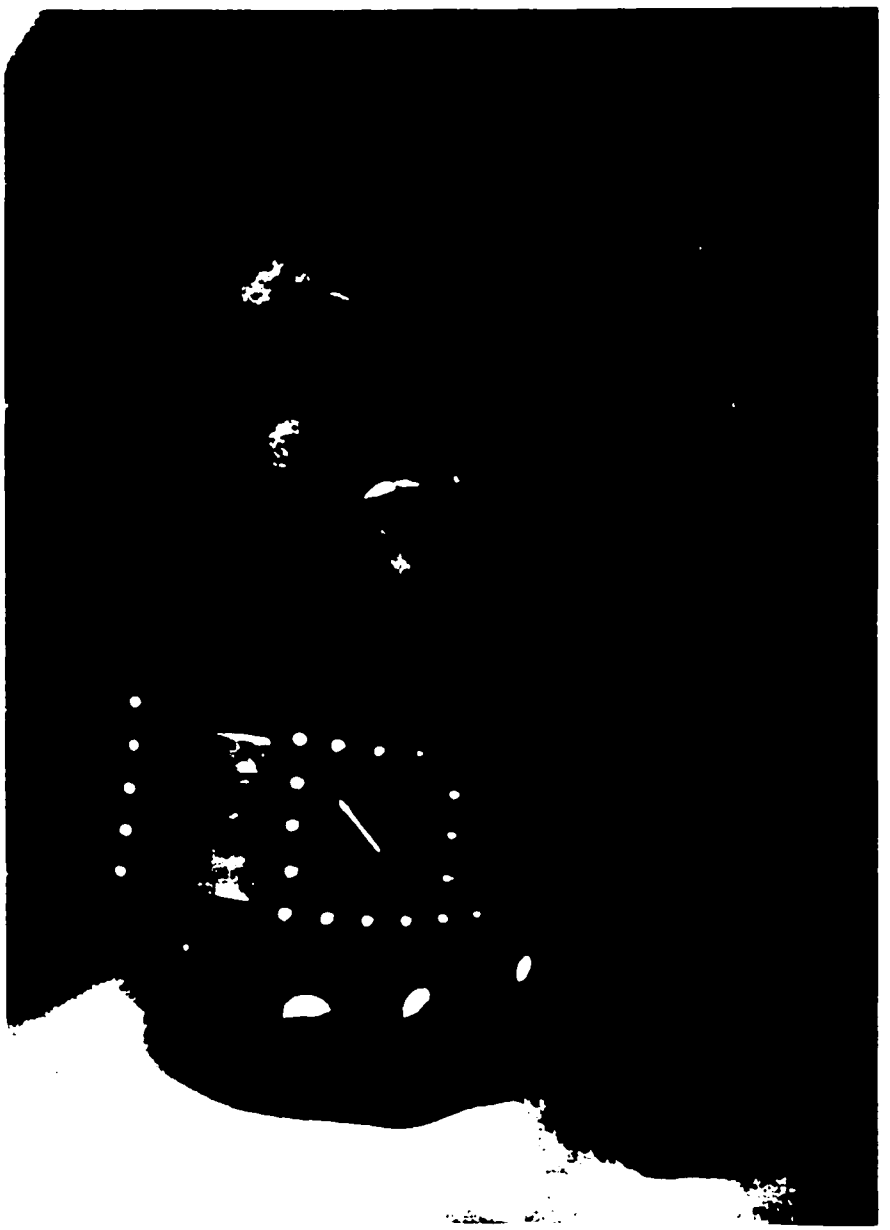

72. William B. Seabrook (American, 20th century), Leather Mask and Collar, ca. 1930, published in Documents 8 (1930): 464.

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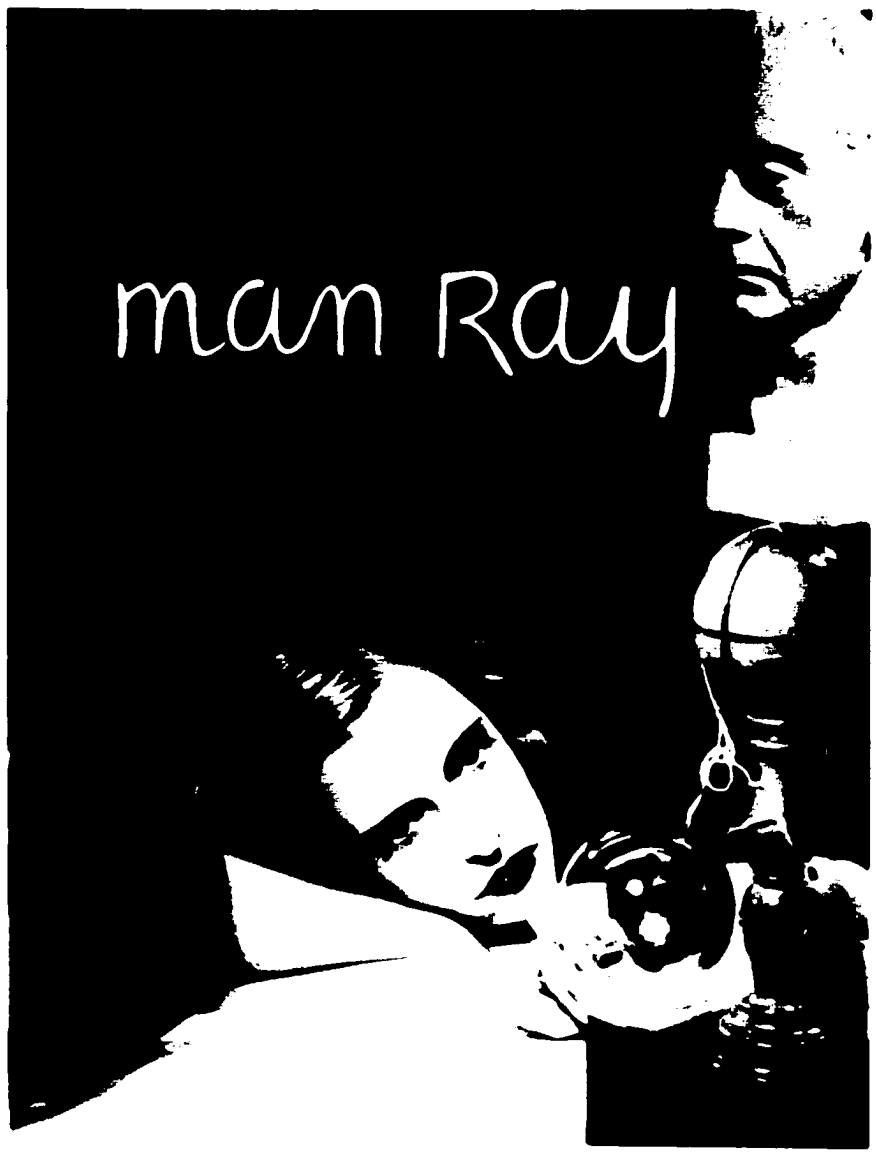

73. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Untitled, color photograph, published as the cover for Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934.

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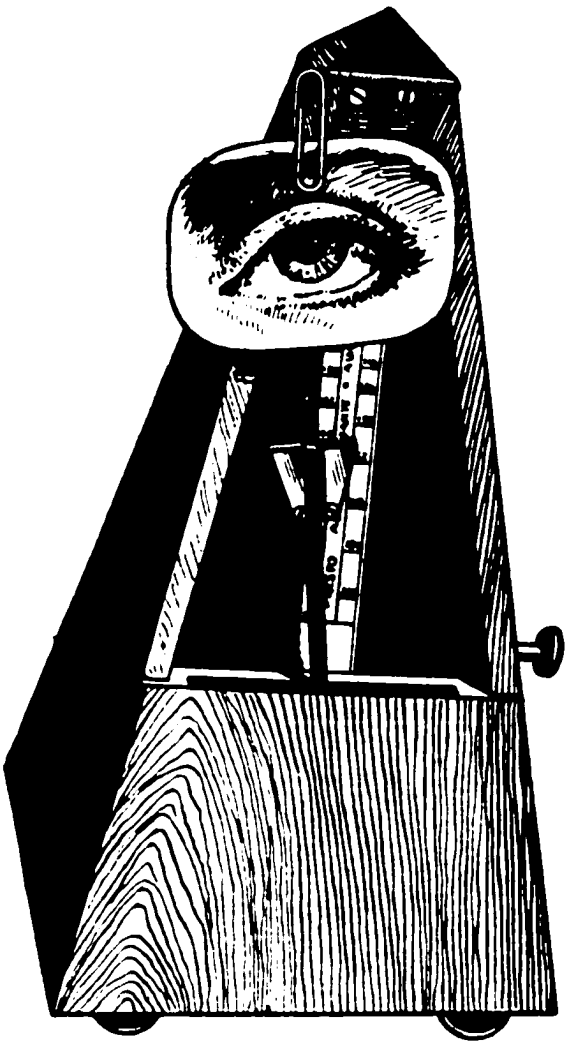

OBJECT OF DESTRUCTION (Drawing by *Man Ray*)

Cut out the eye from a photograph of one who has been loved but is seen no more. Attach the eye to the pendulum of a metronome and regulate the weight to suit the tempo desired. Keep going to the limit of endurance. With a hammer well-aimed, try to destroy the whole at a single blow.

74. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Object of Destruction, 1932, drawing, reproduced in This Quarter 5, 1 (September 1932) (Surrealist Number): 55.

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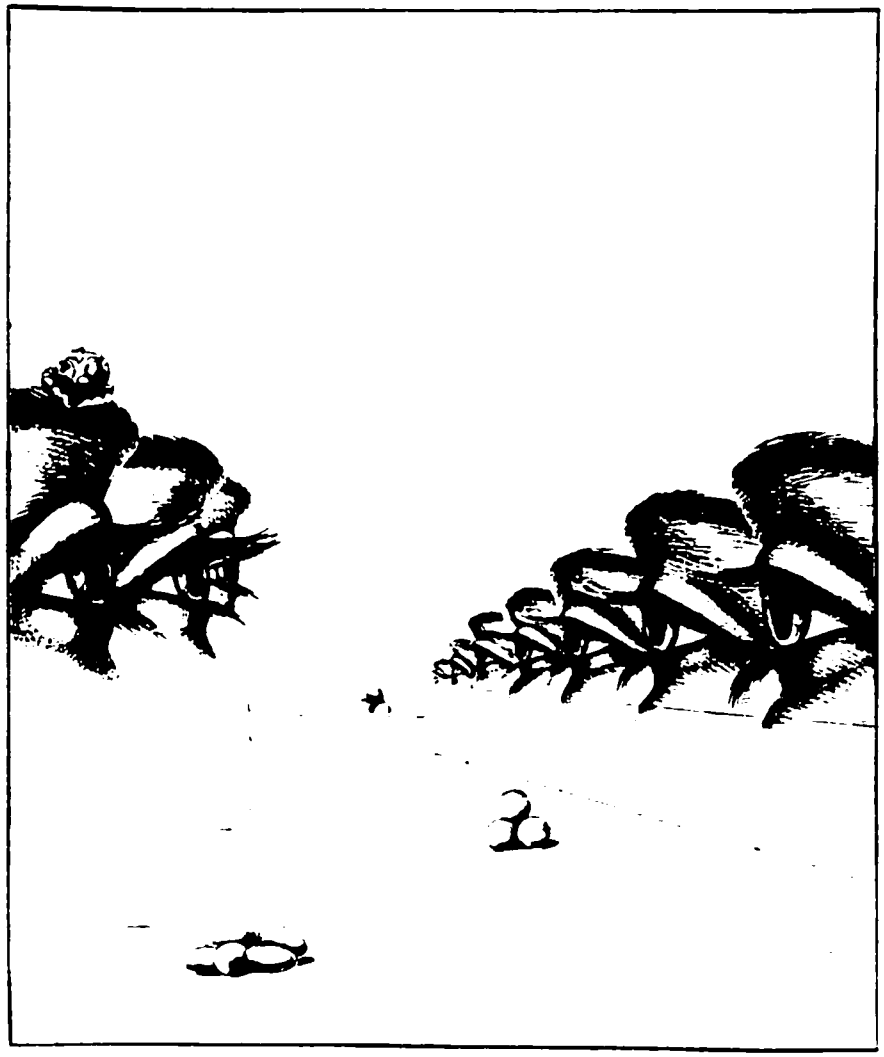

75. Max Ernst (German 1891-1976), Poème visible (Eyes), 1933, drawing for Une Semaine de bonté: A Surrealistic Novel Collage (Paris: Jeanne Bucher, 1934; New York: Dover Publicationins, Inc. 1976), also published in E. Tériade, "Aspects actuels de l'expression plastique," Minotaure 5 (December 15, 1934): 45.

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76. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Untitled, solarized photograph, published in Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934.

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77. Unknown Photographer, installation shot of Man Ray in front of his painting, A l'heure de l'observatoire--les amoureux (The Lips), 1932-34, oil on canvas, 39 3/8 x 98 1/2," painting now in Nyarkos Collection.

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78. Man Ray (American 1890-1976), Untitled, rayograph, published in This Quarter 5, 1 (September 1932) (Surrealist Number).

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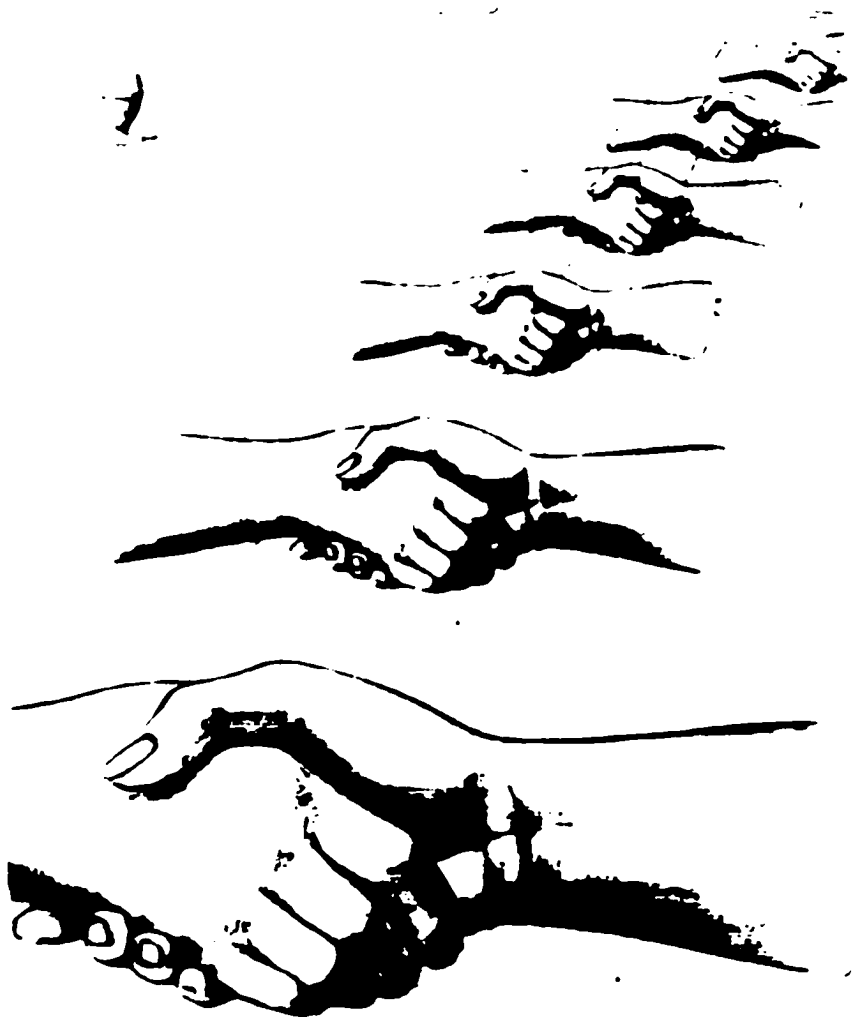

79. Max Ernst (German 1891-1976), Poème visible (Hands), 1933, drawing, for Une Semaine de bonté: A Surrealistic Novel in Collage (Paris: Jeanne Bucher, 1934; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1976), also published in E. Tériade, "Aspects actuels de l'expression plastique," Minotaure 5 (December 15, 1934): 45.

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80. Man Ray (American 1890-1976) Untitled, rayograph, Published in Photographs by Man Ray 1920 Paris 1934.

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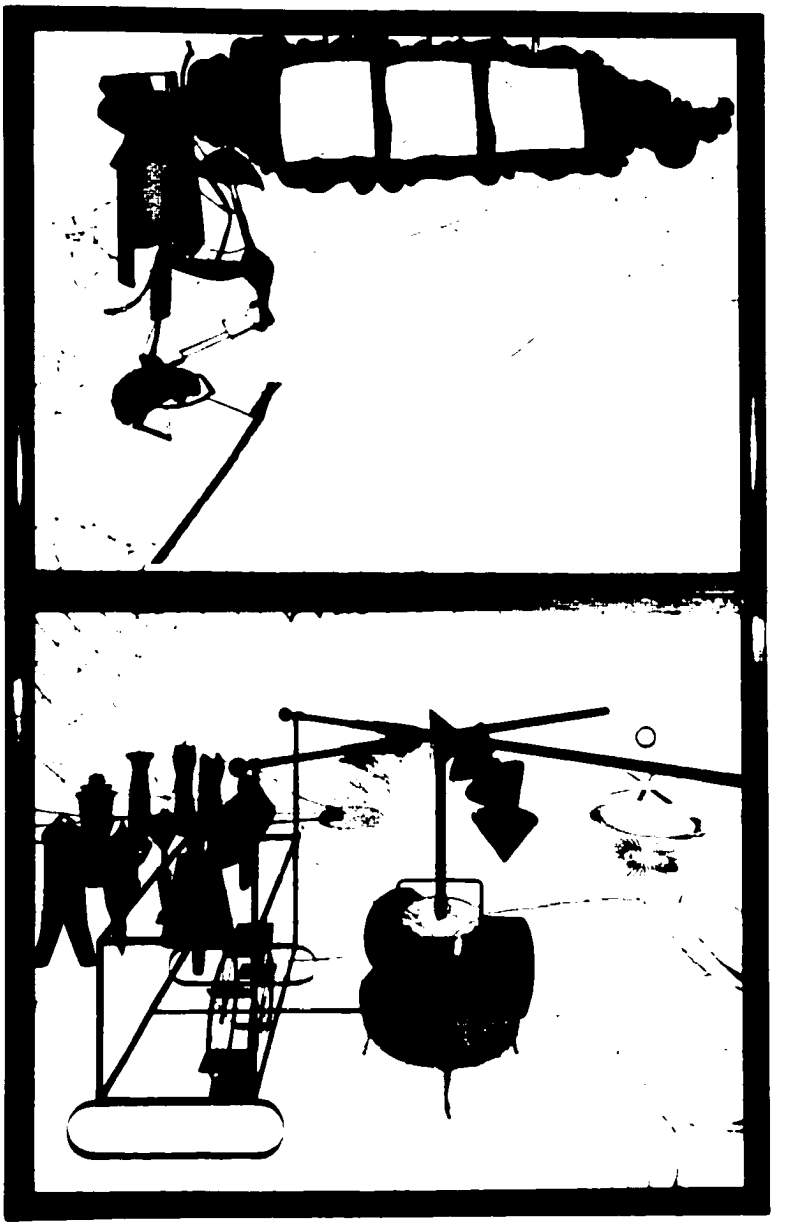

81. Marcel Duchamp (French 1887-1968), The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even (Large Glass) (recto) 1915-1923, mixed media, 109 1/4 x 69 1/4," The Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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82. Marcel Duchamp (French 1887-1968), The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even, installed in Katherine Dreier's Library at The Haven. Photograph taken in 1942.

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83. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Storage shot of Partition (left panel, recto), 1961-64, mixed media, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

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84. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Storage shot of Partition (right panel, recto), 1961-64, mixed media, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

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85. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Storage shot of Partition (left panel, verso), 1961-64, mixed media, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

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86. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Storage shot of Partition (Right panel, verso), 1961-64, mixed media, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

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87. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Looking Glass, 1964, mixed media on Masonite, Collection San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco.

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88. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), La Virgen, 1962, mixed media on Masonite on wood, 28 3/4 x 21 5/8 x 7," Collection Becht, Maarden, The Netherlands.

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89. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Last Supper, 1960, mixed media, no longer extant.

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90. Unknown Photographer, Photograph of Bruce Conner and his friends in front of Last Supper and Partition in Conner's Mexican home, c. 1961-62, Bruce Conner, San Francisco.

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91. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Mushroom, 1962, pencil on paper, 20 1/2 x 14 15/16," Kohn Turner Gallery, Los Angeles.

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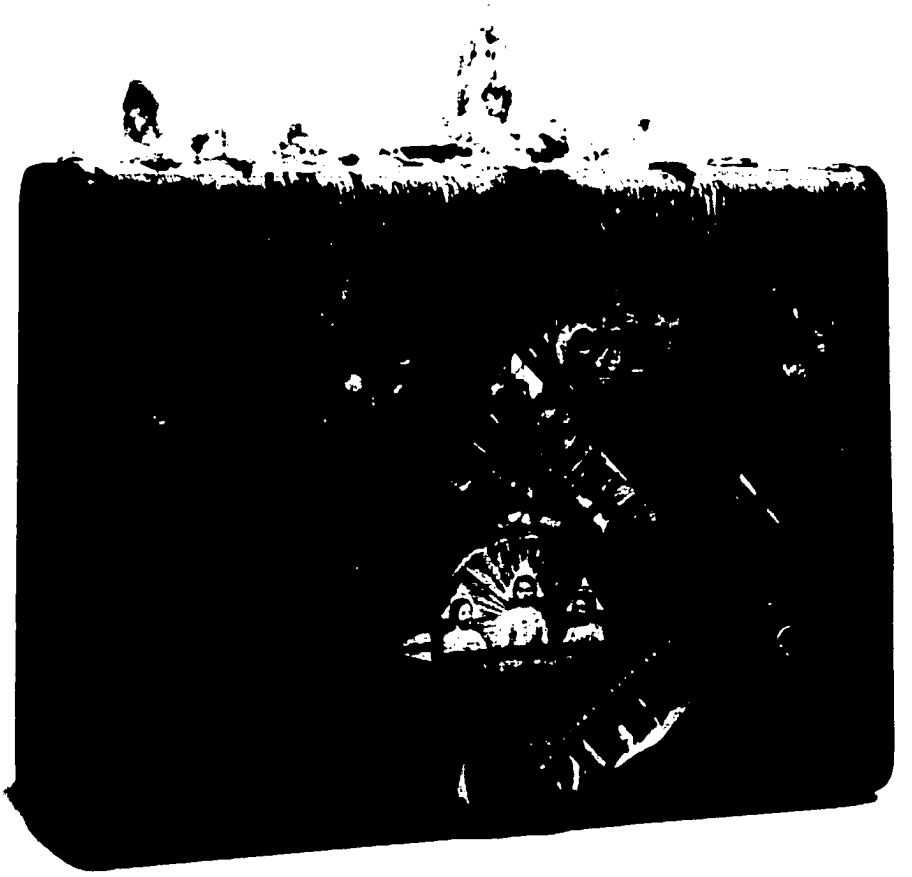

92. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Suitcase, 1961-1963, Crayon on paper, colored foil paper, fabric emblem, beads on lace, glitter, soot, candles, wax, graphite, wrapping paper, S & H Green Stamps, mirror, half of a carved wood-and-plastic yo-yo, pins, fur, woven strap, etc. on suitcase, 22 1/8 x 24 3/16 x 8 15/16," Collection of San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego .

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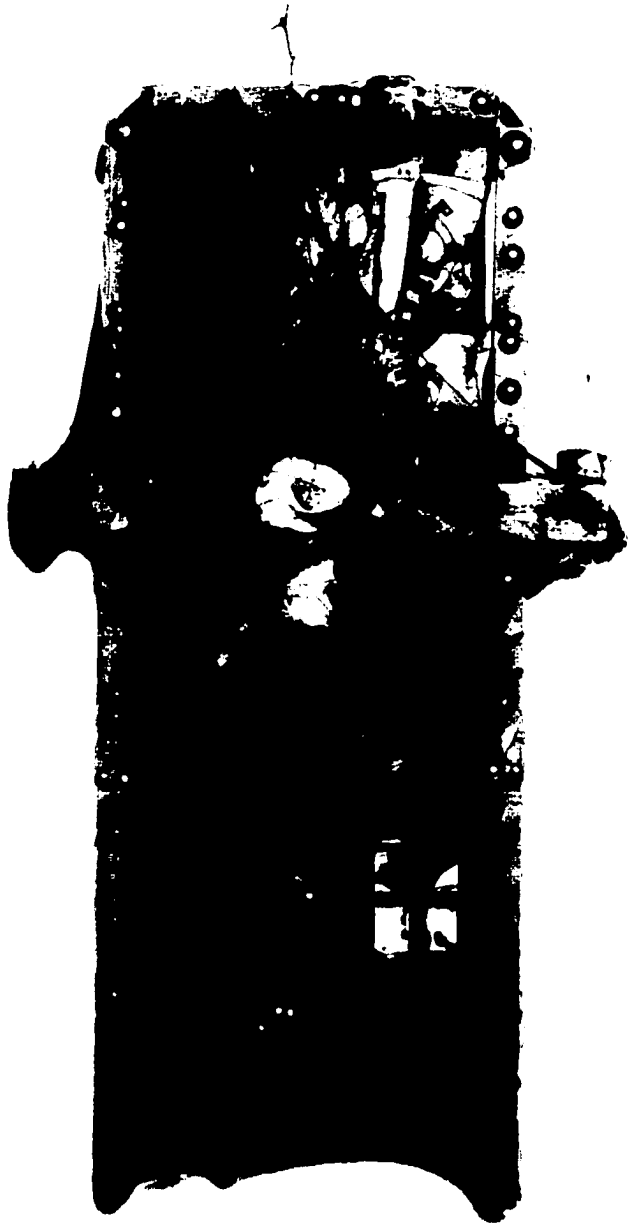

93. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933) Cross, 1962, wood, nylon, photograph, fabric, cardboard, candle, tacks, nails, thorns, desert water bag, fringe, fired clay, feather, etc., 37 x 19 1/2 x 14", Collection of Orange County Museum of Art, LAM/OCMA Art Collection Trust, Newport Beach, California.

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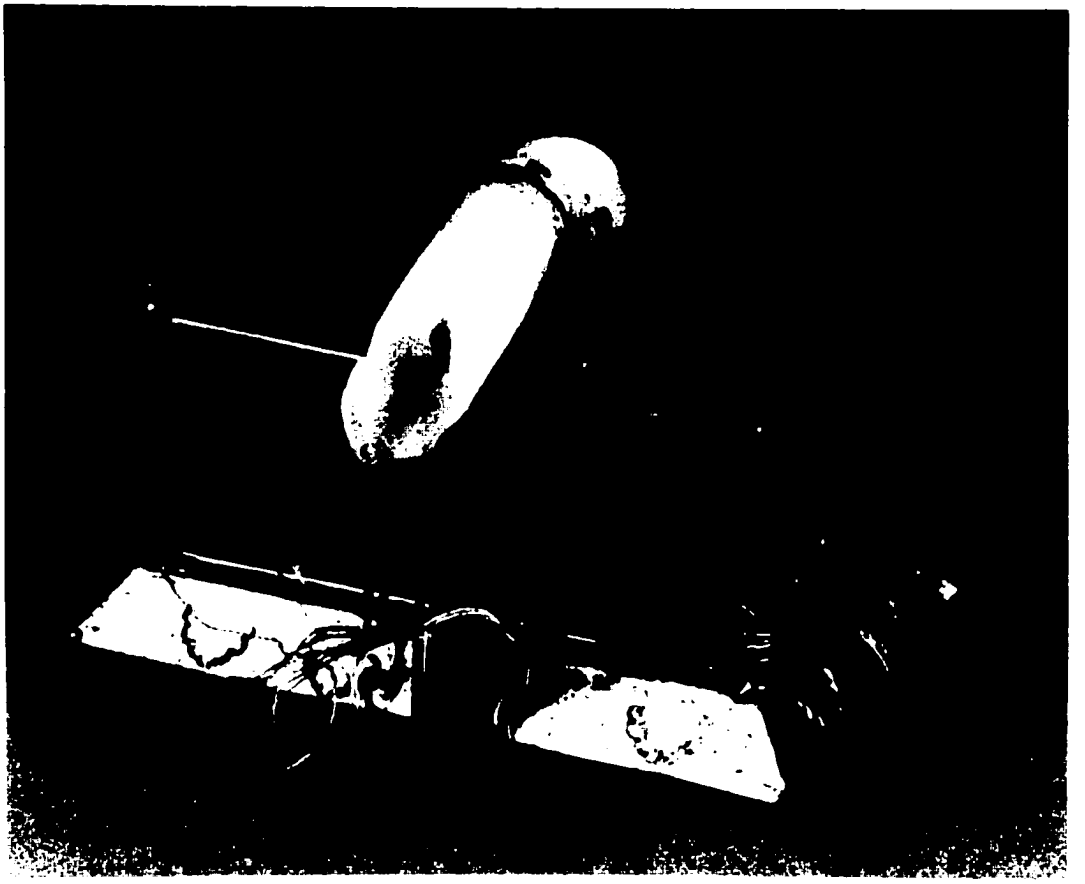

94. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), The Marcel Duchamp Traveling Box, 1963, metal-and-glass box, candle, string, rubber stamp of the artist's signature, beads, etc., 3 3/4 x 4 3/4 x 4 1/4," Collection Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

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95. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Snore, 1960, wood, fabric, nylon, string, metal vent, paint, metal can, etc., 36 1/2 x 17 1/2 x 21 1/2," Collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

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96. Allen Jones (English, born 1937), Screen (recto), 1965, oil on pine on five-panel folding screen, 72 x 85," Private Collection, London.

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97. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), The Artist, 1990, paper collage, 13 1/8 x 9 1/2," Private Collection, Los Angeles.

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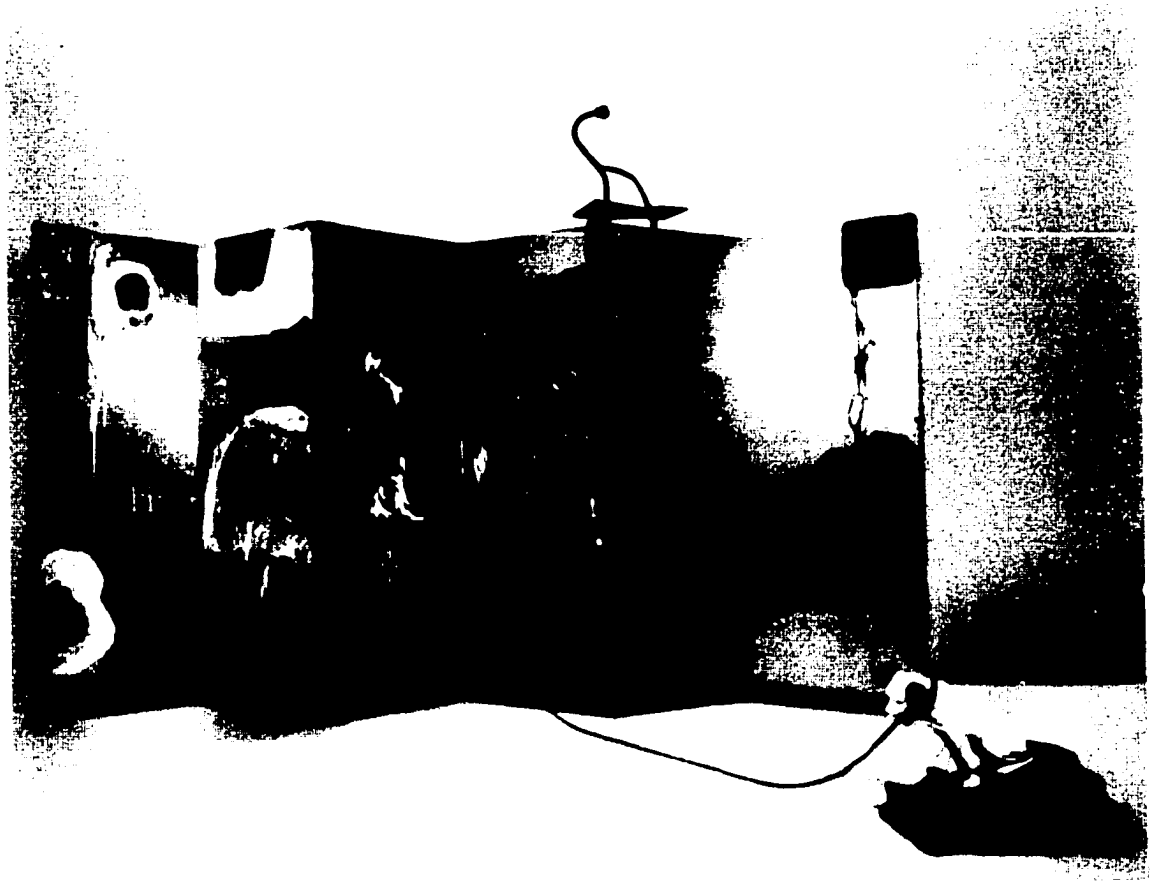

98. Robert Rauschenberg (American, born 1925), Gold Standard, 1964, combine painting: oil, paper, printed reproductions, clock, cardboard box, metal, fabric, wood, sting, show, and Coca-Cola bottles on six-panel gold leaf Japanese folding screen with electric light, rope, and ceramic dog on bicycle seat and wire-mesh base, 7' 1/4" x 11' 10" x 4' 3," The Sogetsu Art Museum, Tokyo.

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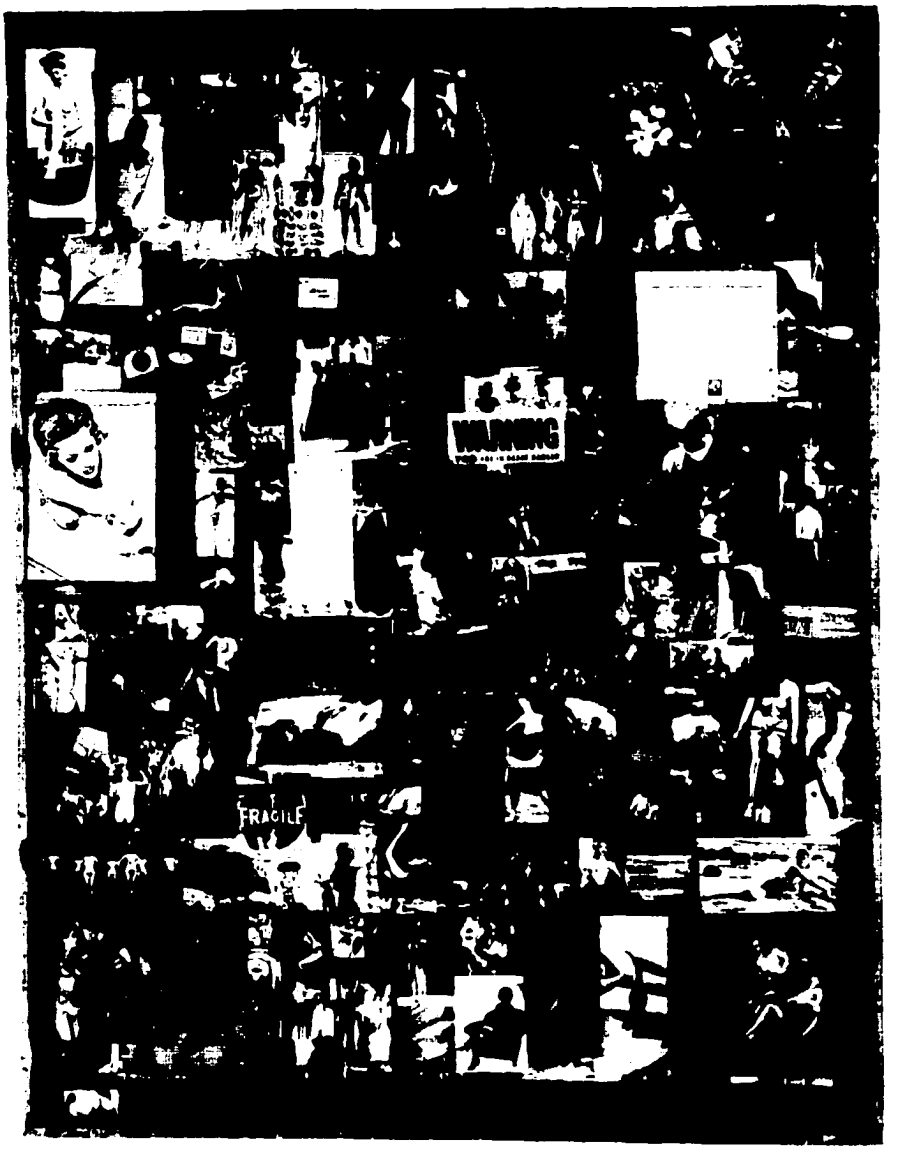

99. Bruce Conner (American born 1933), Untitled (verso), 1954-61, paper, wood, adhesive, nails, paint, staples, metal, tar, feathers, plastic, etc. on Masonite. 63 7/8 x 49 5/8 x 4 1/8," Collection Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

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100. Bruce Conner (American, born 1933), Black Dahlia, 1960, offset photograph, feather, nails, paper collage, tobacco, rubber hose, fabric, sequins, string, etc., 26 3/4 x 10 3/4 x 2 3/4," Collection of Walter Hopps, Houston.

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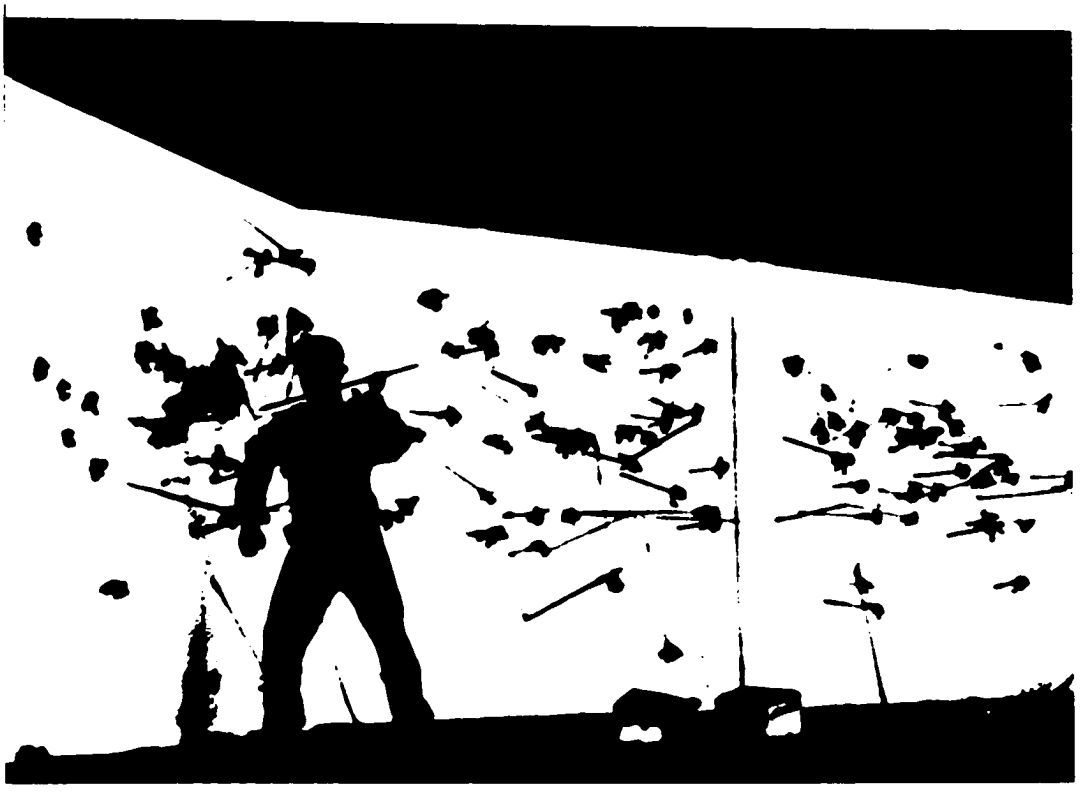

101. Unknown Photographer, Photograph of Gutai performance piece by Kazuo Shiraga with folding screen shot with arrows and being thrust with spears, 1957.

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