Beyond the Muse: The Representation and Self-Invention of Leonora Carrington and Dorothea Tanning

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Abstract

Surrealism, at its heart, aimed to dismantle and transcend existing boundaries - of propriety, of canon, and of discipline. As an artistic movement, it rejected conscious control of the creative process in favour of the pursuit of the unconscious mind. In practice however, these works of art were often plagued by the objectification of women. Despite this misogynistic thread, women within the movement were able to advocate for themselves within personal and professional Surrealist networks - negotiating boundaries through collaboration and self-representation. Chapter one focuses on Art of This Century's 1943 *Exhibition by 31 Women* - during which the women of Surrealism took centre stage for the first time. Displayed artists Leonora Carrington and Dorothea Tanning, alongside gallerist Peggy Guggenheim, worked in forced proximity due to a shared lover and spouse - Surrealist painter Max Ernst. These women, despite personal turmoil, were able to collaborate on an exhibition that shattered convention. The gallery is best known for its role in the popularization of famed abstract expressionists, and I argue that it was equally pivotal for the early careers of women artists in the Surrealist movement. The second chapter continues the focus on Carrington and Tanning, and examines the role of self-representation in their oeuvres. Turning away from the fragmentation and objectification of the female body, the two artists instead emphasized self-representation and personal transformation – centering the female body in a new way. The duo's deeply personal subject matter allowed them to delve inward, thus positioning their work at the heart of the Surrealist imagination.

Resumé

Le surréalisme, dans son essence, visé à démanteler et à transcender les frontières existantes, celles de la bienséance, du canon et de la discipline. En tant que mouvement artistique, le surréalisme a rejeté le contrôle conscient du processus créatif au profit de la recherche de l'inconscient. Dans la pratique, cependant, ces œuvres d'art étaient souvent marquées par l'objectivation des femmes. Malgré ce fil conducteur misogyne, les femmes du mouvement ont pu négocier les frontières par la collaboration et l'autoreprésentation, défendant ainsi leurs intérêts au sein de réseaux surréalistes personnels et professionnels. Le premier chapitre porte sur l'*Exhibition by 31 Women* (1943) d'Art of This Century, ou les artistes surréalistes féminines ont exposé leurs œuvres publiquement pour la première fois. Les artistes exposées, Leonora Carrington et Dorothea Tanning, ainsi que la galeriste Peggy Guggenheim, ont travaillé dans une proximité forcée en raison d'un amant et d'un conjoint commun : le peintre surréaliste Max Ernst. Malgré leurs différends personnels, ces femmes ont pu collaborer et mettre sur pied une exposition qui a brisé la convention. La galerie est surtout connue pour son rôle dans la popularisation des célèbres expressionnistes abstraits, et je soutiens qu'elle a également joué un rôle déterminant dans les débuts de la carrière des femmes artistes du mouvement surréaliste. Le deuxième chapitre continue à se concentrer sur Carrington et Tanning, et examine le rôle de l'autoreprésentation dans leurs œuvres. Les deux artistes ont rejeté la fragmentation et l'objectivation du corps féminin pour se concentrer plutôt sur l'expression de soi et la transformation personnelle et mettre en lumière le corps féminin de façon tout à fait inédite. Le sujet profondément personnel du duo leur permet d'être profondément introspectives, plaçant leur travail au cœur de l'imagination surréaliste.

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Introduction

As an artistic movement, Surrealism is well-known for its rejection of the conscious control of the creative process in favour of the pursuit of the unconscious mind. Significantly, its artistic production was disproportionately dominated by works by male artists that centered objectification of and violent acts upon the bodies of female subjects. In his 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism,* André Breton (1896-1966), self-declared founder of the movement, announces a focus on 'Man': "Man proposes and disposes. He and he alone can determine whether he is completely master of himself, that is, whether he maintains the body of his desires, daily more formidable, in a state of anarchy."[1] The emphasis on male desire and autonomy is clear. The use of 'man' and 'he' is more than a mere syntactical choice, as Breton then launches into a roll call of more than thirty artists and creatives whom he claims embody Surrealism – all were men.[2] This indicates a clear focus on masculine artistic creation, with no mention of women and their contributions to the movement. Later, however, Breton clarifies his vision for the movement and subsequently brings women into the conversation. In his 1930 *Second Manifesto of Surrealism,* he states that "the problem of woman is the most wonderful and disturbing problem there is in the world."[3] This attitude was by no means restricted to the artists themselves, with art critic James Stern (*Time Magazine)* refusing to attend the 1943 *Exhibition by 31 Women* on the basis "that there had never been a first-rate woman artist and that women should stick to having babies."[4] These strongly held attitudes peripheralized the contributions of women to the Surrealist movement.

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[1] André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 18.
[2] Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism,* 26-27.
[3] Ibid., 180.
[4] Kat Buckley, *Peggy Guggenheim and The Exhibition by 31 Women*, (Baltimore, MD: Maryland Institute College of Art, 2010): 15, https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.4041.4329.

Socialite and gallerist Marguerite (Peggy) Guggenheim's (1898-1979) gallery Art of This Century was a key exhibition space for emerging avant-garde artists in both Europe and her native United States of America.[5] Its exhibition program courted controversy by pushing against art world norms by providing a vital space to exhibit work by women, including British artist Leonora Carrington (1917-2011) and the American Dorothea Tanning (1910-2012). After brief tenures at traditional art schools, both artists found themselves in New York City and were looking for venues to exhibit their work. In 1943, Guggenheim and a jury of her (male) peers curated a show titled *Exhibition by 31 Women.* The goal of the exhibition was to devote a show exclusively to women artists.[6] This exhibition provided a venue for the trio to transcend personal turmoil (they shared a romantic partner) and participate in a show that provided vital exhibition space to avant-garde women artists. This thesis examines the strategies used by Guggenheim, Carrington, and Tanning to negotiate the Surrealist movement, namely collaboration and self-representation. Chapter One argues the need for the exhibition to be recognized as a vital moment of representation for Carrington and Tanning as artists, while Chapter Two focuses on their use of the self as subject throughout their careers.

The Prevalence of Surrealist Misogyny

The first wave of feminist scholars to tackle the place of women artists in Surrealism, a group that includes Mary Ann Caws, Whitney Chadwick, Xavière Gauthier, and Susan Rubin Suleiman, argued that representations of the female body were subject to the psychosexual

[5] Siobhán M. Conaty, "Art of This Century: The Women," in *Art of This Century: The Women*, ed. Siobhán M. Conaty, Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, and Peggy Guggenheim Collection (Stony Brook, NY: Stony Brook Foundation, 1997), 15.
[6] Jasper Sharp, "Serving the Future: The Exhibitions at Art of This Century 1942-1947,"in *Peggy Guggenheim & Friedrich Kiesler: The Story of Art of This Century*, ed. Dieter Bogner and Susan Davidson (New York, NY: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2004), 291.

whims of male Surrealists.[7] Despite their varying interpretations of the Surrealist ethos, the sexualization of, and violence wrought upon, the female body can be seen across the oeuvres of the movement's male 'greats', including René Magritte (1898-1967). His 1929 collage for Surrealist journal *La Révolution surréaliste* (Figure 1) serves as an example of the broader movement's attitude towards women. The work is a study in juxtaposition: photographs of fully-clothed male surrealists encircle the central painting, overwhelming the lonely unclothed figure of the central nude woman. The painting's text "je ne vois pas la (femme) cachée dans la forêt" (I do not see the (woman) hiding in the forest) adds a contemplative quality to the work. Are the men lost in their own world, or are they dreaming of her nude form?[8] The juxtaposition prompts the viewer to ponder the work's true meaning. Even in a work cataloguing the movement's male participants, the artist has found a way to include a nude female form trapped within their confines. The closed eyes and blank facial expressions of the men add a macabre quality to the collage. Their faces serve as an example of what feminist scholar Amy Lyford refers to as a Surrealist "aestheticization of dismemberment" through their resemblance to surgical moulages, casts of bodily repair which went on museum display after the war as reminders of medical progress and rebirth.[9] Therefore imbued with a haunting quality, Magritte's collage sets the nude female body alongside a grim reference to war – inextricably linking sexuality and violence.

Another example of what Lyford terms "quintessential" Surrealist misogyny" is Hans Bellmer's (1902-1975) series of articulated dolls.[10] Among these works was a series of images titled *Poupée,* which appeared in Surrealist periodical *Minotaure* (Figure 2). The photographs

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[7] Amy Lyford, *Surrealist Masculinities: Gender Anxiety and the Aesthetics of Post-World War I Reconstruction in France*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 128.
[8] Rudolf E. Kuenzli, "Surrealism and Misogyny," in *Surrealism and Women,* eds. Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli, and Gloria Gwen Raaberg, First MIT Press ed., (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 18.
[9] Lyford, *Surrealist Masculinities,* 48, 54.
[10] Ibid., 15.

depicted various combinations of female doll part to create the effect of a 'woman' bound, dismembered, mechanical, and reduced to partial assemblages. In some photographs, the doll is adorned with roses, while in others, it is arranged in a way to emphasize female sexuality through notable emphasis on her breasts. In an interview, Bellmer recognized the conflation of childhood objects and sexual desire in the series.[11] This disturbing acknowledgement contributes to the photographs' disconcerting effect on the viewer. The re-publication of both Magritte and Bellmer's works in Surrealist publications highlights the ways in which the objectification of women and violence against them was both accepted and celebrated by the wider movement.

Dream-like interpretations of Surrealist irrationality that take visual form through the objectification of women's bodies can also be seen in the work of Salvador Dalí (1904-1989). His 1929 painting *The Great Masturbator* (Figure 3) represents a psychosexual dream world. In a state of "self-induced delirium" Dalí is shown in profile at the centre of the work, with his muse Gala Éluard (soon-to-be Gala Dalí) emerging from his head, with bare shoulders and loose hair. Her mouth is shown in close contact with the clothed genitals of a disembodied third figure (or perhaps it is Dalí himself), thus suggesting a sexual act or possible castration.[12] In many Surrealist works, women were both object of desire and fear, and exemplified the close connection between sexuality and death. Compared to the distorted visage of the artist, which unfurls from the ground into an exaggerated head balanced precariously on his nose, Éluard is depicted in a truer corporeal form with proportional features and flowing hair**,** thereby centering (or reducing her to) her beauty. Her role in the painting is limited to her beauty, her participation in sexual activity, and her origins from the body of the artist.

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[11] Robert J. Belton, *The Beribboned Bomb: The Image of Woman in Male Surrealist Art*, (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2000), 120n144.
[12] Kuenzli, "Surrealism and Misogyny," 19.

German artist Max Ernst (1891-1976) was no exception to the misogynistic drive within much Surrealist practice. As the romantic partner of the three women who are the focus of my thesis, his attitudes towards women - in both his artworks and his personal life - are particularly relevant. In his 1940 painting *La toilette de la mariée (The Attirement of the Bride)* (Figure 4) Ernst depicted a scene of nudity, violence, and corporeal hybridity. The central nude woman, duplicated in the mirror, has been symbolically beheaded and given the head of an owl. This avian interest is replicated in the feathered figure at left, who holds a broken arrow aloft pointing at the central figure's genitals for emphasis or violent aims (or both). The right-hand woman is nude but corporeally distorted, with a twisted neck disrupting the scene. Most intriguingly the small green figure in the foreground transcends both species and gender, and is composed of lurid green skin, webbed feet, four breasts, and a phallus. Even in an imaginary world of hybridity and fantasy, Ernst has managed to fragment and sexualize the female form. This attitude also permeated his passing comments: "The woman is a sandwich covered with white marble."[13] While not vulgar in language, the use of food as a metaphor reflects the tendency of male Surrealists to treat of the female body as something to be chopped up and consumed for their enjoyment. The reference to marble refers to how the female body in the history of art was often reduced to an aesthetic, sculptural object but it also points to the ostensibly deadly threat of female sexuality: teeth would certainly be cracked if one were to bite into a sandwich covered in stone. By representing, and thus defining, women as muse, corpse, murderer, or faceless archetype in their artworks, many male surrealist artists diminished the contributions women artists made to the movement.

[13] Ingrid Pfeiffer, "Fantastic Women in Europe, the US, and Mexico," in *Fantastic Women: Surreal Worlds from Meret Oppenheim to Frida Kahlo,* ed. Ingrid Pfeiffer, (Munich, Germany: Hirmer Verlag GmbH, 2020), 25.

"Clearly delineated and oddly unfixed": Women Artists and Surrealism

This thesis analyzes the specific strategies – namely representation and self-invention – that Guggenheim, Carrington and Tanning used to navigate the challenges of working within such a patriarchal and misogynist movement. By doing so, I explore how marginalization and participation, or presence and exclusion, are not mutually exclusive.[14] The place of women in the Surrealist movement was highly mutable. As Alice Gambrell has argued, it was "at once clearly delineated and oddly unfixed."[15] This focus on mutability allows for the nuances of the movement to be addressed, but its ever-evolving nature is also fittingly reminiscent of the Surrealist fascination with dreams and otherworldly forms. Broadly, however, the movement was a step forward in terms of demographic representation, with Surrealism having upwards of three hundred women participants over the course of the movement - a level that was then unheard of with the exception of explicitly feminist art collectives.[16] While women linked to surrealism increasingly showed their work in exhibitions, museums, and private collections, they maneuvered through art world networks in a different manner than their male counterparts, with each facing an uphill battle.[17]

The vast majority of the art historical studies focused on women and Surrealism are structured as anthologies. The most characteristic example of this anthologizing is Penelope Rosemont's 1998 book *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology,* which, as she notes, aims to illustrate the "many ways in which women have enriched Surrealism as a ferment of ideas, an imaginative stimulus, a liberating critical force, and a practical inspiration to poetic, moral, and

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[14] Chadwick, "An Infinite Play of Empty Mirrors," 6.
[15] Alice Gambrell, *Women Intellectuals, Modernism, and Difference: Transatlantic Culture, 1919-1945*, Cultural Margins, 4, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 80.
[16] Penelope Rosemont, *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology,* Surrealist Revolution Series, (London, England: Athlone Press, 1998), xxx, xxxvi.
[17] Conaty, "Art of This Century: The Women," 15.

political insurgency."[18] Other scholarship has privileged the movement's interconnectedness. Whitney Chadwick's 2017 *Farewell to the Muse: Love, War, and the Women of Surrealism,* for example, is a highly personal examination of correspondence between women artists of the Surrealist movement.[19] Its thematic focus on the women as agents of both collaboration and artistic creation allows for an analysis of the movement's interconnected personal and professional networks. While anthologies provide an excellent introduction to this complex aesthetic movement, I aim to follow Chadwick's focused approach so I can examine a specific network of actors and their interactions with the broader movement.

Entanglement and Collaboration

Although Guggenheim's gallery, Art of This Century, is best known for its pioneering role promoting the work of male Abstract Expressionist artists, this thesis explores how it was also central to the advancement of women artists linked to Surrealism.[20] Chapter One argues that the gallery and its 1943 show *Exhibition by 31 Women* were in fact equally pivotal to Carrington's and Tanning's careers. The exhibition functioned as a springboard for the careers of several women, despite being fraught with major controversy behind the scenes. By exploring the personal entanglements of those involved with the exhibition, particularly those surrounding the women's relationships with Ernst, I will explore how Guggenheim, Carrington, and Tanning avoided conflict and prioritized art for the sake of Surrealism's success as a leading twentieth-century movement.

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[18] Rosemont, *Surrealist Women,* xxix-xxx.
[19] Whitney Chadwick, *Farewell to the Muse: Love, War and the Women of Surrealism*, (New York, NY: Thames & Hudson, 2017), 3, 14.
[20] Francine Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim: The Shock of the Modern*, Jewish Lives, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 150.

The presence of writings from exhibition participants and peripheral observers allow for the examination of a varied body of primary sources: memoirs, press releases, and critics' reviews. While memoirs, including those of Guggenheim, Carrington, Tanning, and Jimmy Ernst (son of Max), can be fallible because of their inherent retrospection and selective nature, they add vital context as to the thoughts and experiences of those involved.[21] Ultimately, the exhibition makes it clear that the women who presented their work amongst the Surrealists were not to be dismissed, and were able to prioritize collaboration and respect for their craft in order to leverage the exhibition into long careers. Far from a being a mere footnote or brief mention along the trajectory of its participants lengthy careers, this thesis argues that the exhibition is historically significant because of its major contributions to the burgeoning New York avant-garde scene, its pivotal role in Carrington's and Tanning's rise as leading international artists, and its legacy within feminist curatorial practices.

In the second chapter, the focus shifts to the decades long careers of Carrington and Tanning, who both lived and created artworks well into their nineties. Both artists initially turned to the Surrealist movement in 1936: Carrington after receiving Herbert Read's *Surrealism* as a gift, and Tanning after viewing Alfred H. Barr's *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* exhibition at New York City's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).[22] This shared interest soon led them to Guggenheim's Art of This Century, where their works were given vital attention by being shown at the *Exhibition by 31 Women*.

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[21] Ann Curthoys, "Adventures of Feminism: Simone De Beauvoir's Autobiographies, Women's Liberation, and Self-Fashioning," *Feminist Review* 64, no. 1 (2000): 10, doi:0.1080/014177800338927.

[22] Susan Rubin Suleiman, "The Bird Superior Meets the Bride of the Wind : Leonora Carrington & Max Ernst," in *Significant Others: Creativity & Intimate Partnership*, ed. Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle De Courtivron (London, England: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 104; Alyce Mahon, "Dorothea Tanning: Behind the Door, Another Invisible Door," in *Dorothea Tanning*, ed. Alyce Mahon (London, England: Tate Enterprises, 2018), 19.

While their personal and creative paths soon diverged, their work includes the frequent employment of what Dawn Ades has characterized as the "construction of subject as self-image."[23] This is evident in the works they displayed at the *Exhibition by 31 Women.* Carrington's *The Horses of Lord Candlestick*, a work showing horses romping across a verdant scene, and Tanning's *Birthday*, a self-portrait placing the artist alongside a small creature and illogical hallway of unfolding doors, are declarative self-representations both human and animal, thereby announcing their presence in Surrealist circles. In her vital 1998 chapter "An Infinite Play of Empty Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation", Chadwick argues that "the unruly woman of the male Surrealist imagination – dismembered, mutable, eroticized – is recreated through women's eyes as self-possessed and capable of producing new narratives of the self."[24] As such, the women artists of Surrealism, particularly Carrington and Tanning, were ideally positioned to reverse the status-quo and depict complex female subjects that were produced from the artist's own selves. In a broader visual culture context, this notion of self as subject was alternatively described by Joanne Finkelstein as "self-inventive."[25] Chapter 2 explores these themes to examine how, by the end of their careers, both Carrington and Tanning were working in methods entirely disparate to those with which they started their rise to fame at the *Exhibition by 31 Women.* Across mediums and decades, the two artists engaged in frequent self-representation through both self-portraiture and the more complex themes of familial relations and transformative aging.

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[23] Dawn Ades, "Orbits of the Savage Moon: Surrealism and the Representation of the Female Subject in Mexico and Postwar Paris," in *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation*, ed. Whitney Chadwick, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 107.
[24] Chadwick, "An Infinite Play of Empty Mirrors," 11.
[25] Joanne Finkelstein, *The Art of Self Invention: Image and Identity in Popular Visual Culture*, (London, England: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 17.

Through an analysis of Guggenheim's 1943 exhibition, as well as key examples of the ways in which Tanning and Carrington re-invented themselves through their artwork, particularly their self-portraits, this thesis reconsiders early histories of surrealist women artists. The womens' adaptability is reflected in their storied careers, during which they developed their visual styles and artistic subjects but continued to defy the patriarchal confines of the Surrealist movement. Tanning herself stated that "from my earliest beginnings, every decision, every choice, had been sparked by a sense of challenge."[26] Their work ultimately challenged male Surrealists' representations of the female body as an object with depictions of complex female subjects.

Chapter 1. The Role of the Art of This Century and the *Exhibition by 31 Women*

In 1943, Peggy Guggenheim's *Exhibition by 31 Women* was a daring early-career show in which Guggenheim and exhibiting artists Leonora Carrington and Dorothea Tanning found themselves in forced proximity as past, present, and future partners of famed Surrealist Max Ernst.[27] In the close-knit and insular networks of Surrealist practitioners in 1940s New York City, personal and professional lines often blurred. By focusing on this exhibition, this chapter will examine the dynamics of collaboration and mutual respect amongst Carrington, Tanning, Guggenheim. I will argue that the exhibition should be lauded as a key moment of representation and inclusion for women working within the Surrealist movement, with a focus again on Carrington and Tanning.

Much has been written regarding her romantic entanglements, but Guggenheim's true significance to modern art, including Surrealism, comes primarily from her support of emerging

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[26] Dorothea Tanning, *Between Lives: An Artist and Her World* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 277.
[27] Buckley, *Peggy Guggenheim and The Exhibition by 31 Women*, 1.

artists.[28] Those she took under her wing were afforded exhibition opportunities, commissions, and even monthly stipends, as in the case of Abstract Expressionist darling Jackson Pollock.[29] Her love of innovative art drove her to seek out those who might have previously or otherwise gone ignored, a pursuit that often led her to women working within these avant-garde styles. However, it is important to note that it is unknown, debated, and somewhat irrelevant if Guggenheim considered herself a feminist.[30] Regardless of her *potential* self-identification, her interest in emerging artists led her frequently to women working within avant-garde movements, including those displayed at the *Exhibition by 31 Women*.

Broadly this chapter is informed by famed feminist art historian Griselda Pollock's approach of "thinking sociologically" à la Zygmunt Bauman alongside the traditional art historical maxim of "thinking aesthetically."[31] As Pollock explains, her method leads to an overall "analysis of the interrelations between the conditions of social experience and the cultural forms through which they are articulated and subjectively (not individualistically) interpreted or registered."[32] I aim to 'think aesthetically' by providing visual analyses of the exhibited works by Carrington and Tanning, while simultaneously 'thinking sociologically' by examining their navigation of art-world networks through close readings of criticism of the exhibition itself. By linking sociology and art history as Pollock does, this chapter bridges disciplines within social sciences, humanities, and the creative arts.[33] By focusing on the exhibition itself, the relationships amongst artists, and the works displayed, this chapter will explore the intersections

[28] Conaty, "Art of This Century: The Women," 15-16.
[29] Sharp, "Serving the Future," 298.
[30] Conaty, "Art of This Century: The Women," 17.
[31] Griselda Pollock, "Thinking Sociologically: Thinking Aesthetically. Between Convergence and Difference with Some Historical Reflections on Sociology and Art History," *History of the Human Sciences* 20, no. 2 (2007): 141, doi:10.1177/0952695107077109.
[32] Pollock, "Thinking Sociologically: Thinking Aesthetically," 141.
[33] Ibid., 142.

amongst visual analysis, curatorial practices, architecture, interior design, and microsociological networks. As curator Renate Wiehager announced in 2020, the *Exhibition by 31 Women* is "a foundational event in feminist art history" and should be recognized as such.[34]

Art of This Century

> Opening this gallery and its collection to the public during a time when people are fighting for their lives and freedom is a responsibility of which I am fully conscious. The undertaking will serve its purpose only if it succeeds in serving the future instead of recording the past. – Peggy Guggenheim[35]

From its inception, Guggenheim's New York City gallery Art of This Century was innovative – being (at the time) the only art gallery in the city to be owned and managed by a woman.[36] As a business, this set it apart, but also highlights the clear gendered nature of the 1940s art scene. Even in more transgressive locales like New York City, and with an emphasis on avant-garde and emerging works, Guggenheim still stood alone. The fact that Guggenheim, as a society heiress, was self-funded, is particularly key. She was able to mobilize her privilege and generational wealth to accomplish her aims, and did so by giving opportunities to those who lacked the necessary cachet to gain entry into the upper echelons of the commercial art market. While her financial status contributed, hard work certainly played a role Guggenheim's success; with the gallery, its shows and publications, and visitor numbers consuming her mind even in times of personal turmoil.[37] This complete dedication was all but expected by the Surrealist powerhouses, with André Breton claiming that he "maintained that all his life he had sacrificed to truth, beauty, and art, and he expected everyone else to do as much" according to

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[34] Renate Wiehager, "31 Women: An Introduction," in *31 Women*, ed. Renate Wiehager (Ebersbach, Germany: Bechtel Druck GmbH+Co. KG, 2020), 7.
[35] Laurence Tacou-Rumney, *Peggy Guggenheim: A Collector's Album*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 126.
[36] Margaret Hooks, *Surreal Lovers: Eight Women Integral to the Life of Max Ernst*, (La Fábrica/Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona, 2018), 291.
[37] Hooks, *Surreal Lovers*, 297.

Guggenheim's memoir.[38] By failing to recognize that his dual privileged positions as founder and man reduced the sacrifices made, he furthered the misogynistic tendencies of the movement. The expectation that Surrealist practitioners could drop everything for the movement ignores the financial, personal, and political aspects of gaining recognition in the art world, making a powerful gallerist like Guggenheim all the more important for emerging avant-garde artists in New York City. It is clear from Breton's words that the movement was not just aesthetic, but necessitated changes to modes of thought and being, thus encompassing all aspects of its participants' (or, to provocatively borrow religious language, adherents') lives. As such, Guggenheim aimed to separate personal feelings towards artists from her professional practices. Her work was her first love, with Guggenheim assertively stating that she "would rather risk breaking my marriage than give up Art of This Century."[39]

As an private gallery owner, Guggenheim had total sovereignty over her collection. In the increasingly crowded 1940s New York City art scene, galleries battled for commercially viable and unique artists.[40] By virtue of her autonomy, Guggenheim was able to select artists and works based on her own mores, and was not restricted to such matters as commercial success. Broadly her selection process was not guided by personal connections – it instead revolved around genuine appreciation for finding innovative artists who would provoke and "change the tide of modern art."[41] However, the personal still played a role – with Guggenheim mining her personal relationships for jurors, sellers, and artists. The key difference was that these personal connections were the (highly practical and efficient) *mechanisms* to facilitate selection, and did

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[38] Peggy Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: The Informal Memoirs of Peggy Guggenheim,* (New York: Dial Press, 1946), 327.
[39] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: The Informal Memoirs of Peggy Guggenheim,* 328.
[40] Isabelle Graw, *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture,* trans. Nicholas Grindell, (Berlin Germany: Sternberg Press, 2009), 65.
[41] Conaty, "Art of This Century: The Women," 15-16.

not guide the selection of the works themselves. Instead, the selection process was undertaken by a jury panel.[42] This allowed for a degree of perceived impartiality via the introduction of additional voices into the selection of individual works. This method is characteristic of sociologist Karin Knorr-Centina's conception of the art market as a "networking market."[43] While her selection of the works in her collection revolved around her specific aesthetic interests, Guggenheim still leveraged her personal network to fill Art of This Century.

Guggenheim's desire to exhibit new and exciting art extended to all elements of the gallery. Art of This Century is often considered a forerunner in the practice of "installation art" – an immersive viewing experience far from the staid white halls of New York City's established galleries and museums.[44] By creating a provocative setting, the avant-garde nature of the works on display was enhanced. For the architecture and interior design of the space, Guggenheim turned to Austrian architect and exhibition designer Frederick Kiesler. Kiesler transformed the former tailor-shops into a series of themed settings, which aimed to best show off each movement displayed in the gallery. The cubist/abstract gallery evoked a 'circus tent' with curved blue walls and rope-suspended pictures; the kinetic gallery had flashing lights and a rotating wheel of artworks; and, vitally, the Surrealist gallery contained multi-purpose modular furniture (also of Kiesler's design), curved walls, and unframed art on 'poles' that could be manipulated by the viewer (Figure 5).[45] The notion of unframed art was shocking for many Surrealists displayed at the gallery, but they acquiesced to Kiesler and Guggenheim's vision.[46] While it likely took some getting used to, Guggenheim's exhibition practices challenged established

[42] Hooks, *Surreal Lovers,* 298.
[43] Graw, *High Price,* 64.
[44] Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim,* 5.
[45] Tacou-Rumney, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 125.
[46] Ibid., 124-125.

conventions of display, continuing her aim to provoke. These ambitious goals would only be furthered by her choice of temporary exhibitions.

Guggenheim, according to her opening press release, intended for Art of This Century to "become a center where artists will be welcome and where they can feel that they are cooperating in establishing a research center for new ideas. The undertaking will serve its purpose only if it succeeds in serving the future instead of recording the past."[47] In pursuit of new ideas, the gallery undertook a brief but ambitious program of temporary exhibitions alongside its small permanent collection. Over the course of its five year existence, Art of This Century was home to fifty-five temporary shows.[48] This variety of programming gave varied opportunities to emerging artists through both group and solo exhibitions. While men were given many solo shows (including four for Pollock alone), women were represented to an unprecedented degree for the time: a quarter of the solo shows, two group shows, and nearly forty percent of the permanent holdings.[49] While all these shows hold significance in the trajectory of the avant-garde art in 1940s New York City, the *Exhibition by 31 Women* is particularly significant to the careers of participants Leonora Carrington and Dorothea Tanning.

The *Exhibition by 31 Women*

From its opening, Art of This Century had crafted a reputation of being more inclusive that the typical New York City gallery. Guggenheim's desire to shock and challenge norms led to a focus on the representation of exiled, young, and emerging artists.[50] By promoting and representing these creators, she also made a savvy financial decision, thus linking herself with those who could (and did) grow to be major players in both avant-garde and commercial circles.

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[47] Sharp, "Serving the Future," 288.
[48] Ibid., 288.
[49] Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim,* 140, 150-158.
[50] Ibid., 2, 4.

There were works of art by women on display at MoMA and the commercial galleries of other Guggenheim-esque (male) scions like Julien Levy and Pierre Matisse, but none courted these artists quite like Art of This Century.[51] This dovetailed nicely with Guggenheim's aims to provoke, but also with her desire to uncover and promote emerging artists. From these goals came the *Exhibition by 31 Women.* An airplane conversation with famed artist Marcel Duchamp prompted the idea for all-female avant-garde show, and Guggenheim then hurried to assemble a jury of male art world figures, Surrealist figures, agents, and gallerists: a list that included herself and both Max and Jimmy Ernst.[52] Of note is the fact that Guggenheim herself was the only woman on the jury, a choice that seems rather odd considering the representational goals of the show itself. The *Exhibition by 31 Women* was part of Guggenheim's declarative focus on exhibiting women artists, which included a 1945 follow-up to *31 Women,* twelve solo exhibitions, and nearly half of her gallery holdings.[53] It is also clear that she was not immune to forces of nepotism, as Jimmy Ernst was at the time a fledgeling artist and part-time employee of Guggenheim; he hardly had the resume of any other members of the jury. Personal relationships seeping into professional circles was characteristic of the near-incestuous romantic entanglements in many Surrealist networks. For example, Carrington and Tanning were joined in the *Exhibition by 31 Women* by four artists romantically linked to prominent male members of the avant-garde.[54] The use of a jury is also notable as a vestige of the status quo, as the women participating were thus not choosing what works to submit. Leaving these pivotal decisions in the hands of a male-dominated jury underscores the fact that while the exhibition might be vital in terms of representation, it was still very much occurring in a patriarchal space.

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[51] Conaty, "Art of This Century: The Women," 15.
[52] Hooks, *Surreal Lovers,* 298.
[53] Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim,* 140.
[54] Buckley, *Peggy Guggenheim and The Exhibition by 31 Women*, 8.

The exhibition opened in January 1943 with Guggenheim's bombastic press release stating that

> Here then is testimony to the fact that the creative ability of women is by no means restricted to the decorative vein, as could be deduced from the history of art by women through the ages. The spirit of the young wife in ancient Greece who traced on the oilskin window the silhouette of her departing warrior husband is in these women...[55]

Not all were convinced by this extremely assertive and flowery claim. In his memoir, Jimmy Ernst recalls an in-person confrontation during the jury process of the exhibition where "a letter to Georgia O'Keefe resulted in a visit by that formidable lady to the gallery with a small entourage, during which she stonily faced an awed Peggy down with "I am not a woman painter"."[56] By engaging in politics of refusal, O'Keefe was able to assert her opposition toward the moniker of 'woman painter'/'woman artist' in a highly declarative fashion. Her rationale was that she was an artist and did not want her or her work to be pigeonholed due to her gender.[57] While Ernst may have exaggerated the drama of the scene for publication in his memoir, the gravity of the scene is certainly enhanced by its unfolding in person. Many artists, Carrington and Tanning included, came out against the use of 'woman artist' as a category, but there are fewer accounts of this refusal occurring in person.

The debates about 'women artists', 'women's museums', and 'women's art' have long been a great controversy in feminist art histories, with many stances emerging among stakeholders. These debates have raised questions about marginalization, redundancy, repetition, separation (or more cynically, segregation) of women in the art world. Conversely, the moniker signifies the inequality women faced while entering the male-dominated confines of the art

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[55] Buckley, *Peggy Guggenheim and The Exhibition by 31 Women*, 1, 10.
[56] Jimmy Ernst, *A Not-So-Still Life: A Memoir*, 1st ed, (New York: St. Martin's/Marek, 1984), 236.
[57] Buckley, *Peggy Guggenheim and The Exhibition by 31 Women,* 13.

historical canon and commercial art market.[58] Both sides put forth valid claims, making this debate of nomenclature and framing one that confounds scholars to this day. The claim of necessity is however underscored by the popularity of contemporaneous exhibitions that served to minimize women's contributions, in ways considered by contemporary viewers to be iterations of patriarchal and misogynistic norms. One such exhibition, the 1949 *Artists: Man and Wife*, is particularly relevant. The exhibition, held at New York City's Sidney Janis Gallery, displayed the works of artistic couples within Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism but framed the women as secondary figures in the group show.[59] The name of the show itself underscores this notion, framing the 'wives' as significant only in relation to their partners, while the men implicitly hold the own significance and identity. The exhibition included such artists as Tanning, Ernst, Lee Krasner, Jackson Pollock, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, and Jean Arp.[60] This attitude suggests that the issue of 'woman artists' as a mechanism for recognition and inclusion responds to ingrained social issues at the time, which were then bleeding into the realm of aesthetics. Women artists were increasingly being represented in avant-garde circles and society at-large, but still faced the barriers of the patriarchal status-quo.

Leonora Carrington's *The Horses of Lord Candlestick*

For Carrington, her early career was incredibly fruitful – but perceived to be inextricably linked to her relationship with Ernst due to their collaborations. She exhibited pieces in multiple cities on the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition touring circuit while simultaneously publishing multiple short stories featuring illustrations by her then-partner.[61] The exhibition

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[58] Conaty, "Art of This Century: The Women," 16.
[59] Katie McCabe, *More Than a Muse: Creative Partnerships That Sold Talented Women Short,* (London, England: Quadrille Publishing, 2020), 1.
[60] McCabe, *More Than a Muse,* 1.
[61] Betty Ann Brown, *Gradiva's Mirror: Reflections on Women, Surrealism and Art History* (New York, NY: Midmarch Arts Press, 2002), 144.

history is vital – even if her works were overshadowed by those of 'established' Surrealists, her participation signifies an entry into the major Surrealist networks. At this Breton-organized exhibition, her art was shown amongst works by Dalí, Ernst, and Bellmer.[62] Evidently, her career was on the rise. Her paintings took inspiration from a variety of sources - medieval Italian painting, Celtic myths and tales, and even childhood nursery rhymes.[63] This varied lexicon of visual and textual references gave Carrington a ready-made Surrealist vocabulary, one that is evident in the work she displayed at the *Exhibition by 31 Women.*

Carrington's 1938 painting *The Horses of Lord Candlestick* (Figure 6) in many ways exemplifies her early Surrealist style. The work depicts a group of highly expressive horses, each unique, frolicking in an otherworldly world of exaggerated greenery. In the distance, what appears to be a volcano erupts; casting an ominous tone across the painting. The horses are modeled with evident musculature, while their expressions and wind-swept manes exude chaos. Since childhood, Carrington was enamoured with horses as a visual motif, even stating as a child that she desired to become one – "it would give me another kind of energy to become a horse."[64] These notions of hybridity, energy transfer, and metamorphoses become major hallmarks of Carrington's oeuvre.

The tale of the painting's provenance is equally as significant as its aesthetic properties. The work was first displayed at the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition, its first foray into large-scale exhibition display.[65] Remarkably, considering the fraught personal territory the women shared, the work was then purchased by Peggy Guggenheim. While visiting Ernst, Carrington, and their circle, Guggenheim inquired about purchasing a painting – and ended up

[62] Alexander Klar, *Surreal People: Surrealism and Collaboration*, (London: V & A Publications, 2007), 68-72.
[63] Whitney Chadwick, "An Infinite Play of Empty Mirrors," 5-6.
[64] Suleiman, "The Bird Superior Meets the Bride of the Wind," 112.
[65] Ibid., 106.

buying Carrington's *The Horses of Lord Candlestick* instead of works by the far more established Ernst.[66] This was the first major sale by Carrington, making the transaction a key moment in her bourgeoning career. It is thus fitting that the work would go on to be shown at Guggenheim's provocative *Exhibition by 31 Women.*

The horse is said to hold many significances in Carrington's visual and written production. While interpretation is entirely subjective, there is a definite cautionary tale therein. Susan Rubin Suleiman, scholar of Surrealist art and writing, is reticent to discuss the painting as a critique of Ernst and the role of women in Surrealism, instead arguing that Carrington's "conscious energies were focused, rather, on her liberation from middle-class propriety and attainment of an identity as an artist, a project in which Ernst and the Surrealists could only appear as allies."[67] I agree with this notion, as it avoids falling into the trap of ascribing contemporary significances and understandings to historical works. Besides, there is much in Carrington's own writing and life that pertains to the motif of the horse, without delving into leaps of metaphor and contemporary claims.

The white horse, in particular, became Carrington's alter-ego. By blending her mother's tales of the faster-than-air flying horse of Celtic mythology and her 'Bride of the Wind' nickname, it created a visual signifier for herself to avoid having to make her true corporeal form the subject.[68] In essence, the white horse motif coalesced childhood hobbies and tales, myth, Ernst's nickname for his then-lover, and her interest in transgressive freedom into a single image, one that could be leveraged for a coded form of self-representation. This hybrid body was

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[66] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: The Informal Memoirs of Peggy Guggenheim,* 249-250.
[67] Suleiman, "The Bird Superior Meets the Bride of the Wind," 113.
[68] Whitney Chadwick, "Leonora Carrington: Evolution of a Feminist Consciousness," *Woman's Art Journal* 7, no. 1 (1986): 38, doi:10.2307/1358235; Natalya Lusty, *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 66.

common in many Surrealist works, such as Ernst's *La toilette de la mariée (The Attirement of the Bride).* While Ernst's hybrid bodies are characterized as objectified fragmentations of the female body, in the work of women associated with the Surrealist group, hybridization was considered by art historians (Tara Plunkett) and curators (Ingrid Pfeiffer) alike as way for women to politicize their bodies.[69] Particularly since Carrington was early in her career, the horse motif gave her a mechanism to enter Surrealist debates surrounding conceptions of the self and mind, without having to directly replicate her own body and risk objectification.

In Carrington's memoir *Down Below,* which recounts her time in a Spanish asylum, horses appear several times as sources of solace and reminders of freedom. During a traumatic journey across war-torn Europe, the artist was forcibly committed at the behest of the British Consul and her own parents.[70] She recalls observing herds of horses on Sundays, envying their freedom and linking herself to them through childhood nostalgia – at one point even claiming supernatural power and kinship with them and other animals.[71] In *The Horses of Lord Candlestick,* the horses are shown running free, mirroring a freedom Carrington seems to always be striving towards. Some critics have gone as far as to describe the painting as pointing to what Renée Riese Hubert has described as "a universe no longer reminiscent of patriarchal bourgeois society."[72] While this may be true, the lack of human presence in the painting's subject matter makes it hard to parse this assertion, however compelling it may be.

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[69] Pfeiffer, "Fantastic Women in Europe, the US, and Mexico," 35; Tara Plunkett, "'Melusina After the Scream': Surrealism and the Hybrid Bodies of Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 95, no. 5 (2018): 510, doi:10.1080/14753820.2018.1497341.
[70] Chadwick, *Farewell to the Muse,* 100.
[71] Leonora Carrington and Marina Warner, *Down Below*, New York Review Books Classics (New York: New York Review Books, 2017), 35, 43, 62.
[72] Renée Riese Hubert, "Leonora Carrington and Max Ernst: Artistic Partnership and Feminist Liberation," *New Literary History* 22, no. 3 (1991): 723, doi:10.2307/469210.

Carrington's short story "The Oval Lady" (1939) emphasizes the link of the white horse to familial and paternal control. Its protagonist, 'Lucretia', chafes under the control of her bourgeois father, with her only companion being a sentient white rocking horse.[73] This motif can be seen more directly in Carrington's 1937-1938 self-portrait *Inn of the Dawn Horse* (Figure 7), in which Carrington depicts herself in tandem with both a white horse and a rocking horse. The parallel to Leonora and her own father is clear from the title, as her nickname for her father Harold was Lord Candlestick – the titular owner of the painting's horses.[74] The chronology of these visual and written works places them all in the same inter-war period, thus underscoring the prevalence and significance of the motif within Carrington's oeuvre. The white horse enabled Carrington to represent herself in a unconventional manner, thereby making a declarative statement of her introspection and arrival on the exhibition scene.

Dorothea Tanning's *Birthday*

Much like the work of Carrington, Dorothea Tanning's painting for the exhibition also aimed to transgress and provoke. Her self-portrait *Birthday* (Figure 8) blends Surrealist mystery and irrationality with a clear desire for self-representation, declaring her arrival in avant-garde exhibition circles with a complex vision of herself. When Ernst visited Tanning's studio while scouting for the *Exhibition by 31 Women,* he both named the painting and embarked on a decades-long romance with its creator. In fact there have been several quips regarding this tale, as Tanning became the thirty-first entrant in a show intending to display thirty artists – something Guggenheim pointedly commented on over the years.[75] The painting led to a decades-long tradition with Ernst, in which he gave Tanning a painting annually on her birthday,

[73] Joanna Moorhead, *The Surreal Life of Leonora Carrington* (London: Virago, 2017), 54-55.
[74] Moorhead, *The Surreal Life of Leonora Carrington,* 85.
[75] Ibid.*,* 167.

celebrating both their first meeting and the work that brought them together.[76] This initial meeting, auspicious for Tanning's future, also marked a rupture: the end of Guggenheim's marriage to Ernst. Despite this personal tension, Tanning's work was nonetheless added to the exhibition at Art of This Century.

In her memoirs, Tanning fails to mention that Guggenheim was Ernst's then-wife, but she does not shy away from incisive commentary in relation to Surrealism, feminism, and curatorial practices. She was highly critical of the 'woman artist' moniker, as well as her role as the wife of a prominent artist and Surrealist. This culminated in Tanning's tendency to confront those who referred to her as a "woman artist" or wife, or, more damningly, jump onto what she viewed as the bandwagon of feminism for economic gain: "I have nothing to say…I've written savage letters to all kinds of earnest people who wish to include me in this category, and I just can't talk about it anymore. I'm not against women, far from it. I'm against these confused people, doing that."[77] Tanning refused to conform with the trends and interests of the art historical canon, remaining critical to those who aimed to fold her contributions and life into a smooth trajectory or tale. By focusing on a specific moment of collaboration (and avoiding the use of 'woman artist'), I aim to comply with Tanning's views; framing her art as a significant contribution to a specific exhibition and time, but not as a signpost or tokenized symbol.

In *Birthday*, Tanning depicts herself, sporting an open Renaissance-inspired blouse and skirt adorned with vines that metamorphose into naked female bodies. Accompanied by a strange hybrid creature, she stands assertively facing the viewer, with one hand poised on a doorknob, revealing a hallway of seemingly continuous doors. The overall image is uncanny, at once a

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[76] Hooks, *Surreal Lovers,* 338.
[77] Carlo McCormick and Dorothea Tanning, "Dorothea Tanning," *BOMB*, no. 33 (1990): 38, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40424069.

beautiful and implausible scene. The narrow width of the painting enhances the verticality of the doors, giving the impression that they stretch far above the viewer. The vibrant purple and gold of her sleeves draw attention to her upper body, an effect further enhanced by the muted shades of green and brown that dominate the rest of the painting. Due to the brightly coloured sleeves, the eye goes to Tanning before her mysterious winged companion, making it a secondary surprise. Tanning has spoken extensively on the painting and its personal significance, but has always left something unclear. On one hand she described the painting as a "a talisman for the things that were happening" in her life.[78] On the other, she was adamant that "you can't control the way people look at your paintings. You can't change their interpretive strategies."[79]

Between the in-process transformation of her attire, mysterious yet enclosed scene, and newly-acquired title, *Birthday* most immediately suggests the notion of rebirth. Art historian Victoria Carruthers noted that the rebirth had been characterized in a romantic sense, but, as the painting was created pre-Ernst, it is more often framed as a transformation from reality to fantasy, real to surreal, physical to imaginative.[80] These flexible dichotomies are echoed in a statement given by Tanning for a 1944 exhibition, in which she says of *Birthday*:

> The result is a portrait of myself, precise and unmistakeable to the onlooker. But what is a portrait? Is it mystery and revelation, conscious and unconscious, poetry and madness? Is it an angel, a demon, a hero, a child-eater, a ruin, a romantic, a monster, a whore? Is it a miracle or a poison? I believe that a portrait, particularly a self-portrait, should be somehow, all of these things and many more, recorded in a secret language clad in the honesty and innocence of paint.[81]

In the work, she casts herself and her painting as unknowable, interior, and multitudinous.

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[78] Dorothea Tanning, *Birthday* (San Francisco, CA: Lapis Press, 1986), 14.
[79] Tanning, *Between Lives,* 311.
[80] Victoria Carruthers, *Dorothea Tanning: Transformations*, (London, UK: Lund Humphries, 2020), 27.
[81] Carruthers, *Dorothea Tanning*, 28.

The enclosed and domestic setting of Tanning's self-portrait has resulted in a fruitful body of analysis by the newer generations of feminist art historians, including Victoria Carruthers, Katherine Conley, and Alyce Mahon. This research is often related to broader discussions of representation and the role of women in the Surrealist movement. The body as a subversive tool of self-representation is often framed in opposition to the male Surrealist tendency to depict the female body as fragmented and altered to fit often misogynistic aims.[82] This is evident in the violent dismemberment of Bellmer's *Poupée* and Dalí's psychosexual depiction of his muse emerging from his mind for sexual purposes in *The Great Masturbator.* In contrast, Tanning's self-portrait depicts a complex and contemplative female figure, and she spoke of domestic spaces as haunting and mysterious pressures upon the lives of young women, further destabilizing the assumptions set upon the female body.[83] By depicting herself in a rather ominous domestic space, Tanning destabilizes the notion of domestic space as a safe haven for women and problematizes its confines. The windowless space, set-like constructed space, and unfolding doors create an artificial space that is anything but safe and banal. The unfurnished and sparsely decorated (save a hint of wallpaper above a door) space is unflinchingly sterile, inhabitable without changes. Further destabilizing the viewer, the setting at once ensconces Tanning in a cave-like room and offers myriad possibilities through the doors.

This drama is enhanced by the uncanny construction of the scene. Clearly staged for maximum sterility, the space unsettles the viewer. This can be characterized as theatrical due to her historical 'costume', stage-like wooden floors, and fantastical companion, but the more

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[82] Madeleine Cottenet-Hage, "The Body Subversive: Corporeal Imagery in Carrington, Prassinos, and Mansour," in *Surrealism and Women,* eds. Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli, and Gloria Gwen Raaberg, First MIT Press ed., (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 76.

[83] Katharine Conley, "Safe as Houses: Anamorphic Bodies in Ordinary Spaces: Miller, Varo, Tanning, Woodman," in *Angels of Anarchy: Women Artists and Surrealism,* ed. Patricia Allmer, (Munich, Germany: Prestel, 2009), 50.

fitting association is that of the Gothic. Surrealists, including Carrington, were often enamoured with gothic imagery as a mode of escape – namely via castles, ruins, wild landscapes, and doors.[84] In the case of *Birthday*, her companion creature can be considered gothic as it is an odd and unidentifiable creature of mystery. Tanning noted in 1989 that her early work was heavily inspired by gothic imagery, reflecting that "In the forties I was in a kind of gothic mood. The mood of longing for a displacement, of another time, another place. I had read gothic novels at that time. They were permeated with this mist of mysterious and unpredictable atmospheres of places that I didn't know about."[85] The continuously opening series of doors in the background epitomizes this interest in displacement and unknowable places.

The depiction of doors is common in much Surrealist art, and is often traced back to Lewis Carroll's 1865 *Alice In Wonderland*, which was loved by many Surrealists.[86] Tanning, however, refuted this explanation, instead arguing that "I had been struck, one day, by a fascinating array of doors – all, kitchen, bathroom, studio – crowded together, soliciting my attention with their antic planes, light, shadows, imminent openings and shuttings. From there it was an easy leap to a dream of countless doors."[87] Dreams were important to many Surrealist artists, particularly Dalí and Breton, due to their links to the innermost workings of the mind. Tanning played with this concept in her work but to different ends. Her words mark a return to discussion of domestic space, and thus bring the concept of doors into what was considered a more feminine space. Here it is entirely practical, with Tanning taking inspiration from her own home and studio - key environments in her personal landscape. The enigma of the doors remains

[84] Ades, "Orbits of the Savage Moon," 116.
[85] Alyce Mahon, "Dorothea Tanning, Surrealism, and 'Unknown but Knowable States' of Being," in *Fantastic Women: Surreal Worlds from Meret Oppenheim to Frida Kahlo,* ed. Ingrid Pfeiffer, (Munich, Germany: Hirmer Verlag GmbH, 2020), 225.
[86] Mahon, "Dorothea Tanning: Behind the Door, Another Invisible Door," 16.
[87] Carruthers, *Dorothea Tanning,* 28.

unsolved, but can be taken as new worlds or possibilities.[88] This notion is at once comforting and ominous – the doors offer choices, but also unknown futures.

Reactions to the *Exhibition by 31 Women*

While the outcome of critics' reactions to the *Exhibition by 31 Women* varies, they appear united in agreeing that Guggenheim accomplished her aim of provocation and transgression. In examining the words of critics, it is vital to remember that this occupation was the domain of white men of high socioeconomic standing.[89] As such, the reactions that are available are relatively homogenous, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the broader public who visited this well-attended show. For example, Henry McBride of the *New York Sun,* wrote that "Surrealism is about 70% hysterics, 20% literature, 5% good painting and 5% just saying boo to the innocent public…it is obvious women ought to excel at Surrealism. At all the events they do, hysterics ensure a show."[90] His repeated reference to 'hysteria' appears pejorative and dismissive in tone. However, in the context of the Surrealist movement, the term takes on a secondary and more positive connotation. The Surrealist patriarchy celebrated madness, especially when it manifested in young women, with Breton deeming Carrington to be one of "the boldest and most lucid" minds of the time after reading her account of her time in the asylum.[91]

The *Art Digest*'s critic was similarly affronted but adopted a more fearful tone. The claim that "now that women are becoming serious about Surrealism there is no telling where it will all end" once again refuses to engage with the work itself, a commonality throughout the reviews.[92] For more contemporary eyes, the *Art Digest* critique can be read as a foreshadowing of increased

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[88] Mahon, "Dorothea Tanning: Behind the Door, Another Invisible Door," 15-17, 30.
[89] Gloria F. Orenstein, "Art History and the Case for the Women of Surrealism," *The Journal of General Education* 27, no. 1 (1975): 52, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27796489.
[90] Conaty, "Art of This Century The Women," 20.
[91] Brown, *Gradiva's Mirror,* 148-150.
[92] Hooks, *Surreal Lovers,* 300.

opportunities for women working within the Surrealist movement, but in its historical context it reads as staid and fearful of future avant-garde endeavours.

Perhaps the most quotable misogynist reaction is James Stern's refusal to attend, as "there had never been a first-rate woman artist and that women should stick to having babies."[93] Disdain drips off of this refusal, and one can only imagine what Stern would have said had he attended the show. Remarkably, however, his actions served as a rallying cry. Buffie Johnson, another artist who showed at the *Exhibition by 31 Women,* marks Stern's reaction as what led to her becoming a feminist, which she enacted by researching the history of women in art history from prehistory to the present, conducting research on feminist art history and representation, and trying to prove him wrong however possible.[94] As an impetus for feminist activism, the exhibition thus transcended Guggenheim's expectations and cemented a legacy of provocation *and* notoriety.

The Legacy of the *Exhibition by 31 Women*

In a very tangible sense, the *Exhibition by 31 Women* led to increased interest in women linked to Surrealist art. In a clear about-face, Breton put out an issue of his Surrealist periodical *VVV* inspired by Guggenheim's exhibition.[95] This disseminated the exhibition and its goals to wider audiences, which was vital considering the temporary nature of the show. More broadly, the provocative nature of the exhibition's space, premise, artists, and works indicates a varied and all-encompassing pursuit of the Surrealist desire to transgress. To return to Rosemont, there has been "an insurrection of the imaginary to overthrow all limitations posed on the real."[96] In short, boundaries were broken, conventions shattered, and reality was eschewed in favour of

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[93] Buckley, *Peggy Guggenheim and The Exhibition by 31 Women,* 15.
[94] Conaty, "Art of This Century: The Women," 20-21.
[95] Hooks, *Surreal Lovers,* 305.
[96] Rosemont, *Surrealist Women,* xxxiv.

worlds beyond. Even so, a balanced approach to the exhibition's legacy is necessary. While to people today there are definite problems with the show, namely its nepotism and male-dominated jury, in its 1940s context, it was ground-breaking because it facilitated the participation of women into the traditionally male-dominated world of public art exhibition. In fact, *31 Women* exhibitor Hedda Sterne counts both Guggenheim and the show itself as contributing factors for her art career's success into her late nineties.[97]

Guggenheim's intentional destruction of Art of This Century when she left for Europe in 1947 perhaps limited the direct legacy of the gallery and its shows, but as a moment within the Surrealist movement and the early careers of major artists it lives on.[98] But even before the gallery's destruction, the *Exhibition by 31 Women* was inspiring further curatorial endeavours. In 1945, Art of This Century hosted a follow-up exhibition titled *The Women,* which continued the precedent of Guggenheim's representation of female avant-garde artists.[99] Decades later, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice put on the 1997 exhibition *Art of This Century: The Women*.[100] By taking direct inspiration from their founder's previous gallery and curatorial efforts, the Collection ensured that new generations of viewers were able to recognize Guggenheim's efforts to increase the representation of women working within the Surrealist movement.

Most significantly, however, the *Exhibition by 31 Women* has gone on to inspire not only curatorial projects, but also broader programming within the institutional space of the museum. Inspired by both the *Exhibition by 31 Women* and *The Women*, Berlin's Daimler Art Collection

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[97] Siobhan M. Conaty, "Art of This Century: a Transitional Space for Women," in *American Women Artists, 1935-1970: Gender, Culture, and Politics*, ed. Helen Langa and Paula Wisotzki (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2016), 30.
[98] Tacou-Rumney, *Peggy Guggenheim,* 135.
[99] Conaty, "Art of This Century: a Transitional Space for Women," 25.
[100] Wiehager, "31 Women," 10.

put on the show *31: Women*.[101] The show itself is notable in terms of continued representation and the recognition of Guggenheim's efforts, as well as part of a larger calendar of events. The show was part of a museum content slate (lectures, publications, screenings) during which, according to the curator, "around 60 women who shaped their time as artists, authors, gallery owners, art collectors, publishers, or designers from around 1900 to the present day will be presented."[102] This wider variety of roles and artistic mediums furthers the representational aims initially set out by Guggenheim. Vitally the exhibition has also prompted introspection on the part of the Collection, who acknowledge their holdings are twenty-five percent women artists and thus situate the 2020 exhibition as part of a broader drive to examine collection strategies, research policies, and acquisition priorities.[103] The fact that a short-lived gallery and even briefer exhibition are inspiring representation and institutional change is a clear indicator of the importance of the show and its artists. Both Carrington and Tanning used the exhibition to display works of innovative self-portraiture, a trend that continued in myriad forms throughout their careers in a masterful demonstration of interiority and identity reproduction.

Chapter Two: Self-Representation in the Works of Leonora Carrington and Dorothea Tanning

In reaction to the misogynistic tendencies of the movement, namely fragmentation and reductionist archetypes of women subjects, women turned toward the proverbial mirror, and began to engage in self-representational artistic practices.[104] Gambrell conceives of the women of Surrealism's identities as "at once clearly delineated and oddly unfixed."[105] This focus on

[101] Wiehager, "31 Women," 6.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., 7, 9.
[104] Chadwick, "An Infinite Play of Empty Mirrors," 11.
[105] Gambrell, *Women Intellectuals, Modernism, and Difference,* 80.

mutability allows for criticality, but is also fittingly reminiscent of the Surrealist fascination with dreams and otherworldly forms. As such, the "self" as an identity and artistic subject becomes a mutable and ever-evolving form. In the context of Carrington's work, Natalya Lusty argues that "the process of self-revision is pivotal to the way in which they position the female subject."[106] By depicting the self as subject Leonora Carrington and Dorothea Tanning destabilized Surrealist misogyny and archetypes, instead depicting the female corporeal form as whole and multitudinous. The symbiotic nature of self and subject facilitated the long careers of both Carrington and Tanning – as they grew and transformed as artists and women, so too did their work.

Surrealist male creatives such as Bellmer and Breton were particularly enamoured with archetypes such as the *femme-enfant* ('woman-child'). In juxtaposition with each other, these characteristics created a fetishistic image of the woman in question, as evinced in Bellmer's *Poupée,* where a form known as a childhood toy is dismembered, bound, and photographed. As Chadwick argues, the moniker of *femme-enfant* indicated a "volatile mix of sexual awareness and childlike ingenuousness that fired the Surrealist imagination."[107] In theory, the combination is (and should be) impossible – setting a measure that cannot be reached. The archetype is thus yet another lofty standard leveled against women, albeit one they would likely not aspire towards.

The *femme-enfant* obsession is clear in the 'art-world anecdotes' of prominent Surrealists. Some of the most evocative anecdotes come from the writing of Gloria F. Orenstein. Of multimedia artist Meret Oppenheim, for example, she recalls the following:

> She told me how she would sit at the café with the men when she was eighteen and how she was well integrated into the Surrealist group that gathered there. But when she turned

[106] Lusty, *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis,* 4.
[107] Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 74.

> thirty, the men no longer sat with her. She was left alone and abandoned by her closest friends. She was so depressed by this abandonment that she returned to her home in Switzerland and destroyed all her art.[108]

This recollection indicates the prevalence of Surrealist male occupation with the *femme-enfant* archetype, but it is equally vital as an example of the highly gendered personal dynamics within Surrealist networks. In other scenarios, Orenstein was even witness to the events like that of a lunch between herself, Carrington, and editor Henri Parisot, in which Parisot's comments that his (middle-aged) wife was "so wonderful…a true Woman-Child…so pure and innocent, and she needs me to protect her" caused Carrington to leave and cease speaking to her colleague for weeks.[109] This alone is notable, but Orenstein then reveals that she stayed behind, explaining to Parisot the harm done by his obsession with the infantilizing 'woman-child' stereotype.[110] Orenstein's actions of frustrated but benevolent help to a male friend are familiar to many who engage with feminism in their lives and studies, creating a degree of relatability not often seen in an art historical academic context. Parisot's attitudes were by no means new to Carrington, as decades earlier he refused to correct her French while publishing a collection of her short stories so that she would sound more child-like.[111]

To combat limiting notions like the *femme-enfant*, Carrington and Tanning turned to autobiographic representations of the self. Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* that gender and identity are performative and formed based on actions, practices, splitting, and self-reflexive behaviours.[112] The nature of performance as active and ongoing precipitates a constant transformation of the self. As such, analysis based in the self

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[108] Gloria F. Orenstein, "Invisible in Plain Sight: The Women Artists of Surrealism," in *The Female Gaze: Women Surrealists in the Americas and Europe*, (New York, NY: Heather James Fine Art, 2019), 10.
[109] Orenstein, "Invisible in Plain Sight," 9.
[110] Ibid., 10.
[111] Hooks, *Surreal Lovers,* 155.
[112] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 200.

as subject remains relevant throughout artists' careers, as the self-representation evolves alongside the artist themselves. In clearer terms, as Finkelstein states, "we are constantly reacquainted with the possibilities of making ourselves: such is the art of self-invention."[113] By representing the invented and evolving self in their work, Carrington and Tanning engage in the reproduction of identity into artistic mediums both written and visual. This self-representation predominantly occurs through self-portraiture, but evolves into the inclusion of specific autobiographical narratives relating to family structures and aging. Through the close reading of the artists' work, the evolution of their self-representation becomes clear.

Early Self-Portraiture

Self-portraiture was the genre through which Tanning and Carrington explored self-invention and used of the self as an artistic subject. Autobiographical content, whether visual or written, functions as a conscious representation of identity.[114] Tanning's *Birthday,* for example, depicts the corporeal and iconographic choices made by the artist. She is recognizable to the viewer, but has placed herself in an otherworldly scene – an actor on a fabricated stage. Butler argues that performativity is a mechanism to present identity through signs:

> In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.[115]

By situating herself at the brink of real and supernatural through the inclusion of a supernatural companion, historical and yet modern through the rendering of Renaissance puffed sleeves

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[113] Finkelstein, *The Art of Self Invention*, 144.
[114] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, Second ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 61.
[115] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 185.

alongside victory rolled hair, Tanning herself can be likened to the series of doorways in *Birthday*: again offering several avenues of interpretation for the viewer. Each iconographic and representational choice by Tanning can be interpreted as a gesture of identity construction through the framework of Butler's conception of the fabrications of the self. For example, she shows herself full of possibilities as she is depicted in a moment suspended between states: a perpetual metamorphosis or transformation. As such, her identity is also in suspension, awaiting what Tanning characterizes as an artistic rebirth.[116] This is visualized through the depiction of Tanning as theatrical yet poised, with her hand and placed upon the doorknob leading to untold futures as both woman and artist. The artist was not one for a traditional birthday, and instead preferred to annually celebrate her meeting of Ernst and the artistic evolution that ensued.[117] The painting did, however, gain additional significance through the aforementioned role it played in her marriage to Ernst. If anything, it became even more personal, with its new meaning adding a ritualized purpose upon the self-portrait.

While *Birthday* is often considered the quintessential Tanning painting, Mary Ann Caws introduces a different self-portrait, one that she claims illustrates that the artist "has always been crucially aware of her own position as an artist and of her own awareness as essential to the project both of art and of self-creation."[118] Beginning in 1943, Tanning found new inspiration and increased productivity in rural Arizona, claiming that "Sedona, where nothing happened, was happening."[119] The relative isolation and stunningly desolate landscape prompted the artist to look inward. Among her Arizona works is a stunning *Self-Portrait* (Figure 9), in which Tanning has depicted herself poised on a cliffside as if about to leap into the cavernous depths of

[116] Carruthers, *Dorothea Tanning,* 28.
[117] Ibid., 29.
[118] Mary Ann Caws, *The Surrealist Look: An Erotics of Encounter*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 87.
[119] Tanning, *Between Lives,* 95-97, 140.

the red dirt valley. She is clothed in a swimsuit, which is ironic given the arid desert setting. The strangeness of her outfit and isolation recall Finkelstein's comments that "the self can be an art form, an imaginative bridge between multiple levels of impermanent reality."[120] By conceiving of the self (and in this case, the subject itself) as reaching into multiple realities, incongruences of the work are made logical. In one viewer's reality, the scene could conceal a body of water, while in another the swimsuit serves to instead to reference the hope of aqueous relief – or perhaps to facilitate tactile enjoyment of the desert's haze. Carruthers evocatively describes Tanning's position "as if it might be possible to dive into the vast canyon, physically experiencing the dust of the desert as a cool immersion in water."[121] This interpretation posits that the subject thus engages with multiple sensorial registers, an explanation that bridges the swimsuit and parched desert into a shared reality.

Carrington looked to her lived experience early in her career as well, with the personal becoming subject matter in both her writings and visual art. Her parents' ambitions led her in the direction of "proper" society – culminating in a formal debut to the monarch – which Carrington followed with an immediate departure to the continent to pursue ambitions of her own.[122] In her short story "The Debutante", she turns to the centuries-old ritual of the debutante ball with an outlandish ploy to replace herself with a friendly hyena wearing the skinned face of her maid.[123] By doing so, the narrator "enacts" rebellion in a manner Carrington herself could not have dreamed of doing at her own debut. The short story serves as a challenge to the culture and practices of British aristocracy and the upper class.[124] In this work, Carrington transforms the

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[120] Finkelstein, *The Art of Self Invention,* 225.
[121] Carruthers, *Dorothea Tanning,* 53-54.
[122] Moorhead, *The Surreal Life of Leonora Carrington*, 16.
[123] Leonora Carrington, "The Debutante," in *The Complete Stories of Leonora Carrington*, trans. Kathrine Talbot and Anthony Kerrigan, (St. Louis, MO: Dorothy, a publishing Project, 2017), 3-5.
[124] Gambrell, *Women Intellectuals, Modernism, and Difference,* 75.

reality of her begrudging participation into a fictionalized masquerade. While it critiques the commodification of young female bodies, the violence of the titular debutante captured the attention of orthodox Surrealists like André Breton, who included the tale in his canon-shaping *Anthology of Black Humour.*[125] The work's violence was more in line with the work of male Surrealists like Bellmer or Ernst, but Carrington did not negate its significance as a reformulation of the self. Instead, the violence is framed as necessary in order for the hyena to successfully appear human and female. That is, the only way she can infiltrate polite society is to don the face of another, a mask in the most grotesque sense.

From a more theoretical perspective, the masquerade of "The Debutante" is of particular importance. The notion has fascinated feminist scholars for decades, with Joan Riviere's 1929 psychoanalytical essay "Womanliness as a Masquerade" arguing that femininity functions as a masquerade to conceal aggressive traits of the other sex.[126] The mask of femininity thus conceals masculine traits that are 'incompatible' with feminine presentation. Makeup and clothing could modulate one's appearance to fit sartorial expectations, while finishing schools and etiquette training prepared girls for the scrutiny of their societal debuts. In the case of "The Debutante", the masquerade's cross-species nature obscures a direct link to Riviere, as while the mask transmits femininity, its true purpose is to humanize the hyena. As such, Carrington's writing is more compatible with Finkelstein's notion of masquerade as a method of escape from social and psychological restrictions.[127] While the escape for Carrington was facilitated by the masquerade, the hyena's ultimate liberation was caused by the *reveal* of the deception. Once the guests sat at

[125] Lusty, *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis,* 20.
[126] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 68.
[127] Finkelstein, *The Art of Self Invention,* 200.

the table, the hyena dramatically reveals herself by ripping off and consuming her mask before leaping off into the night[128] – and right into Carrington's *Inn of the Dawn Horse*.

In *Inn of the Dawn Horse,* the white horse and rocking horse motif discussed earlier can be plainly seen. Carrington, depicted with wild hair and in riding attire, perches in a Victorian chair in an unladylike manner. The painting is structured as a "rotating compositional circle" of Carrington, the hyena, the white horse, and the rocking horse, with the three animal subjects being part of the artist's vocabulary of signifiers for herself.[129] As they appear in conjunction with one another, the cycle of figures can be read as versions of Carrington. Both human and animal, the figures symbolize iterations of Carrington's past and present selves. In the context of Moorhead's claim that this self-portrait was "emblematic of all she had gone through to escape from her past, as well as a manifesto for her future", the freedom of the white horse beyond the confines of the interior brings in possible futures as well.[130] Carrington's cyclic identities make this early self-portrait a declarative image of the invented self, which is here unrestricted by species and sentiency. By crafting this varied vocabulary of signifiers, Carrington eschewed the norm of the carefully rendered moment of self-portraiture and instead created a vision of her past, present, and future selves.

Familial Structures

As those who surround, raise, and cohabitate at varying parts of life, the family unit is pivotal to self-invention due to its inherent relationality.[131] At times affirming and constricting, Carrington's and Tanning's immediate families and family spaces offered them avenues through

[128] Leonora Carrington, "The Debutante," 7.
[129] Susan L. Aberth, *Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art*, (Aldershot, Hampshire: Lord Humphries, 2004), 30.
[130] Moorhead, *The Surreal Life of Leonora Carrington,* 112.
[131] Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 168.

which they could delve deeper inward. In Carrington's case, we first turn to the storied family home: Crookhey Hall. As outsiders trying to gain legitimacy in elite social circles, the nouveau-riche Carrington family settled on the lofty Gothic estate in the Lancashire countryside.[132] This stately mansion is depicted in her 1986 lithograph *Crookhey Hall* (Figure 10). With its tall towers and minimal windows, the home is being fled by a phantasmic girl in white. This could symbolize Carrington's rebellion against her family and the bourgeois frivolity that Crookhey Hall represented.[133] As depicted in *Inn of the Dawn Horse* and "The Debutante", once again human observers (one of whom is nude) are depicted in concert with an oddly domesticated hyena. The Gothic tone of the estate is enhanced by the assorted ghostly observers, the murder of crows upon the portico, and the dense forest that disrupts the orderly landscaped nature of the garden's path. The crows are particularly intriguing, as they are directly engaging with the home, the seat of drama within the lithograph. On the roof, a spectral figure reaches out, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy alongside her ghostly companions. Despite Carrington leaving the estate in an act of youthful rebellion, it remained at the forefront of her imagination. Susan L. Aberth believes that the continued depictions of its stone façade were a way to "exorcise" the trauma of a gloomy and strict home.[134] In contrast, I would argue that that Carrington turned to her inner self within its walls, crafting imaginary worlds that became inextricably linked with the place in which they were created. In this case, the lithograph is populated with fantastic creatures, but is still grounded in reality through its representation of Carrington's childhood home.

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[132] Moorhead, *The Surreal Life of Leonora Carrington,* 31-32.
[133] Chadwick, "Leonora Carrington," 37.
[134] Aberth, *Leonora Carrington,* 11.

Carrington also painted an elaborate and highly satirized version the estate's inhabitants, in the painting *The Meal of Lord Candlestick* (Figure 11). This work depicts a bizarre banquet of well-to-do women consuming a feast of flamingo, boar, horse, and a human baby adorned with grapes. At once human, animal, and oddly reminiscent of chess pieces, the dinner guests are represented with overly long necks that are further emphasized by the necklines of their fanciful gowns. Serving the food are diminutive servants, whose size reflects their social standing in relation to the guests. This literal scaling is an element of the painting's function as a satire of the Carrington family and upper-class British society at-large.[135] In reference to his nickname, Carrington's wealthy father is the lord portrayed in the lower left corner with lurid yellow skin and no mouth.[136] This precludes his participation in the feast, and symbolically stops him from commenting on the rebellious art created by his daughter. Carrington's Catholic school education is referenced through the grape-garnished baby and ritualized nature of the meal upon the altar of the dining table.[137] By juxtaposing the traditional grapes/wine of communion with a baby, Carrington emphasizes the satirical (and downright blasphemous) element of her painting.

Carrington provides a kinder depiction of her family in *And Then We Saw the Daughter of the Minotaur* (Figure 12). This painting is among the works created during the early years of Carrington's parenthood, which Aberth has argued is the impetus for some of her best paintings.[138]The painting represents another otherworldly scene around a table, but it is affirming and centered on cooperation, not consumption. Instead of a feast, luminous crystal orbs adorn the table, hinting at the potential for esoteric practices like fortune-telling. Carrington's sons are swathed in black fabric in sharp contrast with the orange robes of the horned cow across the

[135] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement,* 75.
[136] Aberth, *Leonora Carrington,* 41.
[137] Ibid., 39-40.
[138] Hooks, *Surreal Lovers,* 334.

table. Between them is a billowy flower-faced figure, the titular 'Daughter of the Minotaur': feminine deity, child of a favoured Surrealist symbol, and reference to Minoan antiquity.[139] The painting is a meeting of real and imagined, with Carrington's family and Surrealist familiar sharing a table in a show of unity. Here, elements of Carrington's life and work blend together, making *And Then We Saw the Daughter of the Minotaur* a consciously constructed representation of key elements of her identity, namely her family.

Tanning also painted a family dinner in *Portrait de famille (Family Portrait)* (Figure 13), placing a father and mother at a dining table accompanied by a maid and dog. This painting shows a seemingly quotidian family unit, but confronts the viewer's understanding of the scene through manipulation of the notions of scale and opacity. The mother appears the most normal, despite her haunting gaze directly at the viewer. The maid's size is proportional to her social standing in the household, a technique also employed on the servants' bodies in Carrington's *The Meal of Lord Candlestick*. Paired with the dog, the strangeness of her height is amplified. It is the correct size in relation to the mother, but the dog's size becomes incongruous alongside the maid. While Carrington's painting confronts the viewer through its cannibalistic subject matter, Tanning's painting distorts the space to destabilize the viewer's gaze. This can best be seen in the father, who is massive and diaphanous. Barely clinging to bodily existence, he looms over the table. The opacity of his glasses obscures his gaze, which appears to be directed at the viewer. By representing the father's gaze in this way, the painting further disconcerts the work's viewers, placing them under *presumed* scrutiny. In further opposition to Carrington's mockery of the family meal, Tanning has described her painting as a comment on "the hierarchy within the

[139] Janice Helland, "Surrealism and Esoteric Feminism in the Paintings of Leonora Carrington," *Racar: Revue D'art Canadienne* 16, no. 1 (2020): 58, doi:10.7202/1073329ar.

Sacrosanct family."[140] As such, despite the strictness of its internal hierarchy, here depicted via scale, the family unit remains sacred.

In the painting *Maternity* (Figure 14), Tanning engages with another form of family: that of motherhood. Rejecting societal pressure, Tanning chose not to have children. In *Maternity,* she has created a painting that reminds the viewer of what Madeleine Cottenet-Hage describes as the sobering notion that "we are all at odds with the passing of time, although – and one almost hates to repeat an all too evident truth – time is more visibly and tangibly inscribed in the female biology."[141] To refute the so-called biological imperative of procreation, Tanning depicted a scene that frames motherhood as isolating and even disconcerting. The mother stands in ripped and soiled white garb, holding a child in identical clothing. Her posture is stiff and erect, with her gaze trailing off into the distance. Tanning has again turned to a favoured motif: the open door. One reveals a mysterious creature, while the other reveals an unknown space to the right of the canvas. The creature is particularly intriguing, with its rounded rope and cloth body reminding the viewer of both ancient fertility symbols and the wordplay of vessel as a word for both ship and womb.[142] Through the door, then, lurks further symbols of maternity. The dog at first appears reminiscent of its counterpart in Tanning's *Portrait de famille (Family Portrait)*, but with the incongruous addition of a human face. Friends of the artist were quick to mention Tanning's (and Ernst's) love of their pet dogs.[143] Perhaps, then, the human-like dog is the true 'child' of the woman in the painting, at least emotionally.

In her novel *Chasm: A Weekend,* Tanning combines ideas from both *Portrait de famille (Family Portrait)* and *Maternity*. The tale unfolds in the family home, with the main character

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[140] Mahon, "Dorothea Tanning: Behind the Door, Another Invisible Door," 27.
[141] Cottenet-Hage, "The Body Subversive," 83.
[142] Carruthers, *Dorothea Tanning,* 71.
[143] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement,* 131.

Destina Meridian descending into violent and otherworldly behaviour under a lack of parental influence. The main caregiver in her life is her governess Nelly, who turns out to be a sadomasochistic murderer.[144] In a manner characteristic of the Surrealist love of transgression, nothing is as it seems at this strange desert mansion. The reader meets seven-year-old Destina sitting at the head of the dining table squeezing a thick liquid from an object in her hands, which is later revealed to be an eyeball.[145] Immediately the reader is suspicious of this precocious girl, whose mysterious tales of a gift-bringing friend raise a myriad of concerns. Multiple party guests die of misadventure along the way, with Destina soon promising to reveal her friend. Her friend is briefly revealed as a mountain lion, before disappearing and leaving her alone in the desert.[146] In this strange mix of found family and the Gothic-inspired home, Tanning plays with personal notions of family alongside Surrealist mores of imaginary worlds and irrational acts. Destina's aid or complicity in the death of one of the guests leads Chadwick to characterize the novel as "a kind of revenge of the *femme-enfant*."[147] Destina is at once an intriguingly precocious child and part of violent acts, making her more than meets the eye. By weaponizing the trope of the *femme-enfant*, she makes a direct challenge to a popular stereotype of the movement within which she rose to popularity. Drawing from her own notions of family, Tanning has taken elements of her identity and woven them into her literary subject to make comment on maternity and family in a deeply personal way. Once again, the self is mined to develop the subject.

Aging as Transformation

Instead of viewing aging as synonymous with physical and mental decay, Tanning and Carrington retained their vitality, resulting in vibrant self-representations of late-life

[144] Dorothea Tanning, *Chasm: A Weekend: A Novel*, (London, England: Virago, 2004), 111.
[145] Tanning, *Chasm,* 17, 59.
[146] Ibid., 141, 156.
[147] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement,* 188.

transformation. In her drawing *Birthday, 1976* (Figure 15), Tanning revisits the self-portraiture of her earlier work *Birthday*. The drawing depicts Tanning laying supine upon a bed, in sharp contrast to her active and confident pose in the prior self-portrait. She remains a mysterious figure in an interior scene, but is imbued with a new sense of ambivalence. Her body seems to sink into the mattress, shrinking despite the vibrant contrast of her black clothing and the white bedsheets. Meanwhile, her expression is neutral, with one arm outstretched and one tucked behind her head. The walls' staccato linework is akin to static, thus obscuring the viewer's understanding of the setting. At first, the scene gives the impression of sadness and melancholy, especially given that her husband of decades passed away the same year.

Tanning herself, however, takes a more philosophical view to her oeuvre, reminding her audience that "I like to think of it as a garden, planted in 1910 and, like any garden, always changing. There are expansions and diminishments as well as replacements, prunings, additions. One person's garden, one person's life. So far."[148] This notion of eternal transformation despite loss, aging, and uncertainty permeates Tanning's work, making this period one of new horizons. In a literary context, this resulted in her becoming a published poet at the age of eighty-nine, while in her visual expression new doors (to borrow a favourite Tanning motif) opened.[149] By engaging in continuously evolving identity creation, Tanning was able to inscribe aging and transformation upon her own body by depicting it in her work through self-representation.

Across the Surrealist movement, many women artists diversified their mediums of artistic creation. By working with found objects, collage, sculpture, and photography, they were able to cast the female body as empowered and active to further destabilize Surrealist misogyny.[150]

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[148] Tanning, *Between Lives,* 9.
[149] Hooks, *Surreal Lovers,* 339.
[150] Ades, "Orbits of the Savage Moon," 125.

Alongside her forays into poetry, fiction writing, and memoir, Tanning's later career was also characterized by increasing abstraction. Here, the transformation of the aging body is literal – originating in the artist's own body before being inscribed on her work as development to new artistic medium. *Door 84* (Figure 16) is a perfect example of this transformation. In the painting, the subjects engage in a performance that we can now theorize as a Butlerian splitting of identity: a form of gender and identity performance that relies on relationality.[151] A found door splits the canvas in half caught by the competing forces of two girls, each of whom push against it. The door is held in stasis equally between them, forcing the girls into a prolonged struggle.

The figure on the left is far more engaged, as she is shown leaning her whole body weight against the door through both arms and legs. Conversely, the figure to the right is passive, slouching with a single leg braced against the wooden barrier. This disparity in activity is reflected in the formal characteristics of the painting. On the left, the girl's body emerges from an inferno of red brushwork, energizing her push against the door. The right side of the diptych is colder, with the girl slumping into blue shadows crafted from smooth brushwork. Whether the girls are opening or closing the door is unclear, as is their identity. Are they halves of the same self, both active and passive? Regardless, their shared activity prevents the body from falling into the realm of passivity.

In two of Carrington's 1987 canvases, the transforming body is centered through the use of the archetype of the elderly and supernatural crone. Funnily enough the works *Bobbeh/Zaideh* (Figure 17) and *Night of the Eighth* (Figure 18), remain overshadowed by Carrington's earlier works to the point of being difficult to find even in monographs dedicated to her more esoteric paintings. One wonders if this minimization of Carrington's later work is yet another indication

[151] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 200.

of Surrealism's (or rather art history's) preoccupation with the *femme-enfant.* The female subject is no longer aestheticized and young, but, vitally, remains powerful. *Bobbeh/Zaideh* refers to the Jewish terms for grandmother and grandfather, though they can also be characterized as the archetypes of the crone and patriarch respectively.[152] The two figures are surrounded by the dark mystery of space, with planets, stars, and galaxies surrounding them. Only the grandmother, however, is truly part of the otherworldly realm. She has taken flight, while her companion is resigned to his seated position and remains constrained by his aging body. This difference in corporeal potentiality is underscored by Carrington's palette: warm reds adorn the cheerful grandmother, while the grandfather fades into semi-transparency in shades of white and light blue. While the couple are comparable in size, the couple are set apart by their physical capabilities. The crone has reached a state of transformation and transcendence, shattering conceptions of what an aged body should be capable of enacting.

Night of the Eighth further centers the crone by making her a seemingly generative figure. Hunched over with her hands outstretched, she interacts with a sequence of three figures: a quadrupedal creature, abstracted human, and finally the bipedal human. Due to the static nature of the painting, one cannot determine if the figures are evolving or devolving.[153] It is clear, however, that the crone is precipitating these changes. This otherworldly scene of regeneration is furthered by the semi-transparent four-pronged floral forms, swirling galaxies, mysterious central face, and overlapping circular and ovoid forms. The void-like floor is only apparent due to the presence of a golden vortex upon it, where the creature stands. Flying above the scene, the geese are read as an allusion to Carrington's mother's Irish origins.[154] Even when depicting the realm

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[152] Alicia Kent, "'Are We to Be Contented with Dreams?': Getting Older in the Work of Leonora Carrington," *Journal of Romance Studies* 17, no. 3 (2017): 301, doi:10.3828/jrs.2017.23.
[153] Annette Shandler Levitt, *The Genres and Genders of Surrealism* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 86.
[154] Levitt, *The Genres and Genders of Surrealism*, 67.

of surreal fantasy, Carrington grounds her subjects with elements of her deeply personal vocabulary of references.

While Carrington's visual representations of the crone center the transformative power of the aging body, she reaches new heights in her novel *The Hearing Trumpet.* A masterful text that blends Surrealist fantasy with feminist fervour, *The Hearing Trumpet* focuses on an elderly protagonist whose forced move to a nursing home unfolds into an otherworldly quest for the famed (or 'Holy') Grail and ends in utopian transformation.[155] The novel is initially hard to parse, with minimal structure and frequent interjections. Fortunately, those familiar with Carrington's oeuvre will note that the tale turns to many of her classic inspirations: Celtic myth, matrilineal Goddess imagery, hybrid corporeal forms, fantastic beasts of yore, and her own lived experiences. However, the most notable element of *The Hearing Trumpet* is its protagonist: the nonagenarian Marian Leatherby.

This character is near-confrontational in assuring the reader of her competence as a person and narrator, interrupting her train of thought to note that "Here I may add that I consider that I am still a useful member of society and I believe still capable of being pleasant and amusing when the occasion seems fit."[156] While her physical form is not as it once was, her mind is shaper than ever. With age has come discernment, and Leatherby seems no longer willing to entertain the whims and expectations of those around her. Her grandson denigrates her as nearly inhuman, her face is characterized by a gray beard, but she remains confident in herself and her capabilities.[157] She is not coping by claiming or trying to be young, and instead acknowledges and accepts her age and all that comes with it. Joanna Moorhead, confidante and cousin of

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[155] Lusty, *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, 62; Kent, "'Are We to Be Contented with Dreams?'," 298.
[156] Leonora Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 1-2.
[157] Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet,* 3, 10.

Carrington, characterizes Marian Leatherby as proof that "older women, far from being superfluous to humanity, turn out to hold the keys to its salvation."[158] While her utopian quest for the Grail is plot's focus, equally as significant is Leatherby's dogged acceptance of her corporality, which by extension can be considered Carrington's acceptance of transformative power of aging and life experience.

As Annette Shandler Levitt has explained, scholars have long been interested in "the Carrington persona…the complex alter ego."[159] As she continuously evolved throughout her long career, this persona evolved with her, at times becoming near symbiotic with its creator. In a manner reminiscent of Jacques Derrida's concept of the self as fiction and Jacques Lacan's theory of the self as an illusion, Leatherby is a constructed fictional subject: a vessel for storytelling.[160] In *The Hearing Trumpet*, the blending of Carrington and Leatherby becomes clear midway through the tome, with a series of irreverent comments that make the link between author, self, and subject inescapable to the reader. Carrington begins fairly innocuously, with a nonchalant hint that the protagonist "was not educated in a convent school for nothing."[161] As discussed earlier, a religious education was among the strict structures of the artist's youth. In concert with patriarchal and familial pressures, which can be observed via "The Debutante" and *Crookhey Hall* respectively, this triumvirate of influences precipitated Carrington's flight to the continent in pursuit of freer mores.

A third of the way through *The Hearing Trumpet*, 'Leatherby's' autobiographical musings establish further borrowing from the author's life. First, the protagonist references a

[158] Moorhead, *The Surreal Life of Leonora Carrington,* 229.
[159] Levitt, *The Genres and Genders of Surrealism*, 68.
[160] Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography,* 206.
[161] Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet*, 20.

domineering mother "back in Lancashire."[162] From the earlier analysis of *Crookhey Hall,* one remembers that the palatial home is also in Lancashire. Next, Carrington becomes playful, using Marian Leatherby as a mouthpiece to transmit her own opinions in addition to biographical details. This begins in the past tense, with the protagonist's comment that "art in London didn't seem quite modern enough and I began to want to study in Paris where the Surrealists were in full cry."[163] The dichotomy of tradition and rebellion echoes Carrington's life, while the commentary on the modernity of art practices underscores her prioritization of pushing the boundaries via avant-garde strategies. The direct reference to Surrealism as an artistic movement is a nod to the movement through which Carrington rose to prominence, further establishing a blurring of self and subject. While Leatherby is by name distinct from Carrington herself, the construction of Leatherby with autobiographical details from Carrington's life obscures the lines between them. Shifting to the present, Leatherby follows up by remarking that Surrealism's avant-garde status has been diminished by its popularity.[164] The cyclical nature of modernity can be seen as a commentary on Carrington (and Leatherby's) lengthy lives – they persisted long enough that what is new is old again.

By engaging in continuous self-representation throughout their works, Tanning and Carrington have imbued the subjects of their work with autobiographical details. Initially this took the literal form of self-portraiture, with the artists later branching out into interrogations of their own familial circumstances. By encoding these references into their work, Carrington and Tanning were able to create subject matter that did not rely on a visual representation of the artists themselves, but was still inherently personal. Towards the ends of their careers, the

[162] Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet*, 65.
[163] Ibid., 66.
[164] Ibid.

women depicted subjects who in their advanced age led varied and multitudinous lives that contravened the stereotype of the elderly as decrepit. Their constant evolution of self and subject allowed them to build long careers on the basis of the female body as complex and evolving, thereby challenging the misogynistic archetypes and trends of the Surrealist movement at-large.

Conclusion

From the writings of the movement's founder to the comments of prominent art critics, Surrealism contended with misogynist tendencies that permeated the very core of its foundations. Art historian Rudolf E. Kuenzli succinctly outlined the prevailing attitude as:

> Women are to the male Surrealists, as in the longstanding traditions of patriarchy, servants, helpers in the forms of child muse, virgin, *femme-enfant,* angel, celestial creature who is their salvation, or erotic model, doll – or she may be the threat of castration.[165]

In essence, women tended to be seen via what they could be to male Surrealists, not as equal beings with inherent value as subjects. Ironically, the movement was simultaneously lauded for its inclusivity and, as Rosemont argues, "no comparable movement outside specifically feminist organizations has had such a high proportion of active women participants."[166] This conundrum may never be solved, but it provides a mystery that has attracted many a scholar, including myself. This thesis aimed to examine the mechanisms used by Guggenheim, Carrington, and Tanning to navigate the patriarchal confines of the Surrealist movement, namely collaboration to increase exhibition opportunities and self-representation to contravene sexist assumptions surrounding the female body.

The first chapter focused on the *Exhibition By 31 Women,* framing it as a key moment in the early careers of Carrington and Tanning. Guggenheim's efforts to put on an all-women group

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[165] Kuenzli, "Surrealism and Misogyny," 19.
[166] Rosemont, *Surrealist Women,* xxx.

show served as a foundational moment of representation for women aiming to gain entry into the New York avant-garde scene. Guggenheim's unconventional display methods and insistence that the work came first ensured that the show provoked reactions and broke boundaries while avoiding the pitfalls of personal drama among the Surrealists. With declarative visual representations of themselves as artists, human in the case of Tanning and animal in the case of Carrington, the women matched the provocative nature of the show. The long careers of the duo serve as testament to the value of representation for early career women artists, while the emergence of further exhibitions inspired by the work of Art of This Century further cements the gallery's legacy. With the Daimler Art Collection specifically linking Guggenheim's ground-breaking work to their ongoing efforts to improve representation and enact institutional change, the *Exhibition by 31 Women* is firmly established as a vital event within feminist art historical study.[167]

In the second chapter, the written and visual production of Carrington and Tanning took centre stage. Their use of self-representation is frequent and varied, and displays, as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson note, "self-inscription through identity, relationality, agency, and embodiment."[168] By inscribing elements of the self across mediums and decades via the subjects of their work, they returned inward as a mechanism to challenge notions such as the *femme-enfant.* The duo's lengthy careers necessitated the transformation of the subject, as the women themselves were evolving – a development that culminated in the depiction of aging as a transformative apotheosis and rebirth over decay and stagnation. Ultimately, in opposition to representational strategies like Bellmer's dismembering and Dalí's psychosexual muse, the

[167] Wiehager, "31 Women," 7.
[168] Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography,* 168.

female body in the work of Carrington and Tanning is instead complete and introspective, derived from the construction of the 'self' as a narrative form.[169]

[169] Lusty, *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, 4.

Plates

Figure 1: René Magritte, Surrealist portraits around a painting by Magritte, 1929. Collage. In *La Révolution surréaliste* 12 (15 December 1929): 73.[170]

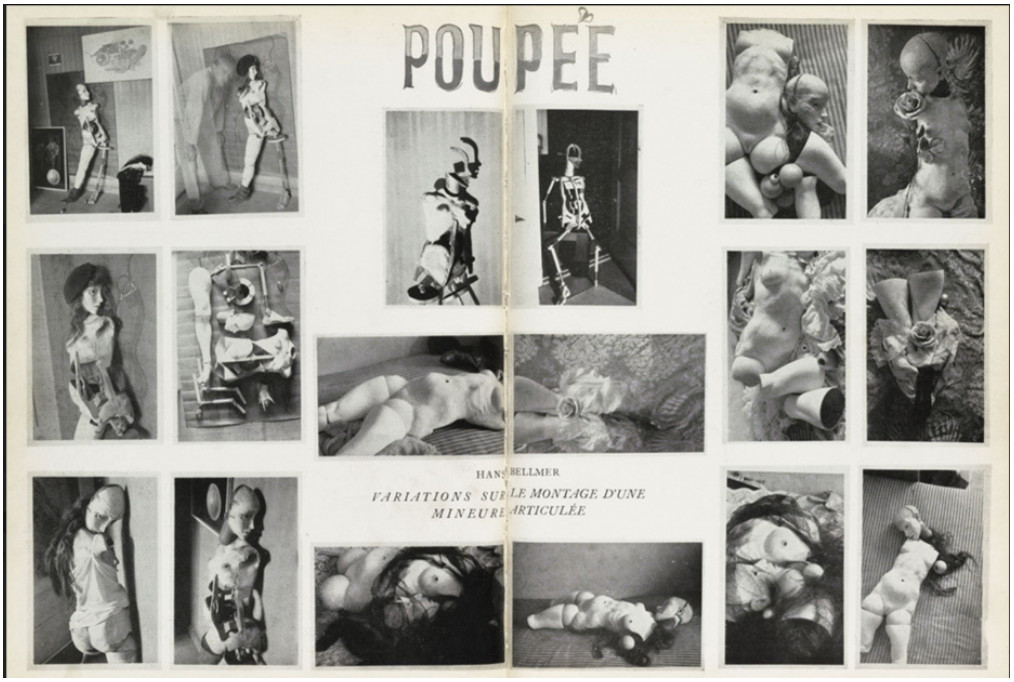

Figure 2: Hans Bellmer, *Poupée*, 1935. Prints. In *Minotaure* 6 (Winter 1935): 30-31.[171]

[170] Lyford, Surrealist Masculinities, 74.
[171] Lyford, Surrealist Masculinities, 16.

Figure 3: Salvador Dalí, *The Great Masturbator,* 1929. Oil on canvas, 43.3 x 59.1 in. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.

Figure 4: Max Ernst, *La toilette de la mariée (The Attirement of the Bride).* 1940. Oil on canvas, 51 x 37 7/8 in. Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice.

Figure 5: Peggy Guggenheim seated in the Surrealist Gallery, Art of This Century, New York, c. 1942. Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, photograph by David Heald.[172]

Figure 6: Leonora Carrington, *The Horses of Lord Candlestick.* 1938. Oil on canvas, 35 x 23.5 in. Private Collection.

[172] Buckley, *Peggy Guggenheim and The Exhibition by 31 Women*, 20.

Figure 7: Leonora Carrington, *Self Portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse)*, 1937-1938. Oil on canvas, 25 9/16 x 32 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

Figure 8: Dorothea Tanning, *Birthday.* 1942. Oil on canvas, 40 1/4 x 25 1/2 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Figure 9: Dorothea Tanning, *Self-Portrait*. 1944. Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 in. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Figure 10: Leonora Carrington, *Crookhey Hall.* 1986. Lithograph on paper, 15 1/8 x 30 3/4 in. National Museum of Women in the Arts.

Figure 11: Leonora Carrington, *The Meal of Lord Candlestick*. 1938. Oil on canvas, 18 1/8 x 24 in. Private Collection.

Figure 12: Leonora Carrington, *And Then We Saw the Daughter of the Minotaur.* 1953. Oil on canvas, 23 5/8 × 27 9/16 in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

Figure 13: Dorothea Tanning, *Portrait de famille (Family Portrait)*. 1953-1954. Oil on canvas, 39 3/8 x 31 7/8 in. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Figure 14: Dorothea Tanning, *Maternity.* 1946-1947. Oil on canvas, 56 x 48 in. Private Collection.

Figure 15: Dorothea Tanning, *Birthday, 1976.* Felt tip pen and crayon on mat board, 32 x 40 in.

Figure 16: Dorothea Tanning, *Door 84.* 1984. Oil on canvas with found door, 63 ¾ x 104 x 5 ¼ in.

Figure 17: Leonora Carrington, *Bobbeh/Zaideh.* 1987. Acrylic on canvas, 20 2/25 x 24 in. Private Collection.

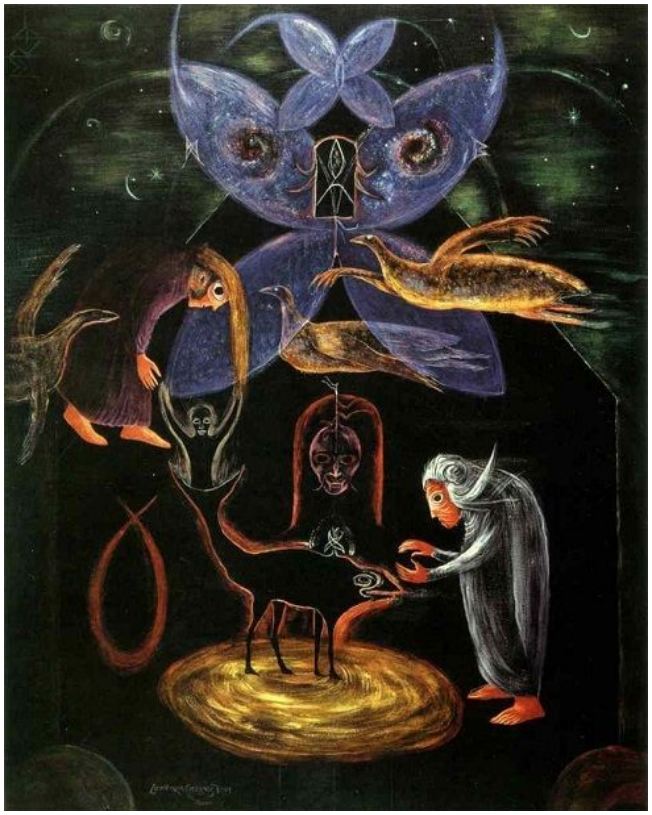

Figure 18: Leonora Carrington, *Night of the Eighth.* 1987. Oil on canvas, 29 ½ x 23 in. Private Collection.

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