Dreaming with Open Eyes: The Vera, Silvia and Arturo Schwarz Collection of Dada and Surrealist Art at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem

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video1(1.4mb)
Marcel Duchamp, *Why Not Sneeze Rrose Sélavy?*, 1921/1964 © 2000 Succession Marcel Duchamp, ARS, N.Y./ADAGP, Paris

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. . . and may I, who am still searching for something in this world,
be left with open eyes, or with closed eyes in broad daylight,
to my silent contemplation.
André Breton, Le surréalisme et la peinture, 1928

The vast collection of works donated by the Milanese scholar,

poet, and collector Arturo Schwarz as a gift to the Israel Museum at the beginning of 1998 was an offering of unique scope and importance. Consisting of about 750 works by approximately 200 artists in a variety of styles and techniques, the Vera, Silvia, and Arturo Schwarz Collection of Dada and Surrealist Art constitutes the major part of the total collection amassed by Arturo Schwarz. (The other parts are to be found in the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome and the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.) This is one of the world' s greatest collections of Dada and Surrealist art, and since its addition to the Museum's existing holdings, which include the collector's extensive library, the Israel Museum has become a global center for the study and display of these two seminal movements in modern art.*

Arturo Schwarz' s connection with the Israel Museum began in 1972, when he gave the museum a set of thirteen replicas of Marcel Duchamp's readymades. During the Gulf War of 1991, he decided to donate most of his collection and his entire library to the Israel Museum, and already in 1992 we received the vast library containing more than a thousand items, including limited-edition books, many with original prints, and full runs of Dada and Surrealist periodicals, as well as documents, manifestos, and Schwarz' s extensive personal correspondence with the movements' leading figures.

Arturo Schwarz was born in 1924 in Alexandria, Egypt, to Jewish parents: a German father and an Italian mother. In his youth, he was very active in clandestine political circles. At first he was affiliated with the Zionist movement and spent several months on a kibbutz in Palestine; later he became involved in a Trotskyist group in Alexandria. At the same time Schwarz made the acquaintance of the Egyptian Surrealists and from 1945 to 1948 ran a publishing company and a bookstore. Arrested several times for his political activities, he was expelled from the country in 1949. He settled in Milan, where he founded another publishing house and, at the beginning of

the 1950s, opened a bookstore which later developed into Galleria Schwarz, which closed in 1975. The gallery held exhibitions of the best Dada and Surrealist artists and of contemporary artists throughout the world. Simultaneously, Schwarz wrote poetry, published scholarly books such as a catalogue raisonné of the works of Marcel Duchamp, gave lectures and organized international Dada and Surrealist exhibitions. His intense involvement in the Surrealist movement and his personal acquaintance with many of its members made him a leading authority on its history.

Arturo Schwarz wrote that "Dada was the first movement in the history of art to liberate the creative process from the shackles of rules and academisms . . . and in Surrealism I discovered a philosophy of life whose cardinal points – love, freedom and poetry – coincided with my own. I have thus never seen myself as an 'art collector' but rather as a convinced Surrealist, keen to acquire the works which were inspired by my own convictions." Indeed, the imprint of his life and personality is manifest in the collection he assembled for years, and the personal portrait reflected in it reveals a combination of two seemingly opposite forces: a romantic-surrealistic vision of imagination, dreams, and love is countered by the critical eye of a scholar and historian who wishes to investigate, to document, and to explain. On the one hand, there is a passion for collection and a spirit of adventure; on the other, methodical assemblage and scholarly classification. Schwarz's deep conviction that Surrealism is not only an artistic-stylistic trend but a universal spiritual and ideological manifestation that seeks "to break the habit of looking at things in the same way, to revolutionize our vision" is evident in his desire to capture and document every cultural, geographical, and historical aspect of the phenomenon. Thus, his collection contains oil paintings alongside photographic portraits, and books of poetry next to documents, representing a range from Europe to South America and from the sixteenth century to the present. His selection

disregards both conventional aesthetic distinctions and any accepted hierarchy of major and secondary works or important and unimportant artists. The result is an encyclopedic cultural mosaic that is impressive and astonishing, especially if one takes into account that it is the lifework of a single individual. Schwarz has explained his criteria by saying, “It is not physical beauty that interests me; it is spiritual beauty and the idea behind it, and when it is strong enough it becomes physical beauty, but not the other way round.”

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video2(1.4mb)
Marcel Duchamp, *Female Fig Leaf*, 1950/1951 © 2000 Succession Marcel Duchamp, ARS, N.Y./ADAGP, Paris

At the end of the year 2000, the Museum will present a major sampling of the Vera, Silvia, and Arturo Schwarz Collection to the public for the first time. Combining Schwarz’s insight and personal approach to collecting with a museological, historical presentation of Dada and Surrealist art, the exhibition *Dreaming with Open Eyes* will feature 350 representative works in a variety of techniques – paintings, drawings, collages, prints, photographs, sculptures, and readymades – along with dozens of items from the unique library of periodicals, documents, and books. A short introductory film presents the life story of Arturo Schwarz

through personal photographs and excerpts from interviews. Using contemporary design language, the exhibition conveys the radical spirit of these two movements. Occupying several galleries, it is arranged by topic as well as in historical order, largely reflecting the main divisions of the original collection.

“Dada Doesn’t Mean Anything”
The Dada movement, which came into being in Europe and the United States in protest at the horrors of the First World War, rebelled against artistic convention and sought to subvert the existing social and political order. The works exhibited, whose main source is the legacy of one of the leaders of Dada, Tristan Tzara, represent the oeuvre of such major artists as Marcel Janco, Jean Arp, Raoul Hausmann, Max Ernst, Francis Picabia, and Kurt Schwitters. Mainly drawings and collages, they exemplify typical elements of Dada: the accidental, the absurd, protest, and criticism. The Dadaists’ desire to fuse life and art and to embrace all areas of creativity is reflected in the accompanying display of their radical periodicals and manifestos, together with excerpts from the early films of Hans Richter.

The Chess Players: Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray
click to see video

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- video3(1mb)
- video4(1.7mb)
- Marcel Duchamp,*Chessboard*
  , ca. 1946 © 2000 Succession
  Marcel Duchamp, ARS, N.Y./ADAGP, Paris
- Marcel Duchamp,*Pocket Chess*
  Set, 1943/1961~64© 2000 Succession
  Marcel Duchamp, ARS, N.Y./ADAGP, Paris

The revolutionary work of Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray had a profound influence on Dada and Surrealist artists and on later trends in twentieth-century art. Arturo Schwarz began to correspond with Marcel Duchamp in the early 1950s and through him made the acquaintance of Man Ray. He demonstrated his deep appreciation of these two artists and his devotion to them by arranging exhibitions, producing series of readymades, acquiring dozens of their works and writing authoritative scholarly books about them. The seventy works by these two artists in the exhibition, which demonstrate their conceptual approach and bear witness to their fertile imaginations, are replete with irreverence, iconoclasm, humor, playfulness, sexuality, and eroticism.

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video5(1.5mb)
Marcel Duchamp, *In the Manner of Delvaux*, 1942
© 2000 Succession Marcel Duchamp, ARS, N.Y./ADAGP, Paris

“Pure Psychic Automatism”: Surrealism
The ideologues of the Surrealist movement, whose conceptual platform was formulated by André Breton in the First Surrealist Manifesto of 1924, wished to develop patterns of thought and expression which would lay bare an inner irrational and subconscious reality like that revealed in dreams, psychoanalysis, and the drawings of children and the insane. Surrealist artists experimented with automatism as a basic principle of random and unmediated creativity, and with illusory dream images in fantastic forms and surprising combinations. In this part of the exhibition, there is a rich collection of more than a hundred works from various periods. Among the artists exhibited are some of the members of the original circle of the Surrealist movement in the 1920s and ’30s, such as André Breton, Joan Miró, Yves Tanguy, André Masson, and Max Ernst, and others who were influenced by it and joined after the Second World War, like Victor Brauner, Wifredo Lam, and Matta. A prominent place is occupied by women artists like Claude Cahun, Remedios Varo, Kay Sage, Dorothea Tanning, and Meret Oppenheim. The works on show illustrate the variety of methods used by the artists to liberate their imaginations from the domination of the critical

consciousness, ranging from automatic drawing, collage, and photomontage to collective drawings, dream pictures, and assemblage.

“The Sleep of Reason”: Forerunners of Surrealism

From the very beginning of the Surrealist movement, writers and artists turned to the works of the past for inspiration and affirmation. In art and literature, they did, in fact, find evidence of a timeless interest in dreams, the supernatural, the magical, and the irrational. In the art of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Baroque, these elements were to be found in such subjects as the Apocalypse, monsters, alchemical symbols, scenes of temptation, and erotica, and in grotesque and hybrid images. From the beginning of Romanticism in the eighteenth century to the Symbolist movement in the nineteenth, the taste for fantasy and the irrational grew stronger: the industrial era gave rise to anxiety and to a longing for a mystical, otherworldly experience. Like Breton and others, Arturo Schwarz assembled examples of pre-Surrealist works characterized, as he said, by “their spiritual attitude toward the marvelous – as well as their subversive element.” This variegated collection includes paintings, prints, and drawings dating from the sixteenth to the twentieth century by artists such as Dürer, Goya, Moreau, and Redon, along with tribal masks and artifacts from Africa, Oceania, and North America.

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video6(1.1mb)
Marcel Duchamp, *Cheminée anaglyphe (Anaglyphic Chimney)* and related material, 1968 © 2000 Succession Marcel Duchamp, ARS, N.Y./ADAGP,Paris

Talking Heads:
The Library Portraits of Surrealist artists and writers immortalized by their photographer and painter colleagues constitute a separate section, which Arturo Schwarz calls “memorabilia.” These works have a special value, apart from their documentary and historical importance, in that they shed light on the personal relationship between the artist who depicts and the person depicted. The collection of portraits is combined with a selection of Dada and Surrealist books illustrated with original prints. There are also artists’ books in special editions by Max Ernst, Man Ray, Masson, Picabia, and others, and books produced jointly by pairs of artists like Tristan Tzara and Jean Arp, Benjamin Péret and Yves Tanguy, Robert Desnos and Pablo Picasso, and Paul Eluard and Man Ray. The collaboration between artists manifested in these portraits and books illustrates the intellectual ferment of Surrealism and the spiritual bond that existed among the members of the movement.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive 250-page catalogue, which includes an illustrated inventory of all the

works in the Vera, Silvia, and Arturo Schwarz Collection in the Israel Museum. An exploration of a perennially fascinating subject, *Dreaming with Open Eyes* promises to be one of the Museum's most important and enlightening exhibitions as we begin the new millennium.

* For more on the collector and his gifts to the Israel Museum, see *The Israel Museum Journal XVI* (1998): 61-70.

Installation
views of the exhibition's Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray section

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The Vera, Silvia and Arturo Schwarz Collection of Dada and

Surrealist
Art, Israel Museum, Israel, 2000