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"Disorienting Forms: Jean Dubuffet, Portraiture, Ethnography"

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores an under-studied yet key aspect of Dubuffet’s figuration—the intersections between Surrealism, ethnography, and performance in his portraits of writers and artist-intellectuals seeking to transform art, culture, and the human image in the post-WWII context. As I argue, Dubuffet produced his portraits in dialogue with the writings of certain of his key sitters, whose prose extolled alternative art forms as a means to transform Western art and culture. Considering Dubuffet’s portraits in relation to his and his sitters’ writings, as well as arts and ethnographic publications, I reveal his looking, for artistic inspiration, to the very cultural forms that had informed his sitters’ production. Many of these are Oceanic masks and figures found in Surrealist collections. Intriguingly, however, many are Indonesian masks, costumes, and puppets that have received scant attention in art historical studies. Combining a variety of visual sources to produce hybrid figures, Dubuffet aimed, I argue, to both affect the viewer and promote a thought-provoking artistic experience. In foregrounding the physicality of his figures in relation to the painting’s surface, moreover, Dubuffet calls attention to the very structure of the tableau, foregrounding the embodied and enculturated, experiences of the viewer. Chapter One, “Animat[ing] the Material:” Dissociation, Performance, and Ethnography in Dubuffet’s Portraits of Antonin Artaud, considers Dubuffet’s painting in relation to the mad Surrealist’s celebration of the affective qualities of Balinese stagecraft in his book The Theater and Its Double. Chapter Two, “The Hand Speaks:” Dislocation, Creativity, and Meaning in Dubuffet’s Portraits of Henri Michaux, considers these likenesses with regard to an aesthetic of displacement in Michaux’s book A Barbarian in Asia and to a variety of Indonesian masks and puppets. Chapter Three, “Evocations and References:” Assemblage, Translation, and Transformation in Dubuffet’s Portraits of Michel Tapié, considers Dubuffet’s depictions of this painter, critic, and curator in tandem with the Oceanic motifs to which, I argue, Dubuffet turned to produce his hybrid, collage-like figures. “Transmuting:” Collage, Theatricality, and Performativity in Dubuffet’s Self-Portraits,” concludes the dissertation with an overview of Dubuffet’s career-long engagement with hybridity, collage, and performativity gleaned through his self-portraiture.
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**France:**
- Fondation Dubuffet
- Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François-Mitterrand
- Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Richelieu Library
- Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Musée de l'Opéra
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- Bibliothèque Armand Salcrou, Le Havre
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- Musée du Quai Branly
- Musée National d’Art Modern, Centre Pompidou

**Switzerland:**
- Archives de la Ville de Genève
- Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne

**The United States**
- Claire Holt Papers, New York Public Library, Dance Division.
- Museum of Modern Art, New York
- Newberry Library, Roger and Julie Baskes Department of Special Collections, Chicago
- Pierre Matisse Papers, Morgan Library, New York
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INTRODUCTION

“Learning How to Smear:” The Way to Do a Portrait in Postwar Paris

Strange, mask-like faces, eyes that gaze out at the viewer, large ears, wild hair, bizarre gestures: such are the features we encounter in Jean Dubuffet’s Post-WWII portraits (Fig.1).

Dubuffet produced over a hundred and fifty of these enigmatic renderings between summer 1946 and the summer of 1947, depicting twenty-two of the friends and associates, mostly writers and artist-intellectuals, with whom he gathered for weekly lunches. My dissertation explores Dubuffet’s paradoxical approach to these portraits, which in his hands become a means to evoke archetypal images. Indeed, in writing his “Notes for the Well-Read” Dubuffet proclaims: “In the subjects I paint I like to avoid anything fortuitous, I like to paint universal data,” adding, “all I want my painting to do is evoke a human face.”

As I elaborate during the course of this dissertation, Dubuffet used the term “archetype” in a manner that is consistent with the writing of Gaston Bachelard, drawing, in turn, upon Jungian philosophy, in which art, the poetic image, is thought to “lie dormant” within a, person or within culture. In such a conception, the artistic act, a performance of the primal will to create, produces images that resonate, suggesting creative

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patterns one might mimic rather than an actual prototype one might copy. Suggestive of both typical and fantastical human figures, Dubuffet’s portraits demonstrate the resonance, for the artist and his milieu, of anonymously produced art, ranging from modern street graffiti to the recently discovered Paleolithic cave paintings at Lascaux. The latter had intrigued Dubuffet and friends such as Gorges Bataille by pointing to the origins of creativity in the prehistoric, and therefore seemingly primal, unenculturated past. The following pages thus explore the ways in which Dubuffet’s portraits problematize the genre of portraiture during the postwar era, a period during which the received, as Dubuffet writes, “cultured,” values of modern humanism and its edifying art historical genres—including portraiture—had been more than thrown into question.

French modernists of the earlier twentieth century are well-known for looking to artistic sources outside of art historical canons (to theater, music, etc.) as well as to so-called “primitive” forms in their efforts to rejuvenate Western painting and, by extension, Western culture. Dubuffet is no exception. Famous for his interest in what he termed Art Brut (roughly translated as “raw art”—the creative work of purported “outsiders,” including mental patients, folk artists, and other marginalized producers), Dubuffet believed this ostensibly “naïve,” art to be

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3 For more on the post-war fascination with Paleolithic cave paintings see Geroges Bataille, Lascaux, or, The Birth of Art: Prehistoric Painting (Lausanne: Skira, 1955); Suzanne Guerlac, “The Useless Image: Bataille, Bergson, Magritte.” Representations 97 (Winter 2007), 28. Perhaps more reminiscent of rubbings than paintings, the rough textures of many of Dubuffet’s portraits suggests the Paleolithic cave art then capturing the attention of Parisian artists such as Dubuffet and many of his acquaintances. Dubuffet combines connotations of Paleolithic painting with rudimentary signs of modern clothing, attire that seems out of place on these crude, “archetypal,” figures, lending them a somewhat humorous air.

4 Dubuffet uses the term “cultured” to refer to art that reflects a high degree of convention, what he sees as cultural conditioning, in many texts, and outlines his views on true art in contrast to “cultured” production in texts including Dubuffet, “Anticultural Positions,” in Dubuffet and the Anticulture (New York: R. L. Feigen & Co, 1969), a facsimile of the artist's manuscript notes [handwritten in English] for a lecture at the Arts Club of Chicago on December 20, 1951” (22 leaves inserted); see also Dubuffet, “L’Art brut préféré aux arts culturels, in Prospectus et tous écrits suivants, 198-202,” translated as “Art Brut Preferred to the Popular Arts,” in Glimcher, 101-104; see also Dubuffet, “In Honor of Savage Values,” trans. Kent Minturn, in Anthropology and Aesthetics, no. 46 (Autumn, 2004): 263.
uncorrupted by mainstream European culture, attuned to primal human impulses, and
demonstrative of a kind of will to form. Dubuffet’s association with Art Brut has, however,
tended to obscure other forms of the so-called “primitive” that appear in his portraits—figures
whose disquieting, ethnographically inflected faces testify, in their way, to the bankruptcy of
Western culture in the post-war period. My research examines Dubuffet’s continued engagement
with non-Western art after the Second World War, the period during which he began collecting
Art Brut. In shedding new light on Dubuffet’s creative processes, this dissertation thus has a
larger set of stakes as well, aiming to give due credit to the non-Western (Indonesian,
Melanesian, and other) art that impacted Dubuffet, one of the most prolific and influential artists
of the post-war period.

For Dubuffet, authentic art should, to the greatest extent possible, result from and
represent interior creative drives, “works that exhibit the abilities of invention and of creation in
a very direct fashion, without masks or constraints.”\(^5\) Yet, as this dissertation illuminates,
Dubuffet remained attuned to visual stimuli, looking to nontraditional art forms, including Art
Brut and other art produced outside or at the margins of Western culture, for artistic inspiration.

Dubuffet’s depictions of odd bodily contortions, interpenetrating appendages, and
spatially ambivalent relationships between his figures and his painted surfaces demonstrate that
he looked to the material world—to the disjunctive forms of Art Brut; the gritty world of post-
war, post-occupation, and post-collaboration Paris; and, as I argue, to the non-Western art forms
to which his sitters turned for artistic inspiration. He did this, in my view, to blend the familiar
with the strange in jarringly disorienting ways; ways by which he hoped to prompt a
reorientation of the viewer’s perspective. This dissertation examines this under-studied yet key

no. 46 (Autumn, 2004), 260.
aspect of Dubuffet’s work—the various, often paradoxical, strategies by which he sought to impact the viewer, which include blending the ordinary with the extraordinary; amplifying affect—the intense and seemingly precognitive viewer responses he might generate—and, ultimately, attempting to promote active, imaginative, and interpretive engagement with his bizarre figures. Following Dubuffet’s own lines of inquiry, this dissertation thus considers the intersection between his post-war portraiture, Art Brut, and ethnography, arguing that his portraits were in dialogue with the artistic activities (poetry, prose, performance and the visual arts) of certain of his portraits sitters: Jean Paulhan, Antonin Artaud, Henri Michaux, and Michel Tapié, each of whom extolled alternative art forms as a means to revitalize art and culture. In foregrounding both his archetypal aspirations and, simultaneously, the bizarre physical characteristics of his figures, Dubuffet’s portraits point to his and his friends’ culturally subversive artistic production. In doing so, Dubuffet called attention to the symbiotic relationship between art, the artist, and culture, a relationship he hoped to alter. In highlighting the physicality of his figures in relation the painting’s surface, Dubuffet also called attention, as will be elaborated in the following chapters, to the very structure of the tableau, highlighting, in the processes, both the embodied, and enculturated, experiences of the viewer.

Dubuffet describes his process as “lay[ing] it on thick” and “learning how to smear,” accomplished with gesture, rhythms, and “circulatory movements” that are reproduced in the painting as though they are “living things.” He worked the canvas horizontally, placing it on a table or the floor and then spreading his haute pâte—a viscous mix of paint, tar, sand, pebbles, and detritus—in a similar process to that of his friend Jean Fautrier. Photographs of Dubuffet

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6 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 77.
working, his canvases spread out on the floor, cannot help but call to mind iconic images of Jackson Pollock, reminding us that Dubuffet’s post-war painting, though figurative, was in a kind of dialogue with American Abstract Expressionism, another movement with roots in the Surrealism of the interwar period that highlighted gestural painting. As argued brilliantly in Leo Steinberg’s 1972 “Reflections on the State of Criticism,” however, Dubuffet’s paintings, even his figurative works [even, as I argue, his portraits], call to mind the horizontality of a workbench or table,” the “flatbed picture plane,” as Steinberg writes, “in which the painted surface is no longer the analogue of a visual experience of nature but of operational processes.”

Steinberg thus places Dubuffet in dialogue with Robert Rauschenberg, posing Dubuffet’s painting as a precursor to “the most radical shift in the subject matter of art, the shift from nature to culture.” Indeed, horizontality of perspective, highlighting of artistic processes (seen, by Dubuffet, as in tension with culture), and the removal of those processes form the lofty easel to a messy workshop were all elements of post-war painting that Dubuffet celebrates in his writings and his *haute pâte* technique. Tipped back up to a vertical position, however, a portrait by Dubuffet takes on the characteristics of a wall, blurring the boundaries between the painting and

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79; also reprinted in Andreas Franzke, *Dubuffet*, trans. Robert Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1981), 47. Dubuffet met Jean Fautrier in 1943, after becoming acquainted with Jean Paulhan. Dubuffet is said to have been profoundly affected by Fautrier’s 1945 *Otage* series. The two artists worked in a similar manner, spreading the thick paste onto canvases placed horizontally on work tables. Dubuffet became increasingly interested in experimenting with adding real world elements, such as studio detritus, ash, sand, and pebbles to his mixture.


9 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 77. In a note titled “Lay It On Thick” Dubuffet writes: “A painter’s basic action is to besmear, not to spread tinted liquids with a tiny pen or a lock of hair, but to plunge his hands into brimming buckets or basins and then rub his palms and fingers across the wall offered to him. He has to putty it with his soils and thick paints, grapple with it, knead it, impress upon it the most immediate traces of his mind, of the rhythms and impulses that drum through his arteries and course along his innervations.”
its support while also emphasizing their differences. Dubuffet discusses painting in terms of spontaneity, inner creative drive, and the “accidents” and “adventures” of the hand and its materials. He also meticulously records his processes in his studio log, describing his layering of a “doughy paste” of paint, ash, sand, and coal dust, the consistency of “babyshit,” which he smears with a spatula and scrapes with the tip of a putty knife. Writing of his art practices in his “Notes for the Well-Read,” Dubuffet describes working with “any mud at hand,” spreading layer upon layer of his thick paint concoctions with a spoon, a spatula, and even his fingers. His additive and subtractive techniques create a unique interplay between the smeared on and gouged out paint, echoing the tensions between movement and stillness, and between the framing edge of the canvas and the corporeality of his figures, which often seem to double as if to reproduce themselves beyond the scope of the picture plane into the viewer’s space.

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11 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 69, 72.
12 Fondation Dubuffet, “Studio Log 3 January 1947, Antonin Artaud aux houppes (Antonin Artaud with Tufted Hair);” reprinted in Dubuffet and Max Loreau, *Catalogue des travaux de Jean Dubuffet*. Fasicule III Plus beaux qu’ils croient (Portraits), 79; also reprinted in Andreas Franzke, *Dubuffet*, trans. Robert Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1981), 47. Dubuffet writes: “I painted in the personage by spreading out a doughy paste of paint (*Rollplastique*). Onto this I threw a good lot of: 1) ashes almost everywhere, 2) sand in places, 3) coal dust in places. Then I spread some of the paste (*Rollplastique*) around the figure to make the background. And with big sweeps of a large flat supple brush I brushed over this with a liquid paint—babyshit color (a lot of yellow, a little red, and a touch of black). Then, with the same brush, here and there summarily laid on a bright red (liquid paint, but very thick). Finally, over all that, still with the same brush, a lot of black liquid paint (quite thick). Then I threw quite a lot of ashes across the whole ground. Then with the spatula I rubbed over it—which made the ashes really penetrate into it while the excess fell off—and this produced quite effective *grattages*. Afterward I worked the figure. I rubbed with the spatula, summarily, so as to arrive at an irregular coarse substance (the ashes in some places penetrating into the paste). . . . I put some paste over the figure again (not everywhere but on a good part of it—especially to draw the contours, large outlines of white paste) (with spatula). Then with the putty knife I redrew the figure (a little differently from before), and by grinding down into it ferociously with the putty knife, the ground color got dragged into it and it tinted (irregularly) the impasto of the figure. Then I drew inside the figure by digging down with the point of a small spatula, and tinted those incised lines with a mixture based on turpentine tinted with brown (red and black). And carefully traced the outlines of the figure with the point of a knife. And put black all around (quite thick liquid black paint) so as to make the figure stand out (with large supple flat brush), and also over the ground.”
Having trained as a painter in his youth, Dubuffet abandoned painting twice during the interwar eras (first, during the 1920s, to pursue a variety of activities, including literature, photography, and ethnography; then turning, for a time during the 1930s, to mask-making, puppetry, and performance while managing his family wine business during most of these decades). He returned to a career in painting during the war years, with his 1943 Metro Series, a body of work featuring colorful, flattened, yet puppet-like figures that are reminiscent of “folk” art and highlight quotidian routines (Fig. 2). Likewise, his subsequent body of paintings, a group of figures exhibited in 1946 under the title Mirobolus, Macadam et Cie Hautes Pâtes (Mirobolus, Macadam and Company, High Pastes), pictures the quotidian (Fig. 3). But in stark visual contrast, and one of several stylistic transformations throughout Dubuffet’s long career, the latter series, which is the immediate precursor to the portraits, marked his transition to rendering gritty, graffitiesque figures of his thick haute pâte. The brut materiality of Dubuffet’s haute pâte paintings was decidedly shocking and critics discussed the renderings in terms of mud and merde, their thick, material presence suggesting real bodily functions and calling attention to the

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14 Dubuffet, Biographie au pas de course, 15-24, 32-37; “Plus Modeste,” in Prospectus et tous écrits suivants Vol. II (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 90; Pepe Karmel, “Jean Dubuffet: The Would-be Barbarian,” Apollo CLVI, no. 489 (October 2002): 16; Peter Selz, “Surrealists and the Chicago Imagists of the 1950s: A Comparison and Contrast,” Art Journal 45, no. 4 (Winter, 1985): 11-12; Glimcher, 4. Dubuffet had trained briefly as an artist in Le Havre and Paris, where he moved in 1918. He painted sporadically during the twenties and thirties, taking up painting full time only in 1942. He had set it aside twice; once for primarily literary pursuits and a bohemian Parisian lifestyle until taking over his family’s wine business in the mid 1920s and the other, when, after having delegated the business to outside management, he returned to save it from bankruptcy in the mid 1930s, during which time he also made his puppets and masks and engaged with folk arts and festivals. He had also travelled to various parts of Europe and to Argentina (to visit an uncle) and Algeria (with his parents) during the 1920s. He resumed sporadic travel during the late 1940s, well after he dedicated himself to his art, returning to Algeria three times and once to America between 1951-52).

scarcity and wreckage of the war and occupation.\textsuperscript{16}

Dubuffet’s monochromatic palette in these post-war paintings suggests that, rather than attempting to generate affect through color (as had a variety of artists since the days of early Romanticism), he sought to impact the viewer with the sheer force of his blunt materiality and his painted gesture. It is with gesture, after all, that Dubuffet’s figures directly address the viewer. Moreover, in writing that “the hand speaks,” of “laying it on thick,” and of “learning how to smear,” Dubuffet indicates that the painted gesture (gestural painting) is as important as the gestures of the figures he depicts. By way of emphasizing this bodily gesture—and of working the paint as material—he adds that “it hardly matters whether you find few or many colors there or which colors they may be!”\textsuperscript{17} The traces of his process are apparent in his painting, laid out, like a road map for the viewer to follow.\textsuperscript{18} Here again, Dubuffet’s strategies align with Bachelard’s definition of art, in which the poetic image reverberates, producing a kind of doubling that brings about a change in the viewer, who feels compelled to “relive” the objects depicted from the standpoint of the painting rather than its real world referents.\textsuperscript{19} For Bachelard this reverberation “become[s] a new being in our language,” and in its grip we begin to imagine


\textsuperscript{17} Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 73, 77.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 72-73.

\textsuperscript{19} Bachelard, \textit{The Poetics of Space}, xxix; see also my footnote 2 in this introduction.
that we too are participating, in some way, in the creative act that produced the art. For his part, Dubuffet proclaims: “The painting will not be viewed passively; scanned as a whole by an instantaneous glance, but relived in the way it was worked out; remade by the mind and, if I may say re-acted.” Dubuffet adds that “a whole inner mechanism has to start working inside the viewer” who “scratches where the painter has done all those things” so that “he feels all the painter’s gestures reproduced within himself.” With flailing arms, many of Dubuffet’s portraits seem poised to directly communicate with the viewer, though the message is, as he intends, disturbingly unclear.

The bizarre, directly communicative gesture of many of Dubuffet’s figures suggests that he looked to theatrical as well as non-traditional plastic means to produce an impactful image. Dubuffet had a life-long interest in theater, in fact, converting a portion of his studio to a stage in order to hold performances of the masks and puppets he produced during the mid 1930s. He also embellished his sitter’s names in some of his portraits, including *Tapié King of the Carnival* and *Michaux as a Japanese Actor*, as if casting characters for his portrait oeuvre. The confrontational gesture and blunt materiality of Dubuffet’s portraits may, in their way, allude to Dubuffet’s interests in masks, puppets, and performance. Indeed, Pepe Karmel has noted the correlation between the materiality of Dubuffet’s *haute pâte* and his paper mâché masks, a correlation I too consider in the following chapters, looking also at the ways in which his gesturing figures connote the materiality and movement of puppets—three dimensional models.

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21 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 72-73.
22 Ibid.
for Dubuffet, which, I argue, attune to his interests in folk art, Art Brut, and various forms of culturally foreign performance (Fig. 4a-c).  

Perhaps one of Dubuffet’s most enigmatic portraits, his 1947 rendering of the author, Nouvelle Revue Française publisher, arts patron, and co-founder of Dubuffet’s Compagnie de L’Art Brut (Company of Art Brut), Jean Paulhan is a case in point (Fig. 1).  

It is rendered in thick haute pâte, built up in layers that are marked by rough, gritty smears and gouges. The figure gestures theatrically—and enigmatically—to the viewer, its right hand (at left of the painting) held up as if in greeting, its left hand (at the painting’s right) held in an outward position. The pose of this arm is notably awkward. Appearing to burst forth from the pentimento of a previously rendered arm, it bends at the elbow leaving the ghost hand to rest between the legs, shockingly, as if to grab its penis. The organ is not there, however, and appears to have been ripped from its proper place and transported to the neck to double as a quasi-comic, yet strikingly disturbing, necktie. Small buttons run downward from this phallic necktie, suggesting also abject droplets of urine or semen that arc over the pentimento hand and foreground the displaced genitals. As strange as these features seem they are nonetheless not the painting’s most arresting qualities. For this figure stares out at us with a jarringly confrontational, even agitated, expression and eyes so glaringly arresting that they dominate the viewing experience, making mere accoutrements of these other pictorial oddities. What is happening with this image is a mystery—a mystery by which Dubuffet aims to disturb, and hook, the viewer, reeling him or her.

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24 Karmel, 16.
25 Fondation Dubuffet, correspondences; Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet; Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,” in Asphyxiating Culture, 109. Dubuffet lists the founders of his Compagnie de l’Art Brut in this volume but there are many correspondences between Dubuffet and his co-founders that can be seen in the archives. Many of these are reprinted in Dubuffet, Prospectus et tous écrits suivants II, (Paris: Gallimard, 1967); and Dubuffet, Jean Paulhan, Correspondance: 1944-1968 (Paris: Gallimard, 2003).
into an uncanny and, he hoped, life-changing artistic encounter. It is a mystery that is worth pursuing since it points too to important aspects of Dubuffet’s artistic aims and processes. As I see it, this painting serves as a kind of key to this period of Dubuffet’s production, serving as a bridge between the various types of portraiture he produced, during the roughly one year that he engaged with it, and his other bodies of work.

The painting of Paulhan succeeds largely by virtue of its mimicry of Art Brut and, as discussed in the following chapters, non-Western cultural forms that were unfamiliar, and thus rather startling, to most European and American viewers. These non-Western artforms include theatrical masks, costumes, and puppets that, by virtue of their appearance and dissociative cultural functions (in both original and Western contexts), Dubuffet translates into an aesthetic of disturbance such as that which had appealed to avant-garde artists working to transform Western art and culture. In this way, Dubuffet reconfigured primitivism in the postwar period while continuing some of its exploitative practices. He knew this on some level that might be repressed in his writings, and in his aims to produce original works of art uncontaminated by culture, regardless of which culture. Indeed, during his Art Brut collecting he began to question what has become known as a triad of avant-garde primitivisms that included the art of children and premodern or non-Western cultures in addition to art made by mental patients. Finding not only that these artforms ought not be lumped together but that none necessarily fit his jarring Art Brut criteria (raw, roughly hewn, perhaps somewhat humorous, and most of all disturbing), Dubuffet

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began segregating only the objects that did so for his collection, which would include scant non-Western production as he considered its diverse cultural origins and functions. Nevertheless, as I argue, his portraits mark a period of experimentation with producing highly affective—and thought-provoking—art, during which time he looked to a variety of both Art Brut and non-Western artistic sources.

The painting of Paulhan serves as catalyst for my examination, in the following chapters, of three portraits that highlight the key pictorial strategies to which I have already begun to draw attention: Dubuffet’s *Antonin Artaud Aux Houppes* (Fig. 5), *Portrait of Henri Michaux* (Fig. 6), and *Tapié Grand Duc* (Fig. 7). These too feature highly affective figures that gaze directly, even theatrically, from the canvas in direct confrontation with the viewer. These too feature strange bodily contortions that highlight both the corporeal bodies of the depicted figures and the materiality of the painting itself. These too demonstrate Dubuffet’s looking to a variety of real world visual sources, including not only Art Brut but also the very non-Western art forms to which his sitters looked for rejuvenating artistic potential. In doing so, Dubuffet worked to intensify affect, turning, as I discuss in Chapter One, to the writings of Antonin Artaud for inspiration. Interested in more than merely the possibility of generating acute physiological responses, however, Dubuffet concerned himself also with the mind of the viewer. Embodying Dubuffet’s aims to craft a new artistic idiom, a “tentative language,” his portraits provide insights into his own artistic development and overall creative project.28

This study of Dubuffet’s portraiture traces back to his artistic formation during the interwar period, and to his interests in Art Brut, ethnography, and performance, each of which he

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began pursuing at that time.\textsuperscript{29} The ambition of my dissertation is to open up new perspectives on Dubuffet’s artistic development, viewing his creative processes as a kind of bridge between the inter- and post-war eras, while shedding new light on his emergence from Surrealism; his interest in “folk” art, puppetry, and performance; and his engagement with Art Brut. All of these pursuits, as I see it, appear in his paradoxically archetypical portraits.

\textbf{Art Brut:}

Although Dubuffet began collecting Art Brut in the mid 1940s, he had been fascinated by the art of mental patients since he discovered Hans Prinzhorn’s popular book \textit{Artistry of the Mentally Ill} in 1923.\textsuperscript{30} Dubuffet’s interest in Art Brut was thus a post-war revival of an interwar preoccupation. Prinzhorn himself became invested in psychology, and ultimately the art of mental patients, after studying medicine and observing cases of psychological trauma during WWI—a connection he shared with André Breton, a medic and another avid reader of the book who, along with Paulhan, author Henri-Pierre Roche, artist Slavko Kopac, critic Michel Tapié and “primitivist” art dealer Charles Ratton, co-founded Dubuffet’s \textit{Compagnie de L’Art Brut}.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} Dubuffet, \textit{Biographie au pas de course}, 22, 32; Dubuffet, “Plus Modeste,” in \textit{Prospectus et tous écrits suivants} Vol. II (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 90. According to Dubuffet he studied ethnography, among a number of other pursuits, as a young man.

\textsuperscript{30} Dubuffet, “Art Brut Chez Dubuffet,” in \textit{Prospectus et tous écrits suivants}, 41; Hans Prinzhorn, \textit{Artistry of the Mentally Ill: A Contribution to the Psychology and Psychopathology of Configuration} (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1972); Rhodes, 59-61. In the 1976 interview “Art Brut Chez Dubuffet, the artist states: “Interest in the art of the insane was ‘in the air’ when I was a student, in the 1920s.” adding that he obtained a copy of Prinzhorn’s Artistry of the Mentally Ill at about the time of its publication from his friend Paul Baudry, the Swiss writer. Regarding Prinzhorn, Rhodes notes that, being trained as an art historian as well as psychiatrist, Prinzhorn followed the work of Alois Riegl and Wilhelm Worringer, presenting the works of the mental patients featured in his book as evidence of a natural will to form that is repressed in modern, Western culture.

\textsuperscript{31} Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,” in \textit{Asphyxiating Culture}, 109; Hal Foster, “Blinded Insights” On the Modernist Reception of the Art of the Mentally Ill.” October 97, Summer 2001, 3-30. Although Prinzhorn trained in psychiatry, his post-WWI interest in the art of the mentally ill parallels that of André Breton, whose service as a WWI medic dealing with shell shock sparked his interest in subconscious processes.
Originally trained as an art historian, however, and following the work of Alois Riegl and Wilhelm Worringer, Prinzhorn presented the works of mental patients as evidence of a natural will to form that is repressed in modern Western culture.\textsuperscript{32} Looking back on his practices in a 1976 interview with author John MacGragor, Dubuffet recalls his enthusiasm for the images in the book, stating that “interest in the art of the insane” was “in the air” during the 1920s and that “the pictures in Prinzhorn’s book struck me very strongly.”\textsuperscript{33} Indeed, enthusiastic “readers” such as Dubuffet, with little knowledge of German, celebrated the book’s uncanny images, believing these artworks to be internally driven and produced by a fundamental creative impulse accessible only outside of (Western) culture. Prinzhorn’s ideas were consistent with, and furthered, the modern/ist myths of primal creativity that inspired Breton and the Surrealists to seek out the art of mental patients between the wars, constructing the heretofore described triad of avant-garde primitivism that included the art of children, mental patients, and pre-modern societies—all of which, at least for a time, attracted Dubuffet.\textsuperscript{34}

Operating within this primitivist paradigm during the 1940s, Dubuffet spoke out against what he viewed as derivative works and joined the call for artists to work against the (cultural) grain. This call reiterated the modernist drive to directly, or as directly as possible, engage with inner creative forces. Like many modernists, Dubuffet nevertheless continued looking to artistic sources for inspiration. He even drew inspiration from Renaissance painting for some of his previous portraits (those produced during the 1930s); and this is especially evident in his 1936 portrait of his wife \textit{Lili in the Renaissance Style} (Fig.8). During this time, Dubuffet also

\textsuperscript{33}Dubuffet, “Art Brut Chez Dubuffet,” in \textit{Prospectus et tous écrits suivants}, 41-42.  
\textsuperscript{34}Harrison, 121; David Maclagan, \textit{Outsider Art: From the Margins to the Marketplace} (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 8; Rhodes, 61; Prior to Dubuffet, Paul Klee is perhaps the artist best known for his exploration of the art of children and mental patients.
discussed the possibility of producing a history of art historical fads. As legend has it, Dubuffet disengaged himself from Western art history in 1942, the year he took up painting in earnest. Indeed, according to Dubuffet in his 1976 interview, he destroyed much of his work made prior to that year, believing it to be “too much influenced by culture!” Yet, he quotes the gesture and signature placement of Albrecht Dürer (Fig. 9) in one of the few colorful post-war portraits, the 1947 painting *Fautrier with Spider Brow* (Fig. 10), a piece that also mimics, and perhaps spoofs, Edvard Munch’s 1895 Expressionist *Self-Portrait with Cigarette* (Fig. 11). These art historical references remind us of the cultural formation of art, a formation Dubuffet lampoons and subverts; but with which he nevertheless remains in active dialogue despite his anti-cultural posturing. Dubuffet turned, as I have noted, to visual sources outside of Western art historical canons, including “folk art,” non-Western art, and Art Brut. He consequently admired the work of Paul Klee, a painter with ties to both German Expressionism and Surrealism who dabbled in puppetry and also drew inspiration from the art of children and the mental patients featured in Prinzhorn’s book.

Dubuffet’s innovative study, elaboration, and incorporation of Art Brut into his renderings draws from not only the works he viewed first hand but also from those creators featured in the *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*. This appropriation is especially evident in his painting of Fautrier, which includes elements suggestive of the art of Karl Genzel, a mental patient who made sculptures called “head-footers,” which are characterized by round heads on two legs (Fig. 12). The disc-like form of Genzel’s sculpture is all but replicated in the head of Fautrier, as is the distorted, slightly pointed disc framing the top and sides of the sculpted figure’s face. The spider brow of Dubuffet’s depiction does not rearticulate the sculpture, but

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35 Dubuffet, Biographie, 36-37.
36 Ibid., 45; Dubuffet, “Art Brut Chez Dubuffet,” in *Prospectus et tous écrits suivants*, 57-58.
37 Dubuffet, “Art Brut Chez Dubuffet,” 42-43; see also Prinzhorn, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* for images.
accentuates the wide, round eyes of Dubuffet’s figure, which echo those in Genzel’s piece. Likewise, the streaked paint in Dubuffet’s portrait of Fautrier, and the downward slashes demarcating the teeth, duplicate the carved beard and mustache of Genzel’s figure. Genzel’s sculpture lacks the torso seen in Dubuffet’s portrait, yet the circularity in Dubuffet’s depiction mimics the shape produced by the bowed legs of the sculpture. Dubuffet shows Fautrier smoking, but the fact that only one arm is seen (the one holding the cigarette) also calls to mind the sculpture, which has no arms at all. Finally, the round, disc-like chin and long neck in the portrait, rearticulated in the painted figure’s necktie, echoes the placement of the genitals in Genzel’s carving, produced by the conjoining of legs and head with no intervening torso and causing the penis to dangle from a position both between the legs and below the chin. Dubuffet thus seems to have looked to a variety of visual sources—from the traditional art historical sources discussed previously to Art Brut—in rendering Fautrier.

Elements of Dubuffet’s portrait of Paulhan (Fig. 1) and, as I discuss in Chapter One, the portrait of Artaud also call to mind Genzel’s figure, though they are less similar to it in their overall appearance. Each work features disjunctive figural elements, however, seen especially in the displacement of the genitals. As I see it, the sculpture’s genitals, placed where the neck should be, provide a model for the penis/necktie in Dubuffet’s paintings. Dubuffet used this technique in many of his other portraits, tailoring them to the attire of individual sitters. He even depicted poet Edith Boissonnas, one of his few female sitters, with vulva shaped neckwear (Fig. 13).

Dubuffet celebrates Art Brut in his writings, affirming his belief in it as the product of primal creative forces. According to Dubuffet, “It is only in ‘art brut’ that one finds, I believe, the natural and normal processes of the creation of art, in their elementary and pure state,”
adding that “a work of art is interesting, in my opinion, on the condition that it is a very immediate and direct projection of what happens in the depths of being.”

For Dubuffet this can only occur when art production is shielded from the influence of culture. Dubuffet refers here to an ideal of ‘brut’ art that is “completely foreign to the ways of culture” and is produced in such a way that “the author does not borrow anything, but rather invents everything.” We understand that this primary avant-gardist goal (or myth) is unattainable to artists composing with culturally produced signs—as all artists do. Yet, as previously mentioned, this notion of art embodying primal creative urges is an idea bound up with the modernist quest to attune to a seemingly primal, which is to say, an imagined pre-cultural/pre-linguistic state of being (and may also inform the recent turn to affect in the humanities). But, as evinced by Dubuffet’s conglomerate haute pate and his hybrid, theatrically posed figures, he subverted modernist notions of artistic purity as well, particularly Greenbergian ideals about media specificity.

Despite his anti-cultural rhetoric, moreover, Dubuffet apparently understood culture to be an inescapable aspect of image production. Although he continued to champion “true” art as the product of primal, inner forces, and artists working outside of ‘cultured’ production, he understood that his work was nevertheless culturally framed and ultimately made to be seen. He writes in Asphyxiating Culture that “the production of art—as all acts do—implies an addressing of others” and that “the man without culture—therefore integrally asocial—we all agree, does

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38 Dubuffet, “In Honor of Savage Values,” 262.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., 263.
41 Ibid., 261; “Note that the swindle in this case is not always deliberate; often it is, but even so it is almost always (at least the majority of the time) unconscious and involuntary, and usually, the author is in good faith. It is the phenomenon of imitation that is very powerfully at work here. The author is not conscious that he imitates another work of art, which strongly impressed him and which he assimilated. He believes, entirely in good faith, that he has pulled it out of his own reserves.” See also Asphyxiating Culture, 91. “The man without culture—therefore integrally asocial—we all agree, does not exist. He is a utopian vision.”
not exist. He is a Utopian vision.”

In the 1976 interview John MacGragor asks Dubuffet pointedly about his engagement with Art Brut sources. In response to this inquiry, and rather predictably, Dubuffet denies any such source-hunting. Pointing specifically to similarities between Dubuffet’s work and the mental patient Anton Müller, however, MacGragor observes that, once seen, the visual parallels cannot be ignored. These borrowings are significant, in my view, suggesting Dubuffet’s engagement with both real word and out-of-this-world visual sources. As I argue in the following chapters, Dubuffet looked to both the dissociative features of Art Brut and the disorienting non-Western art that enriched the artistic activities of his sitters.

Hal Foster has noted the striking similarity between Dubuffet’s figures and the work of another mental patient, Herman Beehle (Beil), which was also featured in Prinzhorn’s book (Fig. 14). This resemblance is especially important in discussing the painting of Paulhan and, as I will discuss in Chapter One, the portrait of Artaud. Both Dubuffet’s and Beehle’s figures are posed frontally as though schematically splayed out against the picture plane. In each work, the figure fills the canvas and features fluffy head gear (or hair?) framing the sides of the head and feet that are cut off at the bottom of the frame. As with the semen-like buttons in the portrait of Paulhan, the shirt buttons of Beehle’s figure suggest not so much clothing as bodily functions.

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43 Dubuffet, “Art Brut Chez Dubuffet,” in *Prospectus et tous écrits suivants*, 57-58. In the interview MacGregor specifically compares Dubuffet’s *Man with a Rose* to drawings by Anton Müller. Dubuffet denies any direct source hunting, stating: “My work was never influenced directly by Art Brut.” The resemblance between these two images is, however, undeniable, and they are compared directly in Lucienne Peiry, *Art brut: the origins of outsider art*. Paris: Flammarion, 2006, 98. Moreover, as already discussed (see note 35), Dubuffet writes of the unavoidable influence of images in culture in his “In Honor of Savage Values,” 261; “‘Note that the swindle in this case is not always deliberate; often it is, but even so it is almost always (at least the majority of the time) unconscious and involuntary . . . .”
gone awry; in Beehle’s case, carving out a hollow canal between the neck and dangling genitals. Rendered flatly and frontally, the genitals of Beehle’s figure also appear to be flayed and even drip blood. Although placed in the anatomically correct position between the legs, the sex organs in Beehle’s figure appear barely connected to the body, and are thus oddly displaced. All of these are signs of the trauma to which Foster attributes the jarring qualities of the art of mental patients.45 Thus, as Foster notes, despite the fact that Dubuffet posed Art Brut as the product of a purely internal artistic operation, he appears to have looked to the art of mental patients as not only an artistic paradigm but also as a visual source.46

We know from Dubuffet’s writings that he intended his paintings to be provocative, and to move the viewer in invigorating ways.47 He did not look to antiquated, classically inspired absorptive models of painting, nor did he wish to participate in modernist reworkings of such models, writing of his disdain for artistic trends that, in his view, regurgitated the same old ideas and the same class biases of the “cultured” elite, albeit in innovative ways.48 For this reason, he turned to the most brut forms of primitivism he could find, producing gritty figures with ambiguous relationships to not only the canvas but to the gallery and the viewer as well. Dubuffet participated, in this way, in avant-garde processes of negation, seeking to overturn previous artistic models in favor of something new, something conceived to reach out from (and into) the innermost depths of human experience. His chances of successfully moving the viewer

45 Foster, 16.
46 Ibid.
47 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 77. Dubuffet writes that “the painting will not be viewed passively; scanned as a whole by an instantaneous glance, but relived in the way it was worked out; remade by the mind and, if I may say, re-acted.”
48 Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture, 68-69. Dubuffet writes that “Many confuse culture with academicism,” noting that the old institutions, “the French Academy, the Institute of Beaux-Arts, the Prix de Rome” are no longer the powerful cultural forces they once were. According to Dubuffet: “This is not where academicism is to be found these days, it has shed its skin, it has moved to new networks with entirely new forms where many no longer recognize it, and sincerely take it for the shining light. It has taken on a modernist face, claims to be avant-garde, plays at being turbulent and seditious.”
thus hinged on disturbance—disturbance to both artistic conventions and routine viewing habits. This emphasis on artistic disturbance also echoes Bachelard’s discussion of the poetic image as a disturbance that has the power to “awaken,” as it were, “the sleeping being lost in its automatisms.”

Dubuffet idealized Art Brut as the only true art precisely because of its crudeness, odd figural distortions, and jarring pictorial displacements. Dubuffet’s paintings perform comparable operations, merging the figure and its ground, alluding to the figure’s movement forward, and picturing a body that lacks structural integrity (seen here in Paulhan’s dual arm, castrated genitals, and traumatized face). Elements of Dubuffet’s figures disconnect or interpenetrate, often in disconcerting places, evoking what Foster describes as Dubuffet’s “schizophrenic sense of literal self-dislocation”—a dislocation that can be seen in the painting of Paulhan, an advocate of Dubuffet’s work who, as mentioned, co-founded his Compagnie de L’Art Brut.

It is my claim that this pictorial slippage was intentional—that Dubuffet not only idealized the primal purity of Art Brut but also embraced its disturbance, seeking to deploy it for maximum pictorial impact. He wanted, in fact, to confront the viewer with something new—or rather something forgotten—a raw, primordial, affective response. As I argue, Dubuffet aimed to intensify affect in order to also amplify meaning, however, and to engage the viewer in the interpretive, and performative, which is to say, transformative, possibilities of art.

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49 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, xxxi; For thorough discussions of disturbance and negation in avant-garde and modernist practices see Peter Bürger, *Theory of the avant-garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); T.J. Clark, “Clement Greenberg’s Theory of Art,” *Clement Greenberg’s Theory of Art.* *Critical Inquiry* 9, no. 1, The Politics of Interpretation (Sep., 1982): 139-156; Michael Fried, “How Modernism Works: A Response to T.J. Clark” *Critical Inquiry* 9 no. 1 (Sept., 1982): 217-234; also see Graver, *The Aesthetics of Disturbance: Anti-Art in Avant-Garde Drama* for an informative discussion of anti-art in Dada, which he argues is not so much an anti-aesthetic as an “aesthetics of disturbance in which the formal qualities of a work of art (theater in his analysis) embody cultural protest. In Graver’s conclusion he discusses Artaud’s work as an example of art that goes beyond playful Dada protest and Surrealist psychological studies, in effect, combining Dada and Surrealism but going further, to produce art that can “reach out and attach itself to the audience” (217).

50 Foster, 3-30; Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,” in *Asphyxiating Culture*, 110.
Ethnography:

Finding ethnography, as gleaned through Surrealist and arts and ethnographic collections and publications, to also be a key component of Dubuffet’s portraiture, this dissertation reveals his reliance upon a variety of cultural forms once grouped in the loosely constructed and shifting category of “Oceanic.” Some of the gleaned artifacts fit this category nicely and were known to Dubuffet’s friends, many of whom were Surrealist collectors of so-called “primitive” art. Other of these artifacts, however, might have been viewed more in terms of their cultural connections to Southeast Asia. While Asian art had long appealed to the Surrealists and, more broadly, the French avant-garde tracing back to the mid-nineteenth century, Southeast Asian art was less familiar, and thus appealing, for this reason, to Dubuffet and his sitters Artaud and Michaux in particular.51 Notable among these cultural forms are Indonesian masks, costumes, and puppets which have neither been sufficiently recognized nor carefully examined in connection with Dubuffet’s work and, indeed, have received scant attention in modern art historical studies. Some of these cultural forms were rather rare in France, known in Paris primarily through ethnographic collections, photographs, and a number of publications to which, as Dubuffet’s renderings suggest, he looked for information and creative stimulation. Dubuffet writes “that the culture of the Occident is a coat which does not fit him; which, in any case, doesn’t fit him anymore,” noting that this culture “drifts further and further from daily life,” until it “no longer has real and

51 Today the term “Austronesia” is used to refer to the related, yet distinct, island cultures of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, many of which have been grouped (at times) under the rubric “Oceania.” Two linguistic traditions dominate these regions. The term Austronesia applies to the linguistically related cultures of the islands of maritime Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Timor, etc.), whereas regions to the east of these islands were more typically viewed, during the early twentieth century, as Oceania (Melanesia including New Guinea and New Ireland, a culture to which Dubuffet specifically refers in his “In Honor of Savage Values”). All of these seafaring islands are extremely hybrid and heterogeneous, however, and thus resistant to easy categorization—a feature of these regions that must have appealed to Dubuffet. Even the cultures with different linguistic roots are in contact here; and the island of New Guinea is a perfect example, being divided into two to form Indonesia (in the west) and Melanesia (in the east).
living roots.” Thus Dubuffet turned to Indonesian art in his efforts to find and (re)invent forms with the potential to enliven and enrich experience.

In his “Causette,” the short, newspaper-like announcement of Dubuffet’s 1947 portrait exposition, he claimed to have “extracted” his sitters’ images from memory (Fig. 15). If so, this memory appears to have been informed as much by ethnographic collections and photographs as by the recalled appearance of his sitters. Indeed, as I argue, Dubuffet looked to Surrealist ethnography, defined by James Clifford as juxtaposing multi-cultural imagery to produce disjunctive effects and promote less Eurocentric cultural values, in developing a pictorial style rooted also in the techniques of assemblage, a term Dubuffet coined in 1953 referring to both two- and three-dimensional collage, and in various forms of performance, including puppetry and dance.

Ultimately, this dissertation elaborates the ways in which Dubuffet alluded even to the cultural functions of certain ethnographic objects, a task requiring at least the memory of some research on his part, which he was known to conduct at Parisian and other European museums and libraries. In doing so, he looked to forms he conceived to be pictograms and ideograms, figural picture-writing that inspired his own enigmatic iconography, a “tentative language” he saw as bound up with material reaility that could conjure new/imaginary and primal forms, triggering elusive, yet powerful memories and associations. Dubuffet’s aims to

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55 Dubuffet, Biographie au pas de course, 22, 32, 36.
reconfigure the human image—and imaginary—in these ways were shared and theorized by his portrait sitters.  

Caricature:

As contemporary critics observed, Dubuffet’s portraits were meant to instigate—to agitate and unsettle the viewer. For Dubuffet, moreover, authentic art is necessarily anti-social or, at least, asocial in its spurring of cultural mores. Neither Dubuffet’s artistically subversive aims nor his figures’ rudimentary, quasi-comic, yet oddly disturbing compositions render his portraits caricature, however; far from it. These renderings are in dialogue with caricature to be sure, as they are with the genre of portraiture. But their hybridity exceeds caricature’s physiognomy, which juxtaposes human and animal (sometimes vegetable) characteristics to allude to specific personality traits or to function as overtly political satire. In contrast, Dubuffet’s hybrid figures waver between the uncanny and the marvelous, causing the viewer hesitation between perceived and conceived realities that Tzvetan Todorov associates with the fantastic. The portraits are as perplexing as they are intriguing, disrupting culturally instilled expectations in order to provoke thought and promote creative artistic and cultural change. Dubuffet conceived of creative forces, and his artistic processes, in terms of creative movements

56 Dubuffet, “Aulticultural Positions,” 12. 19. Painting is a “tentative language” (12) for Dubuffet, yet one he describes as more “concrete” and “closer to life” than writing (19).
and altered states of awareness, moreover, suggesting that it is the role of art to “burst . . . the shell of the socialized and policed man” and “to uncork passages through which the internal voices of savage man can express themselves.” If some of these portraits appear droll they do so in a disquieting way, enacting the kind of unsettling humor Dubuffet attributes in “The Art of the Joke” to the tales of Poe, the prose of Leautreamont, or the colossal sculpted heads of Easter Island. According to Dubuffet, these are “not innocent little jokes that divert you for a few moments, but [rather] the strong ones that instantly turn you to ice, change you to stone, because they’re so good and so surprising.” It is a strange and contradictory admixture. But Dubuffet describes art-making as a “grand game,” one that he wants his viewers to enjoy. Unwilling to deny the importance of the role of pleasure in experiencing art, Dubuffet gives us what he calls “funny hybrids.” As I see it, his bizarre figures, with their oddly humorous bent and their curious signs of movement, are intentionally enigmatic, pointing to the relations and tensions between creativity and culture. They are the product, I want to argue, of a cultural mélange, a hybrid imagery produced to promote a dialogue between painting and viewer, to engage the eyes and the mind so the viewer might imaginatively “re-act” the artist’s creative processes.

Informe /Perform:

Another such mélange is Dubuffet’s tentative association with post-war Art Informel painters. Indeed, the portraits reveal both the affinities and tensions between Dubuffet’s painting and the work of other post-war Parisian artists and critics. Refusing to be categorized, Dubuffet

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61 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 80.
64 Ibid., 77.
rejected the *Informel* label, a term coined in 1952 by his friend and sometime art dealer Michel Tapié to describe, and attempt to coalesce, a loosely connected group of artists (many of whom were also known as *Tachistes*) working in gestural abstraction or, alternatively, figuration in which forms seem to emerge from abstracted imagery suggestive of otherworldly mists or raw, gritty matter. The latter, highlighting earthy materiality and corporeal figuration, were approaches that Dubuffet shared with his friend Jean Fautrier. These artists had much in common, in fact, and Fautrier both exhibited with Dubuffet and, as just discussed, featured in his portrait oeuvre. Refusing to be pinned down, Dubuffet explicitly stated his anti-categorical (anti-cultural, anti-Western rationalist) stance, making it a key component of his artistic project. Writing of the tendency of Western culture to categorize thought and creativity, he argues that such labeling works “to immobilize that which is mobile, to fix that which is constantly moving, to deliver the notion stripped of the play of light that shines on it.” Seeking other forms of transfiguration, he resisted the Western “transforming [of the notion or idea] into a simple figure, a mere extinguished echo, impoverished and denatured.” In short, for Dubuffet words and labels (read rationalism and culture) impede creativity, depriving experience of its “thickness” (its richly layered nuances), a deprivation he attempts to redress in the thickly layered smears and smudges of his paintings. Yve-Alain Bois and Kent Minturn have discussed the degree to which Dubuffet’s renderings have been inflected by rogue Surrealist Georges Bataille’s notion of the *informe* (or formless)—a notion that resists the ordering classification of words (labels, definitions) and emphasizes (non-utilitarian) *function* over form. Surely, Dubuffet’s suspicion of classifying

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categories, of the written word (a dubious claim for such a prolific writer) and, indeed much of
the European painting he believed capable of “delivering only a dead remnant of thought”
demonstrates his appreciation of the informe, as does his celebration of matter and the so-called
“primitive” cultures which, according to Dubuffet, understand “the continuity of all things” and
produce art that can “conjure things, not isolated, but linked to all that surrounds them,”
suggesting, in this way, “different stages between being and not being.”

66 The subtractive aspects of Dubuffet’s process—the defacing (and, at times, defining) scratches and gouges with which he scores his figures also allude, in their way, to the informe, which for Bataille accounts for the human urge to deface.

The notion of the informe, as Bois and Minturn note, surely impacted Dubuffet’s work, though his painting, even his play with materiality, expresses instead an overarching will to form.

Dubuffet’s sculptural paintings certainly owe a debt to post-war phenomenological discourses emphasizing the richness of the material conditions of viewing; the bodily, tactile, and temporal dimensions of experiencing art; and the body in motion, particularly, as previously mentioned, the ideas elaborated by Bachelard.

It is Dubuffet’s generating of dialogues between form and informe; figuration and defiguration; and materials and motion, gleaned through the portraits themselves, that serves as the impetus of my inquiry, pointing me, ultimately, in a performative, direction.

Performativity:

67 Guerlac, 31-33.
As I see it, the verb “perform,” rather than “form” or “informe,” best suits Dubuffet’s figures. For Dubuffet “the accidents of the hand (its impulses, unconscious habits, innate reactions) must also come out at the end of the performance and take a curtain call with the actors.” Writing of a “cinematics of painting” in which a work “will not be viewed passively; scanned as a whole by an instantaneous glance, but relived in the way it was worked out; remade by the mind and,…re-acted” by the viewer, Dubuffet conceives of painting as its own special kind of performance. Dubuffet’s discussion of painting advocates an explicitly performative art, implying also a dialogue with the Action Painting of Jackson Pollock and the New York school of Abstract Expressionism, though in a radically different context. In the face of grim, post-war European reality, Dubuffet conceived of painting as a playful pastiche, and an invigorating enactment that instigates a “whole inner mechanism” inside the viewer.

According to Dubuffet, Western thought “treats notions as if they were devoid of thickness,” a thickness that he attempts to convey in his portraits. Alluding, on the one hand, to the puppet shells of hollow existence, these figures point, on the other hand, to a potential solution, an “anti-cultural position.” Their corporeal presence, odd gestures, and hybrid forms are meant to disorient, to, in effect, dislodge the viewer from culturally structured way/s of looking, opening to new modes of perceiving and conceiving the world—to imaginative moments and creative movements. As Dubuffet writes, “the thinker,” which he describes as also the active (as opposed to passive) viewer, “must turn,” must resist cultural sedimentation, and

70 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 73.
71 Ibid., 77-78. Dubuffet was aware of Pollock’s work, writing of him, as Minturn notes, in his letters to Orozco during the 1950s. It is unclear, however, as also noted by Minturn, to what extent Dubuffet would have had any active dealings with Pollock during his 1951-52 visit to New York or otherwise. Pages
72 Ibid.
73 Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture, 37.
must, experience the “chaotic swarming that enriches and enlarges the world.” He must, for Dubuffet learn to appreciate that living things, in general “have neither fixed forms nor a fixed location, but are [instead] transitory and mobile.”

That Dubuffet wanted his art to disrupt quotidian performance is as clear in his prose as in his painting, in this case portraits which, despite their profusion and diversity, can be described collectively as nothing if not confrontational. Paintings of Tapié stare blankly ahead, as if electrified or, alternately, frozen on the spot. Depictions of Artaud and Michaux also face us directly, often gesturing theatrically. They communicate some crude, creative, and surely anti-cultural, message, one that is quasi-formed yet polyphonic and yet remains, as Dubuffet intends, enigmatic. As previously mentioned, these figures represent writers and artist-intellectuals looking to revamp Western, European, and specifically French culture—a cultural elite (in its way) looking to anti-cultured and ostensibly “primal” solutions. This looking back, for Dubuffet, was not only a turn to primordial, pre-civilized impulses but also a return (with a twist) to the interwar primitivism of Surrealist ethnography, reworked and combined with Art Brut inspiration within the post-war context. This art is grittier and more raw. Rooted in a rhetoric of internally driven creativity, the works covertly (sometimes overtly) draw upon an array of artistic forms—the Art Brut Dubuffet began collecting in the mid-1940s, the Oceanic masks and figures collected by his Surrealist friends during the interwar period, and, as I argue, the Indonesian costumes and puppets featured in the arts and ethnographic venues of these eras (expositions,

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75 Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture, 39, 43.
76 Ibid.
77 Dubuffet, “Aulticultural Positions,” 12; Minturn, Contre-Histoire. Dubuffet describes painting as “a tentative language.” As mentioned previously, Minturn, arguing for Dubuffet’s deliberate obfuscation of interpretation in his portraits, titles a chapter of his dissertation Physiognomic Illegibility, Impossible Exchange: Dubuffet’s Postwar Portraits.”
museum collections, published photographs, and even films), portrayals from the sunset of European colonialism.

Deploying disjunctive imagery, Dubuffet sought to disengage his viewers, if momentarily, from their ordinary worlds. But that was only one of his goals. He wanted to engage his viewers on multiple experiential registers: bodily, emotional, and intellectual. A component of his anti-cultural stance, Dubuffet’s art expresses explicitly cultural dimensions, demonstrating his belief it art’s performative—culturally transformative—power.78 Dubuffet’s cognizance of the interactions and tensions between individual, creativity, and culture becomes more nuanced in his later writings, perhaps most notably in his 1968 Asphyxiating Culture, a book in which he advocates forming a kind of anti-school or “school of deculturation” for the anti-formation of culturally established values.79 But these ideas appear also in his writings of the 1940s-50s, including his 1951 “Anticultural Positions,” a speech he wrote (in English) and delivered at the Arts Club, Chicago. In it, he proclaims: “It seems to me that especially [at that time, in the post-war context] many persons begin to ask themselves if [the] Occident had not many very

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78 Dubuffet, “In Honor of Savage Values,” 261. Despite his Art Brut ideal, and his assertions that art is authentic only when it is the product of internally motivated creative drives, Dubuffet understood that artists compose, albeit at times subconsciously, with culturally situated signs. The artist/“author” operates, in general, in “good faith,” Dubuffet writes, yet the “phenomenon of imitation is very powerfully at work.” Thus,” according to Dubuffet, “the author is not conscious that he imitates another work of art, which strongly impressed him and which he assimilated,” believing instead, mistakenly that he has “pulled it out of his own reserves.” Dubuffet also discusses the tendency of artists to subconsciously mimic the art they see in his 1976 interview with John MacGrigor, who questions Dubuffet about his direct engagement with Art Brut sources. Although Dubuffet denies any such source-hunting, he acknowledges that artists (sometime subconsciously) draw from visual stimuli in culture. It is interesting to consider Dubuffet’s position on inadvertent absorption of images gleaned in culture in relation to his statement in his “causette” that he “extracted” his portraits from memory. Scholar Marie Colombet supports Dubuffet’s assertion, claiming that he didn’t look at any photographs of his sitters in her thesis titled Dubuffet: la question de la ressemblance dans les portraits. Mémoire de maîtrise—Pierre Mendès University, Grenoble, 2001. This is not to say, however, that Dubuffet didn’t incorporate elements from culture—and even from photographs—into his portraits. As I see it, his portraits indicate that he not only subconsciously incorporated imagery he saw in cultural but also consciously drew from the non-Western cultural forms he saw in the photograph of various arts and ethnographic publications.
79 Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture, 60.
important things to learn from savages,” adding, “it may be that refinements, cerebrations, depth of mind are on their side and not on ours.” Thus, Dubuffet drew from non-Western sources in order to mix the familiar with the strange. He wanted to produce something new, something disturbing, something both culturally and artistically Other.

Dubuffet writes that “the production of art—as all acts do—implies an addressing of others. But which others?” For Dubuffet “the face of the other can take many forms. The other can be an unknown, very distant black hole, for whose benefit a bottle is thrown out to sea.” Or, conversely, “it may have a face, and this face may be sensed as real, a true protagonist” or, alternatively, as “a purely imaginary production.” Importantly, for Dubuffet, the Other could be “an imagined being, not yet existing . . . more or less chimerical,” adding that “there is involuntary chimera” and “chimera adopted in full lucidity.” The latter, according to Dubuffet, is “a powerful weapon, available to everyone against reality, against [stultifying, culturally controlled] others, against order.” It is in resisting the rigidity of enculturation that Dubuffet argues “the thinker [artist, viewer] must turn,” must move, must change perspectives. It is through this creative movement that one may take in, as best possible, the dynamic nature of art and life. Dubuffet asks, thusly, if it might be possible “for the mind to adjust to a new fragmentary and discontinuous perspective, and for it to decide to radically change its old operating procedures by orienting them from now on in this direction”—or, more properly, new directions. Dubuffet was unable to produce art that was truly raw in the sense of being uncontaminated by culture. Yet, he created remarkable, culturally resistant hybrids—composite

81 Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture, 82.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., 83.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., 42.
86 Ibid.
figures not bound by the rules of any one set of cultural expectations. He wanted these figures to disorient the viewer, to subvert enculturation in odd, somewhat humorous, and, ultimately, disturbing ways.

**PROJECT TRAJECTORY AND CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

My dissertation consists of three chapters, each of which focuses on Dubuffet’s portraits of a particular writer/visual artist: Antonin Artaud (Chapter One, Fig. 5), Henri Michaux (Chapter Two, Fig. 6), and Michel Tapié (Chapter Three, Fig. 7). These chapters consider Dubuffet’s artistic practice in relation to a tripartite set of thematic concerns, which he shared with each of his sitters, and which organizes my discussion of the portraits: dissociation, performance, and Surrealist ethnography (Chapter One), dislocation, creativity, and performativity (Chapter Two), and assemblage, translation, and transformation (Chapter Three). Because Dubuffet’s portraits depict sitters both fascinated by so-called “primitive” art and concerned with painting, writing, and the performative/transformative dimensions of their work, each chapter considers the intertextual relationships between word, image, and performance vis-à-vis an array of intra-, inter-, and ostensibly extra-cultural forms.

**Chapter One: “Animat[ing] the Material:” Dissociation, Performance, and Surrealist Ethnography in Dubuffet’s Portraits of Antonin Artaud** explores Dubuffet’s three renderings of the rogue Surrealist poet and dramaturge. Focusing primarily on the 1947 *Antonin Artaud aux houppes* (Antonin Artaud with Tufts of Hair, Fig. 5), this chapter considers an understudied aspect of Dubuffet’s career, his interest in Artaud, which I view as a corollary to Dubuffet’s investigation of the affective potential of jarring artistic forms. Tracing these interests to both men’s formation during the Surrealist milieu of the interwar period, I follow the
conceptual links they shared and theorized in affective artistic production and relationships between creativity, culture, and altered states of consciousness. I situate Dubuffet’s interest in Art Brut as an outgrowth of these interwar interests, which he expanded upon within the postwar context. Dubuffet and Artaud met officially in 1945, when Dubuffet began visiting and corresponding with the institutionalized author and collecting Art Brut. Dubuffet was as interested in Artaud’s writings as in his drawings, which he had begun making during his treatment for dissociative disorders. The men likely knew (or at least knew of) each other during the interwar period, however, since they both frequented André Masson’s Montparnasse studio, a nexus of activity for Surrealist poets, painters, and multi-cultural art enthusiasts who practiced automatic writing and the making of exquisite corpses, an activity in which participants each contributed figural elements to collective, collage-like drawings that were decidedly disjunctive.

I consider also Dubuffet’s long-standing interested in Artaud’s Alfred Jarry Theater, a fleeting 1920s venue in which Artaud introduced the use of large puppets, bizarre stagecraft, odd humor, and hyperbolic gesture, to create a super-Surrealistic performance Artaud likened to a dream or hallucination.87 Chapter One considers the ways in which Dubuffet drew upon Artaud’s writings on the dissociative qualities of stagecraft and, specifically, the affective potential of

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87 Antonin Artaud, The Theater and Its Double, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 92-93; Artaud, “The Alfred Jarry Theater,” in Artaud on Theatre, eds. Claude Schumacher and Brian Singleton (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 2004), 38; Bibliotheque Armand Salacrou, Le Havre, File Pataphysique, 1958 Letters from Limbour to Dubuffet, see also Kent Minturn, “Greenberg Misreading Dubuffet,” In Abstract Expressionism: The International Context, ed. Joan M. Marter (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 130. Artaud’s Alfred Jarry Theater was modeled after the playwright of that name (1873-1907), whose costumes, caricatures, and fantastic, dream-like staging appealed to the Dadaists and Surrealists. Artaud’s Jarry productions also drew upon the equally disturbing, often grotesque humor of Paris’s Grand Guignol Theater, a venue modeled on the very Guignol puppetry that Dubuffet produced and performed in his studio during the 1930s. Each of these venues accentuated the sheer physicality of the performance, featuring blunt imagery, caricature, and hyperbolic gesture for both parodic and dramatic effects. Dubuffet’s post-war involvement in the Collège de Pataphysique demonstrates his continued interest in Dada, Jarry, and Artaudian staging. As Minturn notes, the Collège de Pataphysique was “a secret society of avant-garde literary figures devoted to the preservation and celebration of Alfred Jarry’s legacy.”
Balinese theater, which he celebrated in his book *The Theater and Its Double*. In this text, Artaud proclaims the ability of Balinese theater—its gestures, costumes, sound, lighting, stage effects, and so on—to produce intensely affective responses in the viewer, impacting him or her on a primal, pre-conscious experiential register that could revive performance—and culture—in the West. 88 In dialogue with Artaud’s writing, painting, and, as I argue, with the Balinese theatrical costumes that inspired Artaud, Dubuffet sought to amplify affect in his portrait of the author. But Dubuffet’s approach to art-making was not primarily affect-driven. Instead, the artist appears attuned to Bachelard’s ideas on the duality of human experience, in which thinking and feeling work in tandem and form a mutually enriching relationship. 89 Thus, in drawing attention to Dubuffet’s dialogue with Artaudian affect, I nevertheless highlight a major difference in his approach, in which, as I argue, he deployed affect only as a means to create a more meaningful artistic encounter. Dubuffet created art with an aim to produce certain effects in the viewer, to be certain. But he aimed to move the viewer, not remove the agency of the viewer from the equation. Ultimately, I want to argue, Dubuffet approached affect as a crucial component of his art, one that works in tandem with, rather than replaces, meaning—creating an artistic combination that could remove the viewer from an ordinary viewing context and promote new, imaginative ways of relating to art and culture. 90

Although a substantial body of scholarship considers the impact of Balinese theater on Artaud’s writing, the performances have never been considered in relation to Dubuffet’s painting, a significant oversight given that, as I hope to show, they informed Dubuffet’s  

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90 For more on art historical and philosophical understandings of affect and cognition working together as dual faculties working in tandem see Robert B Pippin, *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).
figuration. I highlight the ways in which these theatrical elements (Balinese masks, costumes, and puppets) materialize in Dubuffet’s painting, arguing for their centrality to his Artaudian portrayals and, indeed, to many of Dubuffet’s other portraits—strange hybrids designed to deliver to the viewer an awakening jolt. I argue that a “Surrealist ethnographic” milieu, as described by James Clifford, fed both of these artists’ appetites for culturally foreign art, particularly art so unusual, by Western standards, as to greatly impact the viewer.91 Both Dubuffet and Artaud explored affect as a means to alter the consciousness of the viewer. In drawing upon Balinese cultural forms, both men sought to jolt the viewer out of a culturally induced malaise. But Dubuffet, for whom meaning was most important, extended the idea of the jolt to incorporate a “short Circuiting” of meaning. Chapter One explores Dubuffet’s short-circuiting, his attempts to dissociate the viewer from ordinary enculturated experience and to open him or her to new interpretive possibilities.

Chapter Two: “The Hand Speaks:” Dislocation, Creativity, and Meaning in Dubuffet’s Portraits of Henri Michaux considers several of Dubuffet’s nine portraits of this quasi-Surrealist writer and visual artist, arguing for the centrality of Michaux’s writings on cross-cultural contact to Dubuffet’s depictions. This chapter views Dubuffet’s Portrait of Henri Michaux (Fig. 6) as a pendent to Antonin Artaud Aux Houppes (painted nearly concurrently), resituating Dubuffet’s art in relation to culture, and to meaning, rather than merely to either his notions of anti-culture or the physiological responses he might trigger in the viewer. Considering the portrait in tandem with Michaux’s book A Barbarian in Asia along with Indonesian art and

91 Clifford, 542.
ethnographic materials, this chapter examines an aesthetics of displacement in Dubuffet’s painting.92

A notorious voyager (travelling extensively in Europe, the Americas, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and South/Southeast Asia) Michaux was a prime candidate for Dubuffet’s portrait project. The two men became friends during the 1940s and Michaux’s written and visual work resonated with Dubuffet, providing a kind of paradigm for his painterly project. Another hybrind figure that gestures theatrically, Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux signifies an aesthetics of displacement aspired to by both men. Indeed, this portrait signals both artists’ efforts to achieve what Homi Bhabha has described as an “interstitial perspective” characterized by cultural dislocation and liminality.93

Michaux’s writings (poetry, prose, and various narrative books) center around relationships between culture, creativity and movement, highlighting the impact of contact with new, culturally constructed forms of reality. These themes also characterize his travel accounts *Equador* (1929) and *A Barbarian in Asia* (1933, reissued in 1945, about a year before Dubuffet’s portrait of the author). They also characterize Michaux’s fictional tales of Plume, a tragicomic traveler carried along by odd combinations of mundane and bizarre circumstances. Outlining the author’s encounters with difference in Asian and South/Southeast Asian locales, *A Barbarian in Asia* is unique to the world of travel logs, indicative, in its way, of Michaux’s aesthetics of displacement. Running the gamut of emotions (from euphoria, to rejection, to subtle hostility in the form of humor) attributed to encountering new cultures, and once considered culture shock, the net effect of Michaux’s book is to lay bare processes he undergoes in re-orienting his

culturally situated perspective/s, a goal elaborated time and again in Dubuffet’s prose.

Considering Michaux’s artistic interest in altered states of awareness (pursuits which appear in Michaux’s own paintings of strange beings), this chapter examines Michaux’s real and imagined travels as instrumental to Dubuffet’s portraits—images in which one glimpses cultural forms from the very regions Michaux traversed, images that, as I see it, Dubuffet deployed in order to dislocate the viewer.

This chapter explores these dialogues in their attunement to larger post-war discourses on the decentering effects of encountering Otherness (in terms of both cultural and radical difference), noting again the tradition of Surrealist ethnography which informed these discourses. Dubuffet’s efforts to disorient the viewer, to remove him or her (at least momentarily) from ordinary, culturally-constructed modes of viewing is a goal he shared with Michaux as both men highlighted the performative dimensions of art, identity, and culture. Dubuffet achieves the desired, thought-provoking effects in his portraits of Michaux, selecting and composing with culturally foreign artistic forms, specifically, the Balinese and Sumatran masks and puppets to be found on the Indonesian leg of Michaux’s Asian travels. Chapter Two traces Dubuffet’s dialogue with Michaux, Surrealism, and Indonesian effigies to produce portraits that allude, in their way, to the performative, and culturally transformative, potential of art.94

Chapter Three: “Evocations and References:” Assemblage, Translation, and Transformation in Dubuffet’s Portraits of Michel Tapié considers Dubuffet’s depictions of this notorious art critic, curator, and dealer, another sitter of which Dubuffet made multiple disjunctive, often highly theatrical renderings (Fig. 7). As curator of Dubuffet’s Mirobolus

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94 See also Geneviève Bonnefoi, Jean Dubuffet (Caylus: Association mouvements, 2002). Bonnefoi also discusses Dubuffet’s work in terms of disorientation and a thematic of perpetual movement, though she does not develop these ideas in relation to Dubuffet’s drawing upon the writings of the sitters, or the Oceanic and Indonesian cultural forms, I consider here.
Macadam & Cie: hautes pâtes exhibition, Tapié’s text in the catalogue celebrated Dubuffet’s emphasis on materiality and intriguing figuration. Tapié not only promoted but actively constructed the movement for which he coined the terms Art Informel or Art autre (Art of Another Kind), for which he looked to Dubuffet and to various international, and specifically non-Western, artists for material. Many of the painters Tapié promoted shared Cubo-Surrealist backgrounds, or looked to such pictorial paradigms, and invariably applied collage-inspired imagery to their painting. Though unique in his approach, Dubuffet was no exception in deploying collage strategies.

Produced in 1946, prior to the portraits of Artaud and Michaux, the renderings of Tapié lack theatrical gestures, featuring instead dramatic facial expressions. Their small, startled looking eyes, drawn, as I demonstrate, from Oceanic figures, are both arresting and suggestive of confrontation, serving as a template for many of Dubuffet’s portraits of a variety of different sitters. This chapter considers these portraits, and a range of Oceanic motifs, which I see as instrumental to Dubuffet’s post-war painting and a set of artistic practices—exploration of human duality (humans as both thinking and feeling beings), deployment of non-Western cultural forms, and a collage aesthetic that stems from his previous bodies of work and exposure to the Surrealist collections of the interwar period. I look at the continued resonance of these collections, which, as I argue, instigated Dubuffet’s mimicry of certain Oceanic masks, considering this mimicry as a defense strategy akin to that described by Roger Caillois, and adopted by Jacques Lacan, which Homi Bhaba quotes in his essay “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonialist Discourse,” in which mimicry indicates both the subject’s sense of disintegration into (of being under attack by) a hostile environment, as in the camouflage of

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warfare, and, alternately, efforts to adapt to the imbalances caused by colonialis
tist practices. I see Dubuffet’s mimicry of Oceanic art as appropriation in keeping
with the cultural collage that Clifford poses as a key component of Surrealist
ethnography. I thus consider Dubuffet’s portrait in relation to a variety of Oceanic
cultural forms, and several of his other portraits, including that of his friend Charles
Ratton, the internationally acclaimed collector of African and Oceanic art
who co-founded Dubuffet’s Compagnie de L’Art Brut. Finding patterns which emerge in
Dubuffet’s development of Oceanic motifs (small, round eyes; cobbled together, collage-like
figures), I consider the role of a collage aesthetic that appears in Dubuffet’s paintings of the
1940s, even before his experimentation, in 1953, with mixed-media collage.

Chapter Three hones in on the theatrical qualities of Dubuffet’s Tapié, Grand Duc (Fig.
7), which features both a confrontational image and the overtly disjunctive imagery of collage. I
view this portrait in relation to a remarkably similar mask from the Torres Strait New Guinea,(an
example of which appears in a 1946 MoMA publication.) The mask stares out from the
photograph with a piercing, enigmatic gaze. This face is composed of roughly sewn tortoise shell
fragments, giving it a pieced together look which, combined with the startling eyes, calls to mind
a scarecrow or other patched-together figure (or, perhaps, a kind of Frankenstein to viewers with
Western cultural experiences). It is a particularly arresting image, one which I see as

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96 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Men,” in The Location of Culture, 85-92; Roger Caillois, “The Praying
Mantis: from Biology to Psychoanalysis” and “Mimicry and Legendary Psychastheina” in The Edge of
Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader, ed. Claudine Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 69-
102; Rich, 55-58, 71; Roger Caillois, “The Praying Mantis: from Biology to Psychoanalysis” and
“Mimicry and Legendary Psychastheina” in The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader, ed.
Claudine Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 69-102; Rich, 55-58, 71; see also Sarah K. Rich,
theories see his Ecrits: the first complete edition in English, trans. Héloïse and Bruce Fink (New York:
W.W. Norton & Co, 2006); see also the Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Jacques Lacan”
97 Ralph Linton, Paul S. Wingert, and Rene D’Harnoncourt. Arts of the South Seas (New York: Museum
of Modern Art, 1946), 128. Full discussion and photograph included in Chapter Three.
instrumental to Dubuffet’s portraits and his post-portrait production. Chapter Three thus explores the ways in which this particular portrait (drawn in part from such a mask) serves as the face of Dubuffet’s painterly post-war project, and a set of artistic aims rooted in assemblage, theater, and multi-cultural Surrealist collecting.

My dissertation concludes with “‘Transmuting:’ Collage, Theatricality, and Performativity in Dubuffet’s Self-Portraiture,” an overview of Dubuffet’s art practices gleaned through self-portraits produced at key points throughout his long career (Fig. 16-18). Tracing an artistic trajectory that became more and more characterized by collage practices, pastiche, and overt theatricality, these portraits attest to Dubuffet’s career-long investigation into the relationships between painting and performance, between the physical and fictive materiality of painting, and between the painter, the viewer, and culture. As a corollary to these self-portraits, and this artistic trajectory, I consider the ways in which Dubuffet’s artistic aims can be followed to their logical conclusions in his later production, including his 1962-66 puzzle-like Hourloupe series of sculptures and his 1971-1973 Coucou Bazar (The Hourloupe Ball), a total production featuring assemblage, painting, and sculpture as well as over-the-top theatrics that included animated puppets (Fig. 19). In each of these productions, Dubuffet aimed to dislodge the viewer from the ordinary world, transporting him or her to a world attuned to the polyphonic resonances of art’s performative power.
CHAPTER ONE

“Animat[ing] the Material:” Dissociation, Performance, and Surrealist Ethnography in Dubuffet’s Portraits of Artaud

Part One: Art Brut, Surrealism, and non-Western art in Dubuffet’s painting

The figure confronting us in Jean Dubuffet’s 1947 *Antonin Artaud aux houppes* (Antonin Artaud with Tufts of Hair) seems an alien being (Fig. 5). Its wide, heart-shaped head, shocks of hair, and gangly limbs command our immediate attention as its left arm arcs and sways, pushing into the painting’s border. Raised as if signaling the viewer directly and also touching the canvas’s edge, the figure’s right hand appears strangely distorted, even slightly mechanical in its gesture. Beyond the physical application of the *haute pâte*, oil paint to which Dubuffet has added materials such as ash, sand, and detritus to transform the canvas into a plastered wall-like surface, the painting is rife with distortions and all manner of pictorial oddities.¹ Compare, for example, the figure’s arms at the points where they move into the darkened space of the background. The left arm (on the right side of the painting) rests atop the bulb-shaped torso, pushing closer in space toward the viewer, while the right arm appears to dip into the body as the line circumscribing the torso cuts right through it. Or, by the same token, notice how the sinews in Artaud’s unnaturally thick neck delineate a second, much thinner neck, propped on top of which we see a shrunken face within a face, as the flaring nostrils of the nose become a new set

¹ Dubuffet, *Biographie au pas de course* (Paris, Gallimard, 2001), 48; Dubuffet, *Studio Log*, Fondation Dubuffet, reprinted in Andreas Franzke, *Dubuffet*, trans. Robert Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1981), 47. Dubuffet met Jean Fautrier in 1943, after becoming acquainted with Jean Paulhan. Dubuffet is said to have been profoundly affected by Fautrier’s 1945 *Otage* series and the two artists worked in a similar manner, spreading the thick paste onto canvases placed horizontally on work tables. Dubuffet became increasingly interested in in experimenting with adding real world elements, such as studio detritus, ash, sand, and pebbles to his mixture.
of eyes. Following the line of the nose, through the internal neck, into the downward direction of the phallic necktie at the collar and over the buttons of the shirt, the figure’s body is cut down the middle, doubled on either side. Likewise, the area where the strangely squared shoulders and neck meet also doubles, seeming to project a smaller figure towards us as the necktie of the main figure stands in for the penis of the second man, transforming his flailing arms into legs. And, as with the portrait of Paulhan, once we see the tie as a penis, the buttons, in their turn, flip into abject droplets of urine or semen. Like the squared off shoulders, moreover, the odd attachment of the arms/legs conveys a sense of outward movement, as if the figure, though flat, could tip forward from the canvas to walk on all fours.

In the upper register, the figure’s head presses against the top boundary. Thrust upward by the long, thick neck, the figure seems poised as if ready to spring from the frame like a jack-in-the-box. Even the tufts of hair approach the edges of the painting, as if barely contained by its borders. Comparing the portrait to a photograph of Artaud taken the same year we see his long hair escaping its pomade to form arcs at the sides of his head (Fig. 20). Dubuffet stylizes these shocks of dog-eared hair into literal dog ears.

With a history of mental problems, institutionalization, and “treatments” that included electroshock therapy, Artaud had prematurely aged and his gaunt face was fissured with deep lines. Dubuffet stylizes these lines in the portrait to form a disorienting, mask-like visage. These fissures also double, tracing the face of the secondary figure, whose tiny pupils, barely perceptible at the upper right of the nostrils (doubling here for eyes), seem to look back, as if

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2 Margit Rowell, ed, *Artaud: Works on Paper* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1996), 11, 161. Artaud had been the psychiatric hospital in Rodez since 1943 but it was only one of the asylums in which he had been confined since 1937 under various diagnoses including incurable, paranoid delirium and (likely misdiagnosed) schizophrenia. According to Rowell he may suffered from conlabulatory phrenia, “a delusional psychosis which is not accompanied by intellectual deterioration and in which some symptoms—hallucinations and confabulations—are close to those of schizophrenia.”
trying to see the outer figure, which, in turn, looks directly at the viewer. The play of gazes between these symbiotic forms heightens a troubling sense of confrontation, highlighting the figures’ connectivity, suggesting their imminent split, and calling attention to the process of viewing.

There are many reasons to single out this painting of Artaud from the numerous portraits Dubuffet produced between August 1946-August 1947 (over a hundred and fifty depictions of twenty-two friends and acquaintances, most of whom were writers and artist-intellectuals).

Although Dubuffet’s letters to arts patron Florence Gould credit her encouragement during her weekly salon-style luncheons for his foray into portraiture, it might as easily have been inspired by this particular sitter, Artaud, who made disconcerting portraits of his own while institutionalized for dissociative disorders (Fig. 21-22). Dubuffet’s letters indicate his interest in Artaud’s drawings and, as the story goes, the two men made portraits of each other, though

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3 Jean Dubuffet letter to Florence Gould 9 Aug. 1946, Fondation Dubuffet. Gould was an American expatriate and arts patron married to art collector Frank J. Gould. Dubuffet visited and corresponded with Gould regularly and in his this particular letter proclaims: “Dans quelle aventure vous m’avez jeté! Rien n’était plus loin de ma pensée que de faire de portraits! je n’avais pas la moindre idée de cela! Eh bien me voila maintenant embarque dans cette affaire, es tout à fait passionnée.” (What an adventure you have thrown me into! Nothing could have been further from my thoughts than making portraits! I hadn’t the least idea of doing that. Now I have embarked in this endeavor altogether passionately); see also Bibliotheque Doucet, Florence Gould correspondences; Dubuffet, Biographie au pas de course (Paris, Gallimard, 2001), 53-55; Susan J. Cooke, “Jean Dubuffet’s Caricature Portraits.” In Jean Dubuffet 1943-1963: Paintings, Sculptures, Assemblages: an Exhibition, eds. James Demetrion, Susan J. Cooke, Jean Planque, and Peter Schjeldahl (Washington, D.C.: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in association with the Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 22; Kent Minturn, Contre-Histoire: The Postwar Art and Writings of Jean Dubuffet. Thesis (Ph. D.)—Columbia University, 2007, 110. Cooke and Minturn discuss the connections between Dubuffet’s portraits and his literary sitters. Cooke frames Dubuffet’s portraits as politically motivated caricature supporting his friend Jean Paulhan during the editor’s resistance to the post-WWII purge of French writers accused of collaboration. Minturn agrees that Dubuffet sought to support his friend Paulhan but, contrary to Cooke, argues that Dubuffet made an anti-political, anti-historically engaged statement with his portraits and that it was by way of precisely this ahistoricism (by a disconnection of writers from the political context and ramifications of their writings) that Dubuffet sought to support Paulhan. For an alternate view of Dubuffet’s portraits as politically engaged see Andrea Nicole Maier, Dubuffet’s Decade. Thesis (Ph.D.)—University of California, Berkeley, 2009. Maier argues that Dubuffet’s portraits actually challenged Paulhan’s authority as the Parisian figure whose artistic and literary influence made Dubuffet’s career.
Artaud’s depiction of Dubuffet is now lost. Artaud’s portrait of Dubuffet’s wife Lili remains, however, exemplary of Artaud’s forceful style and featuring various pictorial elements that threaten to disturb the figure (and the viewer). These include marks resembling blood, insects, and punctures, which in some of his drawings actually pierce the surface of the paper. Artaud wanted his depictions to resemble magical spells, and his rendering of pox, scratches, and depicted or literal punctures of the paper produce decidedly disquieting effects. Such are the effects he attributed to true theather, by which he intended to disturb, dissociate, and, most importantly, transform the viewer.

Dubuffet’s painting of Artaud features a number of its own disconcerting attributes, which combine to form an odd, hybrid figure. What is this being which does not so much resemble a man as a creature, a figure with a large animal-like head from which springs a second head (in the direction of the viewer) and fluffy tufts of hair (or feathers, or fur?) at the sides? The position of this second figure is equally unclear. Despite the organic feel of the raw rendering and gritty material, one gets the sense that this smaller figure could be trying to operate the gangly, oversized arms as though by some mechanical apparatus, like a puppeteer manipulating a puppet. Likewise, the penis necktie strikes a particularly unnerving chord, suggesting not only a strange sense of humor but also castration, and a bizarre reattachment as the organ dangles.

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4 Letter from Dubuffet to Paulhan of Jan. 15, 1946, in Correspondance: 1944-1968 (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 274; Jacques Derrida and Paule Thévenin, The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 32 and notes 79-81 pages 52-53.Dubuffet wrote several letters addressing his interest in Artaud’s art. According to Derrida, “One of the first portraits done by Artaud] in Paris is that of Jean Dubuffet, on the afternoon of August 27, 1946. And it is not without importance that it should be the portrait of a painter. Leaving the studio of the rue de Vaugirard where he lingered, engrossed in his work, Antonin Artaud runs afterward to the rendez-vous that he had set with Prevel, and to explain his lateness, recounts what he has just done, saying he had looked for whatever seemed to be troubling in the face of his model. During the course of the visit Jean Dubuffet, who, in the days before, had done from memory two portraits of Antonin Artaud, shows them to him.” According to Derrida and Thévenin, Artaud’s portrait of Dubuffet was apparently never returned after Artaud’s exhibition at the Galerie Pierre.
loosely at the neck. In reading this portrait we do well to recall that for Lacan, symbolic castration represents “the dual somatic and psychical discombobulating effects” of being thrust into, and subjected to, socio-symbolic contexts (synopsis taken from the Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). ⁵ Through this social insertion, moreover, the subject imagines a loss of the raw intensity of life experience, a key concern for Dubuffet.

In addition to the puzzling, and discombobulating, pictorial elements just described, Dubuffet’s painting plays on a number of tensions, including the reduction and excess between the additive layering and subtractive gouging of the thick *haute pâte*. This technique produces both a gritty, wall-like (back)ground and a figure that seems to waiver between crudely scrawled graffiti and fleshy, organic matter. At the same time, the painting makes much of the tensions between movement and stillness as the figure presses against, yet seems trapped by, the painting’s border, as if that were the only thing stopping it from projecting itself off of the canvas. The effect is one of barely contained, or perhaps uncontainable, force—a force with which Dubuffet aims to disturb, dissociate, and disorient the viewer. Addressing what he takes to be the function of art in general, Dubuffet writes:

> To force the mind out of its usual ruts, carry it off into a world where the mechanisms of habit no longer function, where the blinders of habit fly off, and in such a way that everything seems fraught with new meaning, aswarm with echoes, resonances, overtones. That is the effect of a work of art. Shell-shocked by the trauma, all abristle after the bewildering removal from their familiar surroundings (like an attacked porcupine sticking out its spines), all the faculties of the mind are aroused, all its bells start clanging.⁶


Dubuffet wants to move the viewer; in effect, removing him or her from a mundane (encultured) viewing context in order to make possible new ways of seeing art and, by extension, new ways of experiencing the world. In keeping with the philosophy of movement, also the “philosophy of no” or negation elaborated by Gaston Bachelard, Dubuffet aims to trigger an epistemological break, to reset the viewer’s horizon of possibilities and reconnect him or her with what Dubuffet calls life’s “polyphonic” richness.  

Dubuffet began painting professionally just a few years prior to producing his portraits. Yet, he commenced his artistic pursuits in his youth, during the heydays of Paris Dada and Surrealism. Looking back on his practice in a 1976 interview, Dubuffet acknowledges his debt to Dada, adding that it was “in the air, so to speak,” during his formative years. Dubuffet immersed himself in the artistic milieu of interwar Paris, frequenting André Masson’s Montparnasse studio, which attracted rogue Surrealists such as Artaud, Georges Bataille, and Dubuffet’s long-time friend Georges Limbour. Unlike Artaud, Dubuffet had never officially participated in Breton’s sanctioned atelier and, at least retrospectively, disapproved of Surrealism as a “cultural machine.” Dubuffet and Breton were long-time friends, however, and

ideas in relation to Dubuffet’s drawing upon the writings of the sitters, or the Oceanic and Indonesian cultural forms, I consider here.


9 Dubuffet, *Biographie au pas de course*, 21-22; letter to Jacques Berne dated February 8, 1947, in Lettres à J.B., pp. 6-8; Andre Masson, *Les Anéé Surrealiste*: *Correspondences 1916-1942* (Paris: La Manufacture, 1990), 28-29. Derrida and Thévenin also discuss this connection (9), writing: “So Antonin Artaud almost completely stops drawing toward 1924. At that time he frequents the rue Blomet where André Masson had set up his studio, with Miró, Dubuffet, and Malkine as neighbors.”

collaborated during the mid 1940s to both help Artaud and to found the *Compagnie de L'Art Brut*. Dubuffet shared both the Dada and Surrealist sense of irony with regard to culture, rejecting its edifying and stabilizing norms (portraiture, for instance) as absurd, hypocritical, and creatively stifling, ideas that resonated in the aftermath of WWII. Thus, as curator Susan Cooke notes, Dubuffet’s portraits challenged the conventions of high art and the genre of portraiture “in a world where traditional humanistic values no longer seemed secure.” But Dubuffet wanted his art to do more than merely perform a Dada parody of culture or a Surrealist sifting through of culturally repressed states of consciousness. He wanted his painting to tap into and release primal forces (on his end, as the artist) and to transmit these primal forces (though their traces on paper or canvas), to the viewer, hoping to promote individual and, by extension, cultural awakening. Thus, he writes: “Painting can now illuminate the world with wonderful discoveries, can endow man with new myths and new mystics, and reveal, in infinite number, unsuspected aspects of things, and new values not yet perceived.” Statements such as this lend Dubuffet’s anticultural art a decidedly cultural component.

Given Dubuffet’s Surrealist roots and his interest in Art Brut, the psychiatric connotations of the word “dissociate” are fitting for his artistic aims. It is perhaps also fitting that the painting of Artaud nearly coincided with the 1947 International Surrealist Exposition, though

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11 There are many correspondences between Dubuffet and Breton over the years regarding Art Brut and demonstrating the two men’s approaches to art in general. Many of these can be viewed at the Fondation Dubuffet and the Bibliotheque Doucet and some are published in in Dubuffet’s *Prospectus et tous écrits suivants*. In a letter in the Doucet archives to Breton dated 25 mai 1948 Dubuffet lists the members of the *Compagnie de l’Art Brut*, including Breton, along with amounts each had pledged thus far to the endeavor. A letter from Dubuffet to Breton in the Doucet archives dated 3 juillet 1948 lists each member of the venture along with their profession and address: “Mr André BRETON, ecrivain, 42 Fontaine, Paris 9.” For more information on Dubuffet, Breton and L’Amis d’Artaud see Rowel, 162.  
13 Cooke, 28.  
Artaud, a “rogue” Surrealist, had declined to participate, having only tentatively reconciled with Breton after their break two decades earlier.\(^\text{15}\)

Both Dubuffet’s and Artaud’s creative output indicate they sought to tap into a primal, pre-conscious, pre-linguistic, mode of human experience—making affective disturbance a central part of their creative work. As Dubuffet depicted the author, I want to argue, he investigated Artaud’s claims for extreme affect, experimenting with the kinds of intensely affective responses that painting might produce in the viewer. Intrigued though he was by Artaud’s claims, Dubuffet never reframed the act of painting from “representation” to sheer “production,” the crucial move that, as Todd Cronan argues, separates affect theorists from those (Dubuffet included) who still believe in the agency of the author to intend, and the viewer to interpret, art.\(^\text{16}\) For Artaud, as Cronan notes, affect replaced agency and meaning, becoming the primary function of art.\(^\text{17}\) For Dubuffet, by contrast, affect was deployed as a means to create a more meaningful artistic encounter. Of course, he created art with the aim to produce certain effects in the viewer. But, as stated in my Introduction, he aimed to move the viewer, not remove agency from the equation, asserting that art must be the instigator of “a whole inner mechanism” that must “start working inside the viewer.”\(^\text{18}\) Ultimately, Dubuffet approached affect as a crucial

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\(^{15}\) Stephen Barber, *Blows not Bombs* (New York: Creation, 2003), 183-184. Artaud and Breton had fallen out in 1926, after a quarrel about Artaud’s hyperbolic and overly aggressive staging of the Alfred Jarry Theater. Breton nevertheless participated in L’Amis d’Artaud, helping raise money for Artaud’s care.

\(^{16}\) Todd Cronan, *Against Affective Formalism: Matisse, Bergson, Modernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 32.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 64. For more on affect see also Ruth Leys, “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” *Critical Inquiry* 37, No. 2 (Spring 2011): 434-472. Affect is a contested term referring to the triggering of physiological, pre-emotive responses, which some scholars argue supersede meaning. As Leys persuasively argues, the primacy that affect theorists attribute to physiology relegates cognition to a secondary function and, effectively, undermines the agency of the artist and viewer.

\(^{18}\) Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 78.
component of his art, one that works in tandem with, rather than replaces, meaning.  

**Dubuffet, Artaud, Surrealism**

Dubuffet produced three renderings of Artaud: two 1946 charcoal and gouache drawings, *Portrait of Antonin Artaud* and *Antonin Artaud cheveux épanouis* (Antonin Artaud with Blooming Hair, Fig. 23-24), and, my focus in this chapter, the January 1947 painting *Antonin Artaud aux houppes* (Antonin Artaud with Tufts of Hair) (Fig. 5). In these portraits, Dubuffet reduces the figure, highlighting certain of Artaud’s facial features and producing emphatically mask-like visages. In fact, it is the harshness—the abruptness—in Artaud’s face more than anything else that confronts the viewer in the two charcoal and gouache depictions.

Dubuffet rejected psychologically penetrating portraiture in the expressionist sense. Indeed, as Cooke notes, Dubuffet’s portraits “subvert portraiture’s traditional humanistic affirmation of the individual’s significance and autonomy.” Rather, his depictions of Artaud emphasize disturbance, doing so in ways that reflect the author’s intense, confrontational persona. In the *Portrait d’Antonin Artaud* Dubuffet highlights the differences between his media in an especially disjunctive way, echoing the effects produced by smeared graphite in Artaud’s self-portrait of the same year (Fig. 21). The misalignment in Dubuffet’s depiction thus speaks to his dialogue with the author-cum-visual artist, alluding also, perhaps, to the unstable slippage in Artaud’s actual personality noted by his psychiatrist, Gaston Ferdière.

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19 For more on art historical and philosophical understandings of affect and cognition working together as dual faculties working in tandem see Robert B Pippin, *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

20 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 78; Cooke, 22. Dubuffet writes: “In the subjects I paint I like to avoid anything fortuitous, I like to paint universal data,” adding, “all I want my painting to do is evoke a human face, but without accidental peculiarities, which are really so insignificant.”

21 Jan 18, 1946 Letter from Gaston Ferdière to Paulhan, file Antonin Artaud, Fondation Dubuffet Archives. Ferdière writes: “Artaud reste toujours profondément trouble et s’aggrave de jour en jour; see
downplay his interest in relationships between art and the psyche of the artist or sitter. Yet, his comments in the 1976 interview belie this position. In surveying his years of researching Art Brut, Dubuffet acknowledges his interest in the personalities behind it. This admission suggests some preoccupation with the personality of a sitter such as Artaud, whose madness, isolation, and nonconformity to social mores placed his work somewhere in between avant-garde art and Art Brut production.  

Characterizing his portraits as drawn from memory to depict more generalized than individual figures, Dubuffet declares his disinterest in capturing the “accidental peculiarities” of his sitters. But he presents us with his sitters’ most striking characteristics, the features that most impacted his memory. In his rendering of Artaud, these were the deep lines of his face and the glaring slits of his eyes.

In contrast to their more detailed faces, the bodies in Dubuffet’s gouache and charcoal portraits are depicted as ovoid blobs devoid of embellishment. These renderings, characterized by the harshness of the charcoal rubbings, suggest Dubuffet’s play between figuration and near-abstraction. This can be seen to a greater extreme in the skeletal head, squinting eyes, and pronounced lines of Antonin Artaud with Blooming Hair. The hair in this rendering is also more rounded, rendered in frottage and gouache sans the outlines defining the rest of the figure and coiffed as though springing from the sides of the head. Both figures are shown simultaneously as

also Gaston Ferdière Nouveau écrits de Rodez, ed. Evelyne Grossman, Œuvres (Paris: Gallimard, 2004); and Barber, 141.

22 Dubuffet, “Art Brut Chez Dubuffet,” in Prospectus et tous écrits suivants, 45. Discussing his initial interest in researching Art Burt (in this case, of the artist Anton Müller), Dubuffet acknowledges that he wants to know “Who this artist was!” adding: “Of course it isn’t so important to establish a connection with the biography. The pictures can stand alone. But I am always greatly curious. I want to link the work with a mind.” Since Dubuffet acknowledges his interest in the personalities of the Art Brut producers he researched, it is not so surprising to find hints of his sitter’s personality in his rendering.


24 Dubuffet discusses these renderings in a letter to Paulhan dated Sept. 11, 1946 in Correspondences, 328.
lumps of unyielding flesh and forms so flattened as to appear pressed against the paper (as if 
sandwiched between two panes of glass). The lines of the faces, moreover, make the figures 
seem flayed out, enhancing the sense of forward thrust toward the viewer. Yet, for all this feeling 
of movement and pressure, the net visual effect is of stony stillness, as though the figures, having 
impacted the picture plane, have left us with the imprint of a material collision. They look 
fossilized or petrified, a characteristic that may be important given Dubuffet’s emphasis, in his 
 writings, on life as creative movement versus culture as a petrifying, anti-life force.  

In comparison to his gouache and charcoal renderings, Dubuffet’s haute pâte painting of 
Artaud seems softer and more pliant, yet thicker and more materially there. This figure startles 
by virtue of its directly engaging gaze, odd pose, strangely canine form, and the brute presence 
of the piece as a concrete object. This blunt impact of the painting is aided by the implied 
movement of the figure’s upward thrust, its outward doubling, and the arms that reach right out 
toward the viewer.

Dubuffet proclaimed his enthusiasm for Artaud’s work in a 1945 letter to his friend Jean 
Paulhan, writing “I am reading The Theater and its Double by Antonin Artaud and am amazed to 
find there the same ideas as mine.” Although official accounts place their meeting that same 
year, Dubuffet and Artaud likely encountered each other during the height of their Surrealist 
activities of the interwar period. Indeed, Dubuffet may have met Artaud as early as the 1920s 
given both men’s interest in contemporary art, literature, and theater, not to mention their

his true nature, bit by bit, a sort of borrowed nature which becomes habitual for him, and from which he 
can no longer free himself.” Thus, enculturation “works as breaks” from which artists must seek to free 
themselves, at least from time to time.

26 Jean Dubuffet, Jean Paulhan, Julien Dieudonné, and Marianne Jakobi, Letter to Jean Paulhan, 11 
double d’Antonin Artaud et suis émerveillé d’y trouver justement les mêmes idées que les miennes.”
affiliation with the Surrealist circles frequenting André Masson’s Paris studio. Given Dubuffet’s interest in Dada, moreover, it is likely that at that time he investigated Artaud’s Alfred Jarry Theater (named for the playwright whose pre-Dadaesque farces Dubuffet later helped promote). In any case, Dubuffet would surely have known of Artaud prior to their postwar interaction.²⁷ It is likely that Dubuffet’s interest in Artaud was sparked (or renewed) by the painter’s quest for exceptional works made by culturally isolated mental patients, some of which would be included in the collection held by the Compagnie de L’Art Brut, the co-founders of which would also aid Dubuffet in helping Artaud improve his circumstances after the war.²⁸ In any case, it is clear that Dubuffet was drawn to the institutionalized author while touring mental facilities in search of Art Brut.

Artaud’s doctor, Ferdière, also played a role in the meeting. A Surrealist poet as well as a prominent psychiatrist, he aided Artaud’s transfer in 1943 from a state mental institution near occupied Paris to the one Ferdière himself administered south of the occupied zone in Rodez. He did this at the behest of Artaud’s mother and the Surrealist poet Robert Desnos, who was a personal friend to Artaud, Ferdière, and Dubuffet. In fact, Dubuffet was the first visitor Ferdière permitted to see the author since his transfer.²⁹ Ferdière both encouraged Artaud’s drawing at Rodez and made the art of the patients there available to Dubuffet (though Dubuffet’s letters

²⁷ Dubuffet, Archives, Bibliothèque Armand Salcrou, Le Havre, Collège de Pataphysique; Dubuffet, Correspondences in Biographie, 20-22; Valérie Dacosta and Fabrice Hergott, Jean Dubuffet: Works, Writings, and Interviews, trans. Ann King (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2006), 12-13; Dubuffet, and Daniel Abadie. Dubuffet (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2001), 354, 469-70; Barber, 26. Barber places Dubuffet’s and Artaud’s meeting in 1923. Dubuffet’s membership in the Collège de Pataphysique, a society dedicated to preserving the legacy of Playwright Alfred Jarry (one of Artaud’s theatrical inspirations), demonstrates also Dubuffet’s continued interest in the theatricality of puppets, or at least art inspired by such performance.
²⁸ Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,” 109; Le Foyer de l’Art Brut was established in 1947 in the basement the Drouin gallery in Paris.
²⁹ Pierre Chaleix, “Presentation,” in Nouveau écrits de Rodez by Gaston Ferdière; Artaud and Evelyne Grossman, Œuvres (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 1757-1759; Barber,139-140; Rowell, 161-162. With the outbreak of WWII Artaud suffered horrible conditions, including starvation, in the Ville-Evrard institution before the intervention that transferred him to Rodez.
indicate that Ferdière was less cooperative in releasing Artaud’s work, hoping to profit from exhibiting it with collections of the art of the mentally ill). Dubuffet and Ferdière corresponded regularly about Artaud’s wellbeing, however, and cooperated in 1946 to obtain another transfer for him, one that returned him to a private hospital at Ivry-sur-Seine near Paris. To do this, Dubuffet collaborated with a range of Parisian artist-intellectuals including Paulhan, Breton, and Bataille, to raise and administer the funds for Artaud’s care. These men also supported Artaud’s January 1947 solo performance titled The story Lived by Artaud-Momo, an event which, unfortunately, highlighted Artaud’s unstable—and unmanageable—personality in a performance so jarringly disjunctive, and at times aggressive, that it was unclear to what degree it was intentional or the ravings of a madman.

As Dubuffet’s collaborations in his Compagnie de L’Art Brut and Les amis d’Artaud

30 Fondation Dubuffet, Artaud File. Dubuffet sent a number of short correspondences to Ferdière about Art Brut in 1948 and, previously, discussed his treatment of Artaud, and Artaud’s drawings, in letters to Paulhan dated 15 Jan, 22 Jan, 10 March, 12 June, 23 July 1946 and more published in Jean Dubuffet and Jean Paulhan, Correspondance: 1944-1968. In the letter of 22 Jan 1946 (277), Dubuffet writes to Paulhan that “Ferdière ne se content pas d’intercepter les dessins, il intercepte aussi les lettres” (Ferdière is not content to intercept the [Artaud’s] drawings, he also intercepts the letters). For Dubuffet’s articulation of Art Brut versus the art of mental patients, per se, see Dubuffet “In Honor of Savage Values,” 264. Dubuffet writes that “it is certainly not necessary to believe that a man, just because he is mad, is in fact a good painter. Certainly not,” adding: “Psychiatric doctors have organized, in the past few years, some exhibitions of drawings and paintings made by patients, and we have been able to see that these works were not on the whole much more original, inventive, or interesting than the drawings and paintings usually made by normal people. All the phenomena of imitation, mimeticism, affectation, which are at work in normal people, are at work here in much the same way; invention is in both cases frequently very poor, and the true artist who is insane is almost as rare as as the true artist who is normal.”

31 Guillaume Fau and Jean-Noël Jeannene, Antonin Artaud (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2006), 45. Dubuffet, Biographie, 55; Dacosta, 12-13; Grossman, 1762-1763; Rowell, 11, 161-162. Rowell documents Dubuffet’s pivotal role in gaining Artaud’s release from Rodez to the private Ivry-sur-Seine clinic run by Dr. Achille Delmas. Dubuffet and members of the by then historical avant-garde founded a committee to provide for Artaud’s care. They also raised funds by performing Artaud’s work and by auctioning paintings donated by a range of artists, including Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. Artaud had always dabbed in drawing and painting, and he intensified his efforts under Ferdière’s care. Artaud’s portraits, however, were made mostly after his transfer to Ivry.

32 For a thorough account of Artaud’s performance, which took place at the Vieux-Colombier theater, see Barber, 180-183. Dubuffet also refers to the performance (then upcoming) in correspondences to Paulhan dated Jan. 8-9 published in Jean Dubuffet and Jean Paulhan, Correspondance, 269-270. He does not discuss the performance afterward in these letters.
demonstrate, he participated actively in the artistic milieu of Paris, interacting with artist-intellectuals even as he looked to supposedly naïve Art Brut for artistic inspiration. Artaud’s work, it seems, straddled the line between these two forms of production. Dubuffet encouraged Artaud to draw the portraits the author-cum-visual artist exhibited from July 4 – 20 at the Galerie Pierre under the title “Portraits and Drawings by Antonin Artaud”—just one month before Dubuffet’s own portrait exhibition. In fact, though Artaud’s portrait of Dubuffet is now lost, each man proclaimed their portraiture of the other to have been drawn from memory in a similar way. Scholars have mentioned only the contemporaneity of Dubuffet’s and Artaud’s portraits, no doubt because Artaud’s works are generally not considered under the rubric of Art Brut. This is because, despite their disturbingly harsh lines and piercingly pocked marks, and Artaud’s madness, his drawings are fairly refined (Dubuffet looked to Art Brut’s crudeness as a model). Artaud was too “contaminated” by his deep familiarity with the cultural avant-garde, moreover, to be considered a true outsider. In short, though institutionalized for mental illness, Artaud was not altogether isolated from artistic culture and was aware of the fact that his art—even the drawings he made for himself—would likely reach an audience. Moreover, Dubuffet distinguished between Art Brut and the art of mental patients per se, because, he argued, patients’ knowledge of the audience created by therapeutic and artistic interest tainted their efforts, undermining the purely internal artistic operation and setting the same stage for atrophy.

33 Dubuffet discusses Artaud’s portrait exhibition in a letter to Paulhan dated Aug. 16, 1947 in Correspondences, 450.
34 Dubuffet, “How to Make a Portrait,” in “Notes for the Well-Read,” 78; “Art Brut Chez Dubuffet,” in Prospectus et tous écrits suivants, 42; Grossman, 1763; Jacques Derrida and Paule Thévenin, The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 52-53. Dubuffet’s allusion to memory may at first seem inconsistent with his modernist appeal to spontaneity, and to a degree it is. But it is consistent with modern privileging of the sketch conceived of as closer to the creative impulses of the artist. Moreover, Dubuffet likened his “extraction” to a kind of excavation of buried creative forces, aiming to release this creativity rather than recreate a surface likeness (or psychological study) of his sitter.
as that of conventionalized or “cultured” art. He had heated disputes with Artaud’s doctor, Ferdière, in fact, over precisely this point.\(^35\)

In 1982, at the end of his career, Dubuffet set up a midway category termed “Neuve Invention” (Fresh Invention) to account for visual artists, such as Gaston Chaissac, who were attuned to the raw creativity of Art Brut, but not quite within its purview. This new category also applied to “cultured” artist-intellectuals who became self-taught visual artists after being institutionalized.\(^36\) Artaud would seem to fit the latter category. Dubuffet too may have straddled (or hoped, as an artistic goal, to straddle) the line between cultured art and Art Brut. Yet he remained aware of the ultimate futility of such an endeavor.

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As an artist who, in a sense, doubled his persona, moving (albeit inadvertently) from unruly avant-garde literary to quasi Art Brut visual artist, Artaud’s artistic theories resonated with Dubuffet, providing a unique model for his painting. Dubuffet’s painted gesture in the portrait suggests that he was also fascinated by Artaud’s dynamic, gestural expressions (or dramatic outbursts), which continued off stage during treatment and which Ferdière read as a

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35 Dubuffet, “In Honor of Savage Values,” 260, 264. Regarding the atrophying effects of culture Dubuffet asserts: “It really seems that knowledge, far from vitalizing personal intelligence, as we are generally wrong to believe it, works on the contrary to atrophy it. . . . One is either a transmitter or a receiver. The more you are of one the less you are the other; and the sort of people we call cultivated are systematically led to assimilate the creations of others. These exercises lead them to receive more and more and therefore to think less and less for themselves; they are on the contrary struck by more and more paralysis of their creative faculties” (260); negating that Art Brut is synonymous with the art of mental patients, Dubuffet writes that “it is certainly not necessary to believe that a man, just because he is mad, is in fact a good painter. Certainly not” (264). See note 29 for full quote and for more on Dubuffet’s relationship with Ferdière.

doubling of Artaud’s personality: “His personality is double.” Schizophrenia and multiple personality disorders were little understood during the first half of the twentieth century and the former, particularly, retained its status as a catch-all, (usually mis) diagnosis for some time. The idea of schizophrenic dislocation had, indeed, become a way for many avant-garde artists to conceptualize what they saw as the trauma of modernity: faster-paced life, transportation, industrialization, and, after WWI—and WWII—the trauma of mechanized warfare. Many interwar artists saw the double figure as an image not only of a double personality but also an image of identity as performed. This notion of performed identity, of creative doubling, is evident in Dubuffet’s 1936 *Double Self-Portrait with a Bowler Hat* (Fig. 16) and his 1944 *Self-Portrait, as Two Brigands*, an image with dual Dubuffet’s that gaze out from the picture plane while appearing to face, alternately, toward and away from the viewer (Fig 17). Surely the doubling attributed to Artaud’s personality, and that Artaud attributed to true art, attracted Dubuffet.

Plagued by mental illness and drug addiction most of his life, Artaud had been an outrageous agitator since he first affiliated with the Surrealists in the early 1920s. He quickly became one of the most controversial—and earliest exiled—of the group. Yet, as Susan Sontag notes, Artaud remained a fellow traveler, sharing many Surrealist values, including the love of “the Orient,” interest in “the art of the mad,” and a desire to provoke interruptions of Otherness. Artaud’s 1938 book *The Theater and Its Double* celebrates these very values,

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37 Ferdière, 54; Quoted in Barber, 141. Ferdière was clearly interested in Artaud’s emphatic gestures, an interest that can be traced to French Psychiatrist Jean-Martin Charcot’s sensationalized studies of so-called hysterics during the 19th century. Ferdière also discusses Artaud’s “ideas of persecution with periods of marked violent reactions, writing that “his personality is double.”
38 Malcolm Haslam, *The Real World of the Surrealists* (New York: Rizzoli, 1978), 12-130; Barber, 6.
equating them with true art. “In the Oriental theater of metaphysical tendency, contrasted with the Occidental theater of psychological tendency,” Artaud writes, “forms assume and extend their sense and their signification on all possible levels’ or, if you will, they set up vibrations on every level of the mind at once.”

Artaud’s book centers around his essay “On Balinese Theater,” a reworking of the review he’d written for the *Nouvelle revue Française* after seeing the Balinese performance at the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition. Artaud’s book advocates the use of puppet-like costumes and, indeed, puppetesque actors to evoke autonomic processes and untamed psychic forces. His language is more poetic (and inflammatory) than descriptive, and his discussion of actors as automaton-like beings with no individual initiative recalls the Surrealist interest in the automatic channeling of subconscious creative forces—interests Dubuffet had also explored since the 1920s. Yet, by insisting on the artistic control of the director, Artaud prefigures Dubuffet’s view of an artist as both a composer and mediumistic channeler of creative eruptions (conceived by Dubuffet also as kind of channeling of chance events). Dubuffet’s autobiography cites his early interest in mediumistic drawings, which he took to be manifestations of raw creativity, the kind he would come to associate with Art Brut.

Artaud took an analogous approach to art, though with a decidedly more esoteric bent. Both men used the terminology of shamanism, channeling, and alchemy to describe the workings

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41 Dubuffet, *Biographie au pas de course*, 21. Dubuffet discusses these interests in his autobiography and in letters to various friends published in his *Prospectus et tous écrits suivants* and in the archives of the Fondation Dubuffet. Some of the earliest letters to Dubuffet discussing these interests, from friends such as Armand Salcrou, Raymond Queneau, and Georges Limbour, date as far back as 1917 and are archived at the Bibliothèque Armand Salcrou, Le Havre. Gorge Limbour also discusses Dubuffet’s early development in his *Tablea bon levain à vous de cuire la pate* (Paris: Rene Drouin, 1953).

42 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well Read, in Glimcher, 69-70; Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, 53, 58, 98. Artaud sets up his ideal theater as a venue for ritualistically adhered to procedures that operate like transformative spells that create openings for alterative ways of being.

of art, but Artaud seems to have meant these terms literally whereas Dubuffet used them figuratively. Artaud and Dubuffet each conceived of art—theatrical performance and artistic rendering—as powerful agents (for Artaud a form of magical spells) capable of transforming the artist, the viewer, and, ultimately, Western culture. That scholars have only mentioned in passing Dubuffet’s enthusiasm for Artaud’s work is surprising given their relationship, shared concerns, and the 1945 letter in which Dubuffet celebrates the *Theater and Its Double.* This scholarly oversight is doubly odd given that both the artist and the writer sought to generate extreme forms of affective responses in the viewer—responses that each man, in his way, believed to be capable of reviving culture. The two men even conceived of this vivifying artistic function in electrifying terms (another oddity given Artaud’s subsequent “treatments” in electroshock therapy). Whereas Artaud wanted to give the viewer a “jolt,” however, Dubuffet wanted to simulate the trauma of “shell-shock” in order to, as he writes, “short-circuit” enculturated meanings.

Artaud’s essay “On Balinese Theater” celebrates his thrilling experience of the performance, which he describes as “a rippling of joints, a musical angle made by the arm with the forearm, a foot falling, a knee bending, fingers that seem to be coming loose from the hand,” producing effects like “a perpetual play of mirrors, in which human limbs seem resonant with echoes.” Artaud believed that this theater of spasmodic gestures and wild gyrations epitomized the physical and intensely gestural performance he thought could shock—and potentially

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He wanted to (re)produce theater that “upsets all our preconceptions, inspiring us with fiery, magnetism”—a theater that would act upon us like “a spiritual therapeutics.” He wanted, in short, to “affect every facet of the spectator’s sensibility.”

Dubuffet’s portrait indicates that he and Artaud shared certain basic goals for their artistic production—to shake viewers and readers out of a culturally induced malaise by stirring up deep-seated, preconscious, primal forces. While Artaud wanted to “jolt” or defribulate his viewers, however, Dubuffet emphasized the “short-circuit,” that could bypass stale tradition and open channels for new, supercharged currents of meaning.

Both Artaud and Dubuffet conceived of creative forces as primal, believing they existed within the human being (in their raw state) prior to cultural contact and on a different register than linguistic signification. Paradoxically, they hoped to trigger the release of these forces in the viewer through artistic representation. Each favored blunt, yet puzzling, bodily signs, images they thought could circumvent “cultured” thought and cut strait to the core of being. Indeed, for Dubuffet authentic art interfaces with the depths of being. Similarly, Artaud advocated a theater “addressed to the entire organism” that is able to “enter the mind through the body.” Artaud wanted to exceed Surrealist performance, producing theater that could prompt “eruptions” of these primal forces, moving outward from the depths of the composer, and through the forms of the costumed actors, to inject (or infect) the collective body of the audience with raw, life energy. He was unwaveringly determined in these efforts and his efforts to forcibly merge such

47 Barber, 26, 57.
48 Artaud, The Theater and Its Double, 85.
49 Ibid., also in Artaud, Artaud On Theater, 122.
50 Dubuffet, “In Honor of Savage Values,” 262; Artaud, The Theater and Its Double, 60, 62. Dubuffet writes of creativity as “primordial,” as “savage,” and as owing little to the brain “but rather, to the more central and more driving zones in him.” Artaud writes that in Balinese theater “one senses a state before language,” describing it as originating from “a secret psychic impulse which is Speech before words”
51 Ibid., 264-265; Artaud, The Theater and Its Double, 87, 99.
art with life (approaches which may have contributed to his institutionalization during the interwar period). Artaud’s vehement anti-cultural stance both exceeded that of Breton’s countercultural, yet cliquish, Surrealism and also isolated Artaud generally, making him an outsider even within avant-garde communities. Indeed, though Artaud wanted to depersonalize the actors in his ideal theater, and envisioned the audience as a collective body, his writings on the immediacy, intensity, and physicality of viewer responses—felt from the depths of being—set him in opposition to the cliquish life Breton envisioned for the Surrealists. 52 This is a position Dubuffet surely admired on some level (at least until he had to deal with the frustrating practicalities of Artaud’s care). 53 Dubuffet looked, for a time, to Artaudian discussions of art, affect, and the manipulation of primal impulses; but he did not, ultimately, accept Artaud’s belief in the primacy of affect. Instead, affect, for Dubuffet, was a means by which he could enliven art and reconnect with those aspects of humanity he believed to be repressed in European culture. In calling attention to art as resistant to the stifling effects of enculturation, moreover, Dubuffet highlighted its role in not only producing affect but in promoting creative thought as well.

Extreme in his aggressive, hyperbolic theatricality, Artaud had alienated himself from avant-garde circles while continuing to be an influential, if physically peripheral, figure. His vehemently untamed creativity and anti-(Western)cultural energy was a timely addition to the

52 Artaud discusses his position on individual artistic gesture as opposed to socially dictated artistic production in *The Theater and Its Double*, 53-58.
53 Fondation Dubuffet. Artaud File. There are many letters in Dubuffet’s archives that deal with his care for Artaud during his time as the treasurer to the Friends of Artaud, the group he helped found to care for the author in order to gain his transfer from Rodez to the private hospital at Ivry near Paris. This responsibility was eventually given over to Pierre Loeb, the modern and Oceanic art collector and owner of the Gallerie Pierre, which hosted Surrealist exhibitions and Artaud’s 1947 portrait show (the same gallery that reportedly lost Artaud’s portrait of Dubuffet). Loeb had harassed Dubuffet about not providing Artaud with enough money (a real or imagined situation about which Artaud also regularly complained) and Dubuffet eventually relinquished this control, which, in the long run, seemed to be more about Loeb’s control of Artaud. Dubuffet also discusses Loeb in relation to Artaud in his *Correspondance: 1944-1968* with Paulhan. A letter of 15 June 1946 is one such correspondence, which deals with Artaud’s expenses. A letter of 16 Aug. 1947 discusses Artaud’s exhibition of portraits at Loeb’s Galerie Pierre. For more on *L’Amis d’Artaud* also see note 29.
Dada and Surrealist countercultures of interwar France. His emphatic physicality—and drive to reconnect art and life—continued to resonate after the war and, indeed, still resonate today. Since at least the 1960s artists have looked to him as a model for performance art expanded to eradicate the artificial boundaries between the stage and audience, between art and life. Artaud advocated theater that “spreads its visual and sonorous outbursts over the entire mass of the spectators,” in fact, proposing to “abolish the stage and the auditorium and replace them by a single site, without partition or barrier of any kind,” which, he writes, “will become the theater of the action.”

Artaud’s vehement proselytizing for immediacy, intensity, and physicality has also made him a preeminent figure for the recent turn to affect within the humanities. I want to take up this question of affect in relation to Dubuffet’s portrait, considering Dubuffet’s overt exploration of art and affect while ultimately challenging the primacy of affect with regard to his painting. This is to say, I challenge the notion of affect’s primacy in rank, if not in the temporal experience of impact in the painting. For Dubuffet, these first or primal forces were crucial, yet they were neither the end point nor a dictatorial physiological primacy overriding and directing all thought. Rather, Dubuffet takes Artaud’s idea of art that can “enter the mind through the body” in a different way, appreciating raw physicality for its impact on not only the senses but also on the mind; art that initiates creative movement, in effect, opening channels for creative thought.

Dubuffet writes of painting as a language “much better than words,” one that can “express the various stages of thought, including the deeper levels, the underground stages of mental processes.” According to Dubuffet, moreover, “Art addresses itself to the mind, and not

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55 Ibid.
to the eyes,” adding that “Art is a language, [an] instrument of knowledge, [an] instrument of expression”—or, one might say, art consists of both affect and the possibility of intelligibility. Although notions of pre-linguistic, primal forces that “move” the viewer to feel and act in certain ways (as laid out in certain forms of affect theory) are consistent with some of Dubuffet’s writings on art and, perhaps, with his notion of Art Brut as a primal will to form, the overarching themes of his painting and writing are that he wanted (and believed in) more for his art and, importantly, from his viewer, in whom, for Dubuffet, “a whole inner mechanism” must “start working.” Adding that art “has always been considered in this way by primitive peoples,” Dubuffet’s brand of primitivism was not merely an attempted return to primal affective responses (the mere physiology of the viewer), but rather, to ways of making and viewing art that remind us of the dual nature of thinking and feeling human beings. Here again, Dubuffet’s approach to art-making aligns with the duality of human experience elaborated by Bachelard in which thinking and feeling work in tandem and dynamic imagination is contrasted with static habitue. For Dubuffet, affect, the viewer’s deep, emotive reaction, was one of two responses that he hoped to instigate; the other being primarily interpretive. Exploration of Artaudian affect thus marks a unique moment Dubuffet’s career—a moment in which he probed the relationships between creative, ultimately intellectual, movements, the physicality of his art, and the

58 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 78.
embodied, and enculturated, experiences of the viewer. As Dubuffet explored affect he looked also, in my view, to the very condition of intelligibility—of how one makes meaning in culture, calling attention to this question, and these relationships, precisely by circumventing easy reading. Instead, Dubuffet stages a curious artistic encounter.  

Like Artaud, Dubuffet had distanced himself from Surrealism as a movement, yet retained a certain Surrealist attitude. This was characterized by his appreciation of strange forms, unusual juxtapositions, and the untamed creativity of the works of the mentally ill and other ‘non-professional’ artists. The two men’s Surrealist roots also inflected their conceptions of culture and Artaud shared Dubuffet’s view of its asphyxiating effects. Indeed, Artaud had written during the interwar period:

At a time when life itself is in decline, there has never been so much talk about civilization and culture. And there is a strange correlation between this universal collapse of life at the root of our present-day demoralization, and our concern for a culture that has never tallied with life but is made to tyrannize life.

Artaud’s writings prefigure Dubuffet’s writings on the enervating effects of culture, which he describes as “a dead language, without anything in common with the language spoken in the street,” a language that “no longer has real and living roots.” Both men attempted to overturn previous cultural forms and engage the viewer in as direct and raw a manner as possible. Indeed, Artaud writes that “the endlessly renewed fatigue of the organs [in modern Western culture] requires intense and sudden shocks to revive our understanding.”

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60 As noted previously, Kent Minturn’s dissertation (page 99) also discusses Dubuffet’s and Artaud’s circumvention of narrative, history, and easily interpreted meaning.
61 Sontag, xxiv, xxv11. Sontag notes that the Surrealists equated creativity with the vitality they believed to be stifled in Western culture, leading to a crisis of consciousness and an artificial sense of separation from one’s own carnality.
64 See Graver for a lengthily discussion of approaches to an “aesthetics of disturbance” in modernism.
65 Artaud, The Theater and Its Double, 86.
could produce these shocks, effecting a cure for a form of cultural madness, a life-deadening malaise. Dubuffet’s prose clearly indicates that he shared Artaud’s emphasis on the physicality of his medium—and the viewer—as well as a drive to prompt primal affective responses. As I see it, however, Dubuffet took a more holistic approach, hoping to inspire the viewer’s mind as a more long-term ambition. Thus, he wields art as “a language, [an] instrument of knowledge, instrument of expression,” with which he expresses, and to which he addresses, “the various stages of thought.”

This mental emphasis is evident in his puzzling portrait—in its raw materiality (the layered, thickly smeared contours and rutted groves) and the odd bodily signs, which allude to both dissociative and creative doubling.

Consider again the doubling in Dubuffet’s painting, its halving, its double face, and the ambiguous spatial relations suggested by the interpenetration of body parts, the penis necktie, the arms that double as legs, the arm that dips into the body, and the emerging, mask-like face within the face. A crisis in modern experience that included desensitization to the stimuli of everyday life, nostalgia for its lost, and imagined, richness (resulting, in part, from the endless repetitions, and reworkings, of conventional artistic representations) combined with related desires to reunite life and creativity made the concept of doubling important, in different ways, to Surrealists of both the Bretonian and dissident brands. In discussing Dubuffet’s interest in the “accidental face,” which may appear, as though by magic, as our eyes and minds organize the visual stimuli in natural or manmade objects into recognizable patterns, Kent Minturn points to Dubuffet’s fascination with [Bretonian] doubling.

For the idea of an emerging face is a generative model, a pattern, sign, or form taken to be in some way meaningful by the viewer, as if emerging from a

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66 Dubuffet, “Anticultural Positions,” 18-19, 21; see also Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 73, 77.
67 Minturn, 84.
world of symbols.\(^68\) This concept of doubling—and a face that literally does just that—is an important component of Dubuffet’s archetypal portrait.\(^69\) Yve-Alain Bois argues convincingly that Dubuffet’s painting aligns with this generative view of matter as raw material with which to form images.\(^70\) As Foster observes, however, Dubuffet’s painting points also to the actual trauma evinced in the art of some mental patients. In my view this trauma in Dubuffet’s painting articulates an alternate view of doubling explored by the rogue Surrealists, many of whom had collaborated with his friend Bataille in the arts and ethnographic journal *Documents*. In this alternate view, doubling (a kind of mimicry) is seen as indicative of a breakdown of form or effacement of the figure as it takes on the characteristics of its surroundings—a process experienced mentally also by the schizophrenic patients making Art Brut. Roger Caillois theorizes this form of mimicry as kind of “instinct of abandon,” or a relinquishing of the idea of autonomous identity, which Foster reminds us is indicative of mental trauma.\(^71\) Indeed, Caillois’s framing of mimicry as a psychic condition of “depersonalization through assimilation into space” can be associated with the real or imagined, and, during the mid-twentieth century, often misdiagnosed, trauma of schizophrenic dislocation—a dissociation attributed to modern


\(^{69}\) Minturn, 84.


life by many artists (and formerly also by psychiatrists such as Ferdière).\textsuperscript{72}

The disjunctive relationships between Dubuffet’s flattened figure and its ground, the arm that penetrates the body, and the castrated genitals suggest this type of trauma and dissociative doubling, just as the fragmented face within a face suggests schizophrenic dislocation. Consider the resemblances, noted by Hal Foster (and mentioned in my Introduction), between Dubuffet’s figures, in this case, his portrait of Artaud and the work of mental patient, Herman Beehle (Beil), which featured in Hans Prinzhorn’s book Artistry of the Mentally Ill (Fig. 14).\textsuperscript{73} Both of these figures appear to be schematically splayed out against the picture plane and have features that double to produce a second, emerging figure. Beehle’s drawing does not include the face within the face seen in Dubuffet’s portrait, but the buttons on the shirt of Beehle’s figure, aligned with the figure’s nipples, work with a dark spot in the area of the belly button to form a face within the torso. This image prefigures Dubuffet’s 1945 painting Will To Power (Fig. 3), a work whose armless torso and dangling phallus also calls to mind Karl Genzel’s “head-footers” (Fig. 12). In addition to this face within a torso, the heart shape of the torso in Beehle’s rendering prefigures the heart-shaped head in Dubuffet’s portrait of Artaud. Moreover, the long line of the neck, which seems to contain another, smaller neck, in Beehle’s figure, plunges downward into the body—halving (or doubling) it, just as Dubuffet does in the portrait. As discussed briefly in the Introduction, both are posed frontally and fill the picture plane as if threatening to escape its borders. Indeed, both figures have fluffy head gear (or tufts of hair) hanging in framing arcs on the sides of the head and feet that are cut off at the bottom of the frame. Although placed in the anatomically correct position between the legs, the genitals of Beehle’s figure are rendered in a flat yet frontal view. They appear to be flayed and even drip blood. As rearticulated in the

\textsuperscript{71} Hans Prinzhorn, Artistry of the Mentally Ill; A Contribution to the Psychology and Psychopathology of Configuration (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1972); Foster, 16.
painting, the sex organs in Beehle’s figure appear barely connected to the body and are thus oddly displaced. These are signs of the trauma to which Foster attributes the jarring qualities of the art of mental patients that so attracted Dubuffet. Once again, as Foster notes, though Dubuffet posed Art Brut as the product of a purely internal artistic operation, he appears to have looked to the art of mental patients as both an artistic paradigm and a visual source.

As Foster postulates, the pictorial suggestions of trauma in Dubuffet’s painting are unintentional slippage that belie his celebration of Art Brut as the product of a pure, creative act. By contrast, I see references to trauma in Dubuffet’s work as intentional; a psychological glimpse into the informe, so to speak—a dissociative view of doubling indicative of a traumatic—or, perhaps, an epistemological—break, which can be seen in the detached and interpenetrating appendages of figures that seem to be embedded in their supports. This dislocation appears in the portrait of Artaud’s displaced (castrated?) genitals, and the arm that plunges confusingly into the torso. The portrait’s raw, unformed qualities, its crude modeling, and rough haute pâte, reinforce this idea of porous boundaries between the figure and its surroundings, moreover, while also mimicking the raw materials used in the creations of isolated mental patients.

Despite the many similarities of Dubuffet’s portrait to the art of this mental patient, which may signify trauma, the second face in Dubuffet’s painting appears to want to project outward toward us, suggesting also the opposite of a traumatic break—an emerging form signifying (re)generative, and, ultimately, redemptive, doubling. These two forms of doubling

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74 Foster, 16.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 See note 71 for discussion of doubling. See also Bois, 138-143 and Foster, 16. Dubuffet’s work is somewhat mistakenly associated with the dissociative view of doubling and his friend Bataille’s iteration of the informe (a view atuned, in ways, to the writing of Caillois, with whom Bataille and Leiris founded
work hand in hand in Dubuffet’s portrait. Always resistant to either-or categories, Dubuffet’s rendering of an emerging form that Accordions outward toward the viewer contains elements suggestive of both form and informe, traumatic displacement and generative doubling. Indeed, as I argue, the trauma of displacement provides the matrix for the (re)generative qualities Dubuffet sought in his art. And just as he plays with dual forms of doubling in his portrait, he likewise plays with notions of form and informe (the unformed). His painting has its raw, unformed qualities, seen especially in the crude marks and the rough haute pâte, but the projecting figure-within-the-figure confronts us with the artist’s desire to form; to make a tangible, not only readable, image. Dubuffet himself writes of “Partant de l’informe” (Starting with the Unformed) in his Notes to the Well Read. But “starting” is the operative word that points, ultimately, to his creative impetus, his will to form.78

Artaud had taken a similar anti-categorical approach to his writings on theater. Like Dubuffet, the dramaturge has been called an iconoclast due to his desire to overturn the artistic canons of his day. But Artaud also wanted to make something new, something that could both represent and (re)produce primal creative forces. Like Dubuffet, Artaud had rejected the ordering operations of Western culture, logic, and reason, refusing to be pigeonholed even by the dictums of art movements, even by the etiquette of Surrealism. In refusing the artistic categories offered to them by culture, both Dubuffet and Artaud remained outsiders, to a degree, while nevertheless helping shape the artistic avant-garde of the post-war eras.

Artaud’s writing too promotes a dual view of Surrealist doubling, demonstrating his drive to both form images and break them down, and arguing, in fact, that it is the role of theater to

78 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 67.
break down the expected imagery of the viewer and to replace it with a new vision. A prime example of this is Artaud’s *The Theater and Its Double*. In it, he claims that Balinese performance astonishes its viewers by virtue of its bizarre forms, which, for him, show “matter as revelation, suddenly dispersed into signs” so as “to teach us the metaphysical identity of concrete and abstract and to teach us this in lasting gestures.” This is characteristically cryptic language for Artaud. Yet, one thing is clear: the ambition of Artaudian theater is not to form or uniform but rather to *transform*—it seeks to displace and reorganize experience. It “overturns all our preconceptions” by way of “sudden shocks to revive our understanding.” Dubuffet, in his writing, calls for a comparable kind of “uprooting” of the viewer, a dissociation necessary “to force the mind out of its usual ruts.” He wants this disturbance to produce a kind of “shell shock” in the aftermath of which the viewer must negotiate—and continually renegotiate—his or her relationship with the painting. This recurrent (re)negotiation can be seen as perpetual renewal and recalls Artaud’s description of the effects of Balinese theater, which continually assaults the mind, forcing it to readjust and to never quite regain its bearings during the performance.

According to Artaud, the disorienting forms of Balinese theater, along with true theater, true art, prompt “an inexhaustible mental ratiocination, like a mind ceaselessly taking its bearings in the maze of its [own] subconscious.” The disjointed and doubling elements in Dubuffet’s painting suggest analogous aims—to move the viewer’s eyes (sending them along the ruts of his rudimentarily routed figures), to move the viewer’s feelings (leading them on traces of an adventure sketched out by the artist’s hand), and to move the viewer’s thoughts (promoting new

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81 Ibid., 86; as previously mentioned, Jill Shaw’s, *A Coat that Doesn’t Fit* discusses Dubuffet’s reliance upon a kind of “cultural electroshock” that he gained from his trips to Algeria.
82 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81.
ways of experiencing the world). Dubuffet’s painting introduces the viewer to a double existence conceived of as more true to life, to life’s multi-valences, one that reveals the quotidian as merely a pale copy. In short, for Dubuffet authentic art is both a product and an instigator of feeling and meaning alike.

If theater doubles life,” Artaud writes, “life doubles true theater,” meaning it produces new forms of lived experience—new ways of viewing the world. It is precisely this quality of doubling—a double body and a double set of limbs—that suggests movement in Dubuffet’s portrait. And within Dubuffet’s double image of Artaud we see, in effect, an image that doubles painting. If painting doubles life, Dubuffet’s work suggests, life doubles true painting. It is this aspiration to double painting with life—or, more accurately, with true life—that Dubuffet’s emphasis on gesture, mask-like facial expression, and blunt materiality aims to produce, effecting an equivalent form of affective response as described by Artaud in his writings on theater.

Examples of Surrealist doubling that are especially relevant to Dubuffet’s portrait are dolls and mannequins, which the Surrealists thought capable of provoking eruptions of otherness by virtue of the odd juxtaposition of these inanimate stand-ins for living beings (Fig. 25). Dubuffet’s portrait of Artaud in no way resembles a surrealist mannequin. Indeed, it seems too alive for that, too distant from any human or animal form (yet, one whose oddly posed—and poised—arms may call to mind the disturbing stillness of Cailloise’s praying mantis, a figure that for him exemplifies dissociative mimicry). For Dubuffet the portrait is a matter of life and death, which he describes in terms of its reproductive powers, its ability to stimulate, rather than merely

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84 Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,” in Asphyxiating Culture and Other Writings, 110; “In Honor of Savage Values,” 261. Dubuffet describes cultured artistic production as “counterfeit,” a “parasitic substitute for true art.”
85 Artaud, On Theater, 97.
simulate, life. Moreover, the large bulky head, the gesture of the arms, and other oddities in Dubuffet’s portrait approximate an especially uncanny form of the Surrealist double, that of a puppet. As I see it, an aesthetic of puppetry informs Dubuffet’s dialogue with Artaud, tracing back to the two men’s Surrealist, ethnographic, and, ultimately, performative interests of the interwar period, interests they sought to reproduce in the postwar era.

**Puppets, Process, and Patterns**

According to his *Biographie au pas de course* (Biography at a Run or Biography at the Last minute), Dubuffet learned to make guignol (carved wood and sock) puppets of his friends from a craftsman of Lyon, setting up a small theater in his studio to hold puppet shows during the 1930s. As noted, Dubuffet also made paper-mâché masks of his friends, which his compatriot Georges Limbour describes as eerily still doubles with decidedly mortuary connotations (Fig. 4a-c). Although these forms have been largely unexplored in Dubuffet’s work, being described as his mere flirtations with European puppetry and festival masks, I see them as central to his production, such that they function as a nexus between his ethnographic Surrealism of the 1920s, his interest in folk forms including Art Brut, and a variety of non-Western, most notably Indonesian masks, costumes, and puppets which, I argue, he appropriated in making his post-war portraits.

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86 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 69-70, 77-78, 81; Dubuffet, “Notes Du Peinture: Portaits,” in Limbour, *Tablea bon levain à vous de cuire la pate*, 91-92. I refer here to Kent Minturn’s translation in his dissertation, 110-111. Dubuffet writes that by “depersonalizing my models, by transporting them to a very general level of the elementary human form, I was helping to trigger, for the viewer of the painting, certain mechanisms of the imagination or of arousal that considerably increased the power of the effigy.”

87 Dubuffet, *Biographie au pas de course*, 36. This puppet form is thought to have emerged from the French city of Lyon, though it remains a popular form of entertainment in Paris as well. It is very interactive, with the puppeteers eliciting lively participation from young French viewers, who repeat the dialogue of the characters and shout information to them at key moments.

As pointed out in my Introduction, Dubuffet’s interest in puppets manifests in his 1943 Metro series, which is included in his catalogue raisonné volume titled *Marionnettes de la ville et de la campagne* (Puppets of the city and the country) (Fig. 2). Although these paintings feature flattened, linear forms, they are brightly colored like his puppets. And this coloration, combined with the sense that the figures perform routine activities, as though they are more puppets than people, sets up a disturbing ambivalence (are they grim, happy, burlesque?). Despite their flatness, moreover, these figures share characteristics with the sculptures of the famous Prisoner of Basel, Switzerland; works which Dubuffet viewed when collecting examples of Art Brut in the mid 1940s and later published in his *Art Brut* journal (Fig. 26). Dubuffet’s Metro series echoes these puppetesque sculptures that are made of chewed, hardened, and colorfully painted bread and and composed to enact the absurdities of life.

This smooth, colorful imagery is absent in Dubuffet’s portrait of Artaud, which retains, perhaps, a materiality suggestive of the Prisoner of Basel’s chewed bread—and Dubuffet compared his portraits to plain bread (not cake) in his “Causette.” Yet, the portrait evinces a schematic quality and relies upon flattened forms in addition to characteristics that can be traced to Dubuffet’s interest in theater and puppetry. Indeed, the wild tufts of Artaud’s hair recall iconic images of a circus clowns (a term Dubuffet used to describe some of his figures and a figure that appears in French puppetry). Moreover, the few signs of clothing in the painting (the slightly comic, flattened neckwear, buttons, and sleeve cuffs) appear to be attached oddly (or tacked on) and mimic the quick-change costumes that can transform an actor who swaps accoutrements.

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89 For more on these early works see Karmel, 16; Selz, 11-12; Glimcher, 4.
92 Dubuffet, *Fasicule IV, Clowns du desert*. Dubuffet’s group of renderings from his trips to the Maghreb, “Clowns of the Desert” is one example of his using the term “clown” in relation to his art.
such as collars and cuffs. Perhaps Dubuffet plays with the notions of costume and custom, and with the idea of a Western-style suit as culturally dictated attire. Indeed, in French the word “costume” refers to everyday suits as well as to theatrical vestments (and “habit” refers to daily and occupational dress). But the linear qualities of Dubuffet’s figure, and its cartoonish clothing, act in tension with the blunt materiality of the thickly textured haute pâte, which, as Pepe Karmel notes, both articulates Dubuffet’s drive to make art from the gritty materials of everyday life (as mental patients are forced to do) and incorporates the sculptural qualities of his puppets and masks.  

Dubuffet’s portraits are anything but common, however, and work instead to disrupt quotidian experience.

The thick layers in Dubuffet’s rendering serve dual functions, presenting us with brut materiality and alluding to the heavy layers of enculturation Dubuffet wanted to burst through. Dubuffet writes, on the one hand, that “the knowledge and education [enculturation] of the learned and educated man function for him like new crusts added to his own [psychological] layers—new dampers falsifying even slightly more his own true voice.”  

Dubuffet calls, on the other hand, for “works that exhibit the abilities of invention and of creation in a very direct fashion, without masks or constraints.”  

Bearing in mind this idea of unmasking, the subtractive scratches in Dubuffet’s portrait are also significant, suggesting the impetus to deface theorized by Dubuffet’s friend Bataille as a fundamental act of creation (and empowerment) through appropriation.  

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93 Dubuffet, *Catalogue de l’exposition*, 1; Pepe Karmel, 16. Karmel notes also the influence of these masks on the portraits as a group. Using materials that incorporate detritus, ash, and other common materials is another method he shared with mentally ill artists using materials at hand.


95 Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,” in *Asphyxiating Culture*, 110.

pâte suggest that he wanted to make art that traces the creative process, leaving imprints and patterns (like fossils) for the viewer to discover.\textsuperscript{97} He thus foregrounds “the movement[s] of the trowel that has grooved out a rut” and “the furrow of the trowel, crushed here and there by a heavy batch of paint, scratched there in its flesh by the streak of a steel scraper” to affect the “inner mechanism[s]” of the viewer.\textsuperscript{98} Notions of such creative patterning seem to have become an integral part of Dubuffet’s art and theory. Like many in the orbit of Surrealism, Dubuffet was drawn to the way certain patterns are processed by the viewer and, in some cases (as in the phenomena of the “accidental face”) taken to produce a doubling effect.\textsuperscript{99} An emerging figure is one of the most distinctive aspects of Dubuffet’s painting of the immediate postwar period, which is one reason for its (mis)identification with Art Informel. Indeed, whereas Informel artists such as Henri Michaux produced disconcerting figures that appear to emerge from the canvas (features shared with Dubuffet’s painting), these artists worked typically in thinner (tachist) and more colorful paint. Dubuffet preferred his gritty, earth- and flesh-hued haute pâte. Moreover, the gesture, confrontational gaze, and doubling displacement of Dubuffet’s portraits are more consistent with Artaud’s interwar writings on theater than with the traits critic Michel Tapié attributed to post-war Informel painting.\textsuperscript{100} Wanting to remove his art, as far as possible, from the “cultured” (read cultural) expectations of painting, Dubuffet looked instead to Artaud’s writings

\textsuperscript{97} Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 73-74, 77-78.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 77-78.
\textsuperscript{99} Minturn, 84. Minturn discusses Dubuffet’s interest in the phenomenon of the ‘accidental face,’ citing his Old Man from the Beach, a manipulated found object of driftwood, as an example of Dubuffet asserting that faces are arbitrary and that viewers should not read too much into them. But Dubuffet’s interest in emerging faces is consistent with Breton’s notion of the world as a forest of symbols and the artist as materializing a will to form. See also Bois, 138-143. Bois discusses Dubuffet’s resistance to the Informel label (contrasting that label with Bataille’s notion of the informe), arguing that Dubuffet nevertheless shared the will to form evinced by Informel and demonstrated continued interest more in forming an image than in the matter of the materials he also celebrated.

\textsuperscript{100} Dubuffet and Fautrier, both working in thick haute pâte, were both grouped by Tapié and other critics (and art historians to this day) with Art Informel. Dubuffet eventually had a falling out with Tapié for this very reason and likely due to the overblown rhetoric with which Tapié characterized the work of various post-war artists as a cohesive movement with metaphysical aspirations.
on theater, writings in which Artaud called for art that emphasizes blunt materiality, and the unleashing of primal creative forces.

According to Dubuffet, he depersonalized his sitters as he drew their images from memory. He did this in order to draw out the traits that produced generalized, archetypal, and mask-like visages. As mentioned previously, the term archetype refers to an originary pattern or prototype that serves as model for subsequent renderings. For many modernists, though, an archetype is an image conceived of as a primary form—with all the connotations of primal creation—and with which the viewer feels a kind of (in Dubuffet’s case, disquieting) identification. For these artists, archetypes represented the primal creative forces repressed by Western culture, forces which the Western viewer thus sees as both strange (Other) and strangely familiar. Both Dubuffet and Artaud described their art in terms of such archetypal figures, Artaud writing of the benefits of “depersonalizing” his actors and Dubuffet writing of increasing “the power of the effigy” by depicting a “very general level of the elementary human form.”

Dubuffet adds: “In the subjects I paint I like to avoid anything fortuitous, I like to paint universal data.” Moreover, “If I paint the likeness of a man,” according to Dubuffet, “all I want my painting to do is evoke a human face.” This emphasis on archetypes is a factor also of a shared eagerness to produce extreme forms of affect brought about by mysterious, ambiguous, and strange, yet familiar, imagery. Dubuffet brings this depersonalization, paradoxically, to his portraiture, demonstrating yet another way in which his painting intersects with Artaud’s claims.

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102 Dubuffet in Minturn, 110-111.
103 Ibid.
for the dissociative sensations produced by the Balinese theater, a performance characterized by
costumes that “depersonalize” the actors behind archetypal masks.\textsuperscript{104}

Many modernists looked to African and Oceanic masks as archetypes, seeking signs of
the raw creativity they found lacking in European culture. Although Dubuffet identified these
forces as operating at their most extreme in Art Brut, he too, as has been noted by scholars, and
as I discuss at length in Chapter Three, looked to such masks. Given the relative rarity of
Indonesian cultural forms in Paris, even in Surrealist collections, Dubuffet’s drawing upon
Indonesian theater appears to have been triggered by his (re)engagement with Artaud’s \textit{The
Theater And Its Double}, which celebrates the affective qualities of “archetypal” costumes.\textsuperscript{105}

Moreover, as described in Prinzhorn’s book, much of the art produced by mental patients, which
Dubuffet envisioned as drawing upon these same primal forces, regularly repeat certain stylized
patterns (and forms of dissociative and generative doubling). As Prinzhorn and Foster note,
obsessive patterning reflects a patient’s drive to reconstruct the order they have lost as a result of
trauma or mental illness.\textsuperscript{106} Since at least Prinzhorn’s time, psychiatrists have looked to the art
of mental patients to diagnose (a practice that has been as problematic as it is helpful) and to
provide a kind of therapy for mental illness. Like many Westerners during the inter- and post-
war periods, however, Dubuffet saw the raw qualities of much of this art as evidence of
‘primitive’ impulses, erroneously, and eurocentrically conflating these stylized forms with some

\textsuperscript{104}Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 77; Artaud, \textit{The Theater and Its Double}, 58, 60, 93-94, 123; On
Theatre, 114. Artaud writes: “This archetypal theater language will be formed around staging not simply
viewed as one degree of refraction of the script, but as the starting point for theatrical creation” (114). He
describes the actors in his ideal, Balinese-inspired theater to function in regulated, ritualistic ways, almost
as if automatically, in the service of dreamlike, universal, mythic productions. He writes that the
depersonalized masks and costumes heighten these depersonalizing effects. See also Sontag, xxxiv.

\textsuperscript{105}Artaud, \textit{The Theater and Its Double}, 58. For Artaud “Everything [in theater] should be regulated and
impersonal.” And “the strange thing,” according to Artaud,” is that in this systematic depersonalization, in
these purely muscular facial expressions, applied to the features like masks, everything produces a
significance, everything affords the maximum effect.”

\textsuperscript{106}Foster, 16; see also Prinzhorn, Hans. \textit{Artistry of the Mentally Ill}. 
forms of non-Western art. This was a common and now rightly contested conflation. In my view, a more worthwhile investigation of why some of these forms exhibit similarities might be to explore the possibility that some of the patients producing the works that appealed to Dubuffet (works he felt merited the designation Art Brut) might have also been inspired by non-Western cultural forms featured in colonial expositions, ethnographic collections, and cultural publications. This would indicate that, as with the creative output of patients whose art Dubuffet felt was too influenced by (Western) culture, some of the art of mental patients he designated as Art Brut also evinced cultural influences; but influences derived from Other cultures. In the case of explicitly (as opposed to appropriated) non-Western art, Dubuffet’s research revealed a multiplicity of cultural functions that, for Dubuffet, disqualified it from his Art Brut project. In any case, Dubuffet looked to generalized forms he conceived of as preceding culture while he himself produced paintings such as *Archetypes* (Fig. 27). Although lacking the edginess of his portraits, this painting calls to mind graffiti or cave painting with figures rendered on a gravelly surface. Such figures reference naïve art and pre-civilized, and thus for Dubuffet, more authentic) human being.\(^\text{107}\)

The fact that Dubuffet described his images as pictograms or ideograms, capable of communicating directly with the viewer, suggests that his work was not only in dialogue with the post-Surrealist movements *Art Informel* and American Abstract Expressionism, but also with explorations of archaic art and early forms of writing, interests Dubuffet shared with Artaud and studied at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.\(^\text{108}\) For Artaud, who conceived of art as

\(^{107}\) For more on Dubuffet conflating Art Brut with non-Western art see his “Anticultural Positions” 2-3,5, 12, 14, 18, and “In honor of Savage Values,” 261.

\(^{108}\) Dubuffet, *Biographie*, 32-34. Like Artaud, and many other artists of their time, Dubuffet studied so-called “pictographic” scripts. According to his autobiography, he studied Chinese, Mayan, and Egyptian hieroglyphs, pursuing these studies at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France among other Parisian locales.
performance, the figures’ gesturing bodies functioned as hieroglyphic signs. Minturn has explored the connections between Dubuffet’s interest in obscure [and opaque] writing and touched upon these intersections with Artaud’s work. Dubuffet himself writes of his fascination with art and writing that impacts the viewer directly without having a clear and decipherable message. In other words, he was interested in marks that seem, paradoxically, to function in a pre-linguistic way, signs that impress the viewer with a sense of life’s richness and mystery by virtue of their indecipherability. The idea of primal, bodily writing, crucial also to Artaud’s concept of true theater, is important to my discussion of Dubuffet’s portraits, figures in which all areas of Dubuffet’s interests intersect: archetypal forms, patterns of creativity, directly impactful art, and art that moves the viewer by dis- and re-orientation. Dubuffet sought, in short, to make art that affects the viewer in an extreme way, cracking mask-like cultural layers to release “savage” creativity.

Artaud’s Theater, Dubuffet’s Doubling

The Theater and Its Double, a book Dubuffet celebrates as attuned to his own artistic approach, is a compilation of Artaud’s writings on theater produced prior to his institutionalized for mental-illness in 1937. Artaud’s essay “On Balinese Theater” became a focal point of the book that worked in tandem with essays such as “Oriental Theater Versus Western Theater,” “Theater and Culture, and “Theater and the Plague.” These articulated his performative paradigms of theater in which, as Artaud writes in another of the book’s essays, “Theater is First

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111 Rowell, 11,161; Dubuffet, Letter to Jean Paulhan, 11 December 1945 “Je lis Le Théâtre et son double d’Antonin Artaud et suis émerveillé d’y trouver justement les mêmes idées que les miennes.”
Ritualistic and Magical,” serving as a site of transformation.\textsuperscript{112} For Artaud, “real” theater doubles, and can potentially displace, quotidian experience in which puppetesque people are slaves to culture. Although he wrote these texts previously, Artaud conceived of the title for his book while en route to Mexico to partake in the indigenous Tarahumara people’s shamanistic peyote rituals.\textsuperscript{113} Artaud’s Surrealist outlook, fascination with creative doubling, and belief in art as a reproductive force can be seen in his letter to friend and publisher Jean Paulhan, in which Artaud writes:

My dear friend,

I believe I have found a suitable title for my book. It will be: **THE THEATER AND ITS DOUBLE**

For if theater doubles life, life doubles true theater, but it has nothing to do with Oscar Wilde’s ideas on Art. This title will comply with all the doubles of theater which I thought I’d found for so many years: metaphysics, plague, cruelty, the pool of energies which constitutes Myths, which man no longer embodies, is embodied by the theater. By this double I mean the great magical agent of which the theater, through its forms, is only the figuration on its way to becoming the transfiguration.

It is on the stage that the union of thought, gesture and action is reconstructed. And the double of the Theater is reality untouched by the men of today.\textsuperscript{114}

Artaud conceived of theater as a magical agent with transformative powers—the power to *stimulate* the viewer and revive culture. And in the Balinese theater Artaud found his ideal theatrical form/s, which function by way of highly affective doubling.

\textsuperscript{112} Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, essay titles taken from the Table of Contents.  
\textsuperscript{113} Artaud, *On Theater*, 97; Susan Sontag Introduction to *Antonin Artaud Selected Writings*, p. xxv.  
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., See also Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, V (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), 196-7.
Part Two: Dubuffet, Artaud, and the Balinese Theater

The Balinese theater made a major impact on Artaud, who was drawn to the performance because in it he saw many of the same qualities he had worked to promote during the 1920s, including its use of puppets and an aesthetic of puppetry for the costumed and gesturing actors. Artaud had looked to nonwestern sources earlier on in developing his theories on theater, however, attending a Cambodian dance at the 1922 Marseilles Colonial Exhibition and donning traditional Chinese costume for performances of his own that year—performances Dubuffet himself could have seen. Artaud also edited a 1925 edition of *Le Revolution Surrealist* titled “The End of the Christian Era” featuring several of his own essays on Asian cultures. Masson also discusses the general enthusiasm for Asian culture among the Surrealists frequenting his Montparnasse studio, Artaud included. And it is clear that Artaud’s Surrealist ideals and engagement with Asian cultural forms framed his experience of the Balinese theater at the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition. He believed it epitomized the kind of ‘intensely gestural’ performance he worked to produce in the Jarry Theater, in which he had perhaps already incorporated Asian elements. Both featured fantastic characters, costumes, and puppets. And it was precisely these elements that drew him to Balinese theater, which is more forceful and faster paced than the other Asian performances to which he had been exposed. His Alfred Jarry Theater had featured large puppets, emphatic gesture, shocking hyperbole, and odd juxtapositions of violence and humor in a kind of “confrontational Surrealist” performance Artaud likened to a dream or hallucination. He based this performance, in part, on the disturbingly costumed caricatures of playwright Alfred Jarry (1873-1907) and the even more

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disturbing violence of the Grand Guignol theater, a venue that interspersed comedy and blood-soaked melodrama and was modeled on the very Guignol puppetry that Dubuffet studied, produced, and performed in his studio during the 1930s. Each of these performances—the Alfred Jarry Theater, the Grand Guignol, and the Balinese Theater—featured parody and achieved high drama through extraordinary imagery and sheer physicality. Each also featured uncanny doubling, the Balinese theater in the form of masks and puppets and the Grand Guignol in the form of bizarre stage props including skeletons and other stand-ins for (usually dead) human bodies. Each venue attempted to affect the audience by the sheer force of its stagecraft. The resulting multiplicity of resonances served as a major thematic for Artaud, who was enthralled by the Balinese performance and what he took to be its parallels to his own performative paradigms. Indeed, in his essay he notes the resemblance of the Balinese “devil” (likely the Rangda character) to a puppet used in the Jarry Theater. According to Artaud, through these hyperbolic means the Jarry Theater endeavored to “express what life has forgotten,” namely, its richness, resonances, and emotional intensity. Moreover, Artaud asserts, “The Jarry Theater does not cheat, does not ape life, does not represent it. It aims to extend it, to be a sort of magical operation, open to any development.” In short, this theater was meant to (re)produce life, to stimulate rather than merely simulate it. In producing this life-extending

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117 For more on the Grand Guignol theater see Camillo Antonia Traversi, D’Histoire du grand guignol: Théâtre de l’épouvante et du rire (Paris: Librarie Théâtrale, 1933; Jack Hunter, Chapel of Gore & Psychosis: The Grand Guignol Theater (London: Creation Books, 2012). For more on Dubuffet’s interest in guignol see also Frédéric Jaeger, “L’Hourloupe in Close up (1962-1974),” in Jean Dubuffet Traces of an Adventure (New York: Prestel, 2003), 42-44. According to Jaeger, in Dubuffet’s Coucou Bazar he “realized an aim that he had pursued for almost forty years: even as a young man, before the war, he had hoped to earn his living by creating masks and puppets for the Grand Guignol. The Street theater he had dreamed of was transformed into a psychological play.” Unfortunately, no citation is given for the reference, though Jaeger cites other information in Glimcher and Dubuffet’s biography.

118 Artaud, The Theater and Its Double, 56.

119 Artaud, On Theater, 38.
event, according to Artaud, theater “answers a mental need which audiences feel is hidden deep down within themselves.”

Expanding upon the ideas he began expounding in his Jarry Theater, Artaud looked to Balinese theatrical methods to formulate *The Theater and Its Double*. He wanted to mimic its overt stagecraft, which he saw as “the starting point for theatrical creation” rather than merely a backdrop. In his view, bold stagecraft highlights the theater’s physicality, attuning viewers also to their own carnality and providing a means to reach their entire being through the stimulation instigated by its forms. For Artaud, the Balinese theater is a spectacle “which offers us a marvelous complex of pure stage images,” featuring fantastical masks, costumes, puppets, and performers whose choreography suggests “moving hieroglyphs.” Artaud uses the Surrealist-embraced term “marvelous,” to describe the supernatural characters depicted in the Balinese theater. As previously mentioned, I use the word “fantastical,” which Dubuffet prefers in some discussions of his painting, in keeping with Todorov’s use of the term, in which certain imagery goes beyond the uncanny, which may be shockingly, disturbingly unusual in not conforming to known cultural references, or in juxtaposing culturally dissimilar elements (in Dubuffet’s case, figural characteristics), to suggest an encounter with otherworldly, even supernatural beings that prompts hesitation in the subject’s defining of reality. In Artaud’s mind, however, the net effect of Balinese theater, its total production that assails the senses, is primarially affective, meaning it is able to trigger powerful, deep-seated, physiological viewer responses that he imagined to be attuned to primal states of being. Indeed, for Artaud, Balinese

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theaters’ visually striking, puppet-like costumes, odd, jerky choreography, and forceful, fast-paced gamelan music doubles the affective potential of the most innovative Western theater.

In Balinese theater, Artaud writes, one senses “a state prior to language,” meaning that the performance stirs up deep-seated, pre-conscious, *primal* forces. For Artaud the stucato movements and gestures in Balinese theater produce “the philosophical sense, so to speak, of the power which nature has of suddenly hurling everything into chaos.” He conceived of Balinese-inspired performance as both destructive and constructive, having the potential to undo and renew Western theater and, by extension, Western culture. Opposing narrative art, surface realism, and individual, psychologically “deep” portrayals (qualities Dubuffet also avoids in his painting), Artaud saw the corporeal signs of Balinese theater as a way to transmit a multiplicity of intense feelings, to reach the mind through the body. He viewed the gesturing actors as living ideographs able to produce intensely affective viewer responses. Whereas for Artaud, as Cronan notes, affect replaced agency and meaning, becoming the primary function of art, for Dubuffet the question of meaning remained integral. Both men aimed to impact the viewer. But while Artaud sought to produce a purely reactive response, Dubuffet aimed to activate the

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124 Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, 62. According to Artaud: “One senses in the Balinese theater a state prior to language, able to select its own: music, gestures, movements, words.”
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid., 99. “Without an element of cruelty at the root of every spectacle, the theater is not possible. In our present state of degeneration it is through the skin [or body] that metaphysics must be made to re-enter our minds.”
127 Ibid., 26–27, 31, 54–55, 57, 61. “This spectacle is more than we can assimilate, assailing us with a superabundance of impressions, each richer than the next, but in a language to which we no longer hold the key. . . . a language in which an overwhelming stage experience seems to be communicated (57).” Moreover, according to Artaud, “First of all we must recognize that the theater, like the plague, is a delirium and is communicative” (26–27).
128 Todd Cronan, *Against Affective Formalism: Matisse, Bergson, Modernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 64. For more on affect see also Ruth Leys, “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” *Critical Inquiry* 37, No. 2 (Spring 2011): 434–472. Affect is a contested term referring to the triggering of physiological, pre-emotive responses, which some scholars argue supersede meaning. As Leys persuasively argues, the primacy that affect theorists attribute to physiology relegates cognition to a secondary function and, effectively, undermines the agency of the artist and viewer.
viewer, engaging the viewer’s mental attention as well as physical sensations. Still, his brief engagement with Artaudian affect had a major impact on his painting, as is evident in his portraits.

For Artaud, theater should startle—even assault—the viewer, an impact he found exemplified by the Balinese theater. He wanted theater to disrupt enculturated defense mechanisms and trance-like habits by inducing altered states of awareness. He wanted to (re)produce theater so that in “overturning all our preconceptions [it] inspires us with the fiery magnetism of its images and acts upon us like a spiritual therapeutics whose touch can never be forgotten.”129 He aimed, in short, to “attack the spectator’s sensibility on all sides.”130 In the odd bodily contortions, costume doubling, and confrontational air of the Balinese theater, Artaud found a theatrical paradigm that exceeded his hopes for performative transformation—a non-Western model with the potential, he believed, to defibrillate Western culture, so to speak, to prevent it from dying on the table.

**Mask, Costume, Movement**

Like Artaud, Dubuffet almost certainly attended the extremely popular 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition, held in the park at Vincennes, just steps away from his home in Saint-Mandé in the eastern suburbs of Paris.131 It is likewise reasonable to assume that he visited the Dutch pavilion, a highly publicized and elaborate compound featuring the art, puppets, and performance by which the Dutch colonial powers hoped to expand tourism in their Indonesian

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130 Ibid.
colonies (a colonial relationship that ended only in 1947, the very year of Dubuffet’s portrait). Although Surrealist-Communist publications, a boycott, and a counter-exposition highlighted the exploitative colonialism of the main event, these activities did little to deter viewers, perhaps the most notable of whom was Artaud, who became famous for celebrating the merits of the Balinese Theater in his essay. Whether Dubuffet attended the performance or viewed reproductions available in the popular press, ethnographic publications, and the film and photographic archives of Parisian institutions such as Le Musée de l’Homme, Le Musée national des Arts d’Africain et Océaniens (built on the very site of the exposition), and Les Archives internationales de la Danse (of which Dubuffet’s friend Fernand Léger was a member of the board), the event played a significant role in Dubuffet’s artistic development, to the extent, I argue, that he revisited its forms in his 1947 portrait of Artaud.

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132 Two of many press articles dealing with the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition are *L’Illustration* no. 616 August 22,1931; Le Mirroir du monde no°68, 20 June 1931. The exposition ran from May to November and around 33 million people are reported to have attended. In July the Dutch pavilion caught on fire and suffered major damages, including the loss of the Balinese stage, forcing performers to work on the ground, as in traditional Balinese theater.


134 For comprehensive discussions of Parisian ethnographic institutions see Clifford and Daniel Sherman *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945—1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 23-36. The *Musée de l’Homme* was formed in part by the efforts of Dubuffet’s acquaintance and *College de sociologie affilié* Paul Rivet from a reworking of the collection of *Le Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadero* after the 1937 Colonial Exposition. *Le Musée nationales des Arts d’Africains et Océaniens* was the museum formed as a permanent collection in 1931 and remained on the original site of the exposition at Vincennes until being merged with the Parisian ethnographic collections now housed at the *Musée du quai Branly*. Another Parisian resource with Indonesian collections and libraries was *Les Archives internationales de la Danse (AID)*, a Paris-centered organization with ties to London and New York that was dedicated to preserving records and images of multi-cultural dance. They had a permanent collection and held expositions on dance in painting and puppetry that attracted many artists of international renown, including Fernand Leger, who made puppets for one exposition and who sat on the organizations board of directors. AID also did field work in Indonesia and added Balinese, Javanese, and Sumatran costumes and puppets to their collection. They held expositions on Indonesian dance, amassed a large photo gallery, and also showed films of Indonesian performances made at the exposition and in the field. The AID temporarily closed during WWII, at which time member Clair Holt took many
During the 1940s Dubuffet began not only researching Art Brut but also systematically categorizing it, an activity he continued throughout his career. Rejecting any form of art for this grouping that he saw as overly influenced by culture, he determined that non-Western art ought not to be included. He nevertheless cites the art of so-called “primitive” peoples, as well as Asian dance, in his In Honor of Savage Values,” an essay discussing the merits of Art Brut. Because Dubuffet’s interest in Art Brut has dominated the discourse on his work, however, scholars have largely overlooked his continued engagement with non-Western sources. As I see it, however, such forms were always a part of his repertoire, even as he developed his conception of Art Brut. Although scholars have commented briefly on Dubuffet’s interest in Oceanic art, which he saw regularly at La Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro (later the Musée de l’Homme), and initially included in his Art Brut publications, his exploration of Indonesian forms has not been addressed.

The dearth of research into Dubuffet’s engagement with Indonesian cultural forms is especially odd given that Artaud praised the affective qualities of these forms in The Theater and Its Double, the text Dubuffet held to resemble his own art theory. And while some work has been done on Dubuffet’s connections with Artaud, to my knowledge no one has speculated on Dubuffet’s active engagement with Artaud’s primary inspiration—the Balinese theater. If this

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136 Dubuffet, “In Honor of Savage Values,” 264. Dubuffet writes of a friend who has traveled in Korea and was convinced that “Korean dancers and singers are, without any doubt, people of the sort we call insane in Europe.”
137 MacClagen, 26. I am also still attempting to review museum collection records to try to obtain object acquisition dates.
138 The most notable of these works discussing Dubuffet and Artaud are Minturn’s dissertation, which emphasizes the (anti-narrative) incommunicability of Dubuffet’s portraits, and Scott B. Hamilton,
is correct, the Balinese performance at the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition had a greater impact on the French avant-garde than previously imagined—informing the work of one of its most prolific and influential artists.

Surrealist collectors were well known for their interests in African and Oceanic art. Yet, Asian cultural forms also held an appeal. This was certainly the case for Artaud, who had looked to Eastern theater for inspiration since at least the 1920s, attending and experimenting with various forms of Asian performance.\footnote{Singleton, xxx.} Western curiosity about Indonesian culture, specifically, also bloomed during the 1920s-30s as a result of ethnographic expeditions, colonial exhibitions, and the Dutch marketing of its colonies to promote tourism. Indeed, the “Bali craze’ impacted both Europe and the Americas, drawing visual artists such as Walter Spies from Germany and Miguel and Rose Covarrubias from Mexico and New York, each of whom resided in Bali and disseminated awareness of its cultural forms through images and texts. Indeed, Spies founded an artist colony in Bali which served as a hub for both visiting and indigenous artists as well as photographers and ethnographers, including members of the Paris centered group Archives Internationals de la danse (AID). Spies encouraged the interaction of artists, ethnographers, and anthropologists moreover, the latter of which included the famous American Margaret Mead. Covarrubias, a transnational artist of Mexican origin, illustrated for Vanity Fair, the New Yorker, and other popular magazines and cultivated anthropological interests, publishing his own study

\textit{Dubuffet and Ubu Roi: The Influence of Antonin Artaud on Jean Dubuffet.} (M.F.A Thesis, Ohio University, August, 1996), 10-11, 27, 42-43, 50-51. As indicated by the title, Hamilton discusses the likelihood of Artaud’s “influence” on Dubuffet’s art and theory. Hamilton considers the portrait series in relation to Artaud’s Alfred Jarry Theater using Dubuffet’s painting of Artaud as a lens. But this question of “influence” is handled more biographically than formally, focusing on times and places the artist and writer may have had contact during the 1920s (10-11) and arguing that since Dubuffet was only crystallizing his art theory during the 1940s his contact with Artaud during that period was formative (27). Hamilton also poses Artaud’s own portraits as inspirational to Dubuffet. Hamilton handles the formal analyses and theoretical intersections superficially, however, providing merely an overview of similarities and differences (42-43; 50-51).
on Bali to which he contributed text and illustrations accompanied by his wife’s photographs. The angular gestures of Covarrubias’s renderings as well as those of the Balinese artists in the book appealed to a transnational clientele with modernists sensibilities (Fig. 28). Balinese imagery even made its way into popular movies, its angular figures dancing across movie posters (Fig. 29). There is nevertheless a vacuum of scholarship on Indonesian forms in the art of post-war Paris. It seems logical enough, however, that Dubuffet engaged with these forms given his interest in Artaud and in theater, masks, and puppets; and that Dubuffet’s portraits *Edith Boissonnas as a Tibetan Demon* and *Henri Michaux as a Japanese Actor* are titled after Asian cultural forms. The glaring fixity of the Balinese mask is meant to startle, moreover, while at the same time being hauntingly familiar—in much the same manner as Dubuffet sought to do in his portraits.

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A regional form of traditional Indonesian performance, Balinese theater evolved from puppetry and relies heavily on gesture and dance (see map page 315). Although its forms were being impacted by colonialism and tourism, the ritualistic performance is integral to both sacred and everyday life, which are not segregated in Balinese culture as they are in the West. The performance centers on the Hindu value of balance in a dualistic world: between good and evil forces, masculine and feminine characteristics, and locomotive and static states. Its choreography emphasizes contrasts between course and refined movements and is composed of *tangkis* (transitions between static poses and emphatic gesture in which the arms and hands are held out and bent at odd angles). The moves are meant to communicate the idea that balance over natural

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forces can be only temporarily achieved—by continually (re)engaging processes of renewal. The poses are thus deliberately difficult to maintain and express transitory states of being, qualities that fascinated Artaud and, as I argue, Dubuffet (Fig. 30a-b).

Artaud observed, rightly, that the Balinese dancers use bodily signs to communicate directly with the audience, gesturing emphatically with their whole bodies to convey highly-charged emotional content. In Artaud’s mind, however, the performance became a means to repair the mind-body split he perceived in Western theater and culture, transforming the theater into a space where the plastic forms of its production—costumes, gestures, sound, lighting, stage effects, and so on—prompt primal affective responses. He wanted to mimic (not copy) its stagecraft with a double structure meant to both strike and grip the viewers—to jar them out of their cultural malaise with a jolt.

The Balinese performers Artaud (and likely Dubuffet) saw wore dramatic makeup, carved wooden masks, and elaborate costumes, some of which were layered to portray otherworldly figures. In Balinese culture, theatrical costumes are considered sacred, produced by following strictly prescribed formulas to facilitate the easy recognition of archetypal characters.

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142 Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, 61. Artaud writes that “the actors with their costumes constitute veritable, living, moving hieroglyphs. And these three-dimensional hieroglyphs are in turn brocaded with a certain number of gestures—mysterious signs which correspond to some unknown, fabulous, and obscure reality which we here in the Occident have completely repressed.”

143 Ibid. Artaud writes: “Of this idea of pure theater, which is merely theoretical in the Occident and to which noone has ever attempted to give the least reality, the Balinese offer us a stupefying realization, suppressing all possibility of recourse to words for the elucidation of the most abstract themes—inventing a language of gesture to be developed in space, a language without meaning except in the circumstances of the stage.”
Although part of a long Balinese tradition, this imagery was startlingly new to Artaud and most contemporary French viewers. And it was precisely this combination—old (seemingly primal) and shockingly novel (to Western eyes)—that interested Artaud. He especially favored the puppet-like costumes, which, he thought gave “each actor a double body and a double set of limbs” so that “the dancer, bundled into his costume seems to be nothing more than his own effigy”—a description that could serve equally well for Dubuffet’s portrait of Artaud. Indeed, Dubuffet’s double portrait of Artaud is unsettling due to the puzzling relationship of the symbiotic figure/s, the tense spatial relationships between the figure/s and the painting’s borders, and the ambiguous, yet highly theatrical, relationship between the figure and the viewer. And these effects are heightened by the sense of the figure’s suspended projection outward from the canvas, a projection akin to what Artaud wanted to achieve in theater.

In Balinese theater the immobility of the mask counters the movement of the dance and parallels its punctuating pauses. The mask mimics a living face but with little or no movement. Although some of the masks feature puppet-like mechanical parts, such as the movable jaws of the Barong and Rangda masks, they effect an uncanny sense of stillness that contrasts, unsettlingly, with our expectations for facial dynamism. Dubuffet’s portrait achieves a similar effect. Its face, unmoving and staring blankly ahead, highlights its fixity in paint, producing a sense of tension between its rigidity and the movement implied by the tightly packed and

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145 Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, 58. Artaud also uses the term hieratic to refer to his interest in bodily signs he believed could serve as instantaneous transmitters, opaque bodily writing that Minturn and others have addressed at length.
146 Dibia 8, 18, 54.
147 In “Convulsive Beauty” Breton articulates the Surrealist value of such jarring stillness in objects that should otherwise move (he cites a disabled locomotive as an example). But the impact is greater in Balinese theater due to the added contrast with the jerky choreography. Breton, André. *Nadja*. New York: Grove Press, 1960, 19-20. For more on Breton’s thoughts on the uncanny see also *Mad Love (L’amour Fou)* and *Les pensées d’André Breton: guide alphabétique*. 
doubling figure. A sense of “movement” occurs as our vision moves back and forth between the two figures in the painting. The arms thus “move” between being arms and legs, the necktie between clothing and penis, and so on. This “movement” contrasts with the initial impact of the static quality of the painting and, in part, accounts for its effectiveness, allowing Dubuffet to do in paint what Artaud hoped to achieve with Balinese-inspired theater—to disorient the viewer. Although Dubuffet worked in a static medium, he intended his paintings to affect the most intimate and profound “internal movements.” Concentrating on the affective play between movement and stasis, Dubuffet’s portrait demonstrates the painter’s ideal, shared and theorized by Artaud, of an art that disturbs, agitates, and stimulates.

The double structure in Dubuffet’s (and Artaud’s) work echoes the double structure of the tableau with a long and complex history in Western art. Dubuffet’s disorienting forms evince a kind of enigmatic “facingness,” moreover, that strikes the viewer immediately while holding his or her attention in an unsettling way. Despite its theatrical gesture and direct address of the viewer, Dubuffet’s painting does not pander to the audience or offer up any easy answers. In fact, for all his drive to generate extreme affective responses, Dubuffet writes that, ideally, “the painting will not be viewed passively; scanned as a whole by an instantaneous glance, but [rather] relived in the way it was worked out; remade by the mind and, if I may say, re-acted” by the viewer. Dubuffet’s aims are quite close in spirit to Artaud’s proclamation that “theater conventions have had their day.” Artaud writes that “as things stand now [during the 1926-27 Alfred Jarry season] we are unable to accept theater that tricks us. We need to believe in what we see,” adding, moreover, “we can no longer subscribe to theater which repeats itself every night.

149 For more on Michael Fried’s seminal discussion of “facingness” or “strikingness” see Manet’s Modernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 195, 233-235.
150 Dubuffet, “Notes to the Well-Read,” 77.
151 Artaud, On Theater, 31.
according to the same, ever the same, old rituals.” Dubuffet takes up this challenge in his painting, making no effort to trick us with a figure that resembles the reality we know (a long-dead trick), but rather confronting us with an enigmatic image we don’t quite know how to take. His figure takes us outside of our comfort zone, presenting us with something startlingly new, seemingly primal, and yet hauntingly familiar at the same time. It is a hybrid form that strikes our immediate attention and then holds it, uneasily, as we (re)negotiate our viewing experience.

Although dissimilar in many respects, Dubuffet’s portrait of Artaud shares salient characteristics with the Barong and Rangda costumes featured at the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition—both of which Artaud mentions in The Theater and Its Double. The strangely canine qualities of the portrait’s wide, heart-shaped head and dog-eared shocks of hair are particularly reminiscent of the Barong Ket costume, which features an elaborate array of fabrics, fibers, wood, and metal leaf to create a spectacular, dragon-like form covered with masses of flowing fur, especially at the sides of its large head. (Fig. 31), The Barong Ket represents a dragon-like animal spirit described as part lion with the playfulness of a puppy—a fitting description for Dubuffet’s furry figure of Artaud. Indeed, the tufts of the Barong’s main are all but replicated in Dubuffet’s portrait, as is the wide slash-of-a-mouth that we see when the movable mask’s mechanical jaws are closed. Moreover, the sinews in the portrait’s unnaturally thick neck delineate the second, much thinner neck, propped on top of which we see a shrunken face within a face. This configuration also echoes the costume, in which the relatively small mask hangs below the wide, oblong headdress, forming a heart-shaped visage that hides the performer. At the same time, Artaud’s rectangular neck (and decidedly phallic necktie)
rearticulate the *Barong*’s long beard, a symbol of his phallic power (Fig. 32). All of these formal convergences point to Dubuffet’s direct referencing of the Balinese theater in his portrait.

Because the *Barong* character walks on all fours, its costume is operated by two men. The costume is thus, like the portrait of Artaud, literally doubled. In fact, the name of the costume, *Barong*, likely stems from the Sanskrit “bharwang,” meaning two spaces. The elaborate headdress provides space for the forward man to cover his body while moving tufts of the main’s fur as though they are large ears. The man in front also operates the snapping jaws of the heart-shaped mask, which rests at about mid to upper torso throughout much of the performance.

The suggestion that the quasi-robotic arms in Dubuffet’s portrait could also serve as legs not only parallels Genzel’s “head-footers,” it also mimics the two-person *Barong* costume, in which the legs of the front performer double as the arms or front legs of the character. The image of a penis in place of the portrait’s necktie enhances the sense that the arms double as legs and likewise reinforces the idea of a man (or men) inside, the actor/s animating the costume like a puppet. Moreover, this proximity of head, neck, and sex organs in the portrait may also have a theatrical precedent. In part of the performance, the actors animating the costume sit down, at which time the mask rests at about the level of the front man’s genitals (Fig. 33).

Dubuffet’s portrait of Artaud appears a kindred spirit to the *Barong* costume, a fantastic, layered amalgam of strange, hybrid forms.

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154 Bateson and Mead, 164-167; Spies and De Zoete 95-97; Dibia, 70-72; Slattum, 99. See also Hobart, 99, 108.
155 Ibid.; see also Dibia, 71.
156 Dibia, 71.
157 Dubuffet’s rendering of the penis necktie and seminal buttons may comically conflate artistic and procreative acts. He depicted many of his sitters with neckwear that looks like sex organs, including one of the few portraits of women, in which he depicted poet Edith Boissonnas with vulva shaped neckwear. He also depicted Boissonnas as a Tibetan Demon and Michaux as a Japanese Actor, demonstrating his attunement to the general interest, among his peers, in Asian cultural forms.
News photographs of the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition suggest that Dubuffet looked also to the *Rangda* costume in making the portrait of the author, and indeed referenced the very costume Artaud meant when he mentioned the Balinese theater’s “devil.”¹⁵⁸ *Rangda* is a female demon character featured in the *Barong* dance. One particular exposition photograph shows the costume’s wide, heart-shaped head sprouting long shocks of hair at the sides—features also seen in the portrait (Fig. 34).¹⁵⁹ Minus the long teeth of the demon costume, the portrait’s slash-like mouth echoes the straight upper lip in the costume mask. Although the portrait does not feature the long, fiery tongue that hangs from the mask’s mouth, Artaud’s rectangular neck and penis-necktie echo the shape of the tongue, which also symbolizes power, in this case, phallic power held by a female deity performed, traditionally, by a male actor. Dubuffet’s penis/necktie may be somewhat humorous, but if so it is the kind of humor he describes as being like the disturbing “jokes” in Poe’s tales, “the strong ones that turn you to ice” or “stop you in your tracks.”¹⁶⁰ The displaced penis/necktie in Dubuffet’s painting suggests vulnerability and dissociation (ala Artaud). But, like the *Rangda*’s tongue and the *Barong*’s beard, the penis/necktie may also signify the power of altered states of awareness—and magical, transformative performance. Such performance is known in Bali as a trance dance, an aspect of Balinese theater that clearly appealed to Artaud. For Dubuffet, as for Artaud, even humorous, hyperbolic art is not merely a joke, rather it is a trigger with which to unleash a strike against the viewer’s sensibilities.

The similarity of the *Rangda* costume to Dubuffet’s portrait parallels the relationship between the character and the performer in Balinese theater. Although the *Rangda* is gendered

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¹⁶⁰ Dubuffet, “Art and the Joke,” in “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81. “These two categories have common blood. The unforeseen, the unusual is their shared domain. Don’t misunderstand me, I am thinking about the acmes of art. Poe’s tales, The Songs of Maldoror, that statues on Easter Island. Not those innocent little jokes that divert your attention for a few moments, but the strong ones that instantly turn you to ice, change you to stone, because they’re so good and so surprising.”
female, a male actor performs in the role based on tradition and sacred, apotropaic ritual. The character itself is thought capable of both invoking evil spirits and possession by black magicians, however, and thus the costume is only animated by anak sakti or men of great shamanistic power.\textsuperscript{161} Although the sanctioned performers are men, sakti is the female principle in Balinese Hinduism, in which creative forces are gendered male and female. This dualism is also expressed in Balinese theater as tensions between order and chaos, balance and movement.\textsuperscript{162} Dubuffet may have played with this notion of dual gender in rendering Artaud, whose own drawings often feature hermaphrodites.\textsuperscript{163} But as a sign of opposing cosmic forces, ritual performance, and invigorating enthrallment, this costume would have appealed to Artaud in any case, providing another model for \textit{The Theater and Its Double}. The costume would have appealed to Dubuffet as much as Artaud’s writings on its effects. Dubuffet could well have also encountered ethnographic descriptions of the affective qualities of the costume, accompanied by photographs. Importantly, a photograph in Walter Spies and Beryl de Zoete’s book \textit{Dances and Drama in Bali}, a 1938 work well-received by Parisian artists, even shows the Rangda as literally doubled—enacted by multiple costumed actors in a single performance precisely to produce unsettling effects (Fig. 35).\textsuperscript{164} Given Dubuffet’s background in Surrealism, his penchant for ethnographic research, and his chosen subject of Artaud, it is unlikely that this doubling would

\textsuperscript{161} Slattum, 85.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 99.
\textsuperscript{163} For more on Dubuffet’s drawings see Rowell and also Sontag, xxvii.
\textsuperscript{164} Spies and De Zoete, plate 35. See also Figures 27-31. Spies was a European “primitivist” painter who became enamored with Bali upon moving to the island, establishing a transnational artists community that aided Balinese and Western painters alike. He also worked to produce the 1929 popular movie about Bali titled \textit{Island of Demons}. For more information on transnational artistic interest in Bali see Covarrubias, as well as publications and archives of \textit{Les Archives International de la Danse} (AID), the Paris-centered group with ties to London, New York, and Bali had a permanent collection of Balinese costumes, held special expositions, and showed documentary films taken by members in Indonesia. The group also published books on Balinese theater that focused on dance and gesture and featured photographs of costumes and puppets, including the \textit{Barong} and \textit{Rangda}. They collaborated with a range of artists and ethnographers in Bali and interacted with the anthropologists Bateson and Mead. See also Figures 27-31.
have escaped the artist’s attention.

The *Rangda* costume is designed to unsettle. One way it achieves this is with its long, bony fingers, which the actor vibrates during the dance as a means to entrance other characters, and sometimes even viewers.\(^{165}\) Dubuffet’s painting of Artaud rearticulates the claw-like hands and theatrical gestures in the exposition photograph (Fig. 34). Holding his right arm up with the elbow bent at an odd angle, the figure in the portrait doubles the pose of the photographed actor. Moreover, the portrait figure raises its left arm in a way that echoes the performer, who holds an entranced woman in that arm. Dubuffet’s painting of Artaud is as disturbing as, yet less threatening than, the demon in the photograph, suggesting instead an amalgam of Balinese theatrical forms—a conglomeration of archetypal traits enacted and visually merged by the *Barong* and *Rangda* during part of the dance (Fig. 36).

In painting the schizophrenic author, Dubuffet could hardly have been unaware of his sitter’s dual personalities. He would have known, moreover, of Artaud’s belief that he was persecuted by demons (also described by Dr. Ferdière).\(^{166}\) Dubuffet must have understood Artaud’s reputation for wildly theatrical gesture during not only his performances but also in conversation, during the course of his treatment, and in talking to the demons that he claimed tormented him.\(^{167}\) Despite Dubuffet’s anti-psychological/anti-Expressionist approach to painting, he writes that the art of the mentally ill expresses the “internal word” or the “emotional movements of the author.” By looking to Artaud, to theatrical sources, and to the art of the mental patients in Prinzhorn’s book, Dubuffet shows many affinities with theories of art and

165 Bateson and Mead, 164-167; Spies and De Zoete 95-97; Dibia, 70-72; Slattum, 99.
166 Ferdière, 54; also quoted in Barber, 141.
167 Rowell, 11, 161; see expanded footnotes 20 & 36 for more on Ferdière’s assessments of Artayd; see also Artaud’s 1947 letter to Breton, quoted in Grossman, x.
movement modeled upon expressive and performative, rather than art historical, sources.\textsuperscript{168} And his portrait of Artaud is no exception.

\textbf{Puppetry, Performance, Painting}

Dubuffet’s portrait not only parallels the costumes Artaud had likened to puppets, it shares formal characteristics with the Indonesian puppetry from which Balinese theater emerged. Although there is no conclusive evidence that Dubuffet encountered these puppets at the exposition, news articles indicate there was a wide range of objects on view. Moreover, a photograph in \textit{Vu Magazine} shows that the Dutch Indonesian pavilion featured strikingly similar Javanese puppets (Fig. 37). Dubuffet may have seen this photograph in the press or in researching archives, or he may have seen examples in the collection of the Musée de l’Homme or, formerly, at the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro, likely sources given his ethnographic Surrealist ties and his propensity for artistic research.\textsuperscript{169} Dubuffet could have also seen examples if he traveled with his \textit{Guignol} teacher to Lyon, a center of puppetry in France.\textsuperscript{170} Alternately, he could have encountered these puppets during his trip to Holland (the colonial power in Indonesia) in 1932.\textsuperscript{171} Balinese theater was relatively new to most Europeans during the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition. But Indonesian puppets from Java had been widely collected as a

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{168} These ideas intersect with German theorist Wilhelm Worringer’s writings from the beginning of the century in his famous \textit{Abstraction and Empathy}, which was reissued in 1948. The German-Javanese prints and puppets of bizarre, amorphous figures produced by Richard Teschner (1879-1948), also inspired the German Expressionists and may have also provided Dubuffet with visual sources. Dubuffet did not see affinities between German Expressionism and \textit{Art Brut} and may have poked fun at it as he looked to this hybrid Euro-Javanese form in making his painting. Yet any such play would be only one aspect of Dubuffet’s painting, which he wanted to function using odd combinations of disquietude and humor.

\textsuperscript{169} Dubuffet, \textit{Biographie}, 34, 36.

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 36. Lyon is now also home to a world puppet museum.

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 30; Fondation Dubuffet, \url{http://www.dubuffetfondation.com/bio_set_ang.htm} (accessed March, 25, 2011).}
result of Dutch colonial trade, a fact that, given Dubuffet’s interest in puppets, would not have escaped his attention.\footnote{Matthew Isaac Cohen, “Dancing the Subject of Java: International Modernism and Traditional Performance, 1899-1952.” \textit{Indonesia and the Malay World} 35, no. 101 (March, 2007): 10, 13-14. Indonesia was under colonial rule from 1602-1942, first under the Dutch East India Company, then under government administration of the Netherlands (1800-1942). The Japanese controlled the territory from 1942-1945. A series of Indonesian revolts after the war resulted in Indonesian independence from the Dutch in 1949 (covered extensively in European presses). Although Balinese theater was little known in France at the time of the 1931 Paris Exposition, Javanese theater featured at the Paris Exposition of 1889, launching a mania that encouraged Dutch colonizers to rework Balinese theater to touristic, western tastes. Many prominent twentieth-century European performers, including exoticists Cléo de Mérode, Margaretha Zelle (Mata Hari), and Greta Garbo, had worked Javanese forms and motifs into their acts, some of which appeared on film. Here again, Dubuffet may have also looked to Teschner’s well-known puppets, which incorporated hybrid European and Indonesian forms.}

Several aspects of Dubuffet’s portrait point to his interest in puppetry—and to its specifically Indonesian forms. Notice the strangely attached arms, bent at odd angles, and the small, crooked, unstable legs of the figure in the painting. They are not only disorienting, they suggest wayang golek (three-dimensional wood), wayang krunchil (low relief wood), and wayang kulit (carved leather) puppets, each of which are held upright on sticks and feature jointed arms that can be moved by manipulating sticks attached to the wrists (Fig. 38). The visual connection between portrait and puppet is perhaps most striking in the bizarre pose and odd angles of the figure’s arms, its right arm (at the left of the painting) suggesting jointed elements controlled remotely, its left arm (at right) arced in a rounded, seemingly cut out shape. The figure’s spindly, impossibly posed legs reinforce the idea, moreover, that they are not functional supports. Along with the inverted funnel-shaped negative space between them, they suggest a figure held up on a stick or, alternately, a hollow Lyonnais sock puppet such as Dubuffet himself produced. The wide head also mimics puppet forms and appears pushed upward as though entering a stage, in this case the picture plane, from the bottom. These portrait features indicate that Balinese theater appealed to Dubuffet the puppeteer as well as Dubuffet the painter.
Puppets also resonated with Dubuffet the Surrealist ethnographer. Sharing many of the characteristics of the dolls and sometimes jointed mannequins valued by the Surrealists for their ability to provoke eruptions of otherness, puppets may be seen to project an eerie semblance of life, or of death—with their mere semblance of life standing out in a strange, often unsettling way (Fig. 25). As mentioned, Dubuffet’s portrait of Artaud does not overtly resemble a surrealist mannequin—it seems too alive for that. The portrait is a matter of life and death for Dubuffet, however, and a sign of his faith in the potential of art to stimulate, rather than merely simulate, life. Moreover, as suggested by the large bulky head, spindly legs, and gesturing arms, Dubuffet’s figure approximates the function of the Surrealist mannequin in the form of a puppet—and an aesthetics of puppetry which I argue is crucial to Dubuffet’s painting, in this case, painting drawn, in part, from Balinese performance.

Dubuffet’s portrait of Artaud shares key formal traits with Indonesian puppetry, features attuned to Dubuffet’s own artistic project. Consider again the portrait’s emphasis on gesture. The figure’s gestures, one arm in a seemingly cut out shape and the other in an odd, disjointed pose, are not possible in a human figure. These postures echo the forms of Balinese shadow puppets. Indeed, Dubuffet’s quasi-sculptural haute pâte painting may have more in common with low relief wood and carved leather shadow puppets than with their more three-dimensional counterparts. And these forms of puppetry, situated somewhere between two and three-dimensionality, would have surely appealed to Dubuffet the painter and sculptor. The monochromatic planar forms of the portrait, so different in this respect from colorful Balinese costumes, mimics the two-dimensionality and coloration of some shadow puppets—and all shadow performance seen from the audience opposite the screen. To the extent that Dubuffet

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worked within the modern problematic of painting as both an object and a two-dimensional representation, low relief shadow puppets are logical visual sources. The portrait’s color scheme of flesh-colored pigment over a dark, earthy background both suggests and inverts the hues of shadow puppet theater which, viewed on an oil-lit screen, appears as dark silhouettes on a lighter background (imagery that inspired Parisian venues such as the Chat Noir) (Fig. 39.). But it should be noted that in traditional shadow puppet theater, some viewers sit in the back with the *Dalang* or puppeteer to see the performance directly—in its true colors—rather than in shadow (Fig. 40a-b).\(^{174}\)

Such play with seemingly direct versus mediated representation must have appealed to Dubuffet, who idealized art as the product of confrontation with primal forces. Dubuffet the ethnographic Surrealist would have also appreciated the fact that, like the Balinese theater it spawned, shadow puppet theater was (and still is) performed for both entertainment and sacred ritual—It is likewise thought capable of major transformations, and of transporting the viewer to altered states of awareness.\(^{175}\)

Just as the *Dalang* or puppeteer in Balinese theater is thought to function as a conduit to sacred, primal, authentic experience (notions that appealed to modernist myths of the artist as a visionary outsider), Dubuffet holds the artist’s role to be that of “uncork[ing] passages through which the internal voices of savage man can express themselves.”\(^{176}\) Here again, Dubuffet embraces art, archetype, and ritual for what he takes to be their personally and culturally transformative powers. He views himself as directing artistic productions, “animating the

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\(^{174}\) Hobart, 190.

\(^{175}\) Ibid. *The Dalang* or puppeteer is conceived as primarily a spiritual mediator.

material” in order to “move” the viewer in ways that are strikingly similar to Artaud’s claims for the extreme affect produced by Balinese stagecraft.177

Dubuffet wants his painting to participate in a kind of trance dance of its own, but not with the intent of promoting introspective viewer absorption, a condition with affinities to relaxation hypnosis. Rather, in the spirit of both Artaudian theater and Balinese performance, Dubuffet aims to prompt a kind of startle response, a condition whereby contact with unexpected visual stimuli instigates a momentary, trancelike enthrallment, delivering also, for Dubuffet, an awakening jolt and a “short circuiting” of meaning. In contrast to “cultured” art, which relies upon notions of beauty, symmetry, and gracefulness, Dubuffet aims to shock, transfix, and transform the viewer with disorienting asymmetry, distortion, and hybrid, alien-seeming forms. His aims in this regard aligned with Artaudian theater but for one crucial difference—Dubuffet’s “short circuiting” of meaning, which presupposes the possibility of art’s intelligibility and the agency of both the artist and viewer. In other words, for Dubuffet affect does not replace meaning, it works in tandem with it, never negating the capacity of the viewer to discern meaning in the work.

Just as Artaud held Balinese theater to be a paradigm within a performative theory structured on a series of doubles (conceiving it also, as Brian Singleton notes, as Western theater’s Other), Dubuffet sought to displace the mainstream Western “cultural” production he saw as a “parasitic substitute” for true art.178 Dubuffet writes: “I think that the culture of the Occident is a coat which does not fit him; which, in any case, doesn’t fit him any more,” adding that this culture “drifts further and further from daily life,” and that it “no longer has real and

177 Dubuffet, “Notes to the Well Read,” 70; Zurbuchen, 158-159.
178 Singleton, xxvix-xxxvi; Hobart, 74-75; Savarese, 52, 54, 67-68; Cohen, 10, 13-14; Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,”110.
living roots." He looked for what he took to be anti-cultural forms in Art Brut but continued to reference non-Western sources as well, incorporating the Balinese theatrical forms Artaud praised in his book.

Despite Dubuffet’s ambition to produce affective viewer responses, it is apparently the human element that he most wanted to reach, which, in the end, he saw as something more than merely the primal physiological forces he wished to trigger. In contrast to Artaud’s ideal of art that continually bombards the senses, leaving them perpetually disoriented, it is his call for art that makes possible “the union of thought [intelligibility], gesture, and action” that more closely resembles Dubuffet’s artistic ambition—an ambition to both disorient and reorient the viewer, which for Dubuffet means the viewer’s capacity to interpret layers of both meaning and feeling repressed in modern life. Dubuffet writes that art should strive to “break everything that is habitual, to crack all the crusts of the habitual, to burst precisely the shell of the socialized and policed man, and to uncork passages through which the internal voices of savage man can express themselves.” But he also asserts that “It is up to art, first and foremost, to substitute new eyes for our habituated eyes.” This, he hoped, would open a creative connection between the work and the viewer, a conduit by which the viewer could “re-act,” not passively but actively, recreating in his or her mind the creative work of the artist.

**Performance, Identity, Ethnography**

180 Artaud, *On Theater*, 97. See also Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, 196-7. Artaud writes: “It is on the stage that the union of thought, gesture and action is reconstructed. And the double of the Theater is reality untouched by the men of today,” yet most of his writings stress affect and de-emphasize the role of thought in the process, postulating instead a performative model in which the viewer is a passive receptor of intensely affective theatrical stimuli.
181 Dubuffet, “In Honor of Savage Values,” 265.
182 Ibid.
183 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 77.
I began this discussion by tracing Dubuffet’s interest in the affective qualities of artistic forms, from its beginnings in Surrealism, through the art of the mentally ill, and to the Balinese performance that inspired Artaud’s *The Theater and Its Double*, finding that, in addition to the art of mental patients such as Beehle and Genzel, Dubuffet looked to the Indonesian forms celebrated by Artaud. We have seen how such imagery appealed to these quasi-Surrealists as emerging figures or, alternately, served as signs of schizophrenic dislocation in modern culture. We explored this doubling in the Indonesian costumes that inspired Artaud, the institutionalized “rogue” Surrealist Dubuffet contacted while collecting Art Brut. Importantly, we have considered the ways Dubuffet’s work provokes a sense of unsettling difference as a result of juxtaposing these otherwise unrelated cultural forms.

This chapter has also explored origins, in a sense, by tracing Dubuffet’s art practices of the 1940s to their roots in the ethnographic Surrealism of the inter-war period—Dubuffet’s first contact with the Parisian avant-garde. Despite Dubuffet’s ultimate rejection of Surrealism, his use of Indonesian forms was fostered by what James Clifford (building on Sontag’s work) has described as a “Surrealist attitude,” valuing unexpected imagery, cultural juxtapositions, an ironic view of culture, and the desire to invigorate culture by way of “primitive” forms thought to be products of raw creativity.\(^{184}\) Dubuffet’s engagement with Surrealism and ethnography are crucial to understanding his work, which evinces a kind of derangement stemming from the Surrealist desire to make uncanny art.

Dubuffet’s interests in Surrealist ethnography, uncanny puppetry, and art produced during altered states of consciousness (seemingly oblivious to Western culture) led him to Artaud and to exploring the affective claims Artaud made for Balinese performance. Yet, for Dubuffet authentic art deals with how we determine meaning and what makes a painting

\(^{184}\) Sontag, xxvii; Clifford, 118-121.
intelligible—even as he frustrates any desire the viewer might have for easy interpretation. Dubuffet’s emphasis on rudimentary materials and artistic processes; oddly humorous figures; artistic awkwardness; and art that suggests both “primal” creativity and creative thought marks his divergence from Artaudian affect. In writing of the viewer responses he wished to produce, Dubuffet demonstrates his interest in affect. Yet, in writing that art should be relived or “re-acted” by the viewer, whose eyes trace the marks of creativity in a painting, he demonstrates his belief in the value of meaning and the active agency of the viewer, who is not, after all, a puppet-like automaton. Dubuffet’s painting suggests a double structure that continues to engage the viewer long after the initial jolt of confrontation—and not merely with the barrage of repeated jolts Artaud wanted to deliver. Dubuffet agreed with Artaud that art should do away with notions of auratic/aesthetic absorption and cold, cognitive engagement, as is clear in Dubuffet’s painting and anti-intellectual commentary. But he did not hope to trigger an automatic, physiological viewer response as advocated by Artaud. Instead, Dubuffet’s writing—and his painting—indicates that he wanted his work to strike and grip the viewer, to reach out and pull him or her into an active confrontation with art. He wanted to break through to the viewer, to reach his or her inner being, and pull some of that to the surface for a vivifying artistic encounter. For this, as I have argued, he looked to the striking formal qualities of Balinese masks and costumes.

The Balinese mask is meant to startle, its stillness contrasting starkly with the movements of the performers. Rendered in fixed media, Dubuffet’s portrait of Artaud also startles, doubling, in its way, the theatrical costume that inspired both Dubuffet and his sitter. The portrait’s dualities highlight the creative movement by which Dubuffet hoped to excite, agitate, and invigorate the viewer and, by extension, culture. For Dubuffet “painting has a double advantage” over verbal language, “conjuring objects with greater strength” and, as Dubuffet writes, “opening

185 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 77.
to the inner dance of the painter’s mind a larger door to the outside,” \(^{186}\) Dubuffet’s portrait of Artaud expresses this performative power—the power to “carry [the mind] off into a world where the mechanisms of habit no longer function,” according to Dubuffet, “where the blinders of habit fly off, and in such a way,” he adds, “that everything seems fraught with new meaning.”\(^{187}\) Dubuffet thus turned to affect, and to the affective qualities of Balinese costume, as part of a dual artistic strategy – to effect a complex interplay between the mental, physical, and, ultimately, cultural experiences of the viewer.

I take up this theme of duality in Dubuffet’s painting in the following chapter, in which I consider his Portrait of Henri Michaux, a painting produced concurrently, and which I treat as a pendant portrait to Dubuffet’s Artaudian portrayalal. In Chapter Two I explore Dubuffet’s painting in relation to Michaux’s writing and visual art, both of which Dubuffet admired. Viewing Dubuffet’s painting in conjunction with Michaux’s eastward-looking renderings and his book *A Barbarian in Asia*, I trace the ways in which an aesthetic of displacement functions in these each of these works. \(^{188}\) Ultimately, Chapter Two explores Dubuffet’s emphasis on the viewer as an active (thinking as well as feeling) agent, arguing that he experimented with the ways in which sensibility and intelligibility work in tandem to produce performative, which is to say, individually and culturally transformative, art.


\(^{187}\) Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81.

CHAPTER TWO

“The Hand Speaks:” Dislocation, Creativity, and Meaning in Dubuffet’s Portraits of Henri Michaux

Part One: Dubuffet, Michaux, and an Aesthetic of Movement

The first thing you notice in Jean Dubuffet’s 1947 Portrait of Henri Michaux is its face; its large, bulging eyes; its protruding ears; its mask-like appearance (Fig. 6). What is this bizarre figure standing in for Michaux? How does it speak, in its way, to Dubuffet’s artistic aims? In Chapter One I discussed Dubuffet’s flirtation with affect, which, I argue, he engaged with while painting Antonin Artaud Aux Houppes (Fig. 5), a work produce nearly concurrently with the Portrait of Henri Michaux.1 Taking up my conclusion, in that chapter, that Dubuffet amplified affect as only one of a dual set of artistic aims, this chapter considers the other, his aim to stimulate the viewer’s mind. Dubuffet made much of his “anti-intellectual” stance, proclaiming in his “In Honor of Savage Values,” that authentic art exceeds the purview of reason and adding that what passes for knowledge (the encyclopedic drive of Western humanism) works not to vitalize intelligence but rather to “atrophy” it.2 Celebrating the raw, aggressive qualities of Art Burt, Dubuffet asserts, in fact, that “art does not have anything in common with the plan of the head or with reason” and that “art that proceeds from the head and from reason is a very weak art.”3 For Dubuffet, the “people who confuse art with the things of the reasoning head are people who do not ask much of art,” moreover, and who, according to Dubuffet, “probably have

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3 Ibid.,” 265.
no idea of what real art, when it shows itself in all its force, can bring. . . .”  

It is Dubuffet’s last statements about the nature of making and viewing art that significantly qualify his ant-intellectual remarks, revealing his view of art as both a thinking and feeling endeavor.

Dubuffet writes that “painting is a way much more immediate and much more direct than [a] language of words, much closer to the cry, or to the dance.”  

This is why painting, according to Dubuffet, “is a way of expression of our inner voices much more effective than that of words.”  

For Dubuffet these nonverbal “inner voices” or feelings from the depths of being are the source of true art and the raw, creative work of Art Brut. Indeed, representing the raw creative energies expressed in Art Brut was, for Dubuffet, a strategy by which to stage an intriguing, and thought-provoking, artistic encounter. Dubuffet considered the dual elements of art—thinking and feeling—to be interdependent and, ideally, mutually stimulating. In Chapter One I pointed out the affinity of this dual view of art with the ideas of Gaston Bachelard and touched upon the intersections between Dubuffet’s art theory and Bachelard’s philosophy of movement, really the movement of the creative imaginary.

This chapter explores more fully Dubuffet’s thematic of movement and dislocation in his *Portrait of Henri Michaux*.  

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4 Dubuffet, “In Honor of Savage Values,” 265.
6 Ibid.
8 See also Geneviève Bonnefoi, *Jean Dubuffet* (Caylus: Association mouvements, 2002). As mentioned in the previous chapters, Bonnefoi also discusses Dubuffet’s work in terms of disorientation and a thematic
Dubuffet’s work in relation also to his belief that “painting is a language” that is “charged with meaning,” an artistic language that can, indeed, be even more meaningful than writing.\(^9\) Looking closely at Dubuffet’s portrait, this chapter considers the ways in which Dubuffet articulates his dual approach to art as not only an affective but also, primarily, an intellectual endeavor. I do so, moreover, in relation to Michaux’s cerebral, yet disjunctive, prose and an aesthetic of displacement in his 1931 book *A Barbarian in Asia*, a text that deploys disorienting strategies to prompt critical reflection and, I argue, consideration of identity as a cultural construction.\(^10\)

In comparing Dubuffet’s *Portrait of Henri Michaux* to Antonin Artaud *Aux Hoppes*, one glimpses Dubuffet’s process in relation to his sitters, their shared interests, and their differing approaches to crafting what was ultimately, for each of them, a desirable sense of cultural dislocation. For Dubuffet and Michaux, as we will see, the approach was decidedly cognitive, building upon affect only to amplify a meaningful artistic experience.

The nearly identical poses of these two portraits are puzzling. Each figure bends his right arm (at the left of the painting) in an overly acute angle while his left arm (at the right of the painting) arcs in a curve. Neither of these poses is possible in a human arm and this accentuates the sense that what we see here is a depiction of the radically Other—or at least, something not quite human. Both figures hold their hands out, palms open with the right hand held up and the left hand held down, their gestures signifying something unknown, yet conveying the idea of movement and communicative contact with the viewer. Each stands facing the viewer with his spindly legs spread, feet cut off by the painting’s edge. Each of the figures pushes forward, of perpetual movement, though she takes a different approach to her study and does not develop these ideas in relation to Dubuffet’s drawing upon the work of his sitters, or the Oceanic and Indonesian cultural forms I consider.


Michaux decidedly so, as his top-heavy form threatens to topple forward from the canvas. Indeed each of the figures’ heads and hands brush the paintings’ edges, pushing into the canvas’s boarders as if to trying to escape them.\(^{11}\)

In many ways, the painting of Michaux echoes the portrait of Artaud. Yet many of their shared features are *inverted*, producing a number of important differences. Whereas Artaud has tufts of hair in place of ears, Michaux has exaggeratedly large ears standing out from the sides of his head. Perhaps the most striking difference is the shape of the head (*tête* being also a French term for a portrait). Both of these heads appear slightly heart-shaped, but in Michaux’s case it is so elongated as to be nearly an inversion of Artaud’s mask-like visage. As with the heads, Dubuffet inverts elements of the otherwise nearly identical pose, giving Michaux legs that are closer together in a more stable stance. But Michaux’s stick legs seem all the more puppetesque, more a formality than a means of support. Again, as discussed in Chapter One, the negative space between the legs suggests puppetry, one of Dubuffet’s interests, in either sock or stick form. An example of the former is the *guignol* puppetry performed in Paris and by Dubuffet himself in his studio during the 1930s.\(^{12}\) An example of the latter is the Indonesian puppetry

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\(^{11}\) Although the figure’s left arm (at the right of the painting) forms an arc, the two arms form dual triangles as well, lending an air of stiffness to the figure while, paradoxically, enhancing the suggestion of motion. One of these triangles is formed by the composition of the arms and the head, paralleling and accentuating the picture plane while adding a sense of flatness and a sharpness to the largely curvilinear figure. The other triangle is formed by the relationship between the figure’s two arms and its pelvis, which is slightly tilted, causing this portion of the body to appear as if receding back into space. This triangulation, which also indicates movement, creates no real sense of depth, however, accentuating the tensions between two- and three-dimensionality in the painting. The net effect of these fluctuations between two- and three-dimensionality is that the upper torso, which is top heavy in the shape of an inverted pear, tips slightly forward, arms held out as if toppling toward the viewer.

\(^{12}\) Georges Limbour, *Tableau bon levain à vous de cuire la pate: l’art brut de Jean Dubuffet* (Paris: R. Drouin, 1953), 16-17; Frédéric Jaeger, “L’Hourloupe in Close Up (1962-1974),” in *Jean Dubuffet Traces of an Adventure* (New York: Prestel, 2003), 42-44. According to Jaeger, in Dubuffet’s total theatrical production or living painting *Coucou Bazar* he realized an aim that he had pursued for almost forty years: even as a young man, before the war, he had hoped to earn his living by creating masks and puppets for the Grand Guignol. The Street theater he had dreamed of was transformed into a psychological play.”Unfortunately, no citation is given for the reference, though the author cites other
discussed in Chapter One, which also appears in Michaux’s book *A Barbarian in Asia*. In both cases, and as suggested by the painting, a figure is pushed upward onto a shallow stage to confront the viewer directly. This is interesting because it is the opposite of conventional figure painting, in which the figure pushes down onto the ground via real or depicted gravity and weight. In my view, this inversion of the figure’s relationship to the picture plane demonstrates both Dubuffet’s aesthetic of puppetry and his interest in the performative dimensions of art and identity.

The handling of the paint in the portrait of Michaux also stands as an inversion of *Antonin Artaud Aux Hoppes*. Both the portraits of Michaux and Artaud are roughly outlined with thick streaks of paint. In each it is handled differently, however, with the contours in Michaux’s portrait being especially broad (a feature that is highlighted by the expanded title: *Portrait of Henri Michaux “thick rings of crème.”*13 The rendering of Michaux is simpler, moreover, and more schematic. This quality is disconcerting because it is strangely at odds with Dubuffet’s crude rendering and gritty *haute pâte*, which enhance the work’s “primitive” appearance. Both paintings feature neutral colors and a dark, earthy background, but the figure of Michaux is less fleshy looking. It doesn’t stand out as much as the painting of Artaud. And while the pale contours delineate the figure and ground in Michaux’s portrait, the effect is limited by the

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13 The full title of the piece, *Portrait of Henri Michaux “gros cernes crème”* (*Portrait of Henri Michaux “Thick Rings of Cream”*), highlights the broad strokes of paint outlining the figure. Although they define it, however, the pale, pasty smears seem strangely at odds with it, lending a specter-like quality to the form, whose otherwise muddy hues highlight the painting’s materiality and echo the work’s rough, wall-like background. Without these pale contours the figure would all but disappear into this surface. With them, however, the figure emerges from it, as though moving, or in this case tumbling forth, from the picture plane.
treatment of the areas inside the lines. The paint in this inner space (a literary and pictorial theme for Michaux) is swirled, crosshatched, and rutted with scratches and gouges that echo the shallow, earthy background of the painting. This mimicry, attuned to that Roger Caillois articulates as the figure taking on the characteristics of its surroundings, problematizes the figure-ground relationship. Without Dubuffet’s thick contours of paint the figure would all but disappear into the background. With them, however, the figure seems to emerge from it, pushing forward from the canvas toward the viewer. Once again, we see a creative, back and forth movement by which Dubuffet hopes to engage the viewer. As in the painting of Artaud, the portrait of Michaux features rudimentary signs of modern Western clothing as well, and this attire seems out of place on the crude, alien, and seemingly primal figure. Both wear bizarre, penis-shaped neckties that hang above urine or semen-drop buttons that appear both remotely humorous and strangely unsettling. Indeed, tracing the line of these buttons in the figure of Michaux, one finds that the area between the figure’s stick legs contains a strange, angular glob of paint; and this crude glob of paint suggests the dangling flesh that might remain where the phallus has been ripped violently from its proper place. This is a disturbingly burlesque displacement on Dubuffet’s part, which may both poke fun at, and participate in, post-war discourses on the merits of figuration or—alternatively—of defiguration, a trend toward

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14 The rough textures in the painting of Michaux are more reminiscent of a rubbing than a painting, calling to mind the Paleolithic cave art then capturing the attention of Parisian artists such as Dubuffet. As in the portrait of Artaud, however (and despite affinities with paleolithic painting) the portrait includes rudimentary signs of modern Western clothing—attire that seems out of place on this alien form.


16 The clothing in the portrait suggest also the modern graffiti Dubuffet prized and calls to mind the Art Brut drawing of Herman Beehle (Beil), in which a figure dons garb crossed with series of buttons that split it down the middle, halving or doubling it. As in the portrait of Artaud, the graffitiesque “buttons” and necktie in Michaux’s portrait double for the figure’s genitals, which are located at figure’s neck and chest rather than between the legs, recalling the grisly dangling genitals in Beehle’s figure.
experiential and figural deformation in art and literature that, in this case, points also to Dubuffet’s twist on Lacanian castration symbolizing an imagined loss. For Dubuffet, the loss is that of an imagined primal richness elaborated upon also by Bachelard.\footnote{17}

The pendulous splotch of paint and displaced genitals so suggestive of castration in Dubuffet’s portrait also echoes his sitter’s idiosyncratic and darkly humorous literary approach to unstable identity and the fragmented self. Indeed, Virginia La Charité, David Ball, and others argue convincingly that Michaux treats the theme of identity in what amounts to a poetics of movement, fragmentation, and even bodily dismemberment.\footnote{18} This is perhaps most evident, as La Charité notes, in Michaux’s very first poem, his 1923 *Les Reves et la jambe* (Dreams and the Leg), in which he conveys the disorienting sensation of falling awake, so to speak, as his poetic persona awakens to discover a detached leg—his own—and must readjust his understanding of himself as he grapples with his disjointed subjectivity.\footnote{19} This surprise, and macabre, encounter, a confrontation also with his own detachment, according to La Charité, prompts an acute awareness of the fiction of the complete and stable self or, as Ball argues, an eerie encounter with the self in all its multi-faceted mobility.\footnote{20} La Charité adds that Michaux’s use of humor and odd deformations characterize his overall challenge to the “form of order,” shaping a body of

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\footnote{19} The imagery of bodily dismemberment was often used in response to the trauma and devastation of WWI, though Michaux, himself a student in Belgium during the war years, did not serve.
\footnote{20} La Charité, 21; Ball, xii, xiv-xv; see also Laurie Edson, *Henri Michaux and the Poetics of Movement* (Saratoga, Calif: ANMA, 1985), 46-48. All three scholars discuss Michaux’s treatment of the thematic of the fragmented self. La Charité addresses bodily fragmentation specifically, citing Michaux’s poem in his poem *Dreams and the Leg* (*Les Reves et la jambe*, 1923), while Ball discusses the thematic more generally, Edson considers Michaux’s work as dealing with streams of movement and moments and points of rest or momentary (and fragmentary) identification.
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work in which it is *force* more than form that matters—a sentiment attuned to Dubuffet’s art practice.\(^{21}\) Indeed, close looking reveals that resonances of Michaux’s twisted humor; ambiguous, form-resisting dispersal; and metaphorical bodily dismemberment are evident in Dubuffet’s portrait, producing an image that unsettles the viewer in much the same way as Michaux’s writing.

A slightly comic image that suggests the bizarre, the absurd, and the inexplicable, Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux captures the spirit of Michaux’s texts. Although flattened and stylized, the portrait of Michaux also recalls Dubuffet’s paper mâché masks, the strange, three-dimensional portraits discussed in Chapter One that his friend Limbour likened to death masks and described in mortuary terms (Fig. 4a-c).\(^{22}\) What I want to suggest is that even these funerary connotations are relevant to Dubuffet’s art, his art theory, and his practice as much as to his wirings on the asphyxiating effects of culture. Moreover, these connotations are highly relevant to this particular sitter and to both the artist’s and his sitter’s aims to produce art that disrupts life in order to stimulate it. Dubuffet does so, in this case, by drawing upon not the Balinese forms that he adapted in his portrait of Artaud, but, as I argue, a variety of Indonesian masks and puppets that through their performance reshape enculturated views. These are cultural forms, moreover, that Dubuffet’s friend Michaux would have seen during his celebrated Indonesian travels.

Despite the portrait’s oddities (its smooth bulbous head; upward arching brows; and large, protruding ears) it bears a striking resemblance to Michaux. This can be seen in a 1940s photograph, which shows Michaux’s receding hairline, thin face, and high cheekbones (Fig. 41). In the painting, the large head rests atop a body whose frailty (gleaned also in the photograph) is

\(^{21}\) [La Charité, 27.]

\(^{22}\) [Dubuffet, *Biographie au pas de course*, 36; Limbour, 16-17. Limbour describes the masks as “*masque[s] mortuaire[s]*.”]
only accentuated by its top-heavy torso. The resemblances between the painting and the photograph of Michaux are embryonic, however. They are rudimentary signs of a figure that seems only remotely human. It is an intriguing hybrid meant to activate the viewer’s imagination so that, as Dubuffet writes, “all of the faculties of the mind are aroused.”

**Dubuffet, Michaux, and Surrealist Ethnography**

Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux is a testament, in its way, to the need to reconceptualize the human figure given the bankruptcy of Western culture and the values of enlightenment-legacy humanism after WWII. But this bizarre postwar figure attests also to Dubuffet’s Surrealist roots and to a fascination with odd figural, spatial, and temporal displacements. In both painting and writing, Michaux’s work too retains affinities with Surrealism and he, like Dubuffet, participated in the Surrealist milieu of interwar Paris. Indeed, the two men may have met when they each frequented the experimental Surrealist atelier of André Masson’s Montparnasse studio. In any case, given their interwar Surrealist associations, it is likely that each man had been aware of the other’s work prior to their war-time meeting.

Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux is nothing if not uncanny; and its odd forms and displacements are meant to produce the maximum viewing effect. This artistic “impact,” as

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24 Dubuffet, *Biographie*, 21; Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 70; La Charité, 22; see also André Masson, *Les Années Surrealistes: Correspondences 1916-1942* (Paris: La Manufacture, 1990), 23, 28-29. Both Michaux and Dubuffet experimented with Surrealist automatism, yet valued degrees of artistic control, conceiving of artistic production as also a kind of creative channeling. Whereas Michaux saw his role as a writer to be analogous to that of a train conductor, switching tracks to generate various reader responses, Dubuffet likens his role as an artist to that of a conductor, composing figural forms as though engaged in a symphony of artistic inspiration, material experimentation, and chance. According to Dubuffet the artist is “a conductor” working with “a chorus of materials,” using “all of the components of the artist’s mind,” to create a process comprised of “intoxication and madness” in which “élan, brutality, and ferocity sing.”
Breton would say, includes both the production of affect and the activation of the mind. It is not a purely reasoning mind that Dubuffet hoped to active; far from it. Nor did he wish to engage in Surrealist excavation of the individual psyche ala Breton. Rather, Dubuffet sought to address the duality of the viewer as a thinking and feeling being ala Bachelard. Dubuffet aimed to open the viewer’s mind, to make it more receptive to life’s “echoes, resonances, and overtones.” A hybrid figure, Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux suggests the porousness of conceptual boundaries and the fluidity and dynamism of identity, highlighting, in the process, the power of art to impact the viewer and, perhaps, redirect, culture.

A fellow traveler to the Surrealists, to use Susan Sontag’s image of Artaud, Michaux too explored non-Western cultures and their production as means to reconnect European art with vital creativity. As with many Surrealists, Michaux too pursued interests in ethnography, performance, and a range of artistic responses that could be generated by culturally disjunctive

25 Dubuffet engages in a set of artistic strategies to promote viewer responses that were celebrated by his friend André Breton. For more on this see Les pensées d'André Breton: guide alphabétique, ed. Henri Béhar (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1988), 81, 215-216. This text contains entries pertaining to Breton’s thoughts on affect, convulsive beauty, the marvelous, and the uncanny drawn from Breton’s Amour Fou and other writings. See also Rosalind Krauss’s discussion of doubling and artistic impact in Breton’s notion of “Convulsive Beauty” in The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987), 109-112. It should be noted that neither Dubuffet nor Michaux, however, were as interested as Breton in individual psychological states, each seeking to engage with primal, even archetypal, creative forces and to grapple with the suppression, and hoped for release, of those forces within Western culture.

26 For more on Bachelard’s ideas on human duality see The Poetics of Space, xi-xii.

27 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81.

28 For more on cultural hybridity see Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), 1; for more on Performativity, in its earliest inception, see J.L Austin, How to do Thing with Words (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1962). I take the Surrealist interest in cultural relativism and unusual juxtapositions to point also to appreciation of what Bhabha later elaborated as cultural hybridity. I draw the term performativity from the bodies of literature following Austin’s definition of speech acts as cases in which words perform certain actions (such as wedding ceremonies). I use the term “performativity” in keeping with subsequent understandings of representation as generally performative.

imagery. According to Ludmila Velinsky, however, Michaux critiqued what he took to be Surrealism’s superficialities; its downplaying of the difficulty of attuning to one’s inner psychic forces, and its lauding of automatism at the expense of art. For both Dubuffet and Michaux, Surrealism encouraged the exploration of ritual performance and shamanism, which included speculating about primal creativity and transformative processes believed to be attainable during altered states of consciousness. Both men dabbled in automatic writing and painting, a conceptualization of artistic process that no doubt emerged from their involvement with Surrealism and, most notably, with Masson’s studio, which was a creative haven for such experimentation. Although Michaux maintained that his visual art was shamanistically channeled, he viewed his writing as more self-guided, posing it as analogous to the work of a train conductor who can switch the viewer’s interpretive channels. This position is remarkably similar to Dubuffet’s own likening of his approach to art as “a grand concert,” a “chorus of

30 For thorough discussion of Michaux’s experimentation with hallucinogenic drugs see Velinsky, 264-300; for more on Artaud’s drug use see Margit Rowell, ed, Artaud: Works on Paper (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1996) and Adrian Morfee, Antonin Artaud’s Writing Bodies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). Both Artaud and Michaux explored connections between art, affect, and identity, pushing the boundaries of this exploration by experimenting with consciousness-altering mescaline (Artaud in Mexico during the 1930s and Michaux in Paris during the 1950s, with the encouragement of mutual friend Jean Paulhan). Artaud had debilitating drug habits, which he aligned with his interest in mysticism when he traveled to Mexico in 1935 to observe Tarahumara rituals, which included the use of the psychedelic drug peyote.


32 For more on Michaux, shamanism, artistic channeling, the dream, and altered states of consciousness see Michaux, Emergences Resurgences; Nakabayashi, 109-115; Ball, xii-xv; Velinsky 27-37; Carrie Noland, Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), 130-133.

33 Dubuffet, Biographie, 21; Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 70; La Charité, 22; see also Masson, 23, 28-29. Both Michaux and Dubuffet experimented with Surrealist automatism, yet valued degrees of artistic control, conceiving of artistic production as also a kind of creative channeling. Whereas Michaux saw his role as a writer to be analogous to that of a train conductor, switching tracks to generate various reader responses, Dubuffet likens his role as an artist to that of a conductor, composing figural forms as though engaged in a symphony of artistic inspiration, material experimentation, and chance. According to Dubuffet the artist is “a conductor” working with “a chorus of materials,” using “all of the components of the artist’s mind,” to create a process comprised of “intoxication and madness” in which “élan, brutality, and ferocity sing.”

34 La Charité, 22.
materials” and “of all the components of the artist’s mind” including “intoxication and madness” that is nevertheless controlled, to a degree, by an artist who is “flexible and subtle.”

Dubuffet and his sitter each participated in the Surrealist milieu but remained detached from Surrealism as a movement, preferring to go their own ways rather than conform to the values of a group. Yet, both retained Surrealist interests, including an artistic engagement with primitivism, a penchant for Surrealist ethnography, and a fascination with producing bizarre figures. For Dubuffet, these interests led him to investigate different forms of “primitivism,” including his project of defining and collecting Art Brut. Dubuffet took a less spiritual approach to art-making than did Michaux, to be sure. Yet, both artists used their craft to strike certain chords in the viewer, aiming to produce art that so strongly resonates as to be personally and culturally transformative. Their works point to what they saw as the unnecessary, falsely conceived of distance between creativity and everyday life—a distance staged by Western enculturation. Both men, in fact, posed art as explicitly anti-cultural, stating their aims to use art as means of cultural deconditioning. Indeed, Michaux writes of painting to “decondition himself” and Dubuffet insists that it is the function of art to engage the viewer in such a way that “the mechanisms of habit no longer function.” Once again, Dubuffet’s art theory and practice show affinities with the philosophy of Bachelard, who contrasts imaginative movement with stagnant habitue. Dubuffet repeats this motif regularly, restating it in his 1968 book *Asphyxiating Culture*, in which he proclaims that “the first step toward deconditioning will consist in

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35 Dubuffet, Notes for the Well-Read, 70.
36 Henri Michaux, *Émergences—résurgences* (Genève: Albert Skira, 1972), 9; Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81; Dubuffet, *Asphyxiating Culture and other Writings*, trans. Carol Volk (New York: Four Walls, 1986), 60, 62. Michaux writes: Ne, elevé, istruit dans un milieu et un culture uniquement du ‘verbal’ je peins pour me deconditionner.” Dubuffet revisits these themes (first elaborated during the 1940s) in his *Asphyxiating Culture*, writing that “the first step toward deconditioning will consist in distancing oneself from all that is traditionally expected—for example, from painting” (62). He also proposes founding “a school of deculturation” (62).
37 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, xiii-xxix, xxv, xxxi.
distancing oneself from all that is traditionally expected.” 38 The goal for Dubuffet, and for Michaux, is to produce art that promotes an epistemological break or dislocates the viewer, as much as possible, from the routines of culture.

Asserting that “art generally has to mix the habitual and familiar with the marvelous” Dubuffet combines the everyday with the bizarre in his portrait of Michaux.39 As I argue, the painting represents his artistic aims: to produce a thought-provoking encounter with the uncanny, disorienting the viewer and disrupting (at least momentarily) his or her traditional, and predominately Western, cultural moorings. As contemporary critics observed, Dubuffet’s bizarre portraits were meant to agitate; but that was not their only goal.40 Indeed, Dubuffet’s portraits were performances of his aims to both subvert lofty institutional ‘Art’ and reconnect the viewer with raw creativity, a force that can awaken all of the viewer’s faculties so that “the blinders of habit fly off” and “everything seems fraught with new meaning.”41

Dubuffet’s artistic aims to dislocate his viewers are fitting for his this portrait of Michaux, whose written and pictorial projects are characterized by dynamic movements, troubling transitions, and bizarre encounters. As Velinsky and La Charité note, a comingling of dreaming and waking states; life-changing, self-reflexive, yet ambiguous moments; and points of

38 Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture and other Writings, 62. Dubuffet writes: “In terms of art, the first step toward deconditioning will consist in distancing oneself from all that is traditionally expected—for example, from a painting—and in recognizing the fallacious nature of the episodic fancies dominating the manner in which this object is treated, whether this treatment trends, according to the times, toward a geometric-style arrangement or else, on the contrary, toward a chaotic one, and whether it makes use of impersonal means of execution or else, on the contrary, strongly personal ones. After which we will come to realize the deceptively cultural nature of the idea of the painting itself, no matter what type of treatment it has received.”
39 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 76. Dubuffet writes, “Art generally has to mix the habitual and familiar with the marvelous. Anything containing only the habitual has no art, and anything containing only the marvelous is really fairyland, it doesn’t move us. We like to see a work of art combining the very real and the very strange (closely blended).”
41 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81.
contact between self, circumstances, and the Other trouble Michaux’s readers, as do the disjunctive tensions between his apparent disinterestedness as a writer and the heightened states of awareness his imagery evokes. Kazuo Nakabayashi notes that these very qualities distinguish Michaux’s painted figures, which appear often as dynamic, morphing forms. One could say that Michaux considered it his job as an artist to “move” the viewer, very often in disorienting ways. His work sets the viewer off course, so to speak, and this holds true for both his writing and his painting.

The artistic aim to decenter the reader/viewer appears in many of Michaux’s writings, including his 1933 book A Barbarian in Asia. At first glance, the book outlines Michaux’s year-long travels in Asia and a variety of the related, yet distinct, Central, South, and Southeast Asian cultural forms he encountered. Although these cultural forms have received less attention in studies of Surrealism than the art of Africa and Oceania, many Asian forms, particularly Korean and Japanese theater, were appreciated by the Surrealists. It is Michaux’s chapter on Indonesia that most interests me, however, and the cultural forms of these Southeast Asian islands that, despite the interwar “Bali Craze,” were less well known to the Surrealists (see map pg. 315).

In dialogue with Michaux’s book, and inflected with a history of ethnographically inflected

44 For more on the so-called “Bali craze” see my discussion in Chapter One, beginning on page 84. In both Chapters One and Two, I argue here that Dubuffet depicted Southeast Asian forms that were relatively rare in Surrealist collections. Although overshadowed by their African and Oceanic collecting, however, the Surrealists’ interest in Asian cultural forms was well known, manifesting early on in the gatherings, in which Dubuffet and Michaux both participated, at Andre Masson’s Montparnasse Studio. For more on this see Masson, 23, 28-29. Importantly, Dubuffet depicted many of his portrait sitters as Asian characters, including Michaux as a Japanese Actor and Edith Boissonnas as a Tibetan Demon. Dubuffet also refers to Korean dance in his “In Honor of Savage Values,” 264 when he discusses a friend (perhaps Michaux?) who traveled in Korea and was convinced that “Korean dancers and singers are, without any doubt, people of the sort we call insane in Europe.”
Surrealism, Dubuffet’s portrait pictures some of the very cultural forms Michaux would have seen on his trip. Indeed, as I argue, the mask-like face, stiff hands, and odd gesture in Dubuffet’s portrait directly reference the ritualistic masks, costumes, and puppets of Bali and the neighboring island of Sumatra. As I see it, Dubuffet looked to ethnographic depictions of these effigies, mimicking and imaginatively manipulating the imagery in his portrait of Michaux. This mimicry, as I argue, serves both formal and thematic ends, pointing to his and Michaux’s distinct, yet related, artistic aims—to dislocate the Western viewer from the ordinary and open him or her to new possibilities for alternative modes of experience. Scholar Richard Ellmann begins his preface to *Selected Writings: Henri Michaux* by stating: “Reading Michaux makes one uncomfortable.” 45 Ellmann adds that “the world of Michaux’s poems bears some relation to that of the everyday, but it is hard to determine what” such that we are unable “to reassure ourselves by calling it fantasy.” 46 These observations, and the idea that Michaux’s work is unsettling and resists the simple categorization of satire, could equally apply to Dubuffet’s portrait of the author.

Writing of his desire to “force the mind out of its usual ruts” and to “carry it off into a world where the mechanisms of habit no longer function,” Dubuffet too seeks to disorient the viewer.47 Dubuffet’s hybrid portrait demonstrates this artistic aim, one in which, as I argue, he attempts to produce effects that are analogous to the range of responses that can occur when one removes him or herself from accustomed surroundings and make new contact with the Other in new cultural contexts. Such reactions to encounters with difference, essentially to disruptions of

46 Ibid., VII.
47 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81; See also Geneviève Bonnefoi, *Jean Dubuffet* (Caylus: Association mouvements, 2002). Bonnefoi also discusses Dubuffet’s work in terms of disorientation and a thematic of perpetual movement, though she does not develop these ideas in relation to Dubuffet’s drawing upon the writings of the sitters, or the Oceanic and Indonesian cultural forms, I consider here.
ordinary cultural experience, ultimately change the ways in which one views the world. Importantly, for both Dubuffet and Michaux, encountering the Other (in terms of cultural and various modes of experiential difference) profoundly affects the way one conceives of one’s identity and the ways in which one relates to one’s own cultural milieu, in this case that of Western Europe in the inter- and post-war eras. Dubuffet wanted his portrait to stage a similar situation, as I see it, presenting the viewer with art as Other in both the cultural and radical senses. Thus, he depicts a hybrid form, with both human and inhuman characteristics (the large, distorted head; oversized ears; strange, oval eyes; mask-like facial features; and odd, stiff gestures), bringing the viewer face to face with something radically Other, something operating, he hopes, on a completely different experiential register. He aims to achieve the desired effects, I argue, by composing with culturally alien forms—creating a hybrid figure he derives, in part, from the Indonesian masks, costumes, and puppets Michaux would have seen during his travels. Such figures were radically foreign to French viewers and, as Dubuffet likely gleaned from the research of ethnographic journals he was known to conduct in various Parisian libraries, alluded, within their own cultures of production, to otherworldly culturally enlivening encounters. Dubuffet wanted his painting to promote just such an encounter, performing a kind of confrontation that troubles one’s sense of identity and highlights it as largely the product—or production—of enculturation.

48 For more on culture shock see Kalervo Oberg, "Culture Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments." Practical Anthropology 7 (1960). The term “culture shock” was coined by Kalervo Oberg to describe a condition in which the viewer experiences a combination of both immediate and delayed reactions to cultural difference. The term has subsequently fallen out of favor, however, due to its appropriation by jingoistic neocons; Although not yet available, Jill Shaw’s, A Coat that Doesn’t Fit: Jean Dubuffet in Retrospect, 1944-1951. Theis (Ph.D.)—The University of Chicago, 2013. discusses Dubuffet’s reliance upon a kind of “cultural electroshock” gained from his visits to Algeria and also discusses Dubuffet’s work in relation to the idea of dislocation and to the “breaks” that he benefited from introducing into his oeuvre.
Dubuffet’s emphasis on the performative dimensions of culture and identity have dual consequences for his portrait, a work which alludes to both puppetesque quotidian routines and the individual performer’s ability to either reinforce or resist, subverting cultural mores in favor of less inhibiting, and more creative, ways of being. Dubuffet proclaimed his anti-rational, anti-categorical, anti-cultural approach, stressing his distaste for “one of the characteristic traits of the mentality of Occidental Man,” namely, “the desire to divide up everything everywhere by yes or no—good or bad” without appreciating the nuances of experience. For Dubuffet, life experience should be “admirably complex” in a world “where all things interpenetrate and are continuous and imbricate one with the other and do not conform at all to this simplistic principle of yes or no, heads or tails.” His writing demonstrates not only his interest in phenomenology a la Bachelard but also his grasp of the cultural inhibitors of habit, as Bachelard writes, that can dwarf human experience. These are the cultural limitations Dubuffet wanted his art to exceed or, at least, subvert. And we can think of his opposition to categories as also an openness to hybridity as elaborated by Homi Bhaba—a condition which results from contact with, and comingling of, cultural forms once erroneously believed by Europeans to be mutually exclusive. Dubuffet celebrated Art Brut and other forms of “primitive” production he took to be originary, which is to say, uncontaminated by culture. But closer looking at his writing, particularly his later writing in his 1968 Asphyxiating Culture, demonstrates his understanding that “the man without culture . . . does not exist,” that “he is a utopian vision,” suggesting that

50 Ibid.
51 Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, xii, xxix, xxx-xxxi.
52 For more on cultural hybridity see Bhabha, The Location of Culture.
what is important for Dubuffet is one’s creative, and culturally subversive, position.\footnote{Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1968), 94. Dubuffet adds: “This is how the artist’s ambiguous position is defined. If his production does not bear a very personal stamp (which implies an individualistic, and consequently a strongly anti-social and therefore subversive position), it contributes nothing. If, however, this individualistic spirit is pushed to the point of refusing all communication with the public, if this individualistic spirit becomes so exasperated as to no longer wish to have his work seen by anyone, or even as to make it intentionally so secret, so encoded, that it is hidden from the viewer, its subversive character vanishes, it becomes like a detonation produced in a vacuum: It emits no sound” (48).} Dubuffet’s recognition of the inevitability of cultural influences revieals his receptiveness to hybridity as the only viable artistic approach. He acknowledges as much when he writes of “blend[ing] the familiar with the marvelous” in his art and asserting that thought cannot contain experience but “can only capture fragments, can only be fragmentary.”\footnote{Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 76; Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture, 37. Dubuffet recognizes that “thought can only capture fragments, can only be fragmentary,” and of this, he argues, “Western thought is not sufficiently aware.” See also pages 39, 46, 87.} He composes with such fragments in his portrait to form something different. It is a figure that suggests cultural damage, an image of the human reworked in the traumatic postwar context that references both Dubuffet’s interwar awakening to art and a primordial past that can be only gropingly engaged with. On closer inspection, and by way of its dialogue with the cultural production of portraiture and, to a degree, caricature, Dubuffet’s painting poses a problem. Yet it points also to a proposed solution. Dubuffet’s portrait suggests a desirable openness to hyridity, to different forms of artistic production, and, by implication, to creativity as a dynamic, living force, one that accentuates “different stages between being and not being” as creative potential.\footnote{Dubuffet, Anticultural Positions, 20. The points referenced here appear throughout Dubuffet’s essay and, in fact, serve as its structure, which he lists numerically under the rubric of “‘points concerning Occidental culture with which I don’t agree’” (4), which he contrasts, specifically, to “savage values” (3).}

**MICHAUX: A BARBARIAN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

At first glance, Michaux’s book merely presents readers with his quirky, Eurocentric interpretations of his contact with a variety of East Asian, South Asian, and Southeast Asian

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፫ Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1968), 94. Dubuffet adds: “This is how the artist’s ambiguous position is defined. If his production does not bear a very personal stamp (which implies an individualistic, and consequently a strongly anti-social and therefore subversive position), it contributes nothing. If, however, this individualistic spirit is pushed to the point of refusing all communication with the public, if this individualistic spirit becomes so exasperated as to no longer wish to have his work seen by anyone, or even as to make it intentionally so secret, so encoded, that it is hidden from the viewer, its subversive character vanishes, it becomes like a detonation produced in a vacuum: It emits no sound” (48).

፥ Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 76; Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture, 37. Dubuffet recognizes that “thought can only capture fragments, can only be fragmentary,” and of this, he argues, “Western thought is not sufficiently aware.” See also pages 39, 46, 87.

፦ Dubuffet, Anticultural Positions, 20. The points referenced here appear throughout Dubuffet’s essay and, in fact, serve as its structure, which he lists numerically under the rubric of “‘points concerning Occidental culture with which I don’t agree’” (4), which he contrasts, specifically, to “savage values” (3).
cultures he encounters during his travels. As La Charité argues, Michaux’s writing, in general, seeks to disorient, functioning in tandem with the motif of awakening in his writing to attune the reader to various stages and states of being.\(^5^6\) Michaux’s prose, like his panting, is filled with disquieting encounters between self and other and is characterized by an overarching, though ambiguous, sense of the back-and-forth movement, between the coherence and fragmentation, of enculturated identity. Despite his efforts to escape European culture during the course of his travels, the alternation between interested, acerbic, and tongue-in-cheek prose in his book is off-putting to a twenty-first century reader. As with Dubuffet’s portrait, however, Michaux’s book warrants a closer look. It too operates on multiple intellectual and emotive levels, highlighting a range of responses to contact with difference and revealing tensions between the writer’s inherited cultural biases and his dissatisfaction with Western culture. Running the gamut of emotions that can occur in encountering difference, from euphoria, to rejection, to subtle hostility in the form of sardonic humor, the net effect of Michaux’s book is to lay bare the processes he undergoes in a sometimes instantaneous, sometimes incremental, occasionally inspiring, and frequently unsettling re-orientation of perspective/s.

Dubuffet acknowledged his admiration of Michaux—and thus, presumably, the author’s thematic of displacement, in letters to friend Jacques Berne.\(^5^7\) As Minturn observes, one

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\(^5^6\) La Charité, 21-22.

\(^5^7\) Dubuffet, *Lettres a J.B.*, 1945-1985 (Paris: Hermann, 1991), 5, 11 (letters of Jan 13, 1947 and May 29, 1947 cited also in Minturn, 94); Dubuffet writes: “J’aime bien (surtout pour commencer, pour soutenir mes premiers pas dans cette entreprise de portraits) traiter de personages aussi merveilleux que possible (comme Michaux, Léautaud, Artad, Cingria) parce que ça m’en traîne, ça m’excite.” (I like (especially to begin, to support my first steps in this enterprise of portraits) to deal with people who are as marvelous as possible (like Michaux, Léautaud, Artad, Cingria) because that’s what compels me, excites me (5); Dubuffet also writes of being “entiché de Michaux” (infatuated by Michaux) in his letter of May 29, 1947 (11); see also Minturn, 94. For more on Michaux’s thematic of movement see La Charité, 21; Edson, 46; Ball, xii, xiv-xv. All three scholars discuss Michaux’s treatment of the fragmented self, though. La Charité addresses boldly fragmentation specifically, citing Michaux’s poem in his poem *Dreams and the Leg* (*Les Reves et la jambe*, 1923), while Edson considers Michaux’s work as dealing with streams of movement and moments, and identity as momentary points along the way.
contemporary critic even compared Dubuffet’s and Michaux’s work, proclaiming that Dubuffet was to painting what Michaux was to writing. Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux points to both the artistic processes with which the artists experimented and to the reactions each of them wanted to produce in the viewer. That the painting draws, as I argue, upon some of the very Southeast Asian cultural forms the author would have seen on his trip should not be too surprising given the evidence I present in Chapter One that Dubuffet looked, contemporaneously, to Balinese cultural forms in rendering Artaud. In both portraits, an amalgamation of various cultural sources produces an enigmatic figure—a hybrid figure that faces the Western viewer and prompts an uneasy sense of confrontation.

As Peter Broome observes, the theme of displacement features prominently in Michaux’s writing. Indeed, Michaux travelled extensively in order to disengage himself from his European culture. Unable to accomplish the ideal of complete detachment despite his extensive world travels, Michaux remained, for all his efforts to the contrary, a drifting, somewhat culturally dislocated European with a troubled relationship to his culture of origin. His book reflects this

60 Edson, 53; Parish, 151-166; Nakabayashi, 116.; See also Dima Hamdan, Victor Segalen et Henri Michaux: deux visages de l’exotisme dans la poésie française du XXe siècle (Fasano: Schena, 2002). Michaux travelled throughout Europe and extensively in the Americas (1918, 1927, 1936, 1939, 1967, 1969), the Middle East (1930, 1947, 1956, 1974), and Asia (1931-1932, 1966). Like many members of the Parisian avant-garde, Michaux investigated an eclectic blend of eastern cultures and philosophies beginning as early as the 1920s. Michaux travelled the world over, and it cannot be said that he adopted any one of these cultures as an ideal non-Western alternative. Instead, he sought to experience the transformative (if disorienting) effects of cultural dislocation, exploring regions characterized by high degrees of intercultural contact. The Indonesian islands he visited during his 1931 trip are a case in point. They are comprised of a myriad of cultures (and cultural mélanges) with not only Asian but also a variety of other roots, making cultural categorization (a procedure about which Dubuffet was dubious) extremely problematic. Indeed, multi-cultural forms and hybrid, bizarre imagery (to the Western eye) appear to have played roles in both Michaux’s and Dubuffet’s painting. And this shared interest in alien forms—images with the potential to be individually and culturally transformative within the European artistic context—surely fostered the two men’s friendship. Dislocation was be a kind of ideal for Michaux, one that can be seen also in the writings of the quasi-Symbolist poet Victor Segalin, who travelled to China at the beginning of the twentieth century and wrote about both hybridity and a desirable sense of cultural
conundrum—that he can neither fully detach from his own culture nor fully engage with the Other—containing sarcastic expressions of his frustration and, more often than not, derogatory comments about the locals.  

The fact that his book highlights his status as a cultural outsider would have surely appealed to Dubuffet, who celebrated Michaux’s work generally and viewed cultural dislocation as an artistic, as well as anti-cultural, ideal.  

This sense of dislocation is central, I think, to both men’s work and inflects Dubuffet’s depiction of the author. Both men formulated their artistic proclamations as cultural critiques, moreover, which they infused with irony, though Michaux’s relies more heavily upon sarcasm. In affinity with Dubuffet’s artistic aims, however, Michaux’s exploration of the centering effects of encountering difference exceeds a purely psychological reading. Indeed, Michaux too wanted to appeal to an imagined sense of primordial experience, which is to say, an array of feelings about the experience of self and culture that could be imagined to be natural. Michaux’s writing is a poetic, rather than analytic, stream of consciousness that is consciously disconcerting and vacillates between reportage and his creative imaginings. His tone of detachment, as Edson observes, lends his writing an air of objective description that tinges his interpretive commentary on his deliberate dislocation. Known among the Parisian avant-garde of the interwar period and published in the Mercure de France, Segalen would surely have been known to Michaux (see my previous note 61). Scholars such as Edson, Parish, Nakabayashi, and many others have noted the extent to which Michaux’s long-term engagement with the Orient, in the form of travel, art, texts, and spirituality, impacted his own art and writing. Nakabayashi takes this linking of Michaux to Eastern cultures a step further, claiming that, due to a high degree of engagement with the east, “the versatile and subtle position of Michaux’s subjectivity cannot be distinguished straightforwardly as Oriental or Western.” While I would stop short of making such a claim, I do find the idea of cultural dislocation to be a kind of ideal for Michaux. It makes sense that he would look to the orient for cultural alternatives.  


63 See also Edson, 50-51. She discusses a “dialectics of aggression” at work in Michaux’s writing, in which he generally alternates between aggressor and victim.
and chance experiences of the Other. Michaux alternates between subjective and objective positions in his book, ricocheting the reader between the author’s descriptions, interpretations, and mixed responses to intercultural contact. It is a gropingly engaged self-reflexivity in which Michaux does not spare himself from his quasi-parodic assessments. Dubuffet takes an analogous approach to his quasi-comical, yet quite disturbing, portrait and, indeed, to painting in general, which he conceives of as an experimental interplay between the artist’s hand, the material, and chance.

Michaux’s chapter on Indonesia provides a view of his experience of culture shock. Blending wonderment, quirky humor, and the deadpan writing style of a laundry list, Michaux elaborates upon his encounters with cultural Otherness and hybridity, writing:

“Malays, Javanese of Sumatra, Balinese, Malay Soudanese of Borneo, of Flores, mixed with, married to a hundred insular races, to the Batak, to the Dyaks, to the Chinese, to the Arabs, and even to the Papuas, converted in turn to the religion of

64 Edson, 50-51.  
65 As with Michaux’s painting, his writing is not easily categorized and he wrote a number of volumes that blend poetry and prose. These too treat the themes of displacement, actualized by creative movements through both interior (imagined, psychological, altered states of awareness) and exterior spaces. Movements are balanced by moments or momentary points of rest in these spaces, which serve to form a fragmented sense of identity (or more properly identities, conceived as multiple, dynamic, and performed These ides appear even in his titling of works such as The Space Within (L'Espace du dedans, 1944) and Elsewhere (Ailleurs, 1948), two texts written contemporaneously with Dubuffet’s emergence as a post-war painter. Michaux’s treatment of the themes of spatio-temporal displacement in his painting (such as the double figure) refers back to his own artistic processes, highlight art as creative movements. It is easy to see why Dubuffet would be attracted to this work. Like Dubuffet, Michaux considered art-making to be a great adventure, which he approached in terms of creative movements, contact with ‘primal’ life forces, altered states of awareness, and, most importantly, awakenings. It is the hoped-for awakening from stale, habituated culture and the monotonous, conformist states of consciousness it enforces that Dubuffet wanted to promote. Both Dubuffet and his sitter saw gesture as expressive of this creative movement, which they each also enacted in paint (in both the gesture of the painting process and, in many cases, the gesture of the figure, both of which can be seen in Dubuffet’s portrait). Both artists smear their paint in crude, thick strokes, though Michaux’s paint is water based and thus thinner and more fluid.  
66 Dubuffet, “Notes to the Well-Read,” 68-69. Dubuffet discusses art as an “adventure” between the artist, the materials, and chance in several entries, including those titled “Man Should Speak But So Too Should the Tool and the Material,” “Imprint of an Adventure,” and “Teaming Up with Chance.”
India (Hinduism and Buddhism), then to Mohammedanism—here is enough to trip up anyone who attempts to generalize at every step. It is annoying.”

At odds with himself and disappointed by his inability to fully detach from his Eurocentric identity, he longs for a hybrid context that resists cultural stagnation—a hybridity and heterogeneity he finds, yet finds more than a little disturbing, in Indonesia. Michaux’s opening gambit demonstrates the extent to which his Western enculturation inflects his outlook as he parodies his surprisingly tenacious, and perhaps largely subconscious, attachment to the very Eurocentric values he seeks to flee. Encountering heterogeneity and hybridity such as he has never experienced in Europe, Michaux makes visible the tensions he experiences between his desires for, and ambivalence toward, this contact with difference. In reality it is a polyphonic play of differences that resonates, in different ways, long after Michaux’s Indonesian trip. The sense of ambivalence, confusion, and emotive tension shaped by lived experience certainly contributes to his alternately detached tone, tentative humor, and, ultimately, his expression of his inability to really connect with the Other/s he has travelled so far to see. It is over time, however, upon reflection, that Michaux truly appreciates his experiences, writing in his preface to the 1949 American edition of *A Barbarian in Asia*: “When I went on a journey to Asia twenty years ago, I was innocent enough to believe that I could give my impressions,” adding “I exulted in the great multiform, living challenge of the Asiatic peoples to our terrible Western monotony.”

As I argue, this imagery, this multi-cultural mélange, provides a picture of Michaux’s artistic aims to de-center, and serves as a source of inspiration for Dubuffet’s hybrid portrait of the author.

In contrast to Artaud’s hyperbole, Michaux’s writing approximates reportage, no matter

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68 Ibid., v.
how strange the account. Although Michaux’s prose lends an air of the mundane to the incredible, however, somehow the effect is that the reverse is implied—that his travels, his contact with the Other, even the details that become quotidian are uncanny, oddly humorous, and frequently disquieting. In this context, his blasé prose unsettles the reader, providing odd openings in which one may glimpse the marvelous that is repressed by modern European culture. In revealing his morphing attitudes in relation to an amorphous multitude of Others, Michaux’s *A Barbarian in Asia* reveals, simultaneously, that there are nearly as many Michauxs as the Others he encounters. Indeed, he is like an actor playing a variety of staged and fleeting roles while struggling, at the same time, to escape them.  

Michaux is tripped up by his culturally instilled tendency to generalize, categorize, and to want to imagine the Other as one or the other unified, stable identity. He does so even as he rejects the notion that his own identity as a white, European male is—or ought to be—stable. Indeed, his grasp of the notion of identity as a performance—as an unstable and transient set of constructs—is elaborated in his text, in which he describes (with an air of alternating humility and condescension) his encounters with a plethora of Others he cannot easily pin down. His experience of these Others ultimately changes him while highlighting the very notion of identity (his and theirs) as constitutive; a configuration of performed roles situated on a culturally constructed stage. In expressing his chagrin at his inability to “generalize at every step” (a product of his European enculturation), Michaux directs his often biting humor at himself as well as Others. His wit both masks and registers his ambivalence toward the realization that he can no more fully break from his culture than he can truly connect with—or contain—the Other/s of Indonesia, a centuries-long hub of multi-cultural

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Michaux’s brief and satirically generalized discussion of Indonesia thus provides insights into both his writing style and his approach to identity as performance. His book problematizes the very idea of stable identity and opens instead onto a world of experiential possibilities born of fragmentation and hybridity—or dis- and relocation.

Michaux’s more cerebral writing diverges from Artaud’s intensely affective depictions of Indonesian performance. Whereas Artaud had likened the Balinese theater to a barrage of theatrical blows bludgeoning the autonomic networks of the Western viewer, for instance, Michaux characterizes it as a theatrical form that alternates between being strongly affective and melodically entrancing. These intriguing performances, these alien addresses to the viewer, appealed to Michaux on more than merely the autonomic level, as they had for Artaud. Indeed, they appealed to Michaux’s mind as well as his senses.

While describing performances comparable to those Artaud saw at the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition, Michaux rarely reaches Artaud’s fevered pitch. Both men hone in on the near-hypnotic qualities of Balinese performance but in markedly different ways. Countering Artaud’s view of Indonesian theater as “fiery, magnetic imagery” that overturns “all our preconceptions,” and acts upon us “like a spiritual therapeutics whose touch can never be forgotten,” Michaux poses Indonesian performance as a kind of “delirium without frenzy,” adding that it is set to gamelan music not blaring and frenzied, as Artaud had insisted, but that is instead “floating” and “hypnotic.” Indeed, Michaux asserts that “nowhere in the world is there as smoothly running music as the Balinese and Javanese gamelan.”

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70 Michaux, A Barbarian in Asia, 171; for a thorough discussion of the various populations of Indonesia see Jill Forshee, Cultures and Customs of Indonesia (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2006), 12.
71 Artaud, The Theater and Its Double, 84-85; Michaux, A Barbarian in Asia, 176.
72 Michaux, A Barbarian in Asia, 176. Both Michaux and Artaud considered Balinese theater to be enthralling, but whereas Artaud emphasizes its glaring, affective characteristics Michaux stresses its floating, hypnotic qualities.
Michaux’s lack of emphasis on the forceful, frenzied aspects of these Southeast Asian performances may be attributed to the fact that in this passage he conflates the Balinese and Javanese forms (an instance of the problem with generalization noted at the beginning of his chapter). This is a generalization that both loses the cultural specificity of the performances and misses the Balinese emphasis on force and dynamism that distinguishes it from the music of neighboring Java.\(^{73}\) Further into Michaux’s chapter, however, (and perhaps into his Indonesian sojourn) he acknowledges this Balinese intensity, writing that “[t]his music is full of impatience, of trembling, of fever,” and adding that, to him, “the Wayang Koelit (shadow-puppetry) of Java is really the same as the Wayang Koelit of Bali” even though “the style is quite different.”\(^{74}\) He thus conflates the two forms, albeit playfully, even as he attempts to distinguish them. His account reveals the tensions between his desire to experience cultural difference and his Eurocentric cultural conditioning. Such a response (in all its inconsistency) is consistent with the series of reactions to inter-cultural contact that includes mixed feelings and confusion about the overall experience, the Other, and one’s own sense of identity.

Despite Michaux’s conflating disparate forms of Indonesian theater at his chapter’s outset, some of his discussion captures the cultural specificity of the performances. Michaux writes that, in contrast to the Javanese variety, Balinese performances feature characters that “fight each other with unheard-of violence, fast and excitedly.”\(^{75}\) He adds, moreover, that the stagecraft—comprised of frenzied, jerky puppets, shrieking Balinese actors, and the flickering

\(^{73}\) I.W. Dibia, and Rucina Ballinger, *Balinese Dance, Drama and Music: A Guide to the Performing Arts of Bali* (Singapore: Periplus, 2004), 22-23. The gamelan music in Bali, which began in the courts of Java and then to the Balinese courts, became more attuned to the daily lives of the people, and part of their ritual practices, as it filtered into Balinese culture (an idea that would have surely appealed to Dubuffet).

\(^{74}\) Michaux, *A Barbarian in Asia*, 182. Michaux discusses Balinese performance in relation to demons further on page 178, where he describes a funeral ritual enacted by live actors. His discussion here reminds the reader that he is aware of the deep cultural significance of this ritualistic performance, which does not serve as merely entertainment.

\(^{75}\) Ibid.
lights of the oil lamp and its cast shadows—creates a sense of “palpitating, trepidating and electric” life. Michaux not only contradicts his initial interpretations, fleeting from one momentary impression to the next, he also (at one exceptional point) approaches Artaud’s intensely dramatic description. But Michaux drifts here and there in his Southeast Asian account, experiencing bits and pieces of its culture and losing—and reforming—parts of himself along the way. I want to suggest that Dubuffet had similar goals for his painting—both his processes and the products by which he aimed to move the viewer. For these, I argue, he too looked to such performance, producing a portrait of Michaux inflected with the imprints of difference and hybridity.

**MICHAUX, PICTURE-WRITING, AND GESTURE:**

Michaux the traveler is caught somewhere in between, ambling from one (dis)connection to the next. And this sense of drifting is conveyed in both his real and imaginary travel logs. One

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76 Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, 85; Michaux, *Emergences Resurgences*, 9; Michaux, *A Barbarian in Asia*, 182; see also Stephen Barber, *Blows not Bombs* (New York: Creation, 2003), 26, 57. Artaud looked to Balinese theater as a model of performance so primal, so intensely physical as to be shocking to the core of one’s being. Artaud’s intensely written prose poses Balinese theater as a performative ritual—a kind of magical production with the power to stimulate, rather than merely simulate, life. The emphasis on fluidity or “floating” that dominates most of Michaux’s discussion highlights the contrasts between what he and Artaud sought in Indonesian performance, providing insights into how each of them viewed art in relation to culture. Both men saw art-making as a performative endeavor, which is to say, they believed it had, on the one hand, culturally reinforcing tendencies and, on the other hand (ideally) individually and culturally transformative effects. For Artaud the jerky postures and gyrations of Balinese theater epitomized the physical and intensely gestural performance he thought could shock—and potentially transform—the audience, writing of his desire to (re)produce theater that “upsets all our preconceptions, inspiring us with fiery, magnetism” and acting upon us like “a spiritual therapeutics.” For his part, Michaux, in *Emergences Resurgences* (9) asserts that art should serve to undo the (largely verbal) forces of enculturation, writing that he painted in order “to decondition himself.” In *A Barbarian in Asia* (182) Michaux discusses Balinese performance in relation to demons further on page 178, where he describes a funeral ritual enacted by live actors. His discussion here reminds the reader that he is aware of the deep cultural significance of this ritualistic performance, which does not serve as merely entertainment.

77 Dubuffet, “Notes to the Well-Read,” 68-69. As previously noted, Dubuffet discusses art as an “adventure” between the artist, the materials, and chance in several entries, including those titled “Man Should Speak but So Too Should the Tool and the Material,” “Imprint of an Adventure,” and “Teaming Up with Chance.”
sees this especially in his character Plume, the fictitious tragic-comic traveler featured in other of Michaux’s literary works who stumbles, and often bumbles, through his journeys—a character Dubuffet also committed to portraiture (Fig. 42). Minturn discuss Dubuffet’s *Plume with Creases in his Trousers* (a portrait of Henri Michaux), arguing for an emphasis in Michaux’s writing—and in Dubuffet’s painting—on communicative failures and the opacity of language. This may be so to a degree; both Michaux and Dubuffet preferred to intrigue their viewers than to clearly communicate ideas. Both men were, indeed, intrigued by the potential of art, on the one hand, to emotively impact the viewer and, on the other hand, to evoke, rather than explicitly communicate the artist’s ideas (this is why each man looked to ostensibly primal forms as artistic paradigms). The writings and images of both men bear this out, each looking to art to highlight something inexplicable that resists definition and subverts cultural containment. Each looked, in one way or another, to Surrealist automatism and artistic strategies that mitigate the artist’s control—chance, materiality, altered states of awareness, though, to my knowledge, Dubuffet did not experiment with art-making while on psychotropic drugs, as did Michaux. As with Michaux’s character Plume, his book *A Barbarian in Asia* reveals his fascination with cultural and linguistic framing, with human failings, and with erroneous faith in utilitarian communication. However, as scholars such as Nakabayashi, Noland, and Parish observe,

78 Velinsky, 126-127. Plume is the character in a series of tales published in eponymously titled books. These books were actually rearrangements of the original collection, *Un Certain Plume* (Paris: Edit. Du Carrefour, 1930), which appeared in *Plum précédé de Lointain Intérieur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), as well as a 1963 edition (and 1970 reprint), which returned to the original format and included some stylistic changes. As Velinsky notes, Michaux “never considers this task finished” (126), and this continuous reworking of the collection/s demonstrates his emphasis on flux and the reconstitution of fragmentary components.

79 Minturn, 94.

80 Ibid.

81 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 70; La Charité, 22. Dubuffet and Michaux each retained a belief in a degree of intentionality and artistic control, however. As mentioned, Dubuffet viewed his artistic processes as a “chorus” of the artist’s hand, materiality, and chance. Michaux conceived of his painting as more automatic, while he saw his role as a writer as akin to a “train conductor” switching the reader’s attention from track to track.
Michaux strived to communicate his thoughts, feelings, and musings on life by way of gesture and poetic language. Indeed, Margaret Rigaud-Drayton has noted that Michaux attempted, and failed, to communicate with his own gestural language during his Asian and South/Southeast Asian journey. While some scholars may view such history as confirming Michaux’s belief in the opacity—the inevitable failure—of language, however, there is more to the story. Highlighting communicative failure was not Michaux’s ultimate goal, and this possibility (even probability) is only one aspect of his writing. For communicative contact through gesture—arms, hands and bodily movements—was, to Michaux, more important than either transparent communication or its potential failure; and these ideas are suggested in his book, in which he discusses the kinds of body language used by various Southeast Asian populations. Michaux, and Dubuffet for that matter, sought to scramble the viewer’s point of reference, putting communication under pressure, to be sure. Yet, for both artist-writers, art is still a communicative endeavor, one that both expresses the intentions of the authors and points to a range of responses they might promote in the viewer. For each artist, the work should dislocate the viewer from the ordinary. Indeed, it is this troubling sense of dislocation that Michaux, and Dubuffet, find to be liberating, providing a glimpse of the possibility of Other ways of life.

82 Nakabayashi, 111; Noland, 130-133; Parish, 166, 177.
83 Margaret Rigaud-Drayton, Henri Michaux: Poetry, Painting, and Universal Sign (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2005), 1. Drayton discusses the failure Michaux’s ostensibly universal gestural signification to allow the kind of communication for which he had hoped.
84 Minturn, 94. Minturn discusses Dubuffet and Michaux’s shared interest in opaque signs.
85 Michaux, A Barbarian in Asia, 171-185; Rigaud-Drayton, 1. Michaux discusses gesture in theater and in everyday life throughout his book but I call the reader’s attention specifically to the short chapter on Indonesia.
86 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81; Asphyxiaing Culture, 60; Henri Michaux, Émergences—résurgences (Genève: Albert Skira, 1972), 9; La Charité, 24; Edson, 49. As previously noted, in Asphyxiaing Culture Dubuffet calls for a “school of deculturation.” Michaux also wanted a school of painting called “Fantomism” or Psychologism (Edson, 49). Michaux writes: Né, élevé, instruit dan un milieu et une culture uniquement du ‘verbal’ je peins pour me deconditionner” (Born, reared, and educated in a uniquely ‘verbal’ milieu and culture, I paint in order to decondition myself), this oft-cited quote appears also in La Charité, 24.
the case of Michaux’s book—and Dubuffet’s portrait—this sense of intriguing wonder and displacement is produced by a series of relatively short-term intercultural encounters. Michaux travelled place to place; and his book expresses no desire to bond with the cultures he visits. Instead it explores the impact of his encounters and their short- and long-term effects—a range of responses that I see Dubuffet aiming to produce with his portrait.

Scholars have given considerable attention to Michaux’s interest in word and image relations (he combined these forms, in fact, and often accompanied his texts with his own renderings). Both Michaux and Dubuffet were prolific writer-painters who researched the so-called picture writing of ancient Mayan, Egyptian, and Chinese cultures. These preoccupations with pictographs and with bodily signs appear throughout Michaux’s visual production, becoming especially evident in his 1950-51 series *Movements*, in which abstracted forms suggest the human body, dynamism, and artistic communication in ways that pique the viewer’s curiosity (Fig. 43).

Scholars have likewise discussed Michaux’s desire to develop a corporeal form of expression, in his pictograms that resemble human figures, his theatrical pursuits, and his efforts to communicate through physical gesture. In contrast to an affective/Artaudian model of corporeal expression, however, Michaux viewed the body as a lived, discursive, and interpretive

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87 Dubuffet, *Biographie au pas de course*, 32-36; Parish, 151-152; 155-157, 166; Noland, 130-133. Dubuffet describes his own interest in researching the so-called pictographic writing of non-Western cultures in his autobiography. Parish and Noland discuss Michaux’s fascination with ideograms with Parish focusing on his interest in Chinese script (from which he attempts to trace the development of abstract writing (ideograms) from pictograms that mimicked their referent) and Noland considering also his interest in the symbols used in prehistoric cave painting.

88 For thorough discussion of Michaux’s paintings in relation to his interest in pictograms see Nakabayashi, 109-110; Edson, 50; Noland, 133, Parish, 187. It should also be noted that Dubuffet and Michaux shared these interests in pictograms and ideograms with the American Abstract Expressionists, another group of post-war artists with roots in Surrealism.

89 For more on Michaux’s corporeal pictographs see La Charité, 21; Ball, xii, xiv-xv; Edson, 46-50; Nakabayashi, 109-110; Noland, 133, and Parish, 187.
site. This is to say that Michaux’s writing, painting, and discussion of gestural performance in *A Barbarian in Asia* emphasize experience, representation, and intention, foregrounding, in the process, the dynamic relationships between art and culture, between affect and cognition.

Although these men shared interests in corporeal signs and the performative dimensions of art, what interests me in this chapter is the ways in which Dubuffet engages with Michaux’s disquieting, and thought-provoking, work. And this marks an important difference from Dubuffet’s interest in Artaud’s writings on the affective impact of Indonesian cultural forms discussed in Chapter One. For my purposes here, it is not the success or failure of Michaux’s gestural *lingua franca* that is at issue. Rather, I am interested in its *artistic intent*, its intersection with Dubuffet’s painting, and the aims of both men to circumvent culturally informed identity through contact with difference. In Dubuffet’s portrait this is achieved by way of a familiar yet strange figure, a hybrid who stands facing us in an enigmatic confrontation.

Consider again Dubuffet’s emphasis on gesture in the portrait (its own form of bodily writing). In this representation, Michaux stands facing frontally, one hand held up, as if in an oratory pose, and the other sweeping to the side as if communicating some elusive point or mood; perhaps it simply proclaims an enigmatically emphatic mode of address. The stiff, incised hands, which lack the elongated fingers seen in the painting of Artaud, are less expressive in and of themselves. Yet, they participate in the odd gesture of the arms, suggesting both mobility (by way of contrast) and direct engagement—communication—with the viewer. Such gesture is a key component of many Indonesian cultures and is a matter of course in Bali, one of the locales Michaux discusses in his book. There, gesture communicates not so much specific meanings as a *fundamental approach* to life, culture, and spirituality. Thus, it is the *act* of gesturing itself that is significant in developing Balinese and, indeed, many Indonesian forms of performance. This
sacred signification is not restricted to ritual performances, moreover, nor relegated to art
institutional, religious, or theatrical settings, as in the West. 90 In other words, though gestures in
Bali are emphatically cultural, they communicate in ways that were interpreted by European, and
particularly modern twentieth-century artists, to be more free, less inhibited by the text-based,
logocentric norms of the West.

In the 1942 book Balinese Character, the published findings from their joint
anthropological field work in Bali, Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead cite prevalent Balinese
beliefs concerning the use of gesture. According to them, the gestures, in which the arms and
hands are held in rigid, angular poses, are highly significant. They observe that within Balinese
culture the body is conceived not as a unity but rather as an amalgam of interrelated parts; and
this ideology of fragmentation and integration—symbolized as “integration and disintegration of
the body”—finds expression in not only habitual, and highly exaggerated, gestures but also in
“the whole puppet complex” that includes the various forms of Balinese puppetry, a range of
ritual dances, and many aspects of daily life. 91 Indeed, according to Bateson and Mead, in
traditional Balinese culture the body was conceived to be “like a puppet” that is “pinned together
at the joints.” 92 In Bali, according to the authors “folk beliefs are filled with personified limbs,
legs and arms, and heads, each animated by a mischievous will of its own,” adding that “in the
hands, more intensely than any other part of the body, this dissociation, this independence of

90 Miguel Covarrubias, Island of Bali 1937 (London: KPI, 1986), 262; Walter Spies and Beryl De Zoete,
Dance & Drama in Bali, 1938 (Hong Kong: Periplus Editions, 2002), 46; Judy Slattum, Balinese Masks: Spirits of an Ancient Drama (Hong Kong: Periplus, 2003); also see Dibia, 8.
91 Bateson and Mead, Balinese Character, 16-17, children learning dance poses through kinetic
instruction. In their Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead’s 1942 book Balinese Character, written as a
result of the authors working in Bali (in direct contact with the multi-national community of artists and
ethnographers on the island) and published just five years before Dubuffet made his portraits, addresses
the predominance of exaggerated, angular gesture in Balinese culture.
92 Bateson and Mead, Balinese Character, 91.
Each small unit is seen.” This model of the body in culture (and in relation to the cultural body) would surely have captured Michaux’s attention. It is an outlook that parallels his own imagery of bodily dismemberment in poems such as “Dreams and the Leg, alluding to fragmentary states and overlapping stages of cognitive (and ultimately also cultural) dislocation.

For Michaux, a poetics of dismemberment functions within a set of written and pictorial strategies that rely upon a corporeal language. He does not intend his poetic or pictorial gestures to instill cultural cohesion the way the Balinese do. Rather, for Michaux gesture is used to dislodge the subject’s position with relation to his or her cultural identity. Gesture is meant, in Michaux’s work, to communicate with the reader/viewer in strange ways—to dis- and re-orient one’s perspective. In Michaux’s work, as in Dubuffet’s, we see a double play—a set of superimposed images that vacillates between the familiar and the foreign, between the corporeal figure and its connoted, elusive meaning.

**Movement, Transformation, and Hybridity in Michaux’s Painting**

Certain of Michaux’s paintings warrant special attention, since they too share important characteristics with Dubuffet’s portrait. As with Dubuffet’s portraits, many of Michaux’s figures are disturbing, which I see as a result of their hybridity, their ambiguous amalgam of both human and inhuman characteristics. One such image is Michaux’s *Entre centre et absence* (Between Center and Absence), a watercolor of 1939 (Fig. 44). Its long visage, beady eyes, and unusual vertical striations are disturbing because they seem to only remotely connote a human figure. Interestingly, though I have found little evidence that Michaux looked to Balinese or Sumatran

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93 Bateson and Mead, *Balinese Character*, 18. Even the Balinese hands at rest rarely remain in what Westerners would consider a relaxed position and instead retain angular poses consistent with this cultural value of gesture.

94 La Charité, 21; Velinsky, 29-34.
figures for artistic inspiration, this 1939 image points to his own ethnographically inflected production, recalling photographs of a carved wooden *Kayan Dyak* (Pig Mask) of Borneo, another Southeast Asian (and partly Indonesian) island to which Michaux refers in his book (Fig. 45). Since the mask is used to drive away threatening pig spirits from newly planted crops, it is designed to be frightening, appearing as an alien form as a result of its hybridity. The figure in Michaux’s painting is likewise unnervingly alien. It is an image that both immediately impacts the viewer and leaves lasting—and disturbing—effects; the kinds of effects Dubuffet’s attributed to true artistic production. Michaux makes no mention of this mask in his book; nor, to my knowledge, does he discuss it in relation to his art. Yet, this painting indicates that he looked to the cultural forms of the exotic locales he visited to produce otherworldly figures by which to intrigue his viewers.

Consider also Michaux’s untitled double figure produced in 1948 by means of broad, sweeping strokes of lithographic crayon that has been swiped and scratched through with equally emphatic gestures—marks resembling some of the renderings in Prinzhorn’s book (Fig. 46-47). This smeared, yet apparently furry figure in Michaux’s lithograph faces forward and features a second face that peers out from its wild streams of hair. Once again, the figure has only a remote connection to humanity. Indeed, it seems more a kindred spirit to the Balinese *Barong* discussed

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95 Michaux, *A Barbarian in Asia*, 171. Boreo is a Southeast Asian island, the largest in the world, that is divided between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei.
96 Prinzhorn, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, 108, illustration 64. The smeared paint in Michaux’s figure recalls, a smeared watercolor in Prinzhorn’s that is held as an example of the symbolic tendency in the art of the mentally ill; and this book is another intellectual as well as artistic connection between Dubuffet and his sitter. According to Karl Kürtös, *Henri Michaux et le visuel: ekphrasis, mimésis, énergie* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2009), 92, Michaux owned an original 1922 edition of the book. In any case, Michaux clearly pursued both visual and poetic practices that appealed to his Surrealist circles during the interwar period. The gestural smears in Michaux’s renderings provide insights into why they appealed to Dubuffet. They also explain why dealers and critics such as Tapie grouped their work together under the rubric *Art Informel* despite their otherwise apparent differences. For more on Michaux’s Surrealists activities see Bréchon, Broome, La Charité, and Velinsky. The gestural smears in Michaux’s renderings provide insights into why they appealed to Dubuffet. They also explain why dealers and critics such as Tapie grouped their work together under the rubric *Art Informel* despite their otherwise apparent differences.
in relation to Dubuffet’s *Antonin Artaud with Tufts of Hair* in Chapter One. Michaux’s figure is less benign, however; its hybrid form is both mysterious and monstrous. If it is also slightly humorous it is the kind of humor that Dubuffet writes of finding in the tales of Poe; the kind that freezes you instantly in your tracks.\(^97\) A similar juxtaposition of imagery, suggesting a comparable amalgam of humor and disquietude, occurs in Dubuffet’s portrait.

Dubuffet’s *Portrait of Henri Michaux* also gazes out from the canvas; but it is unclear whether it gazes at us. Sharing some of the strangeness, and the crude smeariness and smudginess, of Michaux’s figure, Dubuffet’s painting is thicker, grittier, and more substantial. It is harder, a quality that is accentuated by the figure’s lack of hair. Dubuffet’s figure does not emerge from another figure (as it does in the portrait of Artuad), moreover, and certainly not from a mass of hair. Rather, the portrait of Michaux appears to be in a symbiotic relationship with the materiality of Dubuffet’s thick, muddy paint. This transforms the canvas into a rocky, wall-like support—an earthy picture plane that, though flat, connotes a sense of place, perhaps even a primitive backdrop in front of which the figure stands, gesturing theatrically to the viewer.

Despite the differences in their pictorial styles (Michaux’s being more attuned to *tachism* and Dubuffet’s more expressive of brut materiality) each of these artists depicts strange figures that seem to waiver between one form and another, between two- and three-dimensionality, between stasis and movement, and, perhaps, even between one existential dimension and the

\(^97\) Dubuffet, “Art and the Joke,” in “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81. “These two categories have common blood. The unforeseen, the unusual is their shared domain. Don’t misunderstand me, I am thinking about the acmes of art. Poe’s tales, *The Songs of Maldoror*, that statues on Easter Island. Not those innocent little jokes that divert your attention for a few moments, but the strong ones that instantly turn you to ice, change you to stone, because they’re so good and so surprising.”
next. Their figures vacillate also between appearing oddly comic and vaguely horrific. These suggestions of fluctuation are emblematic of the artists’ emphasis on creative movements and artistic transformations—a way of conceiving creativity which also, as Sontag notes, emerged from Surrealist discourses. This is creativity, I argue, that could only be conceived of by Dubuffet and Michaux as hybrid—a creative dynamism by which they hoped to impact in the viewer and, by extension, culture.

According to Nakabayashi, Michaux wanted to enact an artistic “return to the primordial point from which the human image was gradually extracted through the act of painting.” This quest for primal forms (and/or forms that might trigger the release of primal forces in the artist and viewer) drove Dubuffet’s creative process too and he expressed his appreciation of

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98 See also Tapié. Henri Michaux. Au pays d’Henri Michaux, 1948. Tapié was especially taken by the piercing eyes of Michaux’s figures, which serve as the focal point of many of his paintings. For Michaux it is often the eyes, rather than gestures, that reach out to us disturbingly, as if to touch our very soul. These eyes grab our attention, adding a sense of humanity that is unnerving in an otherwise otherworldly visage. Michaux’s depictions only ambiguously allude to the human, however, and he essentially presents us with anthropomorphic hybrids.

99 Sontag, xxix.

100 Nakabayashi, 110-111; Michaux, Emergences Resurgences III, 580; Discussing Michaux’s general approach to figuration in his 1950-51 Mouvement in the Catalog of the Modern Art Museum exhibition “Emergences Resurgences” (June 19-Aug. 12, 2007), Nakabayashi cites Michaux’s famous description of his process: “The legs, arms or bust may be lacking, but through its dynamic interior, warped and exploded, it is a man. I submit them to torsion, stretch and expansion in all directions—In the shape of a root? A man all the same, a man who counts on the blind underground in order to go to the broad daylight later on.—On a white page, I handle him roughly or watch him being manhandled, scourged or flogged.—A torn man is dashing towards something unknown, for an unknown reason, lashed by something unknown.” Michaux published Emergences Resurgences, an elaboration of his overall artistic approach in 1972, late in his career. Yet, the book outlines a pictorial strategy that is evident throughout his oeuvre, a diverse body of paintings spanning the period between the mid 1920s to the early 1980s. The book illuminates Michaux’s take on figural rendering as encompassing primal, creative, and above all transformative processes. He conceived these processes to be rooted in enigmatic and elusive creative forces that are ultimately incommunicable except through their artistic traces. Like Dubuffet, Michaux viewed his figures as archetypal—images pointing more to the primal forces with which he and his sitters wanted to connect than to a specific person or being. Indeed, like Dubuffet, Michaux asserted that his figures “all come from the prototype of man.” Michaux’s elaboration is much more brooding and merges man and movement in a way that is much more agonizing than anything suggested by Dubuffet’s portrait. Yet, the notion of art leading to “the broad daylight later on” is evidence of a clear bond between Michaux and Dubuffet, evincing a drive for artistic redemption.
Michaux’s work. Both men saw creative process as tapping into and, in a sense, channeling primal forces they believed to be increasingly unavailable to European artists. Both men, I argue, wanted to convey a sense of this primal release to their viewers. They did so teasingly, however, alluding to these forces through creative play and tempering the blunt, gestural physicality of their production with quasi-comic elements—an odd humor that can alternately amuse and unsettle the viewer. These figures produce an ambiguous blend of sensations by which the artists aimed to set the viewer off of the usual, culturally prescribed course, to stimulate the creative imagination, and to instigate personal, and ultimately also cultural, transformations. Michaux writes of “warping,” “stretching,” and “expanding” his figures nearly beyond their recognition as human. His painterly distortions problematize, and thus call into question, notions of human identity. As I see it, these distortions, these hybrids, suggest creative movements for Michaux—the dynamism of the soul by which he—and Dubuffet—wanted to move art and culture in new directions.

Dubuffet made much of looking to internal sources for creative inspiration as he pushed the boundaries of figuration in the postwar context. Turning his attention, at least publicly, to the creative paradigm of Art Brut, his rendering of Michaux nevertheless demonstrates a continued interest in the artistic impact of non-Western art, in this case, the art his sitter would have seen during his travels. If Dubuffet painted his portrait from memory, as he claimed in the announcement for his portrait exhibition, then it appears that ethnographic sources available to him in Parisian collections, publications, and photographs surely also informed his production. Moreover, filtering these images through the distorting lens of memory would be consistent with what I see as Dubuffet’s drive to produce disturbing, hybrid images in the Surrealist

101 Dubuffet, Lettres a J.B., 5, 11 (letters of Jan 13, 1947 and May 29, 1947 cited also in Minturn, 94); for quotes see also my note 43.
102 Quoted in Nakabayashi, 110 from Emergences Resurgences III, pg 580.
ethnographic vein. Dubuffet is known to have looked, for a time, to Oceanic art for examples of raw creativity. Yet, he proclaimed that the Occident should learn from Oriental cultures, a proclamation with which the, at times harsh, depictions in *A Barbarian in Asia* notwithstanding, Michaux agreed.

Ethnographic imagery, published by a range of institutions interested in Indonesian culture appealed to many artists during the 1930s, when Michaux made his trip to Indonesia. In Chapter One, I also demonstrated the appearance of Balinese cultural forms in movies and popular culture. Contemporaneous renderings indicate, moreover, that artists found the interplay between angularity and fluidity, and between dynamism and stasis, in Balinese forms to be artistically invigorating and to appeal, especially, to modernist sensibilities (Fig. 30).

Although *A Barbarian in Asia* was one of Michaux’s books that was unaccompanied by images, it treats his travels throughout Asia and can be counted among the popular 1930s

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104 For more on Balinese culture, cultural exchange, and the artists and anthropologists working in Bali see Spies and De Zoete, 334; Covarrubias, *Theater Arts Monthly, The Theater in Bali* xx, no. 8 (August 1936). Interest in Balinese culture piqued during the interwar period and was celebrated by an international community of artists and intellectuals, some of whom visited Bali and incorporated its dynamic, angular imagery into their own work. This can be seen in renderings by Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias (who lived in Bali with his wife, photographer Rose Covarrubias) in the August 1936 issue of *Theater Arts Monthly* and in Covarrubias’s 1937 book *Island of Bali* (reissued 1946), just prior to Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux. One of these is a plate illustrating Balinese dance poses, which evinces both attunement to modernist angularity in rendering and interest in creative movements—compare also with Michaux’s *Movements* (Fig. 43). A figure Covarrubias includes by a Balinese artist, a painting of a mother ritually shaving a child’s head, suggests the interaction of modern Balinese and European artists, who worked together in the colony initiated by German painter Walter Spies during the 1930s specifically to build such artistic and cultural interaction. Finally, a photograph by Rose Covarrubias demonstrates the appeal the fantastic costumes of Balinese theater held for Western artists. Because trans-national artistic, ethnographic, and anthropological communities worked in close proximity on the island of Bali, the boundaries between the types of related publication were often blurred. Thus, ethnographic and anthropological publications routinely featured modernist Balinese renderings and, conversely, art journals highlighted ethnographic depictions of Balinese cultural forms. Additionally, Henri Cartier-Bresson, who had married a Balinese woman, travelled in Asia during the late 1940s and published an extensive collection of photographs of Balinese dance and culture in 1954. The admixture of sources on Balinese culture would surely have appealed to Dubuffet, who, true to his ethnographic Surrealist background, opposed strict categorization of thought, posing the tendency to structure, segregate, and categorize as one of the main problems with Western culture.
depictions of Indonesia. In it, Michaux elaborates upon, and is befuddled by, the differences between this culture’s values and his own, writing of Indonesians as both “wholesome and noble,” yet overly concerned cultural conventions. He saw the Balinese people as “particularly anxious to be proper”—a cultural disposition that is far from the modernist dream of artistic freedom rooted in a supposed access to primal creativity. Yet, it is this notion of uninhibited creativity that Michaux sought in Asia—and that Dubuffet attempts to depict. He does so in his portrait by creating a hybrid drawn from Indonesian-inspired images. Indeed, Dubuffet’s portrait suggests that he looked to the orient in order to re-orient the perspectives of his Western viewers. He looked, as I argue, to the cultural forms Michaux would have seen during his travels, but distorts these images, tailoring them to fit his own artistic aims.

Dubuffet and Michaux were interested in creative movements, which is to say, in deeply felt and intentionally conveyed artistic impulses. These interests appear in various ways, including the use of gesture and an eclectic blend of imagery in a single figure. Both artists pictorially and thematically engage with movement and Michaux’s pictographs resemble dancing figures (Fig. 43). Recall too that Dubuffet characterized his artistic process as “the inner dance of the painter’s mind” for which art can open “a larger door” to the viewer. In his “In Honor of Savage Values,” Dubuffet contrasted these creative forces to the processes of enculturation, which he conceived of as asphyxiating processes of layering that overlay and, ultimately, overtake human creativity. Reiterating these points, he elaborates them most explicitly in his 1968 book Asphyxiating Culture, in which he writes:

105 Michaux, A Barbarian in Asia, 171.
106 Ibid., 173. See also 174 discussing Balinese women and their concern for propriety, for “deportment” and 175 discussing “deportment” in public behavior. Michaux was, perhaps, from his critical position, more open to discussing the absurdities of culture than its benefits, and this held true for the Other cultures he visited as well as his own. Thus, he was more likely to find fault with than to romanticize its non-Western forms, even as he looked to the East for inspiration throughout his long career.
The mind tends toward mobility and propulsion, that is to say toward the incessant abandonment of one place for another. Inversely, culture never ceases to cry fixation, this is how its action, instead of adding to thought’s agility, chains its feet, immobilizes it.\textsuperscript{108}

Dubuffet adds that “Culture and thought [read, creative thought] are inverse movements,” and that one must “turn,” must change one’s perspective in order to subvert Western enculturation and engage in real creativity.\textsuperscript{109}

As a well-read artist-intellectual who explored ethnographic materials in Paris collections and libraries, Dubuffet likely shared Michaux’s distaste for Indonesian ancestor reverence. Yet, Dubuffet’s portrait suggests that he drew upon Indonesian cultural forms in his painting, perhaps seeing in them signs of the inverse relationship between the dynamism of creative living forces and the enervating stasis imposed by culture. Indeed, I want to suggest that the Balinese tangkis (stop-motion, angular dance poses based on puppetry) provide a model for thinking about both Dubuffet’s and Michaux’s work, picturing what Edson has elaborated, for Michaux, as an “ideology of perpetual movement” (Fig. 30a).\textsuperscript{110}

Both Dubuffet and Michaux emphasize gesture in their art, toying, at times, with thematic connections between pictorial gestures and the physical movements that produce them. Recall the smeared rings of paint in Dubuffet’s portrait or the streaks that form Michaux’s double figure in his lithograph. Consider also Michaux’s ambiguous morphing forms in the lithograph and in his painting *Between Center and Absence*. These depictions illustrate Michaux’s interest in emerging figures, an interest shared by Dubuffet that suggests movement and transformation as major thematics. As Parish notes, movement itself becomes a dominant theme in Michaux’s

\textsuperscript{108} Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture and other Writings, 77.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Edson, 46.
painting and writing as he attempts to depict ‘the dynamism of the inner self.’”  

111 As previously noted, Edson goes as far as to describe Michaux’s aesthetic theory as an “ideology of perpetual movement”—a movement in which the experience of the self occurs only at given points in its creative evolution.  

112 Michaux expands upon on this idea of the self in motion in his 1952 book *Movements*, inspired by his heretofore mentioned paintings grouped under that name (Fig. 43). Although Michaux produced these renderings during his famous mescaline experiments (his radical attempts to tap into the primal creativity one might experience during altered states of awareness), the book provides insights into Michaux’s oeuvre. It is particularly relevant, moreover, to my discussion of both Michaux’s and Dubuffet’s art.  

113 Michaux writes that transforming his consciousness allowed him to become “a complete other” even to himself.  

114 His remarks provide insights into the thematics of movement, dislocation, and self-Othering that characterize his entire body of written and painted work. Thus, as Nakabayashi writes, in Michaux’s painting “what is extracted is a human figure as folds of the forces and movements overflowing in the world.”  

115 As bizarre as they may seem, Michaux’s account of these experiences provides insights into his experimental, and above all, dynamic, approach to art, creativity, and, specifically, to figuration.  

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111 Parish, 185.  
112 Edson, 46.  
113 Nakabayashi, 115.  
114 Ibid., 116, from Michaux’s Postface in *Movements*, Tome II pg 598. According to Michaux, “The movement of the forms became my movement. The more they moved, the more I existed. I wanted more movement. By doing so I became a complete other. I invaded my body—I carried my body as if I was riding a galloping horse as one. I was possessed by movements, pulled by these forms, which had arrived quickly and rhythmically.”  
115 Ibid.  
116 See also Sibeth, 77; Holt, “Batak Dances,” 80-84; Holt, *Théâtre & danses aux Indes néerlandaises*, 31; Asia-Europe Museum Network, *Virtual Collection of Masterpieces*, “The Batak.” http://old.vcm.asemus.museum/stories.aspx?id=bd907d41f-c746-40c2-95bb-b86ca023124c. Michaux’s conflation of rhythmic movements, odd forms, and his dream of manipulating his own body as if he were a rider and it a horse strangely parallels the Sumatran *Hoda Hoda* (horse) ritual, in which one of the dancers is costumed as a horse and rider in one and dances a more frenzied dance than his humanoid
Broom and Edson observe that Michaux emphasizes motion in which the experience of the self occurs only as awareness of transformations at certain points or moments—between movements and moments—within a creative continuum.\textsuperscript{117} Michaux’s is a creative evolution in which there is no stable, static self and in which, as Parish points out, Michaux highlights the self’s inner dynamism.\textsuperscript{118} I agree with these assessments of Michaux’s work and want, here, to focus on his highlighting of the self as a multitude of performed—and transformative—roles, an emphasis seen also in Dubuffet’s portrait.

Andreas Franzke argues that \textit{Antonin Artaud with Tufts of Hair} (painted nearly concurrently with his portrait of Michaux) represents Dubuffet’s growing interest in painting movement.\textsuperscript{119} Indeed, Dubuffet shared this interest with his sitters and the theme is particularly relevant to Michaux. Yet, there is more to be gained by considering the \textit{contrast} between the illusion of movement and the medium-specific stillness of the painting. Picturing performed gesture, Dubuffet asks us to consider relationships between his painting and Michaux’s work, and between art, performance, and identity—relationships highlighted also in Indonesian dance. As Broome notes, in revealing the “countless changing positions of the self,” Michaux’s writings highlight not only inner movements and transitions but also, and above all, “delicate points of balance”\textsuperscript{120} In this sense, Michaux’s writing takes the very form/s of Balinese dance, in counterparts. Michaux’s comments recall also the Indonesian-inspired aesthetics of puppetry, in which the body is conceived of as an amalgam of parts, a fragmented, yet assembled, puppet-like vessel which can be filled with life energy. Such a conception of the body as a moving vessel is at once life affirming and inexplicably unsettling to many Westerners (this despite the mind-body dichotomy in Western thought that artists such as Michaux sought to redress). Michaux’s account reinforces not only a mind-body split but also a split of the psyche, allowing him to Other himself, a transformation that one can say he had sought to enact since exploring intercultural contact (and ways of viewing the self, the Other, and culture) in Indonesia.\textsuperscript{117} Broom, 40; Edson, 46.\textsuperscript{118} Parish, 185.\textsuperscript{119} Andreas Franzke, \textit{Dubuffet}, trans. Robert Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1981), 47.\textsuperscript{120} Broome, 40.
which gestures waiver between movement and pose, signifying momentary points of balance within the dynamic flux of living forces. Michaux himself writes, in his post face to Plume:

“There is not one self. There are not ten selves. Self does not exist. Self is merely a point of equilibrium.”

Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux, which seems only tentatively posed, poised as if to tumble forward from its spindly legs, suggests just such a momentary point of rest. Its pose, likewise, points to performance—and to an ideal of explicitly transitional, rather than artificially static, life.

This image of the dynamic, constructed self is a key concept in Dubuffet’s writings. Conceiving of culture as a rigidifying force that inhibits creative movements, Dubuffet wanted to subvert cultural production. He looked to Art Brut, and, as I have argued, to Surrealist-inspired ethnography to produce creatively stimulating, images—forms by which he might move the viewer to confront encultured perspectives of reality. For his portrait of Michaux, I argue, Dubuffet looked also to Balinese and Sumatran figures as models, drawing from these cultural forms the elements that best pictured tensions between creative movement and stagnation.

Michaux’s notion, mentioned previously, of identity as a series of fleeting points of balance, or

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121 Michaux, Plume, quoted in Broome’s Introduction to Michaux’s Spaced Displaced (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1992), 40.

122 Dubuffet, “In Honor of Savage Values,” 260-261. Dubuffet describes enculturation, particularly in the West, where culture becomes equated with classification as a kind of “atrophy” (a biological term for the inability of unused limbs to maintain freedom of movement). He also describes the rigidifying, the “stratifying” forces of enculturation, proclaiming: “All the acquisitions of education and socialization modify man, substitute for his true nature, bit by bit, a sort of borrowed nature which becomes habitual for him, and from which he can no longer successfully free himself.” According to Dubuffet, these forces function as “brakes” to creativity, adding that, “it is necessary for him, if he wants to produce a creation of art of some value, to suppress these brakes, at least when he wants to, and prevent them from working.” Dubuffet reiterates this in Asphyxiating Culture, in which he writes of the double meaning of the word “culture,” one which denotes cultural production and one which refers to the canons or select “works of the past” which support the “myth” of the superiority of the “bourgeois cast” and the “Western world” generally (8-9). Moreover, according to Dubuffet, “It isn’t writers or artists that the propertied class means to create with its cultural propaganda, it is readers and admirers. Cultural propaganda aims to impress upon these underlings a sense of the gulf separating them from the prestigious treasures to which the dominant class holds the keys, and of the futility of attempting to make a valid creative work outside of these designated paths” (19-20).
of rest only momentarily achieved, is important to Dubuffet’s portrait, which I see as highlighting the contrasts between movement and stasis in ways attuned to Michaux’s writing.123

Part Two: Indonesian Effigies: Dubuffet, Figuration, and Disorientation

Although Michaux remarks disparagingly about the conventionality of Balinese culture, he found in the Balinese theater a form that, to him, expressed both over-attunement to tradition and something that interested him very much—the very contrast between movement and stasis that I have been discussing.124 This contrast is foregrounded in both Balinese theater and shadow puppetry, in which Michaux notices that the puppeteers “move the arms rather than the body and

123 Dubuffet poses Michaux’s portrait within a picture plane I see as organized like a shallow (nearly flattened) stage in which the figure is pushed upward and outward toward the viewer. This visual effect echoes both the guignol puppetry Dubuffet perused and produced in Paris and the Indonesian shadow puppetry Michaux describes in his book. The portrait’s wildly gesturing arms likewise point to puppetry, signaling, on the one hand, the ‘puppet master’ of enculturation guiding the performer’s movements, and, on the other hand, the actor, in this case, Michaux, caught in a moment, depicted in the Western cultural form of portraiture, which can only afford a static view. It is as a snapshot, ultimately, of performed identity, which for the sitter, Michaux, is an identity both troubled and informed by contact with the Other.

124 Michaux, A Barbarian in Asia, 156-159, 173-174 discussing Balinese women and their concern for propriety, for “deportment” and 175 discussing “deportment” in public behavior; see also Matthew Isaac Cohen, “Dancing the Subject of Java: International Modernism and Traditional Performance, 1899-1952.” Indonesia and the Malay World 35, no. 101 (March, 2007): 10, 13-14. Michaux’s A Barbarian in Asia considers the relationships between theatrical and cultural performance, equating overly contrived theater with overtly conventionalized culture. He does this for Bali but it is especially so in his discussion of Japan, in which he writes that Japanese drama (and by implication Japanese culture) represents “a background of ancient impostures and obligations” so that “the poor characters move about, victims, subordinate creatures, but giving themselves, as one might expect, great swashbuckling airs…” It is interesting to note that this is another guise in which Dubuffet depicted Michaux—as a Japanese actor—and this portrayal surely alludes to (and likely parodies) Michaux’s discussion, in which he lambasts Japanese theater as being overly theatrical in direct proportion to the emphatic value placed on tradition and social mores in Japanese culture (Fig. 10). Other than their inclusion in Michaux book, there are few direct relationships between Japanese and Indonesian theater. It is interesting to note, however, that Indonesia was under Japanese control from 1942-1945, after which the Dutch regained control until a series of revolts gained Indonesian independence from the Dutch in 1949. All of these events were covered extensively by the European press, a fact that might have encouraged European comparison and conflation of the practices and products of these two cultures. Michaux makes comparable, though less vehemently disparaging, remarks about Balinese theater and culture, which is also highly conventionalized, though open to artistic innovation. For more on artistic innovation in Balinese theater see Dibia, 52-53.
in which the arms are “limp and dangling” yet can be made to move “fast and excitedly” against a flickering, oil-lit screen. Michaux observes, that Balinese puppetry functions, on the one hand, as dramatic ritual and, on the other hand, as humorously entertaining performance, noting that it is performed only in part for the audience and in part for viewers of another world, that of the animistic deities that pervade Balinese myth, theater, and culture.

The _Jero Luh_ puppet is just such a deity. It is a figure whose features also appear in the portrait of Michaux (Fig. 48). Indeed, the portrait’s long face, convex cheeks, exaggerated lips, and protruding ears with drooping lobes, bear strong resemblances to the _Jero Luh_ mask. According to de Zoete and Spies 1938 book _Dance and Drama in Bali_, the mask is attached to a life-sized puppet used in sacred shrines, ritual processions, and impromptu community performances. These enact the _Barong Landung_, in which the _Jero Luh_ and her oafish husband _Jero Gede_ enact a circular dance that is sacred yet also comical, and is accompanied by the lighthearted, sing-song banter of the performers.

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125 Michaux, _A Barbarian in Asia_, 182-183.
126 Ibid., 176-177. According to Michaux, “when one arrives in Bali … one is enchanted. There are demons everywhere, at the entrance of temples, of houses.” The word demon within this context lacks the malignancy associated with its use in the West. Instead, it refers to a range of good and evil deities as well as animistic and ancestral spirits for which forms of reverence have morphed over time. Evolving over time and incorporating aspects of other cultures which have visited or maintained a presence on the island, Balinese culture has adapted its traditional animistic practices to include primarily elements of Hinduism and Buddhism (many other Indonesian cultures have adopted Islam or, more rarely, also Christianity). Depictions of animistic spirits symbolize life forces and are thus prevalent in Balinese culture—a culture that sees living bodies as puppet-like amalgams of spiritually animated—and culturally directed—matter. For more on demons in Balinese culture see also Mead; Spies; Holt; Covarrubias; Dibia; and Slattum, 13; Forshee, 4-13, 34.
127 de Zoete and Spies, 113-115. according to de Zoete and Spies in their 1938 book _Dance and Drama in Bali_, the _Jero Luh_ (Djero Loeh) puppet is one of a pair of (male and female) puppets known as _Barong Landoeng_ enacted in playful, flirtatious activities during processionals and performances that include a variety of characters, including the Barong Ket and Rangda discussed in Chapter One.
128 Ibid., 112-115; Slattum, 12, 102, 114; Covarrubias, 356. according to de Zoete and Spies, the _Jero Luh_ (Djero Loeh) puppet is one of a pair of (male and female) puppets known as _Barong Landoeng_ enacted in playful, flirtatious activities during processionals that include a variety of characters, including the Barong Ket and Rangda discussed in Chapter One.
The *Jero Luh* is a hybrid, something in between a puppet and a costume used to perform humorous yet life-affirming spectacles. The puppet sways and jerks amidst processional masses at a slower pace than its counterparts on the Balinese stage. Although the *Jero Luh* movements are slower than many of its Balinese counterparts, its roles in flowing processionals and street performances render it ultimately more mobile. This is an interesting inversion of Balinese models for Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux, whose characterizations of Balinese performance are less aggressive and more grounded in travel than Artaud’s dynamic, yet stage-bound, interpretations. The implication, I argue, is that Dubuffet considered not only the affinities and discontinuities between Micahaux’s and Artaud’s interpretations, but looked also to ethnographic depictions of the Balinese forms the men would have encountered, creating hybrid figures attuned to their respective translations. As with its movements, the *Jero Luh*’s features—its ovoid head, long arms (one swaying, one bent), and stick legs—may also seem strange to Western viewers. Dubuffet hints at these features, and the figure’s rhythmic, yet jerky, movements in his portrait.

Gender plays an interesting role in Dubuffet’s portrait as well, as it does in the *Jero Luh* puppet. As in Dubuffet’s depiction of Artaud, the phallic displacement in Michaux’s portrait works with the negative space between the figure’s legs to signal gender ambiguity. This gender-ambivalence may allude to both the psyche of the sitter and Dubuffet’s drawing from a female-gendered Indonesian deity. For, as in the portrait of Artaud, this painting of Michaux shares formal characteristics with a Balinese effigy gendered female yet portrayed by a male performer. The *Jero Luh* is a relatively simple figure, composed of the large, ovoid mask mounted to stick frame that is covered with cloth and carried by the processional performers. To perform the *Jero Luh* a male performer conceals himself, half-heartedly, beneath the dress of the larger-than-life-
sized puppet, animating the female character while remaining comically visible to the spectators. And such ambivalent gender may be germane, as well, to Michaux’s writing. Noting his use of French feminine grammatical choices in some of his poetry, scholars have discussed duality in Michaux’s approach to gendered identity; another sign, perhaps, of his understanding of identity as constructed. Once again, Dubuffet draws upon a cultural form he can adapt to both the face and persona of his sitter, composing with culturally constructed dualities: male/female, and Western/non-Western in painting his portrait. Indeed, the upper portion of the *Jero Luh* mask is echoed in Dubuffet’s painting, particularly the arched eyebrows that swoop upward and that, along with the creases of the forehead, form an elliptical shape suggesting an odd protrusion. The mask’s squared, jutting jaw also appears in the portrait, in which a ring of paint on Michaux’s chin hints, theatrically, at three-dimensionality.

This mask was rare in Parisian ethnographic collections (I am still trying to learn the exact date such a mask was added to the holdings of the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro or, subsequently, the Musée de l’Homme, established 1937). Yet, Dubuffet may have seen such a mask in these collections; at the Musée national des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie, the permanent ethnographic museum built on the site of the 1391 Paris Colonial Exposition; and, likely, also at the exposition itself. Very likely Dubuffet also saw the mask in photographs, perhaps even those Michaux acquired during his Indonesian sojourn. This Balinese cultural form featured also in

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129 Parish, 118. Parish contests Anne Brun’s assertion that Michaux’s use of both masculine and feminine agreement in his poetic use of the first and third person singular is a sign of his “bisexual fantasy and identification with both men and women,” arguing instead that his word choices reflect instead a deliberate play with androgyne in line with his understandings of fluid identity. Although I do not explore these assertions, I do consider Dubuffet’s gender play in picturing Michaux, viewing it as suggestive both artists’ interests in dualities and in the performative dimensions of identity.  
130 I have thus far found no evidence that Michaux collected ethnographic artifacts, though it stands to reason that he would have obtained photographs or even post cards during the course of his travels. It is known that he discussed his travels with his friends, including Dubuffet. In his “In Honor of Savage Values,” 264 Dubuffet mentions a friend who visited Korea (likely Michaux) and with whom Dubuffet
ethnographic publications, such as de Zoete and Spies book (Fig. 49).\textsuperscript{131} The puppet/costume featured too in Claire Holt’s 1939 \textit{Théâtre & danses aux Indes néerlandaise}, a catalogue of objects collected, photographed, and filmed for the Archives internationales de la danse (AID), the Paris organization with ties to the artistic avant-garde that promoted world dance in publications and a variety of artistic events. An AID exposition of Indonesian dance costumes included the \textit{Jero Luh} mask, which was very likely held also in their permanent collection that included an extensive research library. The AID was open to the public until WWII and afterward during brief period of attempted reorganization. The AID appealed to artists due to its eclectic celebrations of dance, costume, and ethnography and its frequent exhibitions highlighting collaborations between painting, puppetry, and performance.\textsuperscript{132} Given Dubuffet’s interest in the arts, in Surrealist ethnography, and in conducting research at Parisian institutions and libraries, the AID was a likely source for him to experience Indonesian cultural forms. Yet discussed Korean dance. It stands to reason that Dubuffet had opportunities to ask Michaux about the art and cultural forms he encountered during his travels. I am currently still researching Paris ethnographic museums in an effort to date the collections and to determine which would have had this object during the 1930s-40s.

\textsuperscript{131} de Zoete and Spies plate 46, discussion on pages 112-115; see also Covarrubias, 356.

\textsuperscript{132} Archives internationales de la danse and Claire Holt, \textit{Théâtre & danses aux Indes néerlandaises, XIIe exposition des Archives internationales de la danse}, 1939 (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve, 1939), 70; Arlene Lev, “Preface,” in “Batak Dances: Notes by Claire Holt.” \textit{Indonesia}, no. 11 (Apr., 1971), 1-2; Lev, “Preface,” in “Dances of Sumatra and Nias: Notes by Claire Holt.” \textit{Indonesia}, no. 11 (Apr., 1971), 1-2; Sanja Andus L'Hotellier, and Dominique Dupuy, \textit{Les Archives internationales de la danse: un projet inachevé, 1931-1952} (Coeuvres-et-Valsery: Ressouvenances, 2012). As noted in Chapter One, the Archives internationales de la danse (AID) was a group founded by Swedish archivist and dance enthusiast Rolf de Maré (famous for his collaboration with notable figures in the Parisian avant-garde and for founding the Ballet Suédois). The AID sponsored trips to Indonesia (headed by de Maré and Holt) to collect dance related artifacts and to photograph and film Indonesian dances. They also held expositions on Indonesian dance and puppetry in addition to maintaining a permanent collection of costumes and photographs, a research library, and a venue for screenings of related dance and ethnographic films during the interwar period. Their activities were disrupted by WWII (at which time Holt went to NY, taking many films and photographs with her). After a brief post-war resurrection, de Maré closed the archives, donating the bulk of the collection to the Dance Museum of the Royal Opera in Stockholm, Sweden. Many photographs were donated to the Drottingholm Theater Library, also in Stockholm and to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Opera Division, Paris, France. The New York Public Library now houses Holt’s vast collection of photographs and some films. It should be noted that Dubuffet’s old friends Braque and Leger collaborated with de Maré in the Ballet Suédois and Leger served on the AID board, participating also in many of their art and dance expositions.
another venue which would have provided Dubuffet the opportunity to see Indonesian artifacts during the 1940s was the Musée d'ethnographie, Genève, which held an extensive collection of Indonesian artifacts and where Dubuffet met with director Eugene Pittard while collecting Art Brut.  

Because, as previously mentioned, the Jero Luh consists of a mask mounted to a stick to form a puppet-like processional costume, it moves rhythmically, yet jerkily, as it is carried by Balinese performers. As described by Spies, the puppet’s slow, jerky movements are disquieting. So are the carved wooden hands with which the figure is fitted. These register and foreground the tensions between the effigy’s static and moving components. The left hand is typically pinned to the puppet’s torso so that the bent arm forms a triangular pose. Despite its fixity, this is considered by the Balinese to be an archetypal “dance posture” that symbolizes movement—or the Balinese start and stop-motion poses that constitute the sacred dances that characterize Balinese culture. Only the right arm moves freely, arcing loosely, yet listlessly, from front to back as the figure is carried—a sweeping motion that is implied by the arced arm in Dubuffet’s portrait. According to Spies, seeing the Jero-Luh in performance is unsettling to the viewer, who registers the odd disjunct between motion and rest effected by the disparately functioning arms. A comparable effect is achieved in Dubuffet’s portrait, in which the positioning of the figure’s arms is reversed, its right arm (at the left of the painting) held in a stiff, angular pose and the left arm (at right) arced as if to suggest a swaying motion. These

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133 For more on the museum’s extensive Indonesian collection see Musée d'ethnographie de Genève. Théâtres d'orient: masques, marionnettes, ombres, costumes (Ivrea, Italie: Priuli & Verlucca, 1997). This book has served as a rich source of information for my research. The next step in my project, the transformation of this dissertation into a book, will entail researching the dates of acquisition for the Indonesian masks and puppets collected by the Musée d'ethnographie, Genève, which was closed while the museum underwent renovations during most of the course of my dissertation research.

134 de Zoete and Spies, 113-115.

135 Ibid., 114.

136 Ibid.
disjunctive arms and the unevenness between their movement and the stasis of the figure’s mask and hands produce the disquieting figure Spies describes in his book—and a performance Dubuffet could have seen in still shots and in AID films. This figure makes for an especially fitting portrayal of Michaux, the writer of an ambling Indonesian travel log who advocated an aesthetics of the “elsewhere” in which the ordinary and extraordinary collide.\textsuperscript{137}

“Imprint[s] of an Adventure:” Sumatra, Masks, and Puppets in the Portrait of Henri Michaux

Some key differences between the Jero Luh puppet and Dubuffet’s portrait are worth noting. Surprisingly, these differences point to still other Indonesian figures to which the painting bears striking resemblances, namely, the ritual masks and puppets of Sumatra. Perhaps the most significant of these differences is the fact that the portrait has oval rather than exaggeratedly slanted eyes, which in the Jero Luh puppet refer to Indo-Chinese hybridity. In contrast to the mask’s (and the sitter’s) pale skin, moreover, the face in Dubuffet’s portrait is rendered in earthy brown hues, which are only slightly lighter than the paintings’ background. These differences in color and eye shape create remarkable parallels between Dubuffet’s portrait, and Sumatran Hoda Hoda masks, as well as the life-sized Si Gale-gale puppets used in Sumatran ritual dances (Fig. 50-51). Although some formal similarities exist between each of these forms due to cultural proximity and hybridity, the Sumatran effigies differ significantly from the theatrical masks and puppets of neighboring Bali. These Sumatran masks and puppets serve

\textsuperscript{137} Michaux elaborates his aesthetic of displacement in many ways, in many works, and proclaims it in titling a compilation of his fictive travels, \textit{Ailleurs} (Paris: Gallimard, 1948).
funerary functions; yet these too are seen to be life affirming within the Batak cultures of Sumatra, protecting the Batak and segregating the dead from the land of the living.\footnote{Sebeth. 11, 68, 70-71, 77. As in nearby Bali, a culture with somewhat related, yet distinct practices, Sumatran cultures structure society around their belief in animist deities and ancestral spirits. Sumatran culture has also been impacted by Christian and Islamic settlers over time and its forms and practices are thus noticeably hybrid. The traditional Batak used carved wooden masks during funeral rituals performed by costumed dancers in the open air. In these ceremonies two masked dancers (one representing a man and one a woman, though both performed by nearly identically outfitted men) encircled a third man costumed as a horse (Hoda hoda) or a hornbill bird, depending upon which Batak clan performed the ritual. The masked dancers then accompanied the kin and the coffin to the burial ground, leaving the masks on the grave or in a small housing above it. Although little is known of the exact details and meanings of these outmoded rites, they are presumed to have served an apotropaic function, keeping evil spirits at bay and escorting the spirits of the dead away. The Batak believe in a duality of souls, protecting the primary “life soul” and encouraging the “death soul” to leave and to cease interacting with the land of the living. This notion of dual souls might have appealed to Michaux, a writer/artist with an oeuvre characterized by duality and transitions. The idea of dual souls—and of keeping the desires of dead ancestors at bay—would have surely appealed to Dubuffet, who made it his artistic mission to flout Western art historical canons. Despite the efforts of some Batak clans to maintain degrees of insularity and ancestral hierarchy, these cultures reflect a high degree of heterogeneity and dynamism. This dynamism would have been seen, by Dubuffet, Michaux, and other artists with similar European perspectives, to be in stark contrast to Western homogeneity and the perceived cultural stability Michaux and Dubuffet considered asphyxiating. The Batak cultures of Sumatra are, in fact, a loose band of cultural hybrids with a variety of interrelated forms and practices, some of which Michaux describes in his book. There are six Batak clans or ethnic groups (Holt lists four) grouped by three related languages yet speaking multiple dialects. Thus the Bataks are linguistically related yet heterogeneous. They also share related, yet distinct, cultural practices comprised of degrees of traditional animism infused with varying degrees of Christian and Islamic influences. Although many Batak practices are viewed from a historical perspective, some Batak still adhere to some forms of traditional practices and beliefs (such as the idea that the spirits of the dead can affect the living and must be treated a certain way in order to insure as little interference as possible with the living). Although these particular ceremonies have become generally outmoded, their legacies live on in artifacts (the masks are still collected and continue to be produced for locals, collectors, and tourists) and in still-current—living—practices.}

By the time Michaux visited Indonesia these once guarded cultural forms were becoming outmoded, their production and performances shifted to the realm of “folk” art appealing to tourists and collectors. Yet, these objects, which traditionally functioned to appease the spirits of the recently deceased, and to escort them from the land of the living, continued to resonate with local cultures and to fascinate curious travelers. These ritual costumes varied by clan and it is
unclear to what degree the various performances were impacted by tourism. Indeed, as Holt notes, at least one Batak group, the Karo, sometimes performed these rituals “just for fun.”

The Batak masks can have more or less rounded eyes and many of them feature large, protruding ears such as those seen in Dubuffet’s portrait. Moreover, the wooden masks are treated with brown dyes, the earthy hues of which are rearticulated in the painting. A Photograph of one of the masks taken in the 1930s (Fig. 50) features several characteristics that appear in Dubuffet’s Portrait of Michaux. These include an elongated face in a similar inverted pear shape and wide, convex cheekbones accentuated by a concave area that sweeps down from the cheeks to the mouth and the long, jutting chin. Indeed, both the carved and painted faces have the same nearly rectangular chin, which is accentuated by close-set mouths and noses. In each case the mouth is thick and wide, with an exaggerated carmine margin. Importantly, the Batak masks are accompanied by stiff wooden hands, which the wearer carries and with which he gestures during the performance, characteristics alluded to in Dubuffet’s gesticulating depiction of Michaux.

Consider also a 1930s photograph of Batak masks in the collection of the Tropenmuseum of Amsterdam, a city which, as mentioned, Dubuffet visited to tour its museums (Fig. 52). In the photograph, which is reproduced in Paris collections, three masked figures appear, their

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139 Claire Holt, “Batak Dances: Notes by Claire Holt.” Indonesia, no. 12 (Oct., 1971), 84; Arlene Lev, Preface to “Batak Dances: Notes by Claire Holt.” Indonesia, no. 12 (Oct., 1971), 65; Sibeth, 77. See also Asia-Europe Museum Network, Virtual Collection of Masterpieces, “The Batak.” http://old.vcm.asemus.museum/stories.aspx?id=b907d16f-c746-40c2-95bb-b86ca023124c. Sibeth, 77. For more on these differences see Sibeth’s discussion. Comparison of her and Holt’s photographs is also helpful. Each Batak clan produced a distinctive form of ceremonial masks, the general characteristics of which were culturally prescribed. The creativity of individual artisans was encouraged, however, producing masks that are formally and functionally similar (and can be identified as belonging to specific groups), yet are uniquely varied. Thus, the masks of the Toba are smaller (with what I take to me more reptilian features) while those of the Karo are much larger (appearing as large humanoid helmets carved from the trunks of trees). Dubuffet would have appreciated such variety, indeed, such hybridity, and appears to have looked to various forms of these masks in painting his portrait of Michaux. As with the cultural forms of Bali, these Sumatran masks may have filtered into the popular consciousness as well, a possibility indicated by the strong resemblance of some Toba masks and regional lizard motifs to the costume used in the 1955 Hollywood production Creature from the Black Lagoon.

140 Dubuffet, Biographie au pas de course, 30.
large, bulky heads barely supportable by the dancers’ bodies.\textsuperscript{141} Although the snapshot captures the dancers in mid motion, the masks are clearly static, their large round eyes set to stare blankly into space. Looking closely, one sees that two of the masks have small tufts of hair and one has a prominent mustache, but the smooth, bulky heads, large round eyes, and protruding ears are the dominant features—features which compete with gesture for dominance in Dubuffet’s painting.\textsuperscript{142}

Each of the photographed figures bears a resemblance to Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux, but the bald figure in the center most notably so. Although the head is generally ovoid, many of its surfaces are carved in a more angular manner, giving the forehead and cheekbones a blocky squared off appearance. The outlines of these surfaces, produced by a play of light and shadow on the wood patina, create a tension between two- and three-dimensionality in the photograph. This is especially evident in the central figure, as it is in Dubuffet’s portrait. In both cases, this play between bulkiness and flatness, between curviness and angularity, creates an odd facial structure, tapering down from a bulky brow and wide cheekbones to a narrower, yet apparently distended, chin, which is accentuated in the portrait by the thick ring of paint below the mouth. The protruding ears, large round eyes, triangular nose, and wide mouth of the photographed dancer are also virtually identical to Dubuffet’s portrait. The dancer’s pose too bears consideration in relation to Dubuffet’s painting. This dancer’s right arm (at left in the photo) appears at an odd angle, as if broken, which results from the way he holds the carved wooden hand by a rod that is concealed under the sleeves of his garment. The angle is less acute in the

\textsuperscript{141} This style is typical for the helmet-type masks the Karo Batak, which are carved from large tree trunks.\textsuperscript{142} Sibeth, 77; Holt, “Batak Dances,” 65, 80-84; Holt NYPL Archives. According to Sibeth, many early twentieth-century photographs of Batak funeral rituals were staged for tourists and show imagery from a variety of Batak clans. This one appears, judging from the bulky heads and long, curved wooden hands, to be from the Karo, though there are three, rather than the traditional two, dancers and the ceremonial horse costume is nowhere to be seen.
photograph than in the painting, but both arms form a V shape and support stiff, inhuman hands. It is difficult to see the left arm of the photographed figure (at right of the snapshot), but it appears to be held up and slightly outward in a manner echoed by Dubuffet’s painting.

The figure at the left of the photograph also warrants attention, since its pose too appears in Dubuffet’s portrait. First, the gown of this figure creases between the legs in such a way as to suggest the stick legs in Dubuffet’s painting, producing a similar bulbous form for the torso. Second, the hands and arms are placed ambiguously in relation to the body. Once again, the figure’s right arm (at left in the photograph) appears at an odd angle as a result of the way the dancer holds the carved wooden hand—another V shaped angle that would be impossible for a human arm. Third, the stiffness of this wooden hand is also mimicked by the right hand of Dubuffet’s figure (at the left of the painting). Although the left hand of the photographed figure (at right in the photo) does not as closely echo (or prefigure) Dubuffet’s portrait, the curves of the carved fingers in the photograph strongly suggest the curved left arm (at right) of the painting. The hands of Dubuffet’s figure, especially the fingers, more closely resembles the small, straighter wooden hands carved by another Batak clan (seen in a 1930s AID photograph), recalling that many of these performances were eclectically staged and photographed during the 1930s with less concern for cultural specificity than for attracting tourists and collectors (Fig. 53).  

For a painter such as Dubuffet, who was interested in puppetry, gesture, and conglomerate figures, however, the wooden hands of the Batak would activate the mask, transforming the performer, simultaneously, into both a puppet and a puppeteer.

Although Sumatran forms were relatively rare in Paris during the first half of the twentieth century, the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition provided one venue where they could be

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143Sibeth, 77; Holt, “Batak Dances,” 65. Dubuffet seems to have created a hybrid form using the large heads of the Karo and the smaller hands of the Toba Batak.
seen. Indeed, the Sumatran section of the Dutch-Indonesian pavilion even featured examples of the large, boat-shaped dwellings Michaux describes in his book, dwellings which, according to the popular press, were some of the main attractions of the exposition. In addition, several then-emerging institutions housed Sumatran objects that could be seen by Parisians, such as Dubuffet, who did not make the long voyage Michaux took to Indonesia. The Musée national des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie, the permanent ethnographic museum built on the exposition site, is one such institution. The Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro and, subsequently, the Musée de l’Homme (established 1937) also housed Sumatran collections, as did the Musée d’Ethnographie of Geneva, which Dubuffet visited in 1945. Moreover, as AID publications show, that group housed examples of these very Sumatran masks, as well as photographs and films of them in use during ritual performances that were filmed on location.

The Portrait of Michaux, Sumatra, Si Gale-gale

The similarity of Dubuffet’s portrait to Hoda Hoda masks is astounding. But these features are shared with an even more intriguing Sumatran effigy, the striking, nearly life-sized Si Gale-gale puppet (Fig. 51-54). This figure served, within traditional Batak cultures, as a stand-in for the loved ones of deceased Batak during their funerals. The figure was used to perform funerary rites for clan members who died childless. Yet, legend has it that the puppet could also symbolize and, in that way, reanimate the spirit of dead children. Although these wooden doubles typically replaced imaginary originals (representing children who had never

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144 Michaux, *A Barbarian in Asia*, 175. Dubuffet discusses the boat shaped Sumatran homes he saw on his trip. For the next phase of my project, transforming this dissertation into a book, I am working to obtain inventories of exactly what artifacts were featured in the Sumatran section of the Dutch pavilion and which of them would have survived a massive fire that occurred during the exposition. It seems unlikely that these masks would have been omitted from the exposition, however, since they were already becoming a tourist attraction during the 1930s.

actually been born), they nevertheless represented the living spirit of the village mobilized to segregate the realms of the living and the dead. Thematicallly, the use of artistic forms that usher out the old guard would have appealed to Dubuffet, a modern artist seeking to overturn artistic conventions through artistic intervention.

Formally, the Si-Gale gale would also interest Dubuffet. It is made to effect mobility, to perform ritual motions. But the medium of carved wood that is jointed and pieced together renders the figure’s movements stiff and jerky. Mounted on a large, sometimes rolling pedestal, the puppet stands strait and tall. Its arms are manipulated by a puppeteer using a complex system of strings, making gesture its primary means of communication. The wooden face remains largely inexpressive, however, and it is the contrast between this rigidity and the jerky, rhythmic, movements of the arms that is able to produce jarring responses in Western viewers, striking a remarkably unnerving chord. The movements trigger a kind of startle response that is analogous, in my view, to what Dubuffet aimed to achieve in his portrait.

146 Sibeth, 79; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. “Puppet Head (Si Gale-gale)” http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/315894. The use of this puppet likely began sometime during the 19th century and were relatively short-lived, moving into the realm of tourism in the early 20th century. Myths related to the use of the puppet vary among the Batak peoples. In one version, the jointed puppet is used to revive a mourning father from his malaise after the death of his son. In some cases these uncanny doubles are also said to be used in ceremonies to trigger the conception of children. The most commonly held use was for the puppet to stand in for children to perform the funeral rites necessary to transition the spirits of the dead and to prevent their causing problems in the land of the living. In all cases, however, the puppets stand in for children. As with the Batak Hoda Hoda masks, the once guarded Si Gale-gale began being produced and performed for collectors and tourists as early as the 1930s, when Michaux visited Sumatra. Yet, its ritual function (removing dead ancestors from the land of the living) still resonates within Sumatran culture and has been transferred to related forms and ceremonies. Although Sumatran culture is highly ancestor oriented, this idea of artistic forms that usher out the old guard would have surely appealed to Dubuffet, a modern artist seeking to overturn artistic convention through artistic invention.

147 Tibor Bodrogi, Art of Indonesia (Greenwich, Conn: New York Graphic Society, 1972), 33-34; Metropolitan Museum, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1987.453.6. Although the arms are the most mobile elements of the figure, making their gesture its primary means of communication, efforts are made to effect facial movements as well. According the the Metropolitan Museum, “The Toba Batak people of northern Sumatra create sophisticated puppets (si gale-gale) controlled by a complex system of internal strings and levers that allow them to move in a lifelike manner. Si gale-gale formerly played a
The *Si Gale-gale does not appear* in Michaux’s book (a strange oversight given that this cultural form would have been a prominent during the time of his visit). But its function of dead ancestor removal must have appealed to him as he sought to break free from artistic and literary traditions. Indeed, this odd puppet would surely have resonated with Michaux as he formulated his aesthetic of displacement, perhaps inflecting some of his own tétes as well. The *Si Gale-gale’s startling* form and disjunctive movements serve as a perfect model for Dubuffet’s depiction—picturing Michaux, a fellow traveler who combined the familiar and the strange to disorient his European audience.

**SURREALISM, PUPPETRY, AND FANTASTIC FIGURES**

The seemingly magical, yet oddly disturbing animation of the *Si Gale Gale* would have appealed to Dubuffet the painter as well as the erstwhile puppeteer. Its jerky, rhythmic movements, which highlight the disjunct between the figure’s animation and its static wooden components, allude, in their way, to both life and death or some strange state in between—a crucial role in some funerary ceremonies. When an individual died, his or her soul became an ancestral spirit. For his or her spirit to enjoy the same prominence after death that the person had when living, the deceased’s children had to perform the proper funerary rites. If a person died childless, a *si gale-gale* was created as a substitute to perform the necessary funerary rituals. When in use, the puppets were mounted on the front end of a long, flat box through which the strings passed, allowing the puppeteer, who sat behind the box, to control the puppet from some distance, giving the illusion that the figure was self-animated. Deftly manipulated by the puppeteer, the *si gale-gale* was able to perform all the required dances and ritual protocols for its deceased parent. Some of these figures are outfitted with rubber pouches behind the eyes containing wet moss or sponge by which the puppeteer can trigger the flow of simulated tears.

148 The *Hoda Hoda* and *Si-Gale Gale* figures do not appear in Michaux’s writings on Sumatra, in which he emphasizes instead the characteristic boat-shaped homes of the *Batak*. This is odd since by the time of his visit these masks and puppets were already being produced for tourism and it is fairly certain he would have seen them. These were prevalent, yet fantastic, ritually charged cultural forms of the kind that would surely have appealed to Michaux, a writer/artist whose work demonstrates his fascination with bizarre figures and the disorienting effects of contact with difference. Perhaps, as is the case with Dubuffet, the visual artist in Michaux, concerned with artistic originality, prevented him from discussing (disclosing) these rich visual sources.
near-hypnotic state in which Dubuffet and Michaux suggest most Westerners remain, ritualistically repeating culturally prescribed routines. For Dubuffet, who attributed true artistic production to attunement with primal creative drives, and who equated the art of museums with an asphyxiating Western culture, the *Si Gale Gale* would surely resonate. To an artist with Dubuffet’s Surrealist foundations, moreover, the *Si Gale Gale* may have seemed a “primitive” precursor to the uncanny, Surrealist mannequin. It can be viewed as a kind of double, *avant la lettre*, to Dubuffet’s painting, a work which alludes, in its way, to the performative aspects of art, culture, and identity that Michaux experienced in Southeast Asia.

Dubuffet and Michaux did not meet officially until 1944, when they were introduced by Paulhan. Yet, each emerged from the Surrealist milieu of the interwar period. They shared certain artistic, Surrealist ethnographic, and (anti)cultural values, moreover, appreciating art that counters European cultural norms, disturbs the individual psyche, and moves the viewer in intriguing ways. Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux does all of these things. Without its title, and some close looking, one would hardly guess the identity of the sitter. The painting is awkward,

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149 Dubuffet, In Honor of Savage Values, 261; Michaux, 1945 “Preface,” in *A Barbarian in Asia*, v; Limbour, 16-17. As previously noted, Dubuffet attributes rote, habitual, mindless—and therefore not creative—action to the processes of enculturation, writing: “All the acquisitions of education and socialization modify man, substitute for his true nature, bit by bit, a sort of borrowed nature which becomes habitual for him, and from which he can no longer successfully free himself.” For his part, Michaux writes: “When I went on a journey to Asia twenty years ago, I was innocent enough to believe that I could give my impressions, and perhaps above everything I exulted in the great multi-form, living challenge of the Asiatic peoples to our terrible Western monotony.” These mortuary connotations are decidedly disturbing, calling to mind Limbour’s description, discussed in Chapter One, of the unsettling effects of Dubuffet’s masks and puppets of the 1930s ([Fig. 4a-c](#)). Dubuffet’s masks can, indeed, be viewed in the tradition of the European death mask, though, as Minturn noted in a Lecture given at Rice University November 26th, 2013, the false faces also had transformative (and performative) potential, allowing Dubuffet and his friends to playfully swap identities at dinner parties.

150 Dubuffet, *Asphyxiating Culture*, 36. Dubuffet writes: “The creation of art—both rare and exceptional—and its discovery are like a desert island: The primitive state, which makes it attractive, disappears as soon as resort propaganda brings over tourists,” adding that “nothing more remains, in this case, but a fake, repulsive primitiveness.”

rather silly, and a bit off-putting—much like Michaux’s writing. The portrait is, above all, Other. It is a hybrid image, in which Dubuffet blends the familiar with the strange, hoping to bring the viewer face to face with difference—something operating on a different register than ordinary experience. Dubuffet strives for the desired effects, as I see it, by drawing upon the very Indonesian masks and puppets that Michaux would have seen on his journey—forms that were radically foreign to French viewers and that alluded (within their own cultures of production) to Otherworldly encounters.

Poised as if to amble, even tumble towards us, the portrait of Michaux’s pose suggests not merely a momentary point of balance, but a desired sense of imbalance, communicating also a sense of creative movement and cultural dislocation. The figure appears to wave or to strike an oratory pose, moreover, addressing us directly, as if on stage, and alerting us to the performative dimensions of the painting. Dubuffet likens his painting to performance in this piece, just as he writes that “the accidents of the hand (its impulses, unconscious habits, innate reactions) must come out at the end of the performance and take a curtain call with the actors.”

Describing the viewer responses he wants his paintings to produce, Dubuffet also elaborates a “Cinematics of Painting” seen as performance and creative movement. In my view, the verb “perform,” rather than the question of “form” or “informe,” best fits Dubuffet’s portrait, whose loosely swaying arm appears to reach right out toward the viewer. Dubuffet wants his painting to do this, in a sense, to grab and to move the viewer to another perspective point. He achieves this with puppet hands, disconcerting theatrical gesture, and mask-like facial features in his portrait. These call to us, asking us to engage with this art, with this creative movement, and, ultimately, with this performance of (anti)cultural identity.

152 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 73.
153 Ibid., 73, 77.
Chapter Three

“Evocations and References:” Assemblage, Translation, and Transformation in Dubuffet’s Portraits of Michel Tapié

Dubuffet’s Tapié Grand Duc (Tapié Grand Duke) appears different in kind than the portraits considered in Chapters One and Two (Fig. 7). Instead of a gesturing figure we are presented with large, flattened head that hovers above small amorphous shoulders at the bottom center of the canvas. In this portrait it is the looming face, rather than bodily gesture, that conveys the work’s full force. Dated August 1946, this painting was completed prior to the pieces discussed in the previous chapters, a fact that may account for some of its stylistic differences. It is these differences, cast in relation to certain key affinities, between this painting and Dubuffet’s body of portraits that I wish to consider here. Tapié Grand Duc is, in fact, rather typical of a subset of Dubuffet’s early portraits and, to my eye, suggests a turning point in his artistic development beginning in 1946. Moreover, since this is one of several portraits depicting Tapié, Dubuffet’s friend and sometime art dealer; a jazz musician and artist, collector, and critic who coined the terms Art informel and Art autre (art of another kind) to describe works such as Dubuffet’s, this painting warrants special attention.

In addition to being a critic interested in Dubuffet’s painting, Tapié also participated as a founding member of Dubuffet’s Compagnie de l’Art Brut in 1948 and, previously, managed the Foyer de l’Art Brut, set up by the men in 1947 in the basement of the Galerie Rene Drouin to showcase exceptional works of Art Brut. Tapié organized many exhibitions of post-war French

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1 Jean Dubuffet, Asphyxiating Culture and other Writings, trans. Carol Volk (New York: Four Walls, 1986), 109. Dubuffet founded the Compagnie de L’Art Brut in collaboration with Andre Breton, publisher Jean Paulhan, author Henri-Pierre Roche, artist Slavko Kopac, critic Michel Tapié and “primitivist” art
art and, indeed worked to situate it within the context of international abstraction, curating many important shows during the post-war period. In addition to organizing exhibitions such as Signifiants de l'informel (1951) and Jackson Pollock (1952), both at the Galerie Paul Facchetti, Paris, Tapié also curated the Mirobolus Macadam & Cie: hautes pâtes de J. Dubuffet at the Galerie René Drouin in Paris (1946) and an Exhibition of Paintings by Jean Dubuffet at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York (1951). In addition to promoting the post-war French artists for which he coined the term “Informel,” Tapié worked to raise awareness of American Abstract Expressionism in Paris, which gained him some recognition in America. Indeed, his seminal 1952 text Un Art autre found readers on both sides of the Atlantic. A transnational organizer, Tapié, who had looked to the east for artistic inspiration, was interested in cross-cultural exchange and worked also during the 1960s to promote the Japanese Gutai movement. For Tapié, art autre took on transnational, and multi-cultural, dimensions.

As in the previous chapters, I see this portrait as building upon Dubuffet’s interwar engagement with Surrealism; but in this portrait Dubuffet’s painterly innovations stem more explicitly from his engagement with Cubo-Surrealist collage. As I argue, the painting exemplifies Dubuffet’s use of a collage aesthetic, which he began translating into his painting at dealer Charles Ratton. The group also benefitted from the patronage of American expatriate and arts patron Florence Gould. After a temporary stint as the Foyer de l’Art Brut, set up by the men in 1947 in the basement of the Galerie Rene Drouin, the company was transformed into the Compagnie de L’Art Brut and relocated to the a new locale in the garden of the Editions Gallimard on the Rue de L’Université, Paris.


that time. This collage translation can be seen in Dubuffet’s fragmentation and re-composition of the human figure in his portrait and, in various ways, throughout his career. It manifests overtly in his literal collage, and combinations of collage and painting, beginning during the 1950s, for instance, as well as his transformation of these into a total theatrical production during the 1970s, when he animated his puzzle-like Hourloupe pieces combining painting, collage, and sculpture in an “animated painting” titled Coucou Bazar, which I discuss in my dissertation conclusion treating Dubuffet’s 1966 Hourloupe self-portraits. Tapié Grand Duc thus marks a turning point, as I argue, articulating a moment in Dubuffet’s artistic development that had lasting effects; one that I see as setting up a rough trajectory upon which Dubuffet advanced incrementally, engaging always, in one way or another, with collage.

Whereas Chapters One and Two considered Dubuffet’s aesthetic of disturbance and dislocation, respectively, considering also his engagement with Indonesian costumes, puppets, and masks, this chapter considers his portrait of Tapié in relation to a variety of Oceanic masks, paintings, and sculptures, arguing that this, and other portraits of Tapié, reveal still earlier instances of Dubuffet’s appropriation of multi-cultural images in ways that have been characterized by James Clifford, more generally, as “cultural collage.” Indeed, Dubuffet’s portrait speaks to us precisely in the blunt languages of pictorial and cultural collage, making strange the face of Tapié by infusing it with the cultural production of the Other. The portrait of Tapié is art of another kind, here characterized by citation, grafting, and hybridity. Dubuffet

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reconfigures these strategies in the postwar context, in my view, reworking them and combining cultural and painterly collage so that he might uniform, and reform, the human figure in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Although Dubuffet and the Surrealists were known to have looked to Oceanic art for inspiration (Dubuffet’s friends Andre Breton and the internationally acclaimed dealer Charles Ratton had two of the most extensive Oceanic collections in Paris), little attention has been paid to the ways in which this engagement impacted Dubuffet’s painting. Likewise, scant attention has been paid to the ways in which specific Oceanic forms, including the masks, paintings, and sculptures I consider in this chapter, impacted artists such as Dubuffet in the postwar context. While Philippe Peltier and Elizabeth Cowling have begun investigating the extent to which Oceanic art collected in Surrealist circles inspired artists such as Juan Miro, Max Ernst, and others between the wars, this chapter explores the ways in which the Oceanic art collected by Dubuffet’s friends and disseminated into Parisian museums impacted his painting. In addition to Parisian collections such as the Musée de l’Homme (the collection formerly on view at the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadero) and the Musée national des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie (a permanent collection at the site of the 1931 Colonial Exhibition at Vincennes, which was near Dubuffet’s residence and the suburb of Bercy where he ran his wine business. Dubuffet would have had ample opportunity to view Oceanic art and ethnographic materials within even his casual circles—at Andre Masson’s or Miro’s Montparnasse studios during the 1930s and through his friends Breton and Ratton, both Oceanic collectors and contributors to Dubuffet’s Compagnie

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de l'Art Brut during the 1940s. Indeed, during the post-war period Dubuffet was not only friends with Breton and Ratton, but also communicated regularly with Pierre Loeb, a gallerist with whom Dubuffet collaborated, and frequently bickered, in determining Artaud’s care (discussed in Chapter One), who actively collected Oceanic art and who, in addition to Ratton, had been instrumental in introducing it to Parisian museums during the 1930s. Tapié himself must have been affected by Oceanic forms, as he too painted in a Surrealist style and, judging from his painting, looked to artists such as Masson and Miro for inspiration (Fig. 55).

Interestingly, the Oceanic artifacts being collected by many Surrealists are not the objects I see as most impactful to Dubuffet’s work, though they have been discussed as quite important to avant-garde artists of the 1930s. The appearance of Oceanic motifs not seen in Surrealist rendering, especially the startled looking round eyes in Dubuffet’s portrait, thus indicates that Surrealist collections piqued his curiosity, inspiring a general interest in Oceanic forms and, quite likely, related research of the ethnographic materials he was known to peruse in Parisian museums and libraries. These intersections also signal his ambition to go his own way artistically, however, and to create a unique visual idiom. It should be no surprise by now that Dubuffet looked to cultural forms that attracted less attention from his peers. This was especially

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7 Fondation Dubuffet, “Studio Log 3 January 1947, Antonin Artaud aux houppes (Antonin Artaud with Tufted Hair)” reprinted in Dubuffet and Max Loreau, Catalogue des travaux de Jean Dubuffet. Fascicule III Plus beaux qu’ils croient (Portraits), 79; also reprinted in Andreas Franzke, Dubuffet, trans. Robert Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1981), 47; Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,” in Asphyxiating Culture, 109; There are many correspondences between Dubuffet and his co-founders regarding the Company of Art Brut that can be seen in the archives of the Fondation Dubuffet and the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet. Many of these are reprinted in Dubuffet, Prospectus et tous écrits suivants, (Paris: Gallimard, 1967); and Dubuffet, Jean Paulhan, Correspondance: 1944-1968 (Paris: Gallimard, 2003). A letter of 25 mai 1948 from Dubuffet to Breton (Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet) is particularly helpful. It lists each of the contributors and the sum of funds they have thus far pledged to the endeavor.

8 Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,” in Asphyxiating Culture, 109; Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, letter of 25 mai 1948 from Dubuffet to Breton lists each of the contributors and the sum of funds they have thus far pledged to the endeavor. Charles is listed here, and in other of Dubuffet’s correspondences, as one of the founders of Dubuffet’s Compagnie de l’Art Brut. Ratton also helped Dubuffet launch his career with the Pierre Matisse gallery in New York.
so during the post-war period, when he turned his attention also to researching and collecting Art Brut—an art he deemed to be internally driven and uncontaminated by the influence of “cultured” forms. Tapié concurred with Dubuffet’s assessment and thus participated in his *Compagnie de l’Art Brut* and curated related exhibitions.⁹ Both men agreed that the authentic artist, drawing upon primal creative energies, eschews “good form”—whether of the classical or modernist variety. Both men looked to non-Western art in their efforts to rejuvenate Western art and culture.

As with the portraits considered in the previous chapters, this depiction of Tapié fills the picture plane, as if pressing toward the painting’s framing edges. This time, however, it is the bizarre, mask-like countenance, with no gesturing arms, that fills the canvas. Beyond the expansive figure and directly confrontational gaze, this portrait appears to have little in common with the previously considered paintings. Once again, however, the flatness of the figure acts in tension with hints of its three-dimensionality, here emphasized by what I see as also clues to the figure’s composite form. The portrait’s flatness does not at all fall flat in terms of artistic impact, though it impacts the viewer in a different way than Dubuffet’s depictions of gesticulating artist-intellectuals. The portrait of Tapié, is less disquieting, perhaps, the bizarre figure expressing Dubuffet’s strange sense of humor as much as his aims to jar the viewer.

At first glance, the most prominent features of the portrait are the face’s triangular shape and small round eyes. Yet, closer looking reveals, again, a kind of doubling, as we recognize that dual triangles form the face into roughly the shape of a kite. Recognition of this kite shape enhances the play between the image’s two- and three-dimensionality, moreover, suggesting the

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⁹ Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,” in *Asphyxiating Culture*, 109; as previously noted, a letter of 25 mai 1948, from Dubuffet to Breton (at Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet) lists each of the contributors and the sum of funds they have thus far pledged to the endeavor. Tapié is listed here, and in other of Dubuffet’s correspondences, as one of the founders of Dubuffet’s Compagnie de l’Art Brut.
effects of a light wind blowing, and slightly bowing, that airborne form. Perhaps there is a pun here on Tapié’s overblown art criticism and the pomposity that, coupled with his programmatic grouping together of disparate artists for *Art informel* exhibitions, eventually led Dubuffet to distance himself from the critic.\(^{10}\) Mimicking photographs of Tapié (Fig. 56), the portrait’s crudely drawn nose suggests the crook of his real life appendage and adds to the suggestion of the face’s three dimensionality. At the same time, the dark lines of the nose also flatten it, echoing the triangular shape of the face. But the thick black lines that form the cheekbones and chin are some of the work’s most interesting pictorial elements, defining a face that appears as if it were assembled from disparate parts that have been flayed out and recomposed into a hybrid figure. This composite connotes an imaginary character, an exotic mask, and the real world face of Tapié, here stylized. These lines are relatively thick, contrasting with the paler paint that colors the face; yet, they are much thinner and crisper than the creamy contours of paint discussed previously in the portrait of Michaux. The black lines describing Tapié have a stark, aggressive quality, moreover, suggesting thin, yet deep, cuts or segments of skin crudely stitched together. Indeed, these stitch-like lines look a lot like threads and give the impression, over all, of a rumpled quilt that is laid out flat and yet is lumpy at the same time. Such a play of contrasts between two- and three-dimensionality, and between a kind of living warmth and lifelessness, can be discomfitting in a painting, a fact that Dubuffet seizes upon in this figure which stares at (or is it past?) us with disturbing disc-like eyes.

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As in the painting of Michaux discussed in Chapter Two, there is a circular form overlaying the tip of a triangular, yet strangely squared-off jaw. This time the chin rests directly atop the small arc of paint suggesting the figure’s torso, however, with no intervening neck. This disc, with a dot at its center, denotes a chin, I should add, while calling attention to the fact that this is a decidedly crudely rendered representation. The ears are treated in a similar manner, protruding from the head yet standing out only insofar as to highlight the fact that Dubuffet has flattened them, indeed, the entire visage, against the canvas. Even the figure’s short cropped hair adds to these flattening effects, as its black lines appear to radiate like spikes from the top and sides of the head. Indeed, this painting well exemplifies one critic’s later observation that Dubuffet’s figures “appear to have been flattened out by a steamroller.”

These are the pictorial elements of the portrait I wish to discuss; features which, as I argue, provide insights into Dubuffet’s artistic processes and experimental methods that I see as rooted in a painterly form of assemblage—a term Dubuffet is credited with coining in 1953 to differentiate his “Assemblages d’empreintes” (Imprint Assemblages) from the collages of Picasso and Braque.

As Peter Selz observes in the catalogue for Dubuffet’s 1962 MoMA retrospective, Dubuffet’s oeuvre is marked by periods of pictorial expansion and contraction, forming diverse bodies of work that are nevertheless unified by an underlying consistency—his interest in vacilating between these microscopic and macroscopic views, which I see in terms of his interest in collage and creative movements. The painting of Tapié represents just such a contraction, a close up view of Dubuffet’s cut and paste compilation—and his cobbling together of contradictions as an artistic strategy. I consider this piecing together of Tapié’s image within the

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context of Dubuffet’s body of portraits and, indeed, his oeuvre, finding this portrait to represent another of Dubuffet’s dual sets of goals, expansive looking and selective recombining. Although largely repressed in Dubuffet’s writings, this conglomerate artistic strategy increased over time, as he attempted to combine painted and drawn figuration with collage and performance, making art that is both bound to (ever more exoticized) cultural practices and yet seeks to escape it; art meant to lead the viewer to an encounter with the imaginary that Dubuffet wished to awaken.

Dubuffet engaged with figuration as part of his pictorial experimentation. This included exploring materiality, challenging the notion of ‘pure’ art, and thus pushing the boundaries between painting, drawing, and sculpture. He experimented with interesting combinations of these media, incorporating print-making and, as previously mentioned, two- and three-dimensional collage.\(^\text{14}\) His reliance upon a collage aesthetic has, in my view, been a key component of all of these practices, and was already apparent in his portraits, here exemplified by *Tapié Grand Duc*. This painting and other works discussed in this chapter highlight Dubuffet’s recombining of disparate forms in ways attuned to his aims to produce “profound internal movements” in the viewer.\(^\text{15}\)

Although this portrait is a *tête*, with barely any perceptible body, it is through bodily signs (facial expression and the pieced together formation of the face) by which it communicates. Indeed, this expression is a form of communication here and may also register bodily trauma. As will be discussed in this chapter and in the Dissertation Conclusion, this pieced together face,

\(^{14}\) Dubuffet, “Memoir of the Development of My Work From 1952,” in Selz, 84-85, 103-106, 116-125. Dubuffet experimented with various forms of collage during his career beginning with his Butterfly collages and Imprint Assemblages of 1953. Dubuffet’s 1955-1956 “Painting Assemblages” particularly interest me because of their combination of painting and collage and the fact that the collaged pieces of painted canvas take on the appearance of actual quilts, an appearance seen in the Oceanic mask and in many of Dubuffet’s subsequent paintings.

with its startling expression, sets the stage, so to speak, for Dubuffet’s comingling of painting, collage, and performance in ever more sculptural and theatrical ways. I use the word “theatrical” in terms of the figure’s direct confrontation of the viewer in a rather vaudevillian way. But I do not see this portrait as pandering to the viewer in the way Michael Fried would describe as “theatrical;” instead I see *Tapié Grand Duc* as an instance, *avant la lettre*, of what Fried calls “facingness,” which in Dubuffet’s hands is tinged with unsettling humor. This is the pictorial concoction Dubuffet aimed to achieve—the kind that includes disquieting, humor that can “turn you to ice” or “change you to stone.”16 A hybrid image composed of disparate parts, *Tapié Grand Duc* is the face of Dubuffet’s painterly and “multi-cultural mélange. It is the face, moreover, of Dubuffet’s and Tapié’s belief that true art is Other, something intriguing, ambiguous, and disturbing.17 Such art speaks, Dubuffet writes, in a language only partly revealed, in a “sphinx’s tongue” very “different from our articulated languages,” as if produced by a being “very different from ourselves,” an Other able to seize the viewer’s attention.18 Wanting to produce more than “short-lived amazement,” Dubuffet aimed to stimulate the viewer’s imagination, writing that to do so “art generally has to mix the habitual with the marvelous.”19 Dubuffet enacts this combination in his portrait, drawing, as I argue, upon a variety of Oceanic figures to depict a hybrid Tapié.

The pictorial elements I have been discussing in *Tapié Grand Duc* suggest Dubuffet’s artistic engagement with the cultural forms of New Guinea, an Indo-Oceanic locale whose art

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17 Dubuffet, “Landscaped Tables, Landscapes of the Mind, Stones of Philosophy,” in Selz, 63; Taipé, in Chip, 603; Clifford, 118-119. *Tapié Grand Duc* provides insights into Dubuffet’s creative processes, which, included the development—even in his painting—of a collage aesthetic. I have argued in the previous chapters that Dubuffet approached his portraits in a manner attuned to the artistic practices James Clifford has described as a “multi-cultural collage” in the Surrealist ethnographic tradition.
19 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 76.
appealed to the Surrealists. As I see it, the portrait references Papuan paintings, sculptures, and masks, the latter of which incorporate elements of painting, sculpture, and collage. Although African masks intrigued Picasso and the Surrealists that followed in his wake, Cowling notes that the art of Oceania began to attract the Surrealists during the 1930s. And this was due precisely to its seeming ability to remain savage, to resist the aestheticization to which African art had, by then, become subjected within French culture.20 This aestheticism can be seen in Man Ray’s photograph of Dubuffet’s friend Charles Ratton’s African sculpture, which Man Ray treats as an accoutrement to his sleek and sexy model (Fig. 57).21 Dubuffet took his art in a different direction than the Surrealists. He prized the “savage” above all, certainly above revamped notions of classical beauty disguised as “primitivism.” It makes sense that he would look to Oceania, and to art forms not yet assimilated into a mainstream visual vocabulary, to try to reconnect with the promise of so-called “primitive” artistic inspiration. Indeed, these cultural artifacts were so radically Other in Western culture as to be uncontainable by its norms, which is just what Dubuffet wanted.

The resemblance between Dubuffet’s painting and a fascinating mask featured in a 1946 MoMA publication Art of the South Seas is especially striking (Fig. 58).22 Dubuffet would not gain fluency in English until his visit to the United States between November 1951- April 1952, during which he resided in New York and visited the Arts Club of Chicago, where he delivered

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20 Cowling, 181.
his famous talk “Anti-cultural Positions” in English.\textsuperscript{23} But he was an avid reader who kept abreast of arts and ethnographic developments both in the company of collector friends and in conducting research at Parisian collections and libraries.\textsuperscript{24} Given that at the behest of Dubuffet’s friend, the African and Oceanic art collector Charles Ratton, Dubuffet had been visited in 1945 by the New York based modern art dealer Pierre Matisse (son of Henri Matisse), moreover, Dubuffet might, at this time, already have set his sights on New York.\textsuperscript{25}

Thanks to dealers such as Ratton, Oceanic artefacts began making their way into French and American collections during the 1930s. The mask in the MoMA book, produced in the Torres Straits Islands located between Papua/Melanesian New Guinea and Australia, is one of many added to Western museums as a result of Oceanic expeditions.\textsuperscript{26} It is made of roughly stitched tortoise shell fragments and served as a large apotropaic plaque. It could be hung on a wall but was likely also carried or worn on the head of a dancer, whose entire body would have been cloaked during elaborate funeral rituals.\textsuperscript{27} Together with its small, round eyes (a common motif in the figuration of New Guinea—and, indeed, in many of Dubuffet’s portraits), the roughly hewn quality of the mask produces a particularly arresting image. Indeed, this stitched together face may, for Western viewers, connote a kind of scarecrow or Frankenstein figure. For an artist such as Dubuffet working in the post-WWII context, the patched together shells of the

\textsuperscript{23} Dubuffet, “Anticultural Positions,” in \textit{Dubuffet and the Anticulture} (New York: R. L. Feigen & Co, 1969), a facsimilie of Dubuffet’s 22 pages of handwrittten notes for his famous 1951 speech delivered to the Arts Club, Chicago are inserted between book pages 8-9. Additional documents related to Dubuffet’s Arts Club lecture can be seen at Inventory of the Arts Club Records, the Newberry Library, Roger and Julie Baskes Department of Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{24} Dubuffet, \textit{Biographie}, 30, 32.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 52; Pierre Matisse Papers, Morgan Library Archives, New York; Glimcher,303.,Matisse began purchasing Dubuffet’s paintings and working to arrange Dubuffet’s first (1947) American exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, where Dubuffet would continue to exhibit until 1959.

\textsuperscript{26} For more on Ratton see Philippe Dagen and Maureen Murphy, \textit{Charles Ratton, L’invention des arts "primitifs"} (Paris: Skira Flammarion, 2013).

\textsuperscript{27} Linton, et. al, 124.
mask might also suggest trauma. Crucially though, the piecemeal figure might suggest a kind of creative movement to Dubuffet, in terms of the Oceanic artists’ compilation of shells (from their original places on the backs of turtles) and their stitching together of the mask itself, which Dubuffet then “moves” or translates into another context, another, in this case, painterly pictorial language. Despite his anti-cultural rhetoric, and his looking to Art brut as a paradigm of art uncontaminated by culture, these practices of assemblage in the Oceanic mask appear to have appealed to Dubuffet as, in some ways, kindred spirits to his own artistic approach.

Dubuffet’s painterly collage in his *Tapié Grand Duc*, and other portraits of the 1940s, set the stage, so to speak, for a range of related artistic practices with which he would engage throughout his career, growing, as previously mentioned, during the 1950s to include the literal collage, which he called “assemblage,” and explored in both two and three dimensional works. Dubuffet’s early sculptures of driftwood, sponges, grapevines, volcanic rock, detritus, and even paper mache of newsprint, such as he had used in his earlier paper mache masks, demonstrate his appreciation of found objects and, indeed, re-enact the shell-gathering of the anonymous Oceanic producers of the mask. Likewise, the sculptures he began producing during the 1960s as part of his puzzle-like Hourloupe series highlight his combination of the techniques of painting, sculpture, and collage while rearticulating the characteristics of Oceanic sculpture (Fig. 59). As Roja Nadjafia describes them, each Hourloupe functions as a “compendium of images,” that expresses Dubuffet’s fascination with materiality and processes of layering in a variety of media. I see these as drawing upon a collage aesthetic already at work in his portrait of Tapié, which re-enacts, reworks, and, indeed, attempts to ratchet up Cubism’s exploitation of the

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28 Dubuffet, “Memoir of the Development of My Work from 1952,” in Selz, 85, 87-91. Dubuffet discusses the ways in which many of his painting and collage series informed each other, laying out a progressive path that nevertheless loops back, periodically, to engage anew with, or recombine, particular media.

tensions between pictorial space and depicted space, between two- and three-dimensionality, and between pictorial and cultural collage. These collide with Dubuffet’s Oceanic-inspired bricolage in *Tapié Grand Duc*. Dubuffet achieved some success here; for, though he appears to have looked, for this portrait, to the facial angularity and wide-eyed expression of works such as Picasso’s *Self-Portrait* of 1907, as Pepe Karmel notes, Dubuffet’s postwar portraits surely also informed Picasso’s *Self-Portrait* of 1972 (Fig. 60-61).30 As with many of Dubuffet’s portraits, *Tapié Grand Duc* plays with pictorial space and the two-dimensionality of the picture plane in tension with the three-dimensionality of his subject. Such a play can be seen also in Dubuffet’s depictions of tables, and even some of his flattened cows, that take on skewed perspectives, combining frontal and birds-eye views that recall Cubist café tables (Fig. 62). In each of these bodies of work, Dubuffet translates his pictorial and cultural collage into painting. In each, his interests can be traced to his engagement with Cubo-inspired Surrealism; and the jarring pictorial possibilities of Oceanic art, which, as I argue, he began combining most adeptly in his portraits.

Notice again the small, startled looking eyes in Dubuffet’s *Tapié Grand Duc*. They bear a marked resemblance to the eyes of the mask featured in the MoMA book, which served as a catalogue of sorts for the 1946 “Arts of the South Seas” exhibition (Fig. 58), a show that also caught the eye of American Abstract painter Barnett Newman, who wrote a related review.31 Published as a collaborative venture between René D'Harnoncourt (then Director of MoMA), Paul Wingert (an archeologist and art historian at Columbia University), and Ralph Linton (an anthropologist also at Columbia), the MoMA book is a survey of the arts of Polynesia,

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Micronesia, Melanesia, and Australia featuring photographs of artifacts in major U.S. collections and color illustrations by Miguel Covarrubias (the transnational artist/anthropologist discussed in the previous chapters dealing with Indonesian art). According to the authors, the timeliness of the exhibition was assured by the renewed attention to Oceania and the South Pacific in light of the Pacific theater of operations during WWII. As is commonly mentioned, though little discussed, Dubuffet was intrigued by the Oceanic art being collected and exhibited by Surrealist friends such as Ratton. Moreover, as Dubuffet’s Compagnie de l’Art Brut collaborations brought him into closer contact with Ratton, who was active in both New York and Paris, Dubuffet likely encountered this particular photograph, which occupies a full page in the MoMA catalogue and is described as one of the most noteworthy pieces in the show. In any case, the visual evidence in the portrait suggests that he did. Despite the fact that Dubuffet did not attend this show (he would not visit America until 1951), his collaboration with Matisse to plan a New York exhibition (held in 1947), and his friendship with Surrealist collectors, such as Ratton, it is very likely that Dubuffet would have been curious about the MoMA exhibition of Oceanic art. Given his friendship with other Surrealist collectors, including Breton and Loeb, moreover, and frequent visits to Parisian collections and libraries, Dubuffet had ample opportunity to observe Oceanic art.

32 “Ralph Linton 1893-1953,” in American Anthropologist, 56:274-280, 1954. Linton was a renowned anthropologist and ethnologist with over three decades of research in locations including North America, Polynesia, and Oceanica. He was the president of the American Association of Anthropogogy and contributed to many American collections, including the Chicago’s Field Museum and the Peabody Museum, Salem, Mass. He also contributed to anthropological activities at Yale and Columbia University.
33 Linton, et. al, 7.
34 Ibid., 124; Dubuffet, Biographie, 52; Glimcher, 303; Fond Dubuffet, http://www.dubuffetfonation.com/bio_set_ang.htm.
35 For comprehensive discussions of Parisian ethnographic institutions see Clifford and Daniel Sherman French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945—1975 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 23-36. The Musée de l’Homme was formed in part by the efforts of Dubuffet’s acquaintance and College de sociologie affiliate Paul Rivet from a reworking of the collection of Le Musée d’Ethnographic du
As my starting point, I take the fact that the mask in the MoMA publication fills the picture plane, commanding the viewer’s full attention—very much like the face in Dubuffet’s portrait. Also prefiguring the portrait, the mask’s small, round gazes out from the page in a blank, yet slightly disturbing, stare. Perhaps it is unsettling because it is unclear in what way it is meant to connect with the viewer (at least until one reads the text explaining what was known by the authors about the object’s context of production). Although the eyes are small—flat discs of shell with specs of black paste serving as tiny pupils—their round shape suggests that they are open wide, a gesture we in the West tend to associate with fear, surprise, or a reflexive startle response. This gaze—and its associations in the West—would have appealed to Dubuffet, as would its true meaning among the people of the Torres Straits, New Guinea, a headhunting tribe Dubuffet likely researched. For the headhunters of the Torres Straits, the mask served as a sign of aggression that could both ward off evil spirits and distinguish kinship, especially during funeral rites. As Cowling notes, it is this integration of art and life, and the use of art in such rituals of life and death, that made Oceanic art so appealing to the Surrealists, a fact that is also elaborated upon in the MoMA publication.

The round eyes (signaling aggression among the peoples of the Torres Strait) are a common motif among the many cultural forms of New Guinea, including those of the culturally

Trocardero after the 1937 Colonial Exposition. Le Musée nationales des Arts d’Africane et d’Océanique was the museum formed as a permanent collection in 1931 and remained on the original site of the exposition at Vincennes until being merged with the Parisian ethnographic collections now housed at the Musée du quai Branly.

36 Such a facial expression is sometimes referred to as a “deer-in-the-headlights” look in which the wide eyes signal, to Westerners, the startled and dazed reactions experienced when one is confronted, unexpectedly, with jarring visual (or other sensory) stimuli. For more on shock hypnosis as understood during the mid-twentieth century see Nathaniel Kleitman, Sleep and Wakefulness (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1939), 464.

37 Linton, et. al, 124.

38 Ibid, 7; Cowling, 181. According to Linton, “More recently, the interest in the dream world and the subconscious that first developed during the later phases of Expressionism, made us aware of the Magic art from Oceania. The affinity of this Magic art with certain contemporary movements is not limited to concept and style but can be observed also in the choice of materials and in technique.”
distinct northwestern regions, now part of Indonesia. As the mask’s most striking feature, these
eyes are as attention getting as any gesture could be. Gazing out from the painting, it is unclear,
to a Western viewer, whether these eyes signal direct confrontation or glaze over as though in
some sort of quasi-comic trance. This ambivalence creates a strange combination of effects that
also appealed to Dubuffet, an odd admixture of the jarring and the slightly, yet disturbingly,
humorous. Once again, however, it is the kind of macabre humor that, according to Dubuffet,
freezes you in your tracks as you try, in vain, to adequately interpret its meaning. 39 Dubuffet’s
portrait highlights the fact that this figure is forever frozen, as if trapped in the piece’s thickly
painted surface. This frozen face reveals a problematic with which Dubuffet grappled as he
attempted to depict creative momentum in his fixed medium of paint. One way he did this, I
argue, was by looking to forms suggestive of just such a startle response—a reaction to sensory
stimuli that results in a momentary jerk and a trance-like paralysis. In a kind of doubling, the
freeze effect of Dubuffet’s portrait suggests that arresting imagery can cause such a face, such a
physical, emotional and, for Dubuffet, also an intellectual response in the viewer, prompting him
or her to attempt to interpret this mysterious art as Other and activating the viewer’s imaginative
faculties.

This quasi-comic portrait of Tapié may exemplify qualities that some contemporary
critics (and curators of recent exhibitions, such as Susan Cooke) have interpreted to be
caricature. 40 Indeed, for Dubuffet, Tapié’s hyperbolic art criticism might have seemed primed for

39 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81. In a note titled “Art and the Joke” Dubuffet writes: These two
categories have common blood. The unforeseen, the unusual is their shared domain. Don’t misunderstand
me, I am thinking about the acmes of art. Poe’s tales, The Songs of Maldoror, the statues on Easter Island.
Not those innocent little jokes that divert you for a few moments, but the strong ones that instantly turn
you to ice, change you to stone, because they’re so good and so surprising.”
40 Susan J. Cooke, “Jean Dubuffet’s Caricature Portraits.” In Jean Dubuffet 1943-1963: Paintings,
Sculptures, Assemblages: an Exhibition, eds. James Demetrion, Susan J. Cooke, Jean Planque, and Peter
just such a parody. Tapié was certainly a character and Dubuffet’s is a theatrical rendering, likely poking fun at this on some level. According to Tapié, after all, true art is “A New Beyond,” a Nietzschean, romantic, and esoteric endeavor that “confronts us as the way of contemplation confronted St. John of the cross: steep and rugged, offering no accessory satisfaction whatsoever.”

Dubuffet agreed that art ought not offer easy answers or satisfaction, preferring his works to stir the imagination of the viewer. Dubuffet and Tapié, it seems, saw eye to eye on the benefits of raw, expressive, and enigmatic art. And, in truth, each man elaborated upon this in somewhat mystical terms. Dubuffet took a more grounded approach, however, remaining more attuned to his materials and creative goals than to esoteric thinking. And despite his production of somewhat droll and theatrically staged portraits, Dubuffet aimed to be enigmatic rather than pander to his viewers. As already indicated, Dubuffet writes of art as a language only partly revealed, very “different from our articulated languages, “as if spoken by a “sphinx’s tongue,” a creature “very different from ourselves” that captures our attention but offers no easy answers.

Elements of parody are frequently countered by jarring edginess in Dubuffet’s portraits; and Tapié Grand Duke is no exception. A puzzle piece or building block within Dubuffet’s oeuvre, the portrait pictures his working through of key artistic issues as he strived to find the right combination of creative qualities—thick paint, odd figural characteristics, elements of humor, and a certain shock value—to produce the kind of visual impact he wanted. Like

43 When available, see also Jill Shaw, A Coat that Doesn’t Fit: Jean Dubuffet in Retrospect, 1944-1951. Theis (Ph.D.)—The University of Chicago, 2013 for what promises to be an enriching discussion of Dubuffet’s reliance upon a kind of “cultural electroshock” gained from his visits to Algeria.
caricature, the painting was meant to culturally agitate. But first and foremost it was meant to stir within the viewer something akin to the artist’s own creative impulses. Indeed, for Dubuffet the traces of the artist’s hand in the materials should trigger such a “re-act[ion],” activating “a whole inner mechanism” in the viewer.\textsuperscript{44} Thus, I concur with Kent Minturn that, despite their seemingly parodic dimensions, Dubuffet’s portraits are not caricature, even as they share some of the formal characteristics and, indeed, some of the aims of that genre.\textsuperscript{45} In shaping an unsettling, yet stimulating viewing experience, Dubuffet looked, I believe, not to caricature but rather, in this case, to the cultural forms of New Guinea—forms collected by his Surrealist friends and a wealth of Parisian institutions. The jarring visage in Dubuffet’s portrait serves, in its way, to pose creativity as a product, and producer, of altered states of awareness. And this is just the kind of impact that Dubuffet wanted from his painting.

Notwithstanding the lack of gesturing arms in the figure, \textit{Tapié Grand Duc} points to Dubuffet’s engagement with performance as well as a collage aesthetic in painting. Indeed, this portrait too includes a theatrical quality in terms of its direct, and rather bizarre, address of the viewer. The face registers Dubuffet’s own theatrical interests, which he began translating into figuration as early as his masks and puppets of the 1930s. He alludes to these interests as well in titling the piece, for which, as is the case with many of his portraits, he embellishes his sitter's name, as if casting characters for his portrait oeuvre. These titles frequently allude to his sitters’ interests or aspects of their personalities and here again \textit{Tapié Grand Duke} fits the bill.\textsuperscript{46} In this

\textsuperscript{44} Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 78.
\textsuperscript{46} Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 78; see also Dubuffet “Notes Du Peinture: Portraits,” in Gorge Limbour, \textit{Tablea bon levain à vous de cuire la pate} (Paris: Rene Drouin, 1953), 91-92; Limbour, 17-18.
way, and given the title’s reference to Tapié’s noble heritage (he was born Michel Tapié de Céleyran), *Tapié Grand Duke* can be situated within the history of French caricature since the Revolution. But the portrait’s title likely also refers to Duke Ellington and to Tapié’s love of jazz, which Dubuffet shared. Dubuffet would lose patience with Tapié’s incessant grandstanding and efforts to promote Dubuffet’s painting as fitting a certain bill. And each of these factors suggests that Dubuffet might have played with titling the portrait, poking fun at his friend’s over-the-top rhetoric. When Dubuffet painted the portrait the two men were friends, however, and Tapié was working as one of Dubuffet’s dealers. Moreover, despite their different approaches to art, esotericism, and forms of exoticism, indeed even what constitutes appropriate artistic showmanship, the two men shared important values that made them companions (or at least compatible colleagues) for a time. Dubuffet wanted to produce unruly, anti-cultural art, which he promoted in texts such as his 1947 “Art Brut Preferred to the Cultural Arts,” his 1951 “Anticultural Positions,” and his 1951 “In Honor of Savage Values.”

Dubuffet discusses his lack of interest in so-called psychological portraiture in the excerpts from his “Notes on Painting” published in his friend Limbour’s book. In discussing Dubuffet’s artistic development Limbour discusses Dubuffet’s masks and puppets, citing Dubuffet’s interest in Guignol puppetry and his carving of the heads for his Guignol puppets of his friends, which he gave theatrical titles in a sort of cast of characters.

Tapié, in *Mirabouls Macadem et Cie*, the catalogue for Dubuffet’s 1946 exhibition. In this text about Dubuffet’s haute pâte paintings, Tapié celebrates both men’s love of jazz and likens Dubuffet’s painterly experimentation to jazz improvisation. I would also like to thank Eric Wolfe of the Menil Collection for his helpful comments on Dubuffet and jazz and the ways in which Dubuffet’s painting style paralleled jazz musicians (whom Dubuffet admired), working through riffs and repetitions as well as experimental play. Tapié, being a jazz musician himself, was well aware of these parallels, though he was quick to try to establish new sets of formulas for artists to follow, a strategy Dubuffet rejected outright, leading to the two men’s falling out.

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Likewise,

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49 Dubuffet, “Anticultural Positions,” in *Dubuffet and the Anticulture* (New York: R. L. Feigen & Co, 1969), a facsimile of the artist’s manuscript notes [handwritten in English] for a lecture at the Arts Club of Chicago on December 20, 1951” (22 leaves inserted); see also Dubuffet, “L’Art brut préféré aux arts
Tapié asserted in his famous *Art autre* (*Art Other* or *Art of Another Kind*) that art must “operate outside of accepted conventions,” must be “totally indifferent to them, as if ignorant of them, as if they had never existed.”

Like Dubuffet, Tapié believed that “established routines” were the only thing keeping alive an exhausted humanism in the post-war context—a humanism both he and Dubuffet sought to subvert. Finally, as with Dubuffet and his friends Artaud and Michaux (discussed in the previous chapters), Tapié too looked to non-Western art (especially to the East and the South Pacific) for artistic inspiration, writing of his approval that “the occidental world” was beginning to appreciate “the Sign” and the calligraphic forms of so-called pictographic writing, to which each of these men also looked for artistic inspiration. Importantly, Tapié wrote that “art must stupefy,” and this idea—the idea that “art is other”—is crucial when considering Dubuffet’s portraits.

According to Tapié in his 1952 text “New Beyond,” authentic art must “stupefy.” It must bypass the remnants of the classical tradition, which are maintained only by stale routine and that contaminate even modernist painting. For Tapié, *art autre* was the solution; and thus he sought to unite into a movement a diverse array of artists exploring newly perceived relationships between painting and materiality, and between figuration and abstraction. The artists he championed included Dubuffet and Jean Fautrier, working in gritty smears of *haute pâte* (the thick paint they combined with ordinary materials such as detritus), as well as artists

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51 Ibid., 631.

52 Ibid., 631.


54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Tapié, “Another Art,” in *Art In Theory*, 629.
such as Henri Michaux, who worked with thinner ink washes, known as Tachist, each of which explored new pictorial realities that united the ordinary and the extraordinary. These artists had a knack for depicting ambiguous figures and faces that seem to emerge from, or degenerate into, mists or, alternately, thick strata of paint. None were particularly eager to be united in an artistic movement yet, as Tapié realized, moved toward many of the same artistic aims. I have argued that for Dubuffet (and, in Chapter Two, Michaux) these aims included an idea of movement itself (or creativity conceived of as such) and art made in the hopes of transmitting the impact of this movement to the viewer.

It was Tapié’s insistence on forming new conventions and imposing new order (as well as an imagined conformity between his selected artists) that led to discord in his relationship with Dubuffet, who resisted any kind of organization that might hem him in or misrepresent his artistic goals.\footnote{As noted previously, for more on Dubuffet’s disagreement with Tapié see a letter dated 31 Dec. 1952 in Dubuffet, \textit{Prospectus et tous écrits suivants}, 308. See also discussion of Dubuffet’s disdain for Tapie’s \textit{Informel} antics in Bois, 138-143, which also cites the Dec. 1952 letter. Dubuffet writes “I refuse as strongly as possible to join forces with all that,” adding “I subscribe to nothing this book [Tapié’s \textit{Un Art Autre}] supports.”} It is interesting here to note the parallels (and the play) between notions of Informel (informal or unformed art) and contemporary discourses on form (seen as conformity) and the inform (imagined as, alternately, a kind of destabilizing force and an artistic freedom that might, paradoxically, lead to new artistic and cultural formations). For some artists, as for Tapié—these ideas took on esoteric connotations, a kind of spirituality in which the interplay between the making and breaking down of form were highly charged. Dubuffet shared in the hyperbole, celebrating and experimenting with this interplay, while refraining from overtly
spiritual elaborations. Instead, Dubuffet saw art making as primarily an interplay between the artist’s hand, the materials, and chance.\textsuperscript{58}

Both Dubuffet and Tapié developed a rhetoric in keeping with modernist myths of originality unfettered by tradition. Both championed what they took to be highly original forms of art. In contradiction of his own rhetoric promoting artistic originality unencumbered by culture, Dubuffet acknowledged that artists mimic the art that inspires them.\textsuperscript{59} For Dubuffet this meant art that seems jarring, unexpected, and, in his mind, barely impacted by cultural influences. He thus celebrated the affective qualities of Oceanic (as well as Asian) art in his famous essay “In Honor of Savage Values,” though he wrote this text primarily to champion Art Brut.\textsuperscript{60} He nevertheless references the ethnographic museum of Basel, Switzerland, a site he visited in collecting Art Brut, and an institution with one of the most extensive Oceanic collections in Europe.\textsuperscript{61} Likewise, Dubuffet visited the Musée d’Ethnographie, Geneva, which he also visited while collecting Art Brut in 1945. His referencing of Oceanic art in this text is another instance of a Western artist patronizingly conflating non-Western art, children’s art, and the art of mental patients, though, during the course of his long career, Dubuffet began segregating these artforms from the Art Brut he worked to collect and catalogue. But his paradoxical pirating of the Oceanic cultural forms he took to be most in line with the visual

\textsuperscript{58} Dubuffet, Notes for the Well-Read, 69. Several of Dubuffet’s notes deal with the interplay between the artist’s hand, the materials, and chance, including “Imprint of Adventure,” “Teaming Up With Chance,” and “Duet.”

\textsuperscript{59} Dubuffet, “In Honor of Savage Values,” 261. Dubuffet writes: The author is not conscious that he imitates another work of art, which strongly impressed him and which he assimilated.”

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 264.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid. Dubuffet writes: “I recently saw in the Ethnographical Museum of Basel a group of decorated and painted wooden sculptures coming from the former German colony of New Mecklenburg, now called New Ireland, which have just been offered to this museum and are presently on display.” For more on the collection in Basel, much of which was accumulated by ethnographer Paul Wirz see Christian Kaufman, Paul Wirz and the Appreciation of New Guinea Art,” in Greub, 141.
impact of Art Brut provides us with a glimpse into his engagement with multi-cultural collage—bricolage, if you will, in his painting.

The eyes of *Tapié Grand Duke* are only one feature the painting shares with Oceanic masks and, indeed, a variety of other Oceanic figures. The patchwork rendering of Tapie’s face, especially in the area of the wide, angular cheekbones is another such characteristic and echoes the stitched together tortoise shell pieces of the mask in the MoMA photograph, which Dubuffet most likely saw. The lines underscoring the eyes in Dubuffet’s portrait also rearticulate the mask’s stitching, as do the marks that form the hair on the flattened head. Additionally, close looking reveals that the ray-like hair in the portrait mimics the remnants of a carved lattice trim that frames the mask. Although broken around the edges, such trim is a common feature of these masks that, according to the MoMA book, are framed by carvings of “short parallel, horizontal lines.” These lines appear too in Dubuffet’s painting. At first glance, the framing element of the mask appears to be suggested only in the upper portion of the portrait’s ray-like hair. Yet, closer inspection reveals traces of a beard-like rubbing circumscribing the painted face that, ever so faintly, rearticulates the latticework of the mask. These traces are the quite striking along the nearly strait edges of the portrait’s cheeks and suggest the tension between angularity and slight curviness that characterize the kite shaped mask. Even more striking, to my eye, is that the highlighted area below the portrait’s chin, a U shaped swoop that stands in contrast to the opposing curve of the shoulders, echoes the fragmented lattice trim that suggests a wispy beard below the mask. Indeed, once this resemblance emerges, it is difficult not to note the way Dubuffet’s treatment of the U shaped area, and his formation of the figure’s shoulders, rearticulate the chipped lattice at the bottom right of the mask, which has been broken off in such a way that its negative space connotes a ghost torso for the masked figure. Indeed, against the

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62 Linton, et. al, 124.
white backdrop of the photograph, the negative space formed by the trim’s fragmentation suggests the slope of a shoulder that Dubuffet appears to have seized upon for his painting.

Despite the parallels between the framing elements of the mask and the stylized hair in Dubuffet’s portrait, it is the top of the head in the painting that differs most significantly from the mask. The portrait head is wider and flatter, forming a face that is more triangular and only subtly suggests the bowed kite or diamond shape of the mask. Both faces provide just a hint of three-dimensionality, however, which is enhanced by a long, crooked, yet triangular nose. Similarly, despite its relative flatness, the mask’s three-dimensionality is emphasized by the shadow cast at the bridge of its nose, which clearly stands out from the face. A comparable effect is achieved in the painting with one bold line, which Dubuffet has topped with dual arcs to form the figure’s eyebrows. These slightly arched eyebrows differ from the mask, which may have no brows at all. Yet, the unibrow in the painting may allude, in its way, to the roughly stitched shell abutments over the mask’s eyes, which signal the raised brows of surprise to most Western viewers.⁶³

The mouths of the mask and portrait are also similar, the lines forming the lips and pencil mustache in the painting resembling the stitched mouth of the mask and the shadow cast over it by the long triangular nose. The chin in the mask does not feature the circular form seen in Dubuffet’s portrait, but both chins form triangular dips in somewhat squared off jaws; and the lines defining the face of Tapié are not so different from the mask’s stitching. Taken as a whole these resemblances are remarkable and point to Dubuffet’s direct referencing of this Oceanic cultural form. Although Dubuffet could see such forms in Parisian museums and ethnographic publications, the striking similarities between his painting and this particular mask indicate that

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⁶³ As noted in Linton, et al., 96, 124, this slight suggestion of three-dimensionality is a characteristic of this type of plaque-like mask in New Guinea.
he saw this particular photograph. Either way, the portrait is highly significant, in my view, providing important insights into Dubuffet’s painterly and multi-cultural collage.

The differences between Dubuffet’s portrait and the New Guinea mask should also be given due consideration. The relatively double arced (rather than straight) brow in *Tapié Grand Duc* is one such feature to which I have called attention. It is interesting to note, however, that Dubuffet’s *Michel Tapié*, produced the same month (Fig. 63), features a stark, strait set of lines above the eyes that re-articulate the stitches running across the eyes in the mask. In the painting the stitches/brows are shown closer to the rounded eyes but the overall impact is the same, as is the slight look of confusion or surprise (to Western eyes) caused by both the combination of raised brows and circular eyes and the appearance of disparate parts having been grafted together in a single figure. Dubuffet again focuses on the head in this portrait, with no half torso and arms to distract, and the total effect is a figure that gazes ambivalently, yet disturbingly, ahead. One might consider here that much of the Oceanic art to which Dubuffet looked, perhaps playfully punning the French term tête to describe a portrait, was produced by headhunting tribes. Given Dubuffet’s strange sense of humor, he would not have missed this opportunity for clever word play in his painting, creating a pictorial allusion to such a play on words—and a figure that is at once droll and disquieting.

**Dubuffet, Oceania, and Surrealist Collecting**

Consider *Tapié Grand Duc* in relation to Dubuffet’s other portraits of the critic. Dubuffet’s painting *Tapié Raie* (Tapié Ray) shares many of the characteristics seen in *Tapié Grand Duc*, including the flattened, kite shaped head; the crooked, triangular nose (this time bending on the opposite side); the flattened ears; and the cheeks’ defining lines, which could pass
for stark stitching (Fig. 64). Here, the lines are called out in the title, which could be translated as Tapié Ray, Line, or Stripe (rayed, lined, or striped)—or, alternatively, Tapié Crossed Off (or under erasure). Perhaps the title alludes to the play between form and the unformed in the emerging Informel movement to which Tapié played such an instrumental role. The marks crisscross Dubuffet’s figure, traces of the firm, yet frenzied movements of his hand (gesture being also important to Dubuffet, to Tapié, and to Informel artists working in both figuration and lyric abstraction). As in the paintings discussed in the previous chapters, this drawing evinces both additive and subtractive (or defacing) marks, the pencil now serving both functions. Perhaps, in this case, however, Tapié cross-stitched would be more accurate as the lines call to mind the crude stitching that binds the tortoise shell fragments in the Torres Strait mask.

The drawing in Dubuffet’s portrait crisscrosses the face, demarcating it while seeming, simultaneously, to cut right through it. These lines also suggest deep pockets below the cheekbones, which are exaggeratedly wide compared to photographs of Tapié (Fig. 65). The broad cheeks in the portrait suggest Dubuffet’s flattening of the figure, an effect he applied selectively, it seems, based on his previously mentioned drawing Michel Tapié done the same month (Fig. 63). As in Tapié Grand Duc, the drawing describing the chin in Tapié Ray includes a circular shape signifying a three-dimensional chin in an explicitly two-dimensional way. Likewise, the pencil mustache and abstracted mouth of Tapié Grand Duc are also echoed, though this time they are positioned closer up in relation to the long nose. The hair too is similar, though in Tapié Ray it is more scribbled, less resembling spikes radiating from the flattened head. The hairline is, perhaps, more naturalistically rendered, more like Tapié’s in that it dips down in the center to form widow’s peaks above each brow. These upward curves add a slight suggestion of
roundness to the face, contributing to its hint of three-dimensionality. Here again though, we see a play between the two dimensional support and the figure of Tapié Dubuffet depicts upon it.

A key difference between these portraits is that Tapié Ray is depicted from head to waist rather than as a head only. Dubuffet could have used hand gestures here to communicate (as he does in the portraits discussed in the previous chapters), but he chooses not to. Instead, the arms are cut off by the canvas edge at just about the level of the elbows. And this rigid demi-torso diffuses some of the impact of the portrait, which lacks the full thrust of the tête that is Tapié Grand Duc. It is as if this additional bodily depiction (fragmented though it is) steals the limelight from the portrait’s bizarre facial features, lending this particular portrait more of an air of caricature and rendering it less a figure that commands the viewer’s immediate attention. For this reason, it seems to me, Dubuffet learned from this depiction, choosing for many of his subsequent renderings to depict either a singularly enigmatic tête or a theatrically gesturing figure. In Tapié Ray the most expressive element is the gesture of Dubuffet’s grottagelike scribbles. In this sense, the work does feature, or at least calls to mind, the gestures of the hand that were so important to both the artist and critic.

Now consider Dubuffet’s portraits next to a photograph taken by Jacques Viot on an expedition for Parisian collector Pierre Loeb (the very same Loeb with whom Dubuffet would later correspond regarding Artaud’s care) (Fig. 66). Notice the parallels between Dubuffet’s depictions of Tapié and these sculptures, which are produced by the Sentani people to decorate the homes of their chiefs. Viot found over sixty of these sculptures submerged in Lake Sentani, 64 Viot’s book too broke with the romanticizing conventions for travel logs inherited from the nineteenth century, focusing instead on his experiences of the journey and his disavowal of colonialism (a disavowal that did not stop him from collecting the art of the indigenous peoples of New Guinea). Peltier describes

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64 Peltier, 164. See also Peltier, 159; Jacques Viot, *Déposition de blanc* (Paris: Stock 1932), which is available at the Alexander Turnbull National Library of New Zealand. Like Michaux (Discussed in Chapter Two), Viot also wrote an unusual travel account, *Déposition de blanc (Testimony of a White)*. Viot’s book too broke with the romanticizing conventions for travel logs inherited from the nineteenth century, focusing instead on his experiences of the journey and his disavowal of colonialism (a disavowal that did not stop him from collecting the art of the indigenous peoples of New Guinea). Peltier describes
many of which he photographed and shipped to Loeb in France. Intriguingly, some of these carved figures are smiling, which, for European viewers is an unexpected feature in a totemic figure from a region associated with headhunting. In fact, the peoples of Lake Sentani are not ferocious headhunters like the peoples of the Torres Strait who made the mask. But the effects produced by their strange, smiling sculptures were just what Dubuffet wanted to achieve in his art, creating that odd combination of the droll and the slightly disturbing

The photographer, Viot, was an adventurous dealer of modern painting and a collector of Oceanic art with Surrealist ties dating to his association, in the early 1920s, with Juan Miró, who Viot also represented as a broker. As mentioned previously, Miró’s studio, along with Masson’s adjacent rooms on the Rue Blomet (in Montparnasse) served as a nexus of Surrealist activities that included collecting and displaying non-Western art. This connection is significant since Dubuffet too frequented Masson’s atelier and surely took note of the non-Western objects that the Surrealists had begun to collect.

As a result of the growing interests of the Surrealists in Oceanic art toward the end of the 1920s, Viot undertook his collecting mission to New Guinea. The venture was funded by Loeb, who already had a sizable collection of rare Oceanic objects he displayed at his Galerie Pierre. 

65 Peltier, 162 (Fig. 9, 5-17); Simon Kooijman, The Art of Lake Sentani (New York: Museum of Primitive Art, 1959), 89-95. Viot found over sixty of these sculptures submerged in Lake Sentani at the former site of a chief’s house destroyed by fire.
66 Ibid., 156.
67 Ibid.
The two men had collaborated in both Surrealist and non-Western art exhibitions, organizing, among other things, Miro’s first solo show and the first group Surrealist exhibition, both of which were held at Loeb’s Galerie Pierre in 1925.\(^{68}\) Because of Dubuffet’s proximity to the Surrealists, it is likely that he attended these openings. In any case, with Loeb’s aid in 1929, Viot visited the northwestern coast of New Guinea. This was the easternmost reaches of Dutch Indonesia, which is today situated in the Indonesian half of New Guinea, known as Western Papua, which borders Melanesian/Papua New Guinea to the east (see maps pg. 316-317). These two New Guineas are home to a diverse array of cultures, and the practices and art forms of the northwest/Indonesian regions differ from those of the Torres Straits that produced the mask in the MoMA book. These cultures share distant histories, however, and maintain a high degree of inter-cultural contact, which allows for the sharing of certain motifs.\(^ {69}\) As the Sentani sculpture (from the Indonesian side of New Guinea) on the far left of Viot’s photograph shows, the small round eyes are one of the motifs found in both cultures. According to Peltier, these carved wooden sculptures attracted little notice among interwar Parisian viewers, who were confounded by, yet more interested in, the Maro (or Toba), the elaborately patterned bark cloth paintings Viot had procured from the same region of northwestern/Indonesian New Guinea (Fig. 67). The paintings and the sculptures were exhibited together at the Galerie de la Renaissance in 1930, a sign of the growing acceptance of non-Western art among more conservative French viewers.

The artifacts were also exhibited, along with objects owned by Ratton, at the 1933 Exposition “Tapa of Northwestern New Guinea” at the Musée d’Ethnographie de Trocadéro, an institution

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\(^{68}\) Peltier, 156, 159. In 1927 Viot began his relationship with Miró at the artists Rue Blomet studio in Montparnasse, where many Surrealists, and Dubuffet himself gathered. But in 1927 (before the 1929 Oceanic voyage) Viot transferred his studio in Montmartre, where he had worked next door to Surrealists Jean Arp, Max Ernst, and René Magritte, to Miró and continued to act as he dealer during this time.

\(^{69}\) Linton, et al., 10, 93.
to which Dubuffet and many French artists turned for artistic inspiration.\(^{70}\) As mentioned, however, Loeb himself indicated that the sculptures went virtually unnoticed during the interwar period, noting that they only began to be appreciated during the post-war era.\(^{71}\) Dubuffet it would seem, given the morphological similarities between his portraits and these figures, was one such interested party. His interest was likely piqued upon seeing the sculptures in these early exhibitions and, perhaps, in the photographs circulated by Viot among the Surrealists.\(^{72}\) In any case, the small round eyes seen in the sculptures and, indeed, in at least one of the bark cloth paintings collected by Viot, are decidedly present in Dubuffet’s postwar portraits of Tapié. Indeed, these small round eyes can be seen in many of Dubuffet’s portraits of other sitters, some of which I consider further on in this chapter.

I am less interested in the bark cloth paintings than the carved wooden sculptures for my study of Dubuffet’s portraits. Yet, given that Dubuffet also looked to painting and, I believe, to these particular paintings, for artistic inspiration, they warrant a closer look. Here, Dubuffet’s 1946 drawing *Michel Tapié* warrants another look as well. I do not claim strong resemblances exist between the two works (the bark cloth depicts fish-like creatures). But I cannot help notice the similarity in the shape of the heads, which are long and distorted as if stretched down from the top toward pointed chins. Likewise, both Dubuffet’s and the Oceanic faces are bifurcated down the middle and again laterally by lines that intersect with the long strait nose. The chins of

\(^{70}\) Peltier, 163-164, 166.\(^{70}\) For comprehensive discussions of Parisian ethnographic institutions and the changes to the Musée d’Ethnographie de Trocadéro under the new direction of Paul Rivet and Georges-Henri Rivière see Peltier, 166; Clifford, 118-119; and Sherman, 23-36. As previously noted, the Musée de l’Homme was formed after the 1937 Colonial Exposition largely through the efforts of Rive (an acquaintance of Dubuffet) after updating the exhibition space of Le Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro in the early 1930s. In any case, given his earlier enthusiasm for ethnography, which he discusses in “Plus Modeste,” in *Prospectus et tous écrits suivants* Vol. II, 90, it makes sense that Dubuffet was one of many Parisian artists who visited the city’s ethnographic collections and libraries.

\(^{71}\) Ibid., 170.

\(^{72}\) Ibid., 159-160; Kooijman, 89-100.
each feature geometric designs, which in Dubuffet’s portrait are echoed by the flattened, triangular neck below. In each case the area of the forehead too forms a geometric shape (though these are more rectangular in Dubuffet’s portraits and more ovular the bark cloth paintings). In both Dubuffet’s portraits and the bark cloth paintings, the figures stare blankly, and disconcertingly, ahead. Indeed, in comparing Dubuffet’s painting to the figure at the right of the bark cloth, we see that both stare out with the same small, round eyes with tiny dots for pupils. What interests me here is that this is another stock image for Dubuffet, an image that he repeated many times in portraits of this and other of his sitters, some of which I will discuss here.

Still, it is the uncanny resemblance between Dubuffet’s portraits and the New Guinea sculptures that most interests me. For not only the exaggeratedly rounded eyes but other characteristics of the sculptures can be seen in Dubuffet’s portraits. It is true that, unlike Dubuffet’s portraits, these are full length figures (ranging from roughly two and one half to six feet in height) that stand in a rigidly frontal pose. Yet, their rounded heads push down onto hunched shoulders from which small, barely carved arms hug the torsos as they reach for the sculpted phalluses (a motif which may allude to fertility and abundance). The post-like shape of the figures stems also from the fact that they form the carved tops of the supporting posts rising up through the floorboards of the Sentani chief’s houses. In any case, the rigid poses of these sculptures are interesting in relation to Dubuffet’s painting. Dubuffet depicts no arms at all in two of the three portraits I discuss, yet in each we see a similar rigidity and lack of hand gestures so different from most of the portraits considered in the previous chapters. This is another point of reference for Dubuffet, moreover, and it is fair to say he produced a sizable group of portraits with such features, particularly during the early phase of his portraiture in 1946.

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Kooijman, 89-95.
Dubuffet’s August 1946 *Portrait of Pierre Benoit* is one such example (Fig. 68). Its large round head tops a decidedly cylindrical (though somehow simultaneously flattened) body, suggesting its own kind of post-like appearance. This is due likely to the fact that, as in Dubuffet’s portraits of Tapié (and the Oceanic sculptures), the *Portrait of Pierre Benoit* lacks an adjoining neck. Thin, flattened arms hug the body, moreover, their lack of modeling enhancing the figure’s post shape and echoing the quasi-formed arms of the sculptures. The missing neck, limp arms, and overall post-shape are not the only features seen in the sculptures, however; for once again we are faced with a figure with small, circular eyes, this time also with a hint of a smile. Dubuffet takes these characteristics further in his August 1946 *Pierre Benoit Monolith* (Fig. 69), which likely pokes fun at the sitter’s name (Pierre or stone) while rearticulating, and further rigidifying, the shape of the Oceanic sculptures. With the exception of very old pieces, stone sculptures, especially large works, are rare in New Guinea. Perhaps, however, Dubuffet makes reference to other of the megalithic sculptures of Indonesia (Fig. 70) or to the megaliths of Easter Island, another Oceanic destination that had fascinated the Surrealists, including his friend Breton (Fig. 71a-b). Recall that in “The Art of the Joke” Dubuffet included the megalithic stone sculptures of Easter Island as proof that art and humor share a common domain, writing that figures such as these do not constitute “innocent little jokes that divert you for a few moments, but [rather] the strong ones that instantly turn you to ice, change you to stone, because they’re so good and so surprising.”  

While Dubuffet’s ironic Eurocentrism shines through in such a statement, and the megalithic Easter Island sculptures are tangential to my discussion of Dubuffet’s portraits, it is interesting to note that the small wooden sculptures of the island, an example of which was showcased in Breton’s collection, are characterized by their intensely

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74 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81.
gazing eyes with small, round pupils—evidence of the impact of this motif to a variety of Oceanic cultures and, as I argue, to Dubuffet’s portraits (Fig. 72).

The wooden Sentani sculptures (Fig. 66) also feature strangely shaped heads, which appear both rounded (especially at the crown) and triangular (exaggeratedly so at the chins)—more features seen in Dubuffet’s portraits. The sculptures are carved only minimally to describe the thin lips, long, strait noses, and connected brows. And these features too are found in Dubuffet’s portraits. The relative lack carving translates, in these sculptures, to a relative lack of force, which is not something we often find Dubuffet emulating. Yet, the quietly assuming presence and emphasis on enigmatic facial expression are characteristics we see in the portraits of Tapié. It is this difference in impact—predominately humorous (to Western eyes) versus predominately jarring—that distinguishes these from the portraits discussed in the previous chapters. In the less gestural, Oceanic-inspired depictions discussed here, some of which succeed and some of which (in my view) fail, Dubuffet filters the work’s force, its impact, primarily through the round eyes and pieced-together faces, producing strangely staring, slightly humorous, yet still, in most cases, oddly off-putting figures.\footnote{An Oceanic-inspired portrait that less successfully achieves what I see as Dubuffet’s artistic aims, to impact the viewer in emotive and meaningful ways, is his November 1946 \textit{Limbour Diable Rouge} (Limbour Red Devil) (Fig. 73). Interestingly, for this portrait Dubuffet may have drawn upon another Oceanic object in the MoMA publication, another tortoise shell mask of the Torres Straits (Fig. 74). Although the mask was produced in the same region of New Guinea, was likely used for the same purposes, and shares many formal characteristics of the}

\footnote{The carved wooden figures are from the northwestern (Indonesian) region of New Guinea, but feature motifs, such as the small round eyes and minimalistic, yet stylized, facial carving common to many regions of the main island and, indeed, even other outlying regions. Forms such as these reveal the complex multi-cultural exchange in the regions of overlapping Indonesia and Oceania, where forms are shared and adapted to fit form and content to an array of local contexts.}
previously considered mask, its artistic impact (at least to the Western viewer) differs markedly. This mask, which features almond shaped, rather than round, eyes was produced by similar methods (selecting, modeling, and combining segments of tortoise shell). Yet, it does not appear as roughly hewn and does not feature the circular tortoise shell eyes seen in the other mask. More of the framing lattice trim is visible on this mask, moreover, with large chunks of the trim remaining in ways that echo the jagged appearance of the mask’s sharp teeth. These show through an open mouth (as opposed to the mouth stitched shut in the previously discussed mask)—a motif also adopted in many of Dubuffet’s paintings.

This almond-eyed mask differs from the other mask in that these eyes are more naturalistically shaped, with only the small dots of black paste serving as pupils being starkly circular. The shell forming the face is also darker in color, which accentuates the large white eyes. It retains its fibrous hair, moreover, an element which softens its appearance despite its sharp teeth (and the ferociousness proper to a headhunting culture). To me, this image is less arresting (despite its sharp teeth) and it stands to reason that its use as a model would produce a less effective (and less affective) portrait. The starkly contrasting eyes in Dubuffet’s portrait are nevertheless one of its most striking features. Here, they peer out from a figure of Limbour that has been smeared (nearly ground) flat into the canvas, a flattening effect taken to an extreme not seen in the mask, and which, despite the slightly silly facial expression (to my Western eyes), suggests that a kind of violence has been done to the figure—another play between brutality and humor in one of Dubuffet’s portraits. The play between drollness and bleakness in the portrait is accentuated by another of Dubuffet’s phallic Western neckties and attire that seems to have been ground into the painting as if trampled on the real-world ground upon which the viewer walks. Dubuffet’s treatment of Limbour’s mouth likewise conflates the campy and the traumatic. Open,
like the mouth in the mask, the portrait’s mouth is distorted, cocked sideways to reveal not pointy, but nubby teeth full of gaps. These teeth are as ragged as those in the mask, but without the bite, so to speak. On second thought, upon closer looking, this portrait may reach its mark for Dubuffet, exemplifying the kind of figure that is disturbing, yet oddly humorous at the same time—the kind of humor that “change[s] you into stone” because its “so good and so surprising.”

Another portrait that looks to be drawn from such an Oceanic mask is Dubuffet’s 1946 *Michaux* (Fig. 75). This rendering smacks a bit more of caricature, perhaps, but its features warrant a closer look. The face is fairly naturalistic; its almond-shaped eyes gaze (as we see by the small, round pupils) to the upper right of the picture plane, in the same direction suggested by the almond shaped eyes in the mask. Dubuffet’s portrait of Michaux lacks the hand gesture seen in the portraits of this artist/writer discussed in Chapter Two, here featuring only the odd oval shaped head atop a thin neck which connects to an ovular torso (features that rearticulate not only the mask but also to the portraits of Tapié). The tufts of hair with which Dubuffet frames the sides of Michaux’s head mimic the fluffy fibers tied to the hairline of the mask, just as each head is distinguished by a bald crown. The eyes in both images are surrounded by linear patterning, moreover, and long, thin, triangular noses can also be seen in both faces. The mask’s toothy mouth can also be seen echoed in the portrait, in which the mouth is formed in the same general shape by the pointy tips of the upper lip and jagged teeth. Although Michaux’s Indonesian travels did not likely take him to the easternmost reaches of the Dutch colonies (its Oceanic borders), Dubuffet seems to have found this mask a fitting model for his intriguing portrait of the author.

76 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81.
Ratton, Art Brut, and Surrealist “Impact”

Although Dubuffet appears to have looked to the almond eyed Torres Strait mask in rendering some of his sitters, it is the figures from various regions of New Guinea with small, round, startled looking eyes that seem to have most attracted him, serving as models for his arresting, somewhat humorous, portraits. The portraits indicate, moreover, that Dubuffet experimented with different variations of these circular eyes as he depicted various sitters. He rendered the eyes simultaneously both large and small, for example, in his November 1946 drawing of his friend Charles Ratton (Fig. 76), the collector of Oceanic art and co-founder of the Compagnie de l’Art Brut who in 1945 introduced Dubuffet to dealer Pierre Matisse, thus helping to launch the American leg of Dubuffet’s career. A 2013 exposition at the Musée du Quai Branly highlights the extent to which Ratton’s collection, founded initially on African art and later incorporating Oceanic forms, inspired the Surrealists and, indeed, avant-garde artists of many varieties during the inter- and post-war periods.\textsuperscript{77} Surely Ratton’s collection inspired Dubuffet as well, who seems to have looked to Oceanic forms to rather comically depict the collector. In Dubuffet’s portrait, small, round eyes are made more surprising, and more comical, by the addition of oversized eyeglasses, seen also in a photograph of Ratton (Fig. 77). These glasses do more than enhance the comic appeal of the piece, however, as they conflate with the eyes to suggest the larger round eyes of still another Oceanic mask (Fig. 78).

The head in Dubuffet’s portrait of Ratton is much more rounded than the masks considered thus far, with only a hint of triangularity appearing at the crown. In fact, the circular head is more in keeping with a photograph of the sitter, as are the eyeglasses and the small round eyes.

ears The rounded head and eyes are, at first glance, the only features this portrait shares with Oceanic cultural forms. But a perusal of Paris’s ethnographic collections—indeed of the Branly itself, which houses objects formerly in the collections of the Musee de l’Homme and the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadero, reveals another Oceanic figure to which Dubuffet may have turned for inspiration: a large anthropomorphic (or monkey-like) protection mask from the East Sepik Province, which was first shown from June to October 1938 at the "Voyage de la Korrigane en Océanie" exhibition at the Musee de l’Homme (Fig. 78). In comparing the portrait of Ratton with the mask, one sees both an uncanny resemblance and an openly playful quotation of Oceanic art. Not least of these mannered resemblances are the small round eyes surrounded by larger discs, which signify eyeballs in the mask and Ratton’s glasses in the portrait. The tiny ears and long, stylized nose in the mask are also seen in the portrait, as is the only slightly pointed head. In the mask, designs at the crown and tongue/chin accentuate the superimposition of triangular and circular motifs, which Dubuffet achieves (in a less stylized though more reduced form) through the use of his pencil. Dark rubbings (where Dubuffet’s pencil has roughly scraped the surface of the paper) suggest cheeks in the portrait, areas marked in the mask by small discs. Ratton may well have owned such a mask. Yet, Dubuffet appears to have looked to the image in the museum’s collection. If so, he looked to one of the most famous Oceanic objects in Paris to depict his friend, one of the most prominent collectors of this very type of Oceanic art.

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78 Musée du Quai Branly, http://collections.quaibranly.fr/pod16/#a4a58ca2-351c-44e1-826b-ea1cbea50bdad (Accessed March 10, 2014). The museum website informs us that the round eyes signaled aggression in New Guinea cultures, a fact that, despite humorous readings by Western viewers, explains the depiction of these eyes in apotropaic figures adorning ceremonial and clan houses.
Oceanic Gestures in Dubuffet’s Portraits

Close looking at Dubuffet’s portraits of Tapié, Limbour, Michaux, and Ratton reveals their resemblances to an array of Oceanic artifacts, suggesting that Dubuffet looked for inspiration to Oceanic art. Although I have thus far discussed *Tapié Grand Duc* and other of Dubuffet’s portraits that omit or downplay gesture, one can also see traces of Oceanic gesture (as well as the staring eyes) in his portraits. Consider, for example, Dubuffet’s November 1946 portrait of the writer and literary critic *Paul Léautaud on a Caned Chair* (Fig. 79). Once again we see the small, round eyes, though this time they are fairly submerged in Dubuffet’s thick paint. The head of this portrait mirrors the drawing of Ratton, in a way (it is rounded, yet also oddly polygonal), while the marks defining the face resemble the renderings of Tapié and Michaux, bifurcating it down the middle with the long nose and again laterally with the lines of the cheeks and eyes. The outstretched arms, however, are completely different. Although not seen in the portraits considered thus far in this chapter, the imagery of outstretched arms, often held slightly upward, is another common motif in the art of both Papuan/Melanesian and Indonesian New Guinea. This gesture is typically used to appease ancestral or other spirits but, as with most Oceanic motifs, can signal a variety of meanings, appearing in various lizard-like or anthropomorphic figures in a variety of local contexts.

An interesting Oceanic form to which *Paul Léautaud on a Caned Chair* bears a remarkable resemblance is a carved wooden skull hook from Southern New Guinea—another accoutrement of a headhunting tribe, and perhaps a symbolism fitting for this caustic critic) (Fig. 80). A striking example of such a hook in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum is characterized by its large, rounded, yet also strangely polygonal head, which seems barely supportable by the frail body of the figure. In the sculpture, the figure sits, arms and legs akimbo
in a pose characteristic of these hooks, which hold trophy skulls on the figure’s pointed knees (similar hooks are used by other tribes to keep food off of the floor). Dubuffet echoes this pose in his painting by depicting his sitter literally sitting, leaning back in his caned chair with his arms stretched wide. Although the legs in the portrait fold limply to the side, they are stick thin like the legs in the hook. Moreover, the portrait’s head and outstretched arms are its dominant features. Barely discernible amidst Dubuffet’s frenzied lines, however, are rearticulations also of the sculpture’s eyes, nose, and mouth. Even the etched lines tattooing the figure’s face and body find their way into Dubuffet’s portrait, suggested by the lines he has gouged through the thick paint. Dubuffet crosses his figure’s torso with an X, a form not seen in the carving but that suggests the shapes of the sculpture’s thin, outstretched arms and legs. Just below the center of this X in the painting are circular marks, which duplicate the navel of the sculpted figure. The most directly mimicked, though displaced, patterning in the portrait appears on the seat of the chair, its caning indicated by crisscrossed lines resembling those on the sculpture’s arms and legs. This, in my view, is another case of Dubuffet blending the familiar with the strange and referencing, simultaneously, a multitude of cultural forms and meanings. Although this particular Oceanic hook is in a New York collection, it would have been available to Dubuffet in photographs. Moreover, the Musée Branly holds comparable pieces carried over from the collections of the Musée de l’Homme, the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadero, and the Musée National des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie near Bercy (the suburb of Paris where Dubuffet ran his wine business and periodically resided during the 1930s).79 Once again, it appears that Dubuffet looked to Oceanic artifacts, and perhaps photographs of them in ethnographic publications, adapting Oceanic motifs to inform his portraits.

79 Dubuffet, Biographie, 29. Dubuffet indicates that he lived in Saint-Mandé during the early 1930s in order to live near his wine business in Bercy.
As with the small round eyes Dubuffet adopted in his portraits, the open arms and legs of the skull hook are common motifs in Oceanic cultural forms. Several examples of these appear in the MoMA publication, most notably in a rendering of a carved canoe paddle featured as the cover art (Fig. 81). A variety of such paddles and other artifacts decorated with figures in this pose (often with circular eyes) could also be seen in French ethnographic publications. Some of these figures are shown in Les Arts indigènes en Nouvelle-Guinée (The Indigenous Arts of New Guinea), a book by Parisian collector Stephen Chauvet, who donated to Parisian collections and participated in early exhibitions of Oceanic art, including that held in collaboration with Loeb, Viot, and others at the Galerie de la Renaissance (Fig. 82). 80

With the exception, for the most part, of the chair caning in this portrait, Dubuffet has dispensed with stylized Oceanic patterning (which is found only minimally in some of the New Guinea cultural forms considered here). He has translated these into his own patterns scraped and gouged into the paint or scribbled with his pencil to double the facial patterns of his sitters. This successful translation, or “transmutation,” as Dubuffet might say, has, perhaps, tempered art historians’ inclinations to discuss in detail his Oceanic references. 81 Here again, however, the resemblances between the small circular eyes, and now also the pose of the arms and legs, are unmistakable. Once again, Dubuffet adapts and reproduces the pose as his own motif, which can be seen, among other images, in two renderings of Paulhan in which the face, eyes, and nose also mirror the portraits of Tapié (Fig. 83a-b). This idea of adaptation and reproduction (rather than adoption or mere quotation) is evident in Dubuffet’s work and, for me, accounts for much of its effectiveness, its blunt visual impact.

81 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 84. “Transmuting” is the title of one of Dubuffet’s notes, in which he writes: “What the wizard finds so enthralling is to transform: beauties into beasts, beasts into beauties. This is a highly instructive procedure.”
It is important to note that the Oceanic figures posed with arms (and sometimes also legs) akimbo can be easily read by Western viewers as a flattened forms (imagery frequently featured in cartoon animations of the 1940s). Dubuffet’s Nov. 1946 *Limbour marionnette aux balafres* (Limbour Puppet in Scars, Slashes or Gashes) is just such an image (Fig. 84). It is also another of Dubuffet’s many portraits that speaks (as discussed in previous chapters), to puppetry, this time explicitly in the painting’s title. It is another work which looks, in its painterly assemblage of mutli-cultural forms, to what I have called an aesthetic of puppetry. This is, moreover, another portrait of Limbour that is flattened and looks blankly out from the canvas with almond shaped eyes (seen in the less affective Torres Strait mask) whose whites contrast, rather glaringly, to their small black irises. This image is a hybrid, combing multiple Oceanic cultural forms with the features of Dubuffet’s friend, again rendered in thick haute pâte that connotes a figure lying flat on its back, as if pressed down into the muddy ground of Dubuffet’s canvas.

Here again, the Oceanic bark cloth paintings collected by Viot and Loeb bear consideration (Fig. 67). Many of these too feature (male or female) anthropomorphic (often lizard like) figures with their arms and legs held out. This motif is also found on painted wooden panels of New Guinea (Fig. 85.), features of which can be seen in many of the portraits I have discussed in this and the previous chapters. These features are visible too in *Paul Léautaud in a Caine Chair*. Their overall flattening effect is achieved in the portraits of Limbour, brought to a muddy ground with Dubuffet’s crude style and gritty haute pâte.

The outstretched arms and disc-like head in the Oceanic panel and carved wooden hook also appear in one of Dubuffet’s early paintings of Tapié, in which once can just discern hints of the rounded eyes and toothy mouth (Fig. 86). Other portraits featuring flattened heads with circular eyes, long, bifurcating noses, and slash or stitch-like mouths or teeth, continue to appear
in Dubuffet’s post-portrait rendering, seen even in depictions taken from his trips to North Africa—the 1948 *Sourire: tête hilare II* (Similing: beaming head II, Fig. 87) and the 1949 *Deux portraits de face* (Two Full-Faced Portraits, Fig. 88). The flattened, disc-like heads with Oceanic features can be seen in many of the heads Dubuffet produces just prior to his *Corps de dames* (Women’s Bodies) series as well, particularly in his 1950 *Minaudeuse* (Fig. 89) and his 1951 *Présence Légèr* (Lite presence, Fig. 90), though the aggressive qualities—the affective edginess—of the earlier works have been toned down.

Elements of such an Oceanic panel are, perhaps, most deftly drawn upon in one of Dubuffet’s final portraits, however, *Bertelé bouquet fleuri Portrait de parade* (Ceremonial Portrait of Bertelé as a Floral Bouquet, Fig. 91). In this portrait Dubuffet seems to have dispensed with any blatantly direct references while retaining the overall impact and visual impression one has in viewing both the wooden Oceanic hook and panel painting. One sees in Dubuffet’s portrait not only the small round eyes; flattened, circular head; and gesturing arms (which here could double for the outstretched legs of the Oceanic figures), but also a play of contrasts—and a creative play between Dubuffet’s free experimentation and his citation of non-Western sources. It is a return to Oceanic imagery after a period of looking, as I have argued, to the cultural forms of neighboring Indonesia to depict writers fascinated with those cultures. Importantly, in this portrait we see a return to combining facial and gestural expression that are equaled by Dubuffet’s gestural brushwork, achieved by dragging other instruments (trowels, spatulas, even fingers) through the muddy surface of the *haute pâte*.

The thick materiality of Dubuffet’s portrait stands in stark contrast to the sleek surface of the painted Oceanic panel (Fig. 85), though both feature figures Dubuffet would describe as raw; so much so, in fact, that elements lending a comic air to some of the works discussed previously
do no such thing here. For here we see a skeletal head, the roundness at the top echoing, while not directly referencing, the Oceanic painting. This jarring, skeletal effect is enhanced by Dubuffet’s treatment of the mouth, which he (again) depicts in stitch-like slashes that both rearticulate the mouth in the painted panel and call to mind the teeth of a bony skull. Again, two round eyes glare out from the portrait, though this time they are larger and slightly squared off. These too mirror the panel painting, in which the eyes seem to have been cut into squared slits. Strangely, the round eyes so characteristic of Oceanic figures are still included in the panel painting but appear displaced to the figure’s torso, doubling as its nipples. Indeed, the figure itself virtually doubles, as if flipping over itself in the panel to form an upside down female, twin. We have seen such doubling before in Dubuffet’s work, in paintings such as Will to Power (Fig. 3) and Antonin Artaud with Tufts of Hair (Fig. 5), discussed in Chapter One, both of which also mimic the Art Brut Dubuffet began to collect and exhibit in the gallery that was managed for him by Tapié.82

**Painterly Collage and movement**

What I am calling a subset of Dubuffet’s portraits, exemplified here primarily by his depictions of Tapié, alternate between conveying a jarring roughness and an odd, yet unsettling, humor. Many of Dubuffet’s paintings effectively combine both, blending these two forms in equally unsettling ways. Some, particularly the drawings of Tapié, are less effective, appearing

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82 Dubuffet and Tapié expressed interest in both Art Brut and Oceanic art. One question this dissertation raises (a logical question given some of my findings), is whether some of the art of the mental patients that fascinated Dubuffet had, in fact, also been inspired by Oceanic sources that the patients (supposed outsiders) might have seen in ethnographic publications, the popular press, or at colonial expositions prior to being institutionalized for mental illness. Although this is a fascinating line of inquiry (one that challenges outdated and Eurocentric notions of affinities between “primitive” arts while accounting for some of the obvious visual parallels, such as figural doubling) this questions exceeds the scope of my project.
overly banal. Still others, discussed here in the Portrait of Pierre Benoit and Limbour Diable Rouge are overly campy. This variety demonstrates, to my eye, that Dubuffet experimented with these portraits, creating a variety of similar, yet quite different, groups of renderings. One could say he approached these renderings the way Tapié approached his experimental notes and repeated riffs in producing the jazz music he and Dubuffet loved.\(^8\)

Likewise, what I see as Dubuffet’s painterly assemblage incorporated various Oceanic motifs, striking figural characteristics by which he constructed enigmatic, jarring, and sometimes playful portraits. Dispensing, for a time, with playfulness in works such as the Ceremonial Portrait of Bertelé (done in the middle of 1947), Dubuffet honed in on the raw qualities and arresting impact of Oceanic figuration. The range of variation in these portraits demonstrates Dubuffet’s working through of pictorial problems to develop a new visual language, one that is grounded in processes of collection and collage while being, nevertheless, uniquely his own. These portraits embody Dubuffet’s interest in arresting features, composite figures, and creative movements, which, as I discuss in the dissertation conclusion, included interests in theater and performativity that he pursued throughout his career.

\(^8\) Thank you to Eric Wolf of the Menil Collection for his comments on Dubuffet’s relationship to jazz following Roja Najafia’s presentation “Our Dubuffet: A Family Matter,” June 17, 2014.
CONCLUSION

Transmutation: Collage, Theatricality, and Performativity in Dubuffet’s (Self) Portraits

Dubuffet’s portraits may strike the viewer as incongruent within an oeuvre characterized by anonymous figures that are frequently embedded in in their grounds or depicted in land and cityscapes. In my view, however, the portraits are not an anomaly; nor are they a mere blip in the career of an artist working in the spirit of Art Brut, graffiti, and archaic cave painting. Rather, the portraits represent a set of artistic aims at a key point in Dubuffet’s creative development; goals that proved, for him, to be both timely and lasting. The portraits thus fit within a continuum in Dubuffet’s production, tracing back to his engagement with a variety of Surrealist preoccupations, including the production of disjunctive imagery resulting from cultural collage—multi-cultural image-gathering as defined, more broadly, by James Clifford, while looking ahead to his expanded practices in mixed-media collage, sculpture, and even theater.\(^1\) Dubuffet’s propensity to combine the familiar and the strange, produceing hybrid, conglomerate figures, and his play with two- and three-dimensionality reveal his debt also to Picasso and to those Cubists with whom Dubuffet associated during the inter- and postwar periods.\(^2\)

One can see hints of this collage aesthetic in Dubuffet’s war-time painting (Fig. 2), in which he flattens and arranges his figures in a variety of patchwork spaces. His radical combining of a collage aesthetic with raw corporeality in the portraits, however, is what makes

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them some of his most effective works. An oeuvre within an oeuvre, the portraits reveal certain transitions and trajectories in Dubuffet’s artistic practice, both establishing and deviating from his criteria of originality, and a spirit of exploration, in his improvisational, yet patterned, paintings. Likewise, the portraits picture creative movements and Dubuffet’s performance of art making within a culture he wished to subvert. These portraits prefigure in paint, sometimes in ink or pencil, his work in two- and three-dimensional collage (“assemblage” as he called it), which he began in the 1950s and continued, sporadically, throughout his career. Indeed, as I have argued, a collage aesthetic, grounded in processes of selecting and composing disparate images, informed Dubuffet’s painting all along, though most effectively in his portraits. Engaging materiality in different ways, in different bodies of work, Dubuffet increasingly showcased collage. Although less successful, to my eye, than his portraits, Dubuffet’s application of collage principles—and often literal collage—culminated in his *Hourloupe* paintings and sculptures. These blocky, conglomerate figures of white, red, and blue, outlined, alternately, in red, blue, or black, occupied Dubuffet between 1963–1974, becoming his signature style. He nevertheless retained an interest in portraiture, producing a series of six self-portraits in the *Hourloupe* style in 1966. Considering two of them here, I conclude my investigation of his life-long engagement with portraiture, collage and performance (Fig. 18, 92).


4 For more on Dubuffet’s foray into explicit collage, and his adoption of the term “assemblage,” see his essays “Le Torrent, Les Papillons (The Mountain Torrent, The Butterflies)” and “Assemblages D’Empreintes (Imprint Assemblages)” in Selz, 83–84 and 84–85.

5 Dubuffet and Max Loreau, *Catalogue des travaux de Jean Dubuffet, Fascicule XXII: Cartes, Utensiles* (Paris: J.-J. Pauvert, 1964), 70–71, Dubuffet’s six Nov.–Dec. 1966 self-portraits, *Autoportrait I–VI*, marker, approx. 25 x 16.5–17.5 cm, are listed in this volume, figs. 204–209. This is one of several volumes of Dubuffet’s catalogue raisonné dealing with the profusion of drawings, paintings, and sculptures relating to the *Hourloupe* series.
One can see these interests materialized in his *Hourloupe* works, though these are overshadowed by his increasingly overt theatricality. In being overly theatrical, moreover, and now pandering to the viewer, these figures are less effective in achieving Dubuffet’s artistic goals, elaborated throughout his career, to move the viewer in meaningful ways. Dubuffet’s interest in collage, figuration, and, to a degree, performativity (now in a less balanced tension with theatricality) remain, however, and are the focus of this concluding chapter of my dissertation. In each case, and regardless of their respective effectiveness, Dubuffet’s portraits highlight the importance of performativity in his work; which is to say, they demonstrate his understanding of art-making as a creative act capable of producing individually and culturally transformative effects.

Although his bright red, blue, and white Hourloupe figures became a signature style for Dubuffet, they began as a radical break. Because of their coloration, emphatic flatness, and explicitly puzzle-like appearance, his 1966 self-portraits appear, at first glance, to be far different than his previous portraits; and, indeed, they differ in many respects. The most glaring of these differences, perhaps, are Dubuffet’s methods of production, now shifted from emphasizing gritty materiality to sleek graphic design. In each case, Dubuffet sought to bring the viewer face to face with art as Other, however, writing that art should “uproot” the viewer (1945) and “set off in the viewer’s mind a hyperactivation of the visionary faculty” (1973).\(^6\) I see these differences in production (in the latter case, design) as accounting for the latter work’s lack of punch—its

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reduced ability to produce the jarring artistic impact of his immediate post-war portraits. The late works too may be unsettling to the viewer, who might ask, as did viewers during the 1940s, whether these works are truly art and in what way. It is Dubuffet’s aim to trouble the viewer in this way—to prompt a questioning of what counts as art, indeed as reality, and why. This, combined with his suspicion of culture and love of theatrics led him to create “phantasmagoric” worlds populated by fantastical figures, here in the guise of portraiture.\textsuperscript{7} As mentioned in the previous chapters, I use the word “fantastical,” which Dubuffet prefers in some discussions of his painting, in keeping with Tzvetan Todorov’s use of the term, in which certain imagery goes beyond the uncanny, which by virtue of its non-conformance to known cultural references or juxtaposition of culturally dissimilar elements (in Dubuffet’s case, figural characteristics), to suggest an encounter with otherworldly beings that prompts hesitation in the subject’s defining of reality—precisely the effect Dubuffet wanted to achieve with his art.\textsuperscript{8} These artistic aims guided Dubuffet’s production. Yet, his theatricality ultimately took center stage, transforming his aimed-for performativity—his interest in art’s transformative power—into sheer performance.

In looking at Dubuffet’s self-portraits of 1966, I consider them in relation to other of the self-portraits he produced at key points in his career, highlighting certain trajectories, and significant transitions, in his praxis. I situate these depictions as recurring, albeit sporadic, motifs in an oeuvre in which portraiture occupied Dubuffet for relatively brief stints. Yet, as I argue,

\textsuperscript{7} Dubuffet, \textit{Prospectus et tous écrits suivants} Vol. II (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 482–483; Dubuffet, English translation in Franzke, 148. See also Tzvetan Todorov, \textit{The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre} (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973) for a discussion of the fantastic, which Todorov distinguishes from the uncanny. Whereas I have heretofore discussed Dubuffet’s painting primarily in relation to the uncanny, in which imagery may be shockingly, disturbingly unusual in not appearing to conform to known cultural references or in juxtaposing culturally dissimilar elements (in Dubuffet’s case, figural characteristics), here Dubuffet reveals his aims to also, at times, conjure worlds and characters that might cause his viewers hesitation in defining reality; or, more importantly for Dubuffet, to begin to imagine wholly new forms of reality.

\textsuperscript{8} Tzvetan Todorov, \textit{The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre} (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), 25, 33, 46.
portraiture played an important role within a body of work geared toward performative, and in the end overly theatrical, aims.

Dubuffet’s 1968 *Asphyxiating Culture* demonstrates that he retained, even well-honed, his anticultural stance, a position to which he wanted his art to attest. But Dubuffet’s portraits of the 1940s were the pinnacle of his figuration, as I see it, prefiguring and surpassing his Hourloupe style in terms of effectiveness—in terms, in other words, of achieving his individually and culturally transformative goals. Like Dubuffet’s post-war portraits, his figures of the 1960s are characterized by fantastical imagery, creative doubling, and collage, elements which, I argue, he saw as both artistically and culturally subversive. The creative thrust of the later figures, however, has been subdued, subordinated to a minor role. Dubuffet continued to present his viewers with art as Other, as something extraordinary. But the viewing impact shifted from one of jarring disjunctiveness, achieved by way of gritty materiality, hybridity, and bold corporeality to one of mild curiosity achieved through playful innovation, draftsmanship, and more orderly forms of real and rendered assemblage.

For decades, critics, scholars, and Dubuffet himself have debated about the degree to which he engaged with self-portraiture. Indeed, some of his self-portraits are ambiguous, as is the case with his *Villager with Close Cropped Hair*, a rendering he produced while travelling in North Africa that curator Susan Cooke situates as self-portraiture (Fig. 93).\(^9\) In some cases, though, it is more than clear that Dubuffet is his own subject. This is true of both his 1936 *Double Self-portrait with Bowler Hat* (Fig. 16) and his 1944 *Two Brigands* (Fig. 17). Dubuffet

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denounced the latter work’s legitimacy as self-portraiture in his correspondence with the Arts Club of Chicago, the venue at which he delivered his famous 1951 speech “Anticultural Positions.” Yet, Dubuffet’s disavowal may be attributed to his artistic investment in anonymous, and, in his eyes, culturally uninflected Art Brut. However, as his American dealer Pierre Matisse observed, “the image speaks for itself,” it is “a self-portrait.” In any case, Two Brigands resembles Dubuffet sufficiently to be considered here, as does its figural doubling (there are two Dubuffet’s in the painting). Dubuffet made his self portrayal clear in his 1966 renderings, which he titled accordingly. Considering each of these portraits demonstrates a back and forth movement, I argue, in which Dubuffet trends toward, then pulls away from, the brut hybridity and disjunctive doubling of his 1940s portraits—qualities he cultivated in order to invigorate art and challenge Western culture.

Consider First Dubuffet’s 1936 Double Self-portrait with Bowler Hat (Fig. 16), an image produced during the period roughly concurrent with his production of the masks and puppets with which he held performances at his studio (Fig. 4a-c). As argued in the previous chapters, the role of these masks in both fixing identities and allowing Dubuffet and his friends to

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11 Ibid.; Arts Club Records, The Newberry Library, Chicago. A December 1, 1951 letter from Pierre Matisse to Margaret Benette of the Arts Club of Chicago states: Furthermore we discovered that among the paintings I am planning to send you, one of them would practically duplicate one you are borrowing from Mr. Culberg. Therefore, I would like to have the No. 2 of my list changed to “The Two Bandits” 1944, oil, 36 x 25 ½, insurance price $565.00.” The question of self-portraiture was raised again prior to a 1974 exposition, in which a March 27, 1974 letter from Mrs. Alfred P. Shaw (President of the Arts Club of Chicago) asks Dubuffet his permission to use the painting Les Deux Brigands as a self-portrait in a “portrait show of eminent people who have spoken at the Arts Club.” Dubuffet’s secretary, Armande de Trentinian, replies by stating: “Jean Dubuffet ne pensait nullement faire son auto-portrait en realisant en fevrier 1944 la peintre “Deux Brigands” (Dubuffet did not at all think to make a self-portrait in realizing his 1944 painting “Two Brigands”). A telephone message taken by the Arts Club secretary from Pierre Matisse countered Dubuffet’s comments, stating: “Although Dubuffet claims it is not a self-portrait nevertheless it subconsciously is. Some artists have done self-portraits of figures not so called but obviously the artist himself . . . Acceptable to use – with its own title and no explanations. It speaks for itself.”
playfully exchange them links art, performance, and identity in Dubuffet’s practice. Like the masks, this double self-portrait is rendered naturalistically with a folk flair, characteristics of Dubuffet’s work prior to his commitment to “anti-classical” art in 1942. The painting is a product too of Dubuffet’s Surrealist engagement, which began in the 1920s when he frequented Andre Masson’s Studio and acquainted with Surrealist artists and writers, some of whom he had known since his childhood in Le Havre.

The doubling in Dubuffet’s self-portrait is, first and foremost, a common way to depict motion, a key facet of Dubuffet’s production accentuated here by the tipping of his hat. Dubuffet took many different approaches to depicting physical and internal/creative movements and a variety of forms during the course of his long career, from the figural doubling seen here (and discussed in Chapter One), to posing figures in mid-motion (discussed in Chapter Two), and, finally, to rendering figures whose gazes appear to suggest a startle effect (discussed, at length, in Chapter Three). Each of these examples from the 1940s highlights the viewers physical, emotional, and intellectual responses to his or her contact with the painting, which Dubuffet hoped to heighten as he developed a raw style of rendering modeled, in part, on Art Brut.

Although Dubuffet’s 1936 double self-portrait predates his celebrated fascination, during the post-war period, with Art Brut, it had already intrigued him since he discovered the art of mental patients, during the 1920s, in Hans Prinzhorn’s book *Artistry of the Mentally Ill.*

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12 Kent Minturn raised this intriguing prospect with Dubuffet’s masks in his "Physiognomic Illegibility: Dubuffet's Postwar Portraits," lecture given at Rice University Tues. Nov 26, 2013.
14 Ibid., 21-22, 36. Dubuffet’s childhood friends included writers Georges Limbour, Raymond Queneau, and Armand Salacrou. In Paris, Dubuffet also befriended a number of avant-garde artist-intellectuals, including art dealer and critic Daniel Kahnweiler, the poet Max Jacob, artists George Braque and Juan Gris, and other artist-intellectuals associated with Cubism and Surrealism.
15 Hans Prinzhorn, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill: A Contribution to the Psychology and Psychopathology of Configuration* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1972); Dubuffet, “Art Brut Chez Dubuffet,” in *Prospektus et tous écrits suivants,* 41. According to Dubuffet, “Interest in the art of the insane was ‘in the air’ when I
Indeed, Dubuffet’s naturalistically rendered portrait, produced more than a decade after his first contact with what he would call Art Brut, already suggests Dubuffet’s engagement with the creative and dissociative doubling figural doubling he saw in the book. As discussed in the previous chapters, the notion of doubling appealed to the Surrealists because it served as a trope for dissociative fragmentation and, alternately, (re)generative production. 16 I have argued that Dubuffet saw both forms of doubling as artistically invigorating and—importantly for Dubuffet—culturally subversive. He thus incorporated this motif in his painting, proclaiming:

“It is up to art, first and foremost, to substitute new eyes for our habituated eyes, to break everything that is habitual, to crack all the crusts of the habitual, to burst precisely the shell of the socialized and policed man, and to uncork passages through which the internal voices of savage man can express themselves.” 17

Dubuffet’s double self-portrait prefigures his post-war proclamations that art should unsettle, pointing to his lasting interest in art that disorients the viewer.

The 1936 double self-portrait is also theatrical. In tipping his hat, Dubuffet directly addresses the viewer and, quite possibly, signals a staged setting. And this theatricality hints at the performative goals Dubuffet would begin elaborating during the war—asserting that art should produce, rather than merely copy, life. The portrait thus points to Dubuffet’s comprehension of identity as an unstable, individual and cultural construct, an understanding that was a student, in the 1920s. We were consciously in revolt against culture. And I wasn’t the only one. I was influenced by Max Jacob and Blaise Cendrars, and also by Dada. All this was part of the general cultural milieu in Paris.” Different sources give different dates for the actual year of Dubuffet’s discovery of Prinzhorn’s book. But it is certain that between the years 1922-23, Dubuffet gained exposure to examples of the art of mental patients, most likely while visiting his friend, writer Paul Budry, in Lausanne, Switzerland.

16 In Chapter One I discuss figural doubling in the Art Brut production of Karl Genzel and Herman Beehle (Beil), featured in Prinzhorn’s book. There are many different forms of figural doubling that occurs in the art of differently diagnosed mental patients discussed by Prinzhorn and collected beginning in the 1940s by Dubuffet.

permeated Surrealist renderings, including a double portrait of Henri Michaux photographed by Claude Cahun (an artist who also produced double self-portrait photographs) (Fig. 94). Both Dubuffet’s and Cahun’s portraits highlight the slippage of identity while foregrounding its status as performance. Both also foreground the performative/transformative dimensions of art, calling attention to its ability to change perceptions and, ultimately, to alter the individual and society, each of which are understood to be dynamic and performed rather than fixed and essential.

During the 1940s, Dubuffet published numerous texts warning of the rigidifying effects of hegemonic cultural forces. “The sort of people we call cultivated,” Dubuffet writes in his essay “In Honor of Savage Values” are “systematically led to assimilate the creations of others.”¹⁸ These processes of enculturation, “these exercises,” according to Dubuffet, “lead them [artists and viewers] to receive more and more and therefore to think less and less for themselves” and thus they are “struck by more and more paralysis of their creative faculties.” Dubuffet’s 1936 double self-portrait was poised to elude these forces avant la lettre, though Dubuffet had not yet found a style suited to the task. Rooted in the Surrealist enthusiasm for picturing slippage in psyche, identity, and culture, Dubuffet’s Self-portrait with Bowler Hat shows the artist at a crossroads, at a point in his early career when he had tentatively re-engaged with painting, which he had given up during the 1920s, only to lay it aside again, for a time. He returned to it in earnest only during the 1940s, when he found a way out of stale academicism, and academicized modernism, setting aside (and even destroying) much of his earlier work.¹⁹ He did this by looking to a variety of nontraditional visual sources, including “folk” art, children’s

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¹⁹ Dubuffet, “Art Brut Chez Dubuffet,” in Prospectus et tous écrits suivants, 41. According to Dubuffet he actually destroyed all of his work prior to 1942, which is clearly not the case and represents his construction of his artistic persona during the postwar period.
art, and non-Western art, in addition to the production of cultural outsiders for which he coined the term Art Brut.

Dubuffet had felt the stifling effects of academicism since he began painting as a youth. When he returned to painting at age 41 he vowed to subvert the legacies of both classical rendering and formulaic approaches to modernism.\(^20\) One way he worked to accomplish this task, I argue, was by producing emphatically hybrid renderings that challenge notions of artistic purity in medium, genre, or cultural specificity. He did this even as he championed Art Brut—his artistic ideal—as an internally driven artistic production. In surveying Dubuffet’s portraits we do well to consider his predilection for hybrid concoctions, for blending “the familiar and the marvelous,” as he writes, in order to intrigue the viewer and subvert preconceived notions.\(^21\)

At the time of his Self-portrait with Bowler Hat, Dubuffet still looked to classical forms and to Surrealist tropes for artistic inspiration, moving, only over the course of time, to incorporate Other art into his work. Yet, the slippage and dislocation in the Self-portrait with Bowler Hat already point to the interest in “multivalent resonances,” hybridity, and creative movement.\(^22\) These led, as I argue, to his adoption (and adaptation) of clever pastiche practices,

\(^20\) Dubuffet, *Biographie*, 16; *Art Brut Chez Dubuffet,* 41. Dubuffet describes most modern art as “banal” during the period of his early formation during the late teens and early twenties. He revisits these ideas throughout his career, discussing academicized modernism even in his 1951 “In Honor of Savage Values” and “Anticultural Positions” and again in his 1968 *Asphyxiating Culture*.

\(^21\) Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 76. Dubuffet writes, “Art generally has to mix the habitual and familiar with the marvelous. Anything containing only the habitual has no art, and anything containing only the marvelous is really fairyland, it doesn’t move us. We like to see a work of art combining the very real and the very strange (closely blended ).”

\(^22\) Ibid., 77-78; for more on cultural hybridity see Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. In the previous chapters I have argued that we can think of Dubuffet’s conglomerate figuration, and his opposition to stable categories in his writing, as an early form of openness to hybridity such as that elaborated by Homi Bhaba—a condition which results from contact with, and comingling of, cultural forms once erroneously believed by Europeans to be mutually exclusive.
and a “cultural collage” attuned to “Surrealist ethnography” as described by James Clifford. As I have argued, collage practices became a way, for Dubuffet, to transfigure art and transform French culture with interjections of culturally disjunctive imagery. Celebrating the artistic superiority of “primitive” art Dubuffet looked, as discussed in the previous chapters, to not only Art Brut but to a variety of non-Western masks and costumes, particularly the Oceanic and Indonesian artifacts valued by the Surrealists, producing hybrid figures that he believed to have highly performative powers.

**Two Brigands**

Dubuffet’s 1944 *Two Brigands* (Fig. 17) is interesting in its situation between his earlier, more “classical” portraiture and his raw post-war portraits, suggesting transitions in his artistic practice. Retaining the double figure of his Surrealist-era rendering while emphasizing performance, dissociative fragmentation, and creative doubling, the crudeness of the 1944 portrait looks forward to the raw materiality of the portraits I have discussed in the previous chapters, which Dubuffet exhibited in 1947. Viewed through the lenses of Surrealism, doubling in this painting too highlights the artistic performance and unique style Dubuffet began developing toward the end of the war. Thus, though this particular portrait has received scant

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23 Clifford, 118-121.

24 Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 78; Dubuffet, “In Honor of Savage Values,” 264-5; Dubuffet, “Anticultural Positions.” There are many examples of Dubuffet lauding “primitive” art and several instances of his discussing specifically non-Western examples of so-called “primitive” art in various texts. In Anti-cultural positions (page 2 of Dubuffet’s notes), he writes: “It seems to me that especially many persons begin to ask ourselves if the Occident has not many very important things to learn from savages. Maybe in many cases their solutions and their ways of doing, which at first appear to us very rough, are more clever than ours. It may be that ours are the rough ones. It may be that refinement, cerebrations, and depth of mind are on their side and not ours.” Dubuffet thus argued that the application of the term “primitive” to non-Western art is a misnomer.

scholarly attention, it warrants a closer look, serving, in my view, as a bridge between Dubuffet’s early and late works and a key to his back and forth movement between anonymous “archetypes” and specific portraiture.\(^{26}\) As I have elaborated during the course of this dissertation, Dubuffet used the term “archetype” in a manner that is consistent with the writing of Gaston Bachelard, drawing, in turn, upon Jungian philosophy, in which art, the poetic image, is thought to “lie dormant” within a, person or within culture. In such a conception, the artistic act, a performance of the primal will to create, produces images that resonate, suggesting creative patterns one might mimic rather than actual prototypes one might copy. Bachelard is also well known for elaborating a philosophy of movement, in which the imaginative faculties are seen in dynamic contrast to static habitude and, indeed, epistemological breaks are seen as necessary to reinvigorate the mind and enrich extant bodies of knowledge.\(^{27}\) Such ideas are seen time and again in Dubuffet’s own writings.

\textit{Two Brigands} presents us with two Dubuffets. They are crudely rendered and virtually identical, though their facial expressions and poses slightly differ. In fact, closer looking reveals several subtle differences in the nuances of the figures. For one thing, the figure at left is a bit taller. His face is more placid, as suggested by the slack lines describing his cheeks and mouth. In contrast, the arabesques around the mouth of the figure at right suggest the full cheeks of a

\(^{26}\) Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 78.

smile. Perhaps he is even laughing, an idea accentuated by the half circles under the eyes indicating mirth. Also interesting are the ears of the figure at left, which are rendered in such a way as to suggest dangling earrings (perhaps the kind worn by the brigands in many of the genre paintings Dubuffet purused in European museums). These differences serve, somehow, to reinforce the overall resemblances of the figures, both of which smile while gazing directly ahead, yet just past, the viewer. The figures are both hairless or have close cropped hair as did Dubuffet. They are dressed identically, in familiar, yet ambiguous, western garb, perhaps in sweaters over collared shirts. Strangely, though, the slope of the garments of the figure at right suggests that we are seeing his back, rather than his front, as though his head faces us while his body turns away. These double Dubuffet’s appear, then, to go in different directions, signs, for me, of his exploration of creative movement and its reproductive doubling. These give the work also a performative dimension. For, the effect of the similarities and differences in *Two Brigands* is to reinforce the idea that there is no stable self, that the self is an entity which is always performed, in motion, and in process.

**Villager with Close Cropped Hair**

Dubuffet’s 1947 *Villager with Close Cropped Hair* (Fig. 93) is one of his paintings with an ambiguous status as a self-portrait. It is also, unlike the previously discussed self-portraits, a single, rather than a double, figure. Painted just prior to his portrait exhibition, the painting was inexplicably excluded from his show despite Dubuffet’s inclusion of other of his North African

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28 Dubuffet, *Biographie*, 35-36. Dubuffet had ample opportunity to peruse museums in France, his home country, and other European museums. He discusses this to some degree in his autobiography.
paintings, works that less resembled portraiture, “outside the program.” This omission might preclude self-portraiture (in Bedouin garb), as the painting’s subject. It might, however, be another instance of Dubuffet’s hesitancy to highlight his engagement with self-portraiture, a genre associated with the notion of the artist-genius that Dubuffet challenged in his writings. Indeed, as Cooke notes, Dubuffet’s crudely rendered portraits subvert the genre, as does his exhibition announcement, which pokes fun at portraiture and asserts that painting should be more like plain bread than fancy cake. Dubuffet liked to produce archetypal forms, moreover, writing in “The Way to Do a Portrait,” that “in the subjects I paint I like to avoid anything fortuitous, I like to paint universal data,” adding that “if I paint a sunken road, I want it to be the very archetype of a sunken road, a synthesis of all the sunken roads in the world.” For Dubuffet, this rendering of archetypes, forms thought to tap into primal human consciousness and creativity, meant rendering human figures at a most basic level, without suggesting, too strongly, their specific identities. Indeed, the elision of identity, “depersonalization” as Dubuffet called it, characterizes much of his work; even, at times, his portraits. It alludes, as I see it, to art’s unique ability to elude, and subvert, culturally prescribed customs. For Dubuffet, this ability to subvert asphyxiating culture and to (re)produce dynamic life was art’s true, performative, function. This, he contrasted to cultured art, which seeks to inform viewers with, and into, static images. The latter practices Dubuffet described, pointedly, as “counterfeit art” and, here again, attuned his art

31 Cooke, 22-23; Dubuffet, “Causette,” in Prospectus, II, 67-73; also discussed in Minturn, Diss., 105.
theory and practice to Bachelard’s notion of dynamic art versus static habitue.\textsuperscript{33} Yet, Dubuffet engaged, periodically, and paradoxically, in both portraiture and self-portraiture, bringing to the genres some of the very qualities he admired in anonymous renderings of stock figures. In fact, Dubuffet’s portraits resemble stock figures, in which he repeats not only specific subjects but also, I have argued in the preceding chapters, thematic motifs: movement, creative doubling, and the performative power of art. His figures are conglomerates, some more overtly so than others. These are images for which Dubuffet conceptualized an interior model of artistic production even as he turned, I argue, to various forms of non-Western art for inspiration, particularly to the Oceanic and Indonesian cultural forms that fascinated key Surrealists.

The \textit{Villager with Close Cropped Hair} is interesting because it is another of Dubuffet’s paintings combining imagery from an array of artistic sources, including Oceanic cultural forms. Most interesting, for me, are the ways in which Dubuffet’s \textit{Villager} draws upon a variety of Oceanic sources to depict a familiar subject (himself) in a context utterly foreign to both France and Oceania. Here, he morphs dissimilar visual sources in depicting himself, a Frenchman, in the guise of an Arab, a new twist on a long-clichéd orientalist/colonialist practice. The figure’s rounded head and curved, limp arms, for example, can be seen in the 1946 \textit{Portrait of Pierre Benoit} (Fig. 68)—and in the Oceanic paintings and sculptures collected by the Surrealists, many of whom were in Dubuffet’s sphere friends and acquaintances (Fig. 66-67). The rigid, post-like

\textsuperscript{33} Bachelard, \textit{The Poetics of Space}, xiv, xviii, xxii, xxv; Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,” 110; “In Honor of Savage Values,” 261. In the former text, Dubuffet describes cultured artistic production as a “parasitic substitute for true art.” He restates this claim in the latter text, in which he specifically labels artistic production “counterfeit.”
demeanor of the *Villager* too harkens back to the portrait of Benoit, to Oceanic sculptures, and even to the megalithic figures of Indonesia (Fig. 70).³⁴

Dubuffet combines styles in this painting, blending the gritty figuration of his portrait series with his appreciation of the sandy landscapes he began painting on his North African trip—and paintings such as *Il flûte sur la bosse* (He flutes on the hump), a figure in Arab garb playing the flute atop a camel that was enigmatically included in the portrait show “outside the program,” though it more resembles Dubuffet’s archetypes (and, in this case, a cultural stereotype).

The buildings and roads scratched into the *Villager’s* background (perhaps with a palette knife or some other sharp implement), are quite different from most of Dubuffet’s other portraits. But Dubuffet’s *Villager* conglomerates his Oceanic-inspired portraits, images of his North African journey, and his war-time figures enmeshed in the land and cityscapes of France (Fig. 2). On one level, the painting demonstrates Dubuffet’s newfound interest in the minimalistic cultures of the Bedouins. On another level, though, Dubuffet’s painting exemplifies his multi-cultural collage and his application of collage principles—disjunctive citation and grafting—in his painting.

**Dubuffet’s 1966 Self-Portraits**

Dubuffet produced six self-portraits between November-December 1966, a fact that I see as supporting his long-standing interests in both portraiture and representation as a form of creative doubling. As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, I consider two of these portraits here in order to explore Dubuffet’s continued engagement with these themes (Fig. 18, 92). The

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³⁴ For more on Surrealist collecting of Oceanic sculptures see image captions and my discussion in Chapter Three.
red, white, and blue figures, composed, as Roja Najafi writes, of “outlined amoeba-like units”
show the artist involved with the *Hourloupe* series of drawings, paintings, and sculptures that
occupied him, in one way or another, between 1962-74. The *Hourloupe* series, so the story
goes, evolved from a group of simple, quasi-automatic telephone conversation doodles into more
elaborate graphic depictions, then linear paintings, then three-dimensional “painted sculptures,”
and finally stage sets, costumes, and even architecture. Dubuffet experimented with various
processes to translate his “*Hourloupe* script,” his organizing linear principle that united his
composite figures, into ever more complex and theatrical pieces. This script, Dubuffet’s linear
approach to outlining, hatching, and filling in the work’s composite pieces produced their
puzzle- or cell-like effects. Moreover, the linear script conflated the figure and ground (in those
of the *Hourloupe* works featuring situated figures) and consolidated the depicted figure and the
art object. In this way, Dubuffet combined elements of painting and sculpture, fantasy and
reality. He did this, he asserted, in order to create “a world other than our own, or, if you prefer,
parallel to ours” in which the traces of the artist’s creative movements “set off in the viewer’s
mind a hyperactivation of the visionary faculty.” Dubuffet hoped that this movement would
inspire the viewer, prompting him or her to question “the legitimacy of what we habitually
accept as reality.” Thus, as different as these late works are, they draw from the same pool of
artistic aims that informed Dubuffet’s post-war portraits—aims to produce art that moves the
viewer, so to speak, removing him or her from an ordinary viewing context in order to challenge
culturally received conceptions.

Produced during the same year Dubuffet began translating his *Hourloupe* pictorial
language into sculpture, a continuation of the melding of two- and three-dimensional art that he

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37 Ibid.
began in his thick haute pâte paintings, the late self-portraits, appear, at first glance, to radically differ from his previous portraiture. Indeed, the figures, composed predominately of flat white cells outlined in black and filled in or lined through with red and blue marker, are, stylistically, worlds away. Yet, closer looking reveals important parallels beyond the mere fact of the figural disjunctiveness and doubling, here manifested in multiple depictions of the same sitter—Dubuffet himself. These depictions too feature fragmentary planes and cut and paste effects, signs, for Dubuffet, of creative movement. These cut and paste effects signify Dubuffet’s adoption of a collage aesthetic even in his drafting.

Dubuffet experimented with a variety of rendering and collage practices during the nearly two decades between his 1946-47 portraits and the Hourloupe series, beginning his experimentation with literal collage in his 1953 butterfly pieces and his Imprint Assemblages.38 His interest in experimenting with mixed-media effects, explored initially in his haute pâte paintings of the 1940s, only grew in the decades following his portraits. Writing of his flattened tables and landscape series of the early 1950s, Dubuffet describes his materials as “a whole theater of facts,” which perform, he believed “on some level of life,” meaning that he saw a liveliness in his artistic play, a liveliness he hoped to transmit to the viewer. Indeed, in describing his second series of “Imprint Assemblages” of 1955, Dubuffet celebrated the fact that “certain elements (the figures in the present case) are delineated in a very epitomized and free-and-easy manner,” which, he asserts, “tends to release the creative activity of the imagination of the viewer.”39 This figuration would interact with the surrounding elements of the collage, according

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to Dubuffet, endowing it with “a more intense reality and life.”

Again, the themes of animation and creative vitality drove his experimentation.

Dubuffet’s exploration of collage culminated in the *Hourloupe* series, of which his 1966 self-portraits are an example. These both look backward, to his 1940s portraits, and forward to his theatrical 1971-1973 *Coucou Bazar (The Hourloupe Ball)*, an “animated painting” replete with assemblage and the kind of high theatrics seen in his puppets and paper mâché masks of the 1930s. These late self-portraits thus reinforce Dubuffet’s proclamation, observed also by many scholars, that despite his diverse output his works fit within a stylistic progression.

These ink and paper self-portraits are less substantial than his *Hourloupe* sculptures, just as they are less material, in their paper thinness, than the portraits he produced during the 1940s. The late renderings are smooth and graphic, in the palette of ballpoint pens. These images are crisper and clearer and, dare I say, in their extreme organization, less “primitive” in form. They are not scrawled into, or built up from, layers of thick, muddy paint. Yet, these late portraits too suggest processes of layering. Rather than earthy *haute pâte* strata, the late works appear to be built up from the thin sheets of doodled paper that reportedly inspired Dubuffet’s production of the series. They are made of ink and paper and they are drawn, not collaged. Yet, they more overtly resemble collage than the post-war portraits, appearing explicitly as drawn assemblages.

Although Dubuffet’s late self-portraits are, in my view, tamer than his raw post-war paintings, they nevertheless maintain the *mask-like* qualities of his early works. The late portraits also hearken back to the European “folk” and non-Western masks that inspired his immediate

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41 For thorough discussion of Dubuffet’s progression of styles into the *Hourloupe* and *Coucou Bazar* series see Glimcher and Franzke. For a most thorough treatment of Dubuffet’s progression from painting to collage and sculpture in his earlier works see Selz, 9-62 and Dubuffet, “Memoir of the Development of My Work From 1952,” in Selz, 84-85, 103-106, 116-125.
post-war portraits. These visual resources include the carnival masks he saw while collecting Art Brut in Switzerland (Fig. 95). Sources also include the masked miniatures sculpted of bread by the Prisoner Bâle (Basel), depictions which eerily resemble Dubuffet’s own puppets and masks (Fig. 26, 4a-c). Significantly, and despite their graphic clarity, the late self-portraits too resemble the roughly hewn Oceanic mask that appears in the portrait of Tapié discussed in Chapter Three (Fig. 58). Indeed, considering Dubuffet’s late self-portraits alongside *Tapié Grand Duc* and the Oceanic mask that, I argue, inspired the painting, one sees remarkable resemblances. Although Dubuffet’s 1966 self-portrait is emphatically flat and linear, it nevertheless alludes to layering and cut and paste assemblage, in short, to his reliance upon a collage aesthetic, now in an explicitly composite face. This cut and paste effect can already be seen in the portrait of Tapié but is even more exaggerated—though less effective—in these later depictions. As I see it, Dubuffet emulates the Oceanic mask’s layering of tortoise shell fragments in each of the paintings, though he does so so more cleanly and crisply in the later works, in which lined and filled shapes are pieced together as if forming cut-out faces. In fact, Dubuffet used literal cut-outs—and collage—as part of his *Hourloupe* process, arranging possible configurations of composite figures as he had done in his previous collage projects.  

Of the two late self-portraits I consider, both of which face frontally, toward the viewer, (as we have come to expect in Dubuffet’s portraiture), one is more and one is less jarring. As already noted, *Autoportrait II* is a patchwork face (Fig. 92). Yet, it lacks the rough, Frankenstein qualities of Dubuffet’s *Tapié Grand Duc* (no rough stitch-like marks around the mouth, cheeks, and eyes). Indeed, *Autoportrait II* is both draftsmanly and serene, as the figure stares, wide-eyed but placidly, ahead. Oddly, this is the only one of the six self-portraits to stare ahead with

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42 For more on Dubuffet’s processes in the various facets of his *Hourloupe* series see the discussion and excerpts from Dubuffet’s studio logs in Franzke, 158-225.
naturalistic blue eyes (the others have eyes that appear filled in or lined out by Dubuffet’s red and blue ink), and these placid eyes make this portrait the least jarring of the group. The odd, red, upturned sliver on the figure’s forehead is, perhaps, the depiction’s most disturbing element, calling to mind a gash in the head around which the blue-lined shapes suggest internal space or brain matter. This feature accentuates the bodily in the portrait, highlighting its cellular, rather than flat, puzzle-like qualities. Otherwise, despite Dubuffet’s innovative arrangement of colors, lines, and shapes, the image appears to suggest the ordinary everyday Dubuffet. This impression is reinforced, for me, by the figure’s plain white shirt collar, which is so traditional compared to the phallic neckwear of his post-war portraits.

*Autoportrait VI* is more interesting and is, to my eye, the most artistically impactful figure in the group (Fig. 18). Unlike the second contemporaneous self-portrait, this one has no eyes, per se, though the areas where the eyes should be confront us more directly, more disturbingly. The one at the figure’s right (at the left of the drawing) is almond shaped and filled in red, gaping blankly as though a bloody socket. The one at right, in contrast, is a half-moon, filled sparsely, with three blue lines and suggesting the bag under the eye of a tired man. Indeed, each of the eyes, or the shapes that serve for them, slopes out and diagonally downward in a way that suggests the fatigue seen in a 1966 photograph of the artist (Fig. 96). This weariness is presented so poignantly as to be disconcerting, a facet of the work which is accentuated by the figure’s explicitly disjunctive qualities. Of each of the six self-portraits, this one is the least composed in the sense that it appears to be barely assembled. Instead it suggests fragmentation, as if the figure could come apart at any minute. Again, the figure takes on a cellular appearance. But this depiction is even more somatic. Despite its fantastical features, it evokes the idea of a weary body barely holding itself together. It takes on a skeletal aspect, moreover, as if a tricolor
memento mori, its white cranium connected to protruding cheekbones and jaws that appear to hang, too loosely, from their hinges.

The red, cigar shaped mouth suggests both a gaping orifice and a phallic Freudian symbol, though if Dubuffet depicts the latter it is done at least half in jest, as with his post-war portraits’ phallic neckwear. The overall effects of the red marks, though, are not of gashes or gaping holes but of skin worn thin, the outer mask falling away, so to speak, as the inner face pushes forward to remake a grim visage. It is a strange image, more jarring than playful, and made even more so, somehow, by the figure’s crazy shirt. No plain white collar here; instead the shirt is patterned with lines that zig and zag in semiotic relationships and accentuate the stick-thin form of the figure.

A few of Dubuffet’s six self-portraits suggest both fragmentation and the piecing together of disparate parts to form a whole image. A few appear somewhat ghoulish compared to Dubuffet’s other, more playful, Hourloupe figures. Yet, each features strange, mask-like visages meant to disorient the viewer. Once again, the sixth self-portrait stands alone, however, in terms of its effectiveness. The sixth portrait alone evokes the breakdown of form, a decomposition. Perhaps this is a true self-portrait, the kind Dubuffet likes to avoid, the kind with both physical and psychological resonances.

In general, and despite the pictorial oddities of the Autoportraits or Dubuffet’s aims to creatively move the viewer, these later works are more theatrical than they are effective, which is to say that to my eye they are neither sufficiently affective nor thought-provoking. They are at least as theatrical as the portrait of Tapié. They convey a sense of the fantastic, the slightly humorous, and yet also the tragic, as Dubuffet asserts, stating that the Hourloupe figures “evoke
something rumbling and threatening with tragic overtones.”

Like the portrait of Tapié, I argue, they too look to the pieced together Oceanic masks that impacted Dubuffet’s portraits, though these late works are more about performance than performativity. With the exception of *Autoportrait VI*, the late portraits are less possessive of a kind of “facingness,” as critic Michael Fried might say. Although the two men’s views on true art couldn’t be more different, I find that it is precisely this quality of “facingness,” a degree of theatricality with which the figures are deliberately staged to confront the viewer in a gripping way, which, in contrast to Dubuffet’s later works, characterizes many of his post-war portraits.

The 1966 self-portraits express Dubuffet’s theatrical bent. They are less artistically gripping, less representative of his early-formed, though lasting, artistic goals—to make art that unsettles the viewer, making possible individual, and cultural, transformations. Dubuffet wrote that “the works belonging to the *Hourloupe* cycle are linked one to the other, each of them an element destined to become part of the whole.” According to Dubuffet, moreover, “The works in this cycle are in the form of sinuous graphisms responding with immediacy to the spontaneous and, so to speak, uncontrolled impulses of the hand which traces them.” These movements, as I have elaborated, were menat to set off in the viewer’s mind a “hyperactivation of the visionary faculty.”

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45 Dubuffet, Jean Dubuffet: Writings on Sculpture, 98.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.
viewer from any ordinary, culturally constructed, context. He wanted, in short, to move art and culture in new directions.

In some ways, the late self-portraits have come full circle. They maintain visual ties to pieced together Oceanic masks, a fact seen in the markings over the eyes and around the mouth that resemble the mask’s stitching. These linear, pieced-together qualities can also be seen to rearticulate the linear markings on other Oceanic figures, such as the decorated food hooks used in New Guinea (in some cases, to hold the heads collected by warring headhunters) (Fig. 97). One can also see resemblances between Dubuffet’s portraits and these food/head hooks in the shape of the figures’ heads and the way they seem jammed onto the figures’ shoulders. The parallel stripes in the images are also quite compelling. But Dubuffet’s late self-portraits convey more a sense of creative play than cultural or radical Otherness. In their draftsmanly form, they look back also to his pre Art Brut-inspired painting, and thus to the period preceding the rawness that characterized his immediate post-war portraits. Dubuffet thus straddles the line, in these late works, between innovation and formulation, between painting and, by his own definition, its mere performance.48

The fragmentation and recombination in the 1966 depictions trace, more directly, to Dubuffet’s actual than cultural, collage. Indeed, these portraits are remarkably similar, and more overtly highlight, the pieced-togetherness of their compositions. But the Hourloupe script, the linear tying together of the works, makes them also more overtly composed, and therefore also less raw. In the late works, the small round eyes and jarring, affective qualities of Tapié Grand Duc are gone. This is another fantastic image, now in the form of “amoeba like units,” as Najafi

48 Dubuffet, “A Word About the Company of Art Brut,” in Asphyxiating Culture and Other Writings, 110; “In Honor of Savage Values,” 261. Dubuffet asserts that cultured artistic production as “counterfeit,” a “parasitic substitute for true art.”
writes. But the composite, brightly colored figures highlight Dubuffet’s creative play without the brut, artistic force of his earlier painting.

The late self-portraits also retain Dubuffet’s play between two- and three-dimensionality, though the layering effects are more contrived, less spontaneously slapped together. Instead, they resemble decorative panels cut into shapes to form the “phantasmagoric” world Dubuffet wanted to create, a world he would construct in ever greater and theatrical scales, building the Cabinet Logologique and Closerie Falbala (architectural structures), and staging the total performance of his “animated Painting” Coucou Bazar (Fig. 19). As Najafi articulates, Dubuffet’s Hourloupe figures are each “a compendium of images” layered to transform what began as his ink drawn telephone doodles into three-dimensional sculptural forms with a life of their own.

Dubuffet’s combining of collage, painting, and sculpture (initially explored in his haute pâte paintings) emerged, as I see it, from his linking of the notions of vitality and creative play. He pictured these by highlighting processes of layering and the tensions between two- and three-dimensionality in his painting. He was interested in exploring the polyphonic “chorus of materials” and “the components of the artist’s mind,” as he wrote in his “Notes for the Well-Read. He wanted to experiment with this push and pull, this back and forth movement, engaging with various art forms and materials that resist easy categorization. In a similar vein, he wrote of his embrace of ambiguity in his renderings, confronting the viewer with “fantasmagoric” worlds comprised of both familiar and the strange components. He continued to experiment with odd combinations of two- and three-dimensional media and to produce

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51 Dubuffet, Notes for the Well Read, 70.
52 Ibid., 76; Jean Dubuffet: Writings on Sculpture, 98.
conglomerate figures, such as his 1966 self-portraits, which appear as flat, puzzle-piece figures that in their hinted at layering still allude to three-dimensionality.

In Dubuffet’s later works, we see these flat planes begin to thicken, becoming decorated sculptural forms. These forms too morph over time to become players in Dubuffet’s painterly theater. In my view, Dubuffet’s portraiture of the 1940s and his limited engagement with self-portraiture were always married, in a sense, to these interests in the interplay between painting and performance. These interests, in turn, fostered Dubuffet’s late-career foray into theater that mark a renewal of his theatrical interests. For the critic Clement Greenberg, Dubuffet’s literary (or other than painterly) leanings in his early work were flaws in an otherwise promising oeuvre. I see Dubuffet’s interests in theater emerging even earlier, in his 1936 Self-Portrait with Bowler Hat and his nearly concurrent masks and puppets. My dissertation has situated these leanings within a context marked by Dubuffet’s interwar proximity to Surrealism and ethnographic collections. His theatrical cut and paste approach developed, over time, to segue into, and emerge, morphed, out of his Art Brut exploration. These ideas surfaced in my opening chapters, particularly in Dubuffet’s post-war interface with Artaud, with strongly affective art, and with the Balinese theater discussed in Chapter One. A doubling effect is seen too, in Dubuffet’s depiction of Michaux, discussed in Chapter Two, a pendent portrait to Artaud, seen through the lens of Indonesian ritual costumes and puppets. These masks, costumes, and puppets make repeat performances, along with their Oceanic cousins, in Dubuffet’s Hourloupe series and

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his 1972 *Coucou Bazar*, an “animated painting” performed that year in New York and Paris and again, in 1978 in Turin.55

**COUCOU BAZAR**

Frédéric Jaeger observes that in *Coucou Bazar* Dubuffet “realized an aim that he had pursued for almost forty years” adding that, as mentioned in Dubuffet’s autobiography, “even as a young man, before the war, he had hoped to earn his living by creating masks and puppets for the Grand Guignol theater.”56 With *Coucou Bazar*, according to Jaeger, “The Street theater he [Dubuffet] had dreamed of was transformed into a psychological play.”57 Dubuffet would disagree with this description of *Coucou Bazar* as “psychological,” working, as he did, to produce archetypal, as opposed to psychologically inflected, art.58 But Dubuffet certainly wanted his production to generate the kinds of intense emotional reactions cultivated by the *Grand Guignol*, a theater notorious for its hyperbole, admixture of puppetry, and odd combinations of the humorous and the horrific, to which Artaud too had also looked for artistic inspiration. As


56 Frédéric Jaeger, L’Hourloupe in Close up (1962-1974),” in Jean Dubuffet Traces of an Adventure (New York: Prestel, 2003), 42-44. The section referenced appears on page 44. Unfortunately, no citation is given for the reference, though the author cites other information in Glimcher and Dubuffet’s biography. Dubuffet discusses his hopes of earning a living making masks, though without specific reference to the Grand Guignol, in his *Biographie au pas de course* (Paris, Gallimard, 2001), 36. “Il m’était entré dans l'esprit que je pourrais gagner ma vie en faisant aux gens leur masque.” (The idea came to me that I could earn my living by making masks for these people). Dubuffet then discusses his interest in guignol puppetry.

57 Ibid. 44.

previously stated, *Coucou Bazar (The Hourloupe Ball)* is a “living painting,” reliant also upon assemblage and performance. Finally, in this total performance, Dubuffet could animate his bizarre, conglomerate figures. It was theater drawn as much from the Indo-Oceanic stagecraft and aesthetic of puppetry that informed his portraits, I argue, as from the inner workings of his imagination. Once again, in Coucou Bazar, Dubuffet combined actual collage with cultural collage, enacting his creative inner movements with an assemblage of painting and sculpture, gesture and dance.

As Andreas Franzke notes, Dubuffet began this task, initially, by outlining figures on sheets of paper and making “*découpes*” or cut out shapes. From there be began transferring the images onto larger and more durable materials, creating stock characters of painted wood, resin, and acrylic he called “*practicables*” (Fig. 59, 98). Some of these, it is interesting to note, were made as moveable figures, like large puppets. Some were fixed to rolling carts, much like the life-sized *Si Gale gale* puppet to which, I have argued in Chapter Two, Dubuffet looked for inspiration in depicting Michaux (Fig. 51, 99). Also interesting are the parallels between the blocky heads and hands of certain of the Practicables and those of the masked Sumatran dancers discussed in Chapter Two (Fig. 52). Just as Artaud had envisioned performance dominated by “Manikins, enormous masks, [and] objects of strange proportions,” Dubuffet (and, for that matter, Michaux) inserted elements of the extraordinary, *vis-à-vis* Indonesian cultural forms, into French culture. In modernizing these prodigious puppets, however, Dubuffet had some of their carts motorized for independent movement, materializing the automatons with which Artaud had hoped to populate the stage. Some of Dubuffet’s non-wheeled figures were made to be moved

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60 Artaud, 97.
61 Ibid, 54, 97-98. Artaud had written of using “mannequins” and “enormous masks” (97) and argued that the actor should function much like an automaton, serving as both “an element of first importance” and “a
by actors hidden behind them, another practice common to both the Si Gale gale puppetry and some forms of avant-garde theater. In addition to Artaudian theater, in the tradition of the *Grand Guignol* and Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*, examples of large props moved by hidden actors dancing across a fanciful sets could be found in performances of the *Ballet Suedois*, a venue produced by Rolf De Maré in which Dubuffet’s old friend Leger had participated. Both Leger and De Maré were key figures (De Maré the founder and Leger a board member) of the *Archives Internationales de la danse*, the organization, discussed in the previous chapters, making films, photographs, and exhibitions of Indonesian performance available to Parisians of the interwar period.

Such experimental theater had made a strong comeback by the time of Dubuffet’s *Coucou Bazar*, as a new generation looked to multi-cultural forms, to Artaud, and to Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*, for artistic inspiration.

Dubuffet’s studio log takes on uncanny resemblances to Artaud’s *The Theater and Its Double*, in fact, as Dubuffet reconceives Artaud’s bizarre, emphatically plastic, stagecraft.

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kind of passive and neutral element” who is “rigorously denied all personal initiative (98). He was so taken by the Balinese theater precisely because, to him, the actors served, in and alongside puppet-like costumes, as “animated mannequins” moving to bold gamelan music he likened to “robot squeaking” (54).

62 Les Archives internationales de la Danse (AID) was a Paris-centered organization with ties to London and New York dedicated to preserving records and images of multi-cultural dance. The records of the organization, photographs, and microfilm of their publications can be viewed in the archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Musée de l’Opéra; see also Sanja Andus L’Hotellier and Dominique Dupuy, *Les Archives internationales de la danse: un projet inachevé, 1931-1952* (Coeuvres-et-Valsery: Ressouvenances, 2012). As noted in previous chapters, the AID was a group founded by Swedish archivist and dance enthusiast Rolf de Maré (famous for his collaboration with notable figures in the Parisian avant-garde and for founding the Ballet Suédois). The AID sponsored trips to Indonesia (headed by de Maré and Holt) to collect dance related artifacts and to photograph and film Indonesian dances. They also held expositions on Indonesian dance and puppetry in addition to maintaining a permanent collection of costumes and photographs, a research library, and a venue for screenings of related dance and ethnographic films during the interwar period. Their activities were disrupted by WWII (at which time Holt went to NY, taking many films and photographs with her). After a brief post-war resurrection, de Maré closed the archives, donating the bulk of the collection to the Dance Museum of the Royal Opera in Stockholm, Sweden. Many photographs were donated to the Drottingholm Theater Library, also in Stockholm and to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Opera Division, Paris, France. The New York Public Library also holds the collection of photographs, films, and manuscripts brought by AID member Claire Holt to New York during WWII.
Dubuffet also organizes his discussion of the discrete elements of stagecraft in a comparable way, compiling in his “Suggestions for the Mise-en-scène of Coucou Bazar.” Dubuffet writes: “The découpes (cut out images mounted so as to stand upright) do not remain fixed in one place throughout the spectacle.” “On the contrary,” as Dubuffet specifies, “the spectacle itself is organized as a succession of figures (patterns of movements, as in a dance).” Comparably, Artaud had written: “The typical language of the theater will be constituted around the mise-en – scène considered not simply as the degree of refraction of a text upon a stage, but as the point of departure for all theatrical creation.” Whereas Artaud had called for music that was “unbearably piercing,” Dubuffet wanted the music in Coucou Bazar to be “very loud and crackling.” Both men wanted glaring contrasts between music and silence as well, in order to intensify the disorienting effects of the performance. For both men, music was to compliment highly expressive stagecraft, though Dubuffet’s was more restrained, or at least more playful—and less intensely channeled—than Artaud’s. For both men, however, what was most important was that the performance move the viewer in a jarring way, that it disorient the viewer, making the theater an event during which the viewer could shake off the blinders of Western culture.

As in Artaudian theater, elaborate costumes played key roles in Dubuffet’s Coucou Bazar. He began assembling the costumes in much the same way he had approached the practicables—cutting out and piecing together various elements; for the costumes this meant heavy sail cloth, polyester, latex, and epoxy board (Fig. 100). The idea was to complicate the figure-ground relationship, as he did in his painting. Thus, the costumes emulated the practicables and, as Franzke notes, were “virtually indistinguishable from the Hourloupe

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Artaud, 93-94.
67 Ibid., 95, Dubuffet, “Suggestions for the mise-en-scène of Coucou Bazar,” in Franzke, 212.
sculptures.” Much like the dancers in the Balinese theater, Dubuffet’s dancers wore puppetesque costumes. In a Surrealistic twist, however, Dubuffet’s figures did not stand out. Rather, they appeared to meld with the background set, camouflaged like the butterflies he had collaged during the 1950s or Roger Caillois’s praying mantis. The actors and puppets in Coucou Bazar would be all the more surprising when they moved, coming to life and emerging from the scene as though from an Informel painting.

Despite their many differences, it is interesting to note the parallels between the layering effects of Dubuffet’s costumes and those Artaud celebrated in the Balinese theater. Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that the costumes and puppets were conflated, a tendency seen in various forms of Indonesian performance. Some of these Indonesian performances marked life and death transitions. Others were performed, as Clair Holt of the AID writes, “just for fun.” Dubuffet wanted his figures to do both, providing the viewer with more than a spectacle and instigating instead a life-altering event.

CONCLUSION: PERFORMATIVITY AND THEATRICALITY

THEATRICALITY: The Hourloupe series and Coucou Bazar are, to my mind, logical progressions of Dubuffet’s love of collage, puppetry, and performance. Likewise, they express a
culmination of his interests in exploring relationships between figure and ground, and between two- and three-dimensionality. But these works are not successful in achieving the aesthetic of disturbance, the right balance of agitation and humor, seen in many of his portraits, which seem to be situated as a nexus of his artistic and (anti-) cultural interests. Dubuffet’s *Coucou Bazar* is more theatrical than moving. In it, the playful humor he wanted to include ends up trumping the jarring effects he hoped to produce. Instead of achieving unsettling humor, the surprising kind “that instantly turn[s] you to ice, change[s] you to stone”—*Coucou Bazar* comes across as a farce—a comic combination of avant-garde theater and vaudeville.\(^{72}\) Instead of prompting the viewer to reconsider the known world, *Coucou Bazar* suggests a pure flight of fancy, worlds away from the cultural critique Dubuffet posed in texts such as *Asphyxiating Culture*.

**Collage in Portraiture:** In all of his post-war production, Dubuffet approached art as assemblage involving processes of selection and composition of disparate parts. In some cases, this collage pieced together culturally dissimilar elements, producing hybrid figures such as his portraits and practicables. Dubuffet undertook these processes, looking to a variety of multi-cultural forms, even, I argue, as he lauded Art Brut as internally motivated art.

Although Dubuffet’s experiments with collage are generally, and according to his own story, said to have begun with his butterfly compilations of 1953, a lone collage appears in the volume of Dubuffet’s catalogue raisonné dedicated to portraits.\(^ {73}\) Listed also in Dubuffet’s Casusette/Catalogue as # 71 of the portraits shown in the 1947 exposition, his July-August 1947 *Bertelé Buvard taché d encre a stylo* (Bertelé Blotting Paper Stained with Ink From a Pen) is a

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\(^{72}\) Dubuffet, “Notes for the Well-Read,” 81.

collage of ink drawings. This cut and paste figure must have seemed a remarkable anomaly seen in the context of a body of portraits done in loose scrawls or layered and rutted paint (Fig. 101).

Yet it is a prophetic figure, one that provides insights into Dubuffet’s artistic project.

True to its title, the figure is comprised of cut pieces of paper stained (in a more Tachiste manner) with ink. Standing starkly to face the viewer, Bertelé stands too at a crossroads of Dubuffet’s artistic practice. This figure too is flattened. Its strangely skeletal head recalls the Oceanic masks we have thus far considered, as do the small circular eyes and the teeth that look like stitched lines. This is an important piece, in my view, in that it combines Dubuffet’s cultural collage with his growing interest in actual collage, which he would explore and expand throughout the remainder of his career.74 Once again we see a figure isolated in the picture plane. This isolation is enhanced, moreover, as this figure is less expansive than in the other portraits, situated at the center and away from the edges of the paper rather than filling it as if ready to spill

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74 In 1953 Dubuffet took up such collage again. Encouraged by the effects he had obtained in a previous exploration of lithography, he began making collages of ink drawings on paper, and even to produce ink drawings resembling these effects (Dubuffet in Selz, 84). A look at one of these “Imprint Assemblages” as Dubuffet called them, is helpful in illustrating this point, evincing his continued interests in collage and painting and leading, in fact, to his experimentation with three-dimensional works. In this image a small, frontally facing figure (with a rounded head resembling Bertelé and, indeed, many of Dubuffet’s portraits) stands atop a mound of painted scraps. These are collaged to form one of the “fantasmagoric” landscapes by which Dubuffet liked to disorient his viewers (Dubuffet in Selz, 66). Although the figure is small relative to most of those considered thus far, it is nonetheless jarring in its alien appearance (enhanced by the large round head) and its sense of both alienation, standing alone atop the scrappy pile against a darkened background resembling a night sky, and direct confrontation of the viewer. The large pile, which stacks upward, as if in layers, to form a lateral band that occupies much of the canvas and pushes the image both upward and outward toward the viewer. The image thus recalls the odd tension of Dubuffet’s earlier paintings. At the same time, many of these painted and collaged scraps are outlined in black ink and this process both highlights the different media and enhances the sense of this piece as also a painting (Dubuffet in Selz, 84-87, 103-106). Also in touch with Dubuffet’s earlier paintings, the figure stares at us with small, circular eyes which appear, simultaneously, both slightly comical and disturbingly jarring. Dubuffet also produced figures during this period composed of collaged newspaper scraps, which seem to combine a variety of Dubuffet’s styles and processes, while pointing ahead to his sculpture. Indeed, from such collages emerged Dubuffet’s three-dimensional assemblages of paper mache and various other everyday materials, with which he experimented during the early 1950s (Dubuffet in Selz, 85, 87-91). Many of these incorporated found objects and organic elements processes very much attuned to his continued interest in Dada practices and experimentation, and play, with chance encounters and the seemingly natural expression of his materials.
off the page. It too is confrontational, however, as the figure looks strait out from the frame. But the cut and paste figure is less materially there. Rather than build up the figure, the collage flattens it. The figure fades into, rather than emerges from, the stark, white background. As previously discussed, Dubuffet frequently experimented with such push and pull between the figure and the flatness of the picture plane. In fact, we have seen this in most of the portraits considered in this dissertation. This collage portrait is no exception. It combines elements of painting and literal collage, foregrounding the collage effects Dubuffet had previously drawn or painted. In doing so, and in referencing the pieced togetherness and skull-like shape of certain Oceanic masks, it makes explicit Dubuffet’s engagement with both artistic and cultural collage. The piece thus speaks to Dubuffet’s extended collage practices, in two- and three-dimensions, practices which expanded and culminated in his *Hourloupe* series, paintings and sculptures that vacillate between two- and three-dimensionality in much the same manner as a puzzle, in which sections are pieced together to form a shallow, yet dimensional image.

As I have argued, each of Dubuffet’s portraits, and particularly his self-portraits, demonstrate his reliance upon a collage aesthetic in his painting and drawing. Moreover, they highlight his approach to painting as performance at key points in his career: as a young man exploring the possibilities of producing theatrical masks for a living, as a mature man taking the leap into an artistic career once and for all after laying aside the family business, and as an aging man surveying, and continuing to build upon, a prolific artistic career and a diverse variety of visual resources. I see these portraits too as pointing to Dubuffet’s artistic translation—of creative energies, artistic formation, and the so-called “primitive” cultural forms he encountered in the collections of Parisian institutions and his Surrealist friends. Dubuffet continued to embrace theater, portraiture (at times), and a collage aesthetic throughout his career. The
portraits, even the late self-portraits, are thus not anomalies. Rather, these images represent different approaches, different moments in Dubuffet’s artistic translations. Dubuffet’s 1966 self-portraits can be seen as a logical progression of interests stemming from his inter-war formation that emerged in his post-war exploration and set the stage for what became the trademark style of his later years, a style characterized by composite forms and an ever more theatrical approach.

I have argued in this dissertation that Dubuffet looked to an assortment of Oceanic and Indonesian cultural forms to produce his post-war portraits: the masks, sculptures, and paintings of New Guinea in depicting Tapié, the transnational and highly theatrical Art Informel critic; the masks, effigies, and puppets of Bali and Sumatra in depicting Michaux, an artist and literary figure with Surrealist ties who wrote about his contact with these Indonesian cultures; and the masks, costumes, and puppets of Bali in rendering Artaud, the legendary mad Surrealist who advocated the affective potential of Balinese theater. Each of these sitters shared certain fundamental artistic aims (though Dubuffet might call them anti-fundamental). Each believed art should primarily move the viewer, disrupting enculturated patterns of life and triggering new internal mechanisms, new individual and cultural awakenings. Each of these men looked to various forms of “primal” art to fulfill these goals.  

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Each of these men valued primal forms and “archetypes,” ideas which gained currency in the post-war era and were highlighted by the then recent discovery of Paleolithic sites such as the cave at Lascaux, which drew attention to the earliest known forms of painting. For more on this general interest in archaic art see see Georges Bataille, Lascaux, or, The Birth of Art: Prehistoric Painting (Lausanne: Skira, 1955); Suzanne Guerlac, “The Useless Image: Bataille, Bergson, Magritte.” Representations 97 (Winter 2007), 28. It is interesting to note the odd combination of archaic forms and collage-like effects produced by the layering of painting on the walls of these rocky caves, layering which clearly fascinated Dubuffet, prompting him to emulate it in his post-war work. Although quite different from the cave paintings at Lascaux, it is even more interesting to note the collage effects of the archaic paintings of Western New Guinea, which appear as pieced together panels. Some of these include lizard forms and images that prefigure the anthropomorphic figures with outstretched hands, the motif discussed previously as so common in the region and, indeed, in Dubuffet’s paintings. Dubuffet surely looked to cave art and Oceanic forms (and possibly to Oceanic cave art) for artistic inspiration. But he also looked, at least briefly, to “folk” art, the art of children, and other so-called “primitive” art closer to his own home and era. His puppets and portrait masks of the 1930s. point to these interests and look ahead also to his
discussed are performative and function in terms of a kind of “facingness.” Some of Dubuffet’s works, especially those of the 1940s, are more artistically and culturally agitational than others. Importantly, most of them combine elements of disturbance and humor, painting and collage, pictorial flatness and the sculptural qualities of Dubuffet’s materials and subjects. Most also combine elements of painting and theater, expressing Dubuffet’s aims to generate certain, largely performative, viewer responses.

**Mobility:** Conveying a sense of creative movement was Dubuffet’s driving motivation for *Coucou Bazar*. He wanted to render creative movement, inspired by the traces of his hand. He did this by his acts of painting and assemblage; his set, costumes, characters, and the movement, in real time, of his puppets and dancers. He wanted to activate painting actually, rather than implicitly, as he had done since painting his post-war portraits. He wanted to breathe new life into art and, by extension, the very culture he viewed as the asphyxiating problem.

With these ideas in mind, I end with Dubuffet’s discussion of his artistic aims in *Coucou Bazar*, aims I see as in a direct lineage from his portraits. He wrote that he wanted the performance to maintain a certain character, “which is that of being the work of a painter and not of a dramatist or choreographer.” He wanted the work to look “not like a theatrical production properly speaking but like a painting—or an ensemble of paintings—in which certain elements are (discretely and moderately) animated with some slight mobility.” The aimed for effect, according to Dubuffet, was to “to bring by those means the mind of the viewer to consider all the elements of the ensemble of paintings (and not only those which do in fact move) as capable of fascination with Art Brut production and the Swiss carnival masks he saw during an Art Brut expedition. Dubuffet’s masks and his Coucou Bazar, I would argue, combine these interests, and his interest in the performative power of art.
mobility.” For Dubuffet, the collage masks, puppets, and costumes of Coucou Bazar and, as I have argued, his portraits, present painting as capable of movement—and of creatively moving the viewer.

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76 Dubuffet, Catalogue des travaux de Jean Dubuffet. fasc. XXVII Coucou bazaar, 211; quoted also in Franzke, 220.
Fig. 1. Jean Dubuffet, *Portrait of Jean Paulhan*, February, 1947. *Haute pâte* on canvas.
Fig. 2. Jean Dubuffet, *Métro*, 1943.

Fig. 3. Jean Dubuffet, *Will to Power*, 1946, *haute pâte*. 
Fig. 4a. Jean Dubuffet *Three Masks: Rene Pontier, Andre Claude, Robert Polguere*, 1935, paper maché. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Fig. 4b-c. Jean Dubuffet, *Mask and puppet of his wife Lili*, 1936, paper mache (mask), carved wood and cloth (puppet).
Fig. 5. Jean Dubuffet, *Antonin Artaud aux Houppes*, January, 1947. *Haute pâte* on canvas, 130 x 90 cm., Morton G. Neumann family collection.
Fig. 6. Jean Dubuffet, *Portrait of Henri Michaux* January 1947, oil on canvas, 130.7 x 97.3 cm. The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection, MoMA.
Fig 7. Jean Dubuffet, *Tapié Grand Duc*, August, 1946, haute pâte (Oil, bitumen, and cement), 81 x 65 cm.
Fig. 8. Jean Dubuffet, *Lili in the Renaissance Style*, 1936.

Fig. 9. Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait at 28*, 1500
Oil on pane, 67 x 49 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Fig. 10. Jean Dubuffet, *Fautrier with Spider Brow*, (July-August) 1947, Oil on canvas. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Fig. 11. Edvard Munch (Norwegian, 1863-1944). Self-Portrait with Cigarette, 1895. Oil on canvas. 110.5 x 85.5 cm. NG.M.00470. National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo.
Fig. 12. Karl Genzel, *Head-Footer*. Wood Carving, 7 ¼”. Listed in Michel Thevoz, *Art Brut* as Karl Brendel (1871-?), *Tadpole Man*, Prinzhorn Collection, Heidelberg.

Fig. 13. Jean Dubuffet, *Edith Boissonnas au cou* (Edith Boissonnas Around the Neck), January 1947, oil on canvas, 48 x 31 cm.
Figure 14. Herman Beehle (Beil), featured in Prinzhorn’s book.
Fig. 16. Jean Dubuffet, *Self-Portrait with Melon (Bowler) Hat*, ink wash on paper, 1936.

Fig. 17. Jean Dubuffet, *Self-Portrait, Les Deux Brigands*, oil on canvas, 66 x 81 cm, Feb, 1944.
Fig. 18. Jean Dubuffet, *Autoportrait VI*, marker, 25 x 16.5 cm., Nov. 1966.

Fig. 20. Photograph of Antonin Artaud, 1947.
Fig. 21 Antonin Artaud, *Self-portrait*, 1946, colored chalk and wax crayon.

Fig. 22. Antonin Artaud, *Portrait of Lily Dubuffet*, 1947, colored chalk and wax crayon.
Fig. 23. Jean Dubuffet, *Portrait d'Antonin Artaud*, pencil and gouache, August 1946.

Fig. 24. Jean Dubuffet, *Portrait d'Antonin Artaud cheveux épanouis*, 1946.

Figure 27. Jean Dubuffet, *Archetypes*, 1945. (first painting Dubuffet executed in *haute pâte*).
Fig. 29. Poster for Edward H. Griffith’s 1938 *Honeymoon in Bali* shown in France as *Lune de miel.*
Fig. 30a. José Miguel Covarrubias, Balinese Dance postures, *Theater Arts Monthly*, August, 1936.

Fig. 30b. Dancers posed for Legong Dance, Paris Colonial Exposition, 1931. http://www.impetustoanalysis.com/2010/03/antonin-artaud
Fig. 31. *Barong Ket* Costume, Bali, Indonesia. Photograph by Claire Holt, 1938, New York Public Library (copy of a photograph at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Musée de l'Opéra, Paris produced from a negative Holt took to New York City during WWII).
Fig. 32. *Barong Costume*, photograph, Bertle de Zoete and Walter Spies, *Dance and Drama in Bali*. 1938.

Fig. 33. Seated *Barong* in performance.
Fig. 34. Rangda. *Le Miroir du Mond*, no. 68 p.721-724, June 20, 1931.
Fig. 35. Rangda Costume, photograph, Bertle de Zoete and Walter Spies, *Dance and Drama in Bali*. 1938

Fig. 36. Barong and Rangda, trance dance, Bali. Photograph by Paul Schraub in Judy Slattum, *Balinese Masks: Spirits of an Ancient Drama*. Hong Kong: Periplus, 2003.
Fig. 37. Javanese Puppets at the Dutch pavilion. Paris Colonial Exposition. *Vu Magazine*, no. 171, p.930-931 June 24, 1931,

Fig. 38. *wayang kulit* puppets.
Fig. 39. Illustration of Shadow puppetry at the Chat Noir.
Fig. 40a. Puppeteer performing.

Fig. 40b. Puppeteer performing.
Fig. 41. Photograph of Henri Michaux, 1940s.

Fig. 42. Jean Dubuffet, *Monsieur Plume plis au pantalon (Portrait d'Henri Michaux), Mr. Plume with Creases in his Trousers* (Portrait of Henri Michaux), 1947, oil paint and grit on canvas 1302 x 965 cm, Tate Collection, London.
Fig. 43. Henri Michaux, *Untitled, Movements*, 1950-51.
Fig. 44. Henri Michaux, *Entre centre et absence* (Between Center and Absence), watercolor, 1939.

Fig. 45. Pig Mask Kayan Dyak wood, 27” L, East Kalimantan, Borneo.
Fig. 46. Henri Michaux, *Untitled*, lithograph, 1948.

Fig. 47. Smearred watercolor held as an example of the symbolic tendency in the art of the mentally ill, Prinzhorn Abb 64, page 108.

Fig. 49. Jero Luh in *Barong Landung* procession, in de Zoete and Spies *Dance and Drama in Bali* (Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1938), plate 46.
Fig. 50. Batak mask foto by v cooen raad-uhlig. http://www.foto-foto.com/old1/index.html

Fig. 51. *Si-Gale Gale* Puppet, Sumatra, c. 20th Century.
Fig. 52. Batak *Hoda-Hoda* Mask of Northern Sumatra, Anonymous photograph of the 1930s, Tropensmuseum, Amsterdam.

Fig. 53. Wooden hands carried by masked Toba Batak dancers. Photograph by Claire Holt, 1938, New York Public Library.
Fig. 54. *Si-Gale Gale* Puppet core, Sumatra, c. 20th Century.

Fig. 56. Photograph of Michel Tapié with Dubuffet’s *Tapié Grand Duc* the Galerie Rive Droite, 1954.
Fig. 57. Man Ray, *Untitled Photograph of Bangwa Queen Sculpture*, 1936 (used here for the 2013 exhibition Charles Ratton: L’Invention des arts “primitives” at the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris).
Fig. 58. Tortoise shell mask, Torres Straits, New Guinea, in Ralph Linton’s *Arts of the South Seas* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946), 128.
Fig. 59. Sculture from Hourloupe Series. A comparable sculpture titled *Welcome Parade* can be seen at 590 Madison Avenue Atrium.
Fig. 60. Pablo Picasso, *Self-Portrait*, 1907.

Fig. 61. Pablo Picasso, *Self-Portrait*, 1972.
Fig. 62. Jean Dubuffet, *Table Corail*, 1953.

Fig. 63. Jean Dubuffet, *Michel Tapié*, August 1946, pencil drawing, 42 x 32 cm.
Fig. 64. Jean Dubuffet, *Tapié Raie, Tapié Line/Stripe (or crossed off)*, August, 1946, pencil drawing, dimensions unknown.

Fig. 65. Photograph of Michel Tapié.

Fig. 68. Jean Dubuffet, *Portrait of Pierre Benoit*, August 1946, gouache, 42 x 33 cm.
Fig. 69. Jean Dubuffet, *Pierre Benoit Monolith*, August, 1946, pencil drawing, 41 x 32 cm.

Fig. 70. Megalithic Sculpture from Sulawesi (formerly Celebes), Indonesia.
Fig. 71. Moai Scuplture, Easter Island, Basalt, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

Fig. 72. Moai kavakava (deified ancestor figure), wood, Easter Island. Similar to sculptures in Breton’s collection (an example of which is now at the Centre Pompidou).
Fig. 73. Jean Dubuffet, *Limbour Diable Rouge (Limbour Red Devil)*, Nov. 1946, dimensions unknown (painting probably destroyed).
Fig. 74. Tortoise shell mask, Torres Straits, New Guinea, in Ralph Linton’s *Arts of the South Seas* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946), 127.
Fig. 75. Jean Dubuffet, *Michaux*, pencil drawing, 1947, 51 x 36 cm (although dated 1947, the Fondation Dubuffet has been determined that Dubuffet produced the portrait in November 1946).
Fig. 76. Jean Dubuffet, *Charles Ratton*, pencil drawing, Nov. 1946, 35 x 26 cm.

Fig. 77. Photograph of Charles Ratton.
Fig. 78. Monumental head sculpted in wood and painted, Musée du Quai Branly, from the voyage of the Korrigane during the 1930s, 120.5 x 57 x 8 cm.
Fig. 79. Jean Dubuffet, *Paul Léauaud a la chaise cannée (on a Caned Chair)*, Nov. 1946, oil (haute pâte) on canvas, 130 x 97 cm.
Fig. 80. Skull hook from southern New Guinea, Metropolitan Museum, New York.
Fig. 81. Cover art illustrating a carved and painted canoe paddle, Ralph Linton’s *Arts of the South Seas* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946).

Fig. 82. Page showing carved canoe paddles in Stephen Chauvet, *Les Arts indigènes en Nouvelle-Guinée* (Paris, Société d’éditions géographiques maritimes et coloniales, 1930).
Fig. 83a-b. Jean Dubuffet, *Paulhan* (State 1 and 2), pencil drawing, Oct. 1946, 36 x 30 cm each.

Fig. 84. Jean Dubuffet, *Limbour marionnette aux balafres (Puppet in Gashes/Slashes/Scars)*, oil (haute pate) on canvas, Nov., 1946, 100 x 73 cm.
Fig. 85. Panel (bajé), wood and paint 81 cm. (32 in) high, in *Art of Northwest New Guinea*, ed. Suzanne Greub, (New York: Rizzoli, 1992).
Fig. 86. Jean Dubuffet, *Tapié Soleil (Tapié Sun)*, 1946.

Fig. 87. Jean Dubuffet, *Sourire: tête hilaire II (Similing: beaming head II)*, 1948.
Fig. 88. Jean Dubuffet, *Deux portraits de face (Two Full-Faced Portraits)*, 1949.

Fig. 89. Jean Dubuffet, *Minaudeuse*, 1950.
Fig. 90. Jean Dubuffet, *Présence Légère (Lite Presence)*, 1951.

Fig. 91. Jean Dubuffet, *Bertélé bouquet fleuri Portrait de parade* (Ceremonial Portrait of Bertélé as a Floral Bouquet), 1947.
Fig. 92. Jean Dubuffet, *Autoportrait II*, marker, 25 x 16.5 cm., Nov. 1966.
Fig. 93. Dubuffet *Le Villageois aux cheveux ras* (Villager with Close-Cropped Hair), oil on canvas, 1947.
Fig. 94. Claude Cahun, *Henri Michaux*, photograph, 1925.

Fig. 95. Carnival masks from Lötschental and Flums, Switzerland, c. 1940, carved wood, paint, and cloth.
Fig. 96. Jean Dubuffet in his Studio. Vence 1966, photograph, Edward Quinn.

Fig. 97. Food hook from Sangriman or Yesimbit Village, 20th cen.
Fig. 98. Hourloupe Figure ("Practicable"), enlarged drawing transferred to wood, layered in resin, and painted with a coat of a vinyl acrylic. Some are mounted on wheels.

Fig. 99. Pracicable, head and hands.
Fig. 100. Jean Dubuffet, costume for *Coucou Bazar*, 1973, sail cloth, polyester, epoxy board, and latex.

**Fig. 101.** Bertelé Buvard taché d encre a stylo (*Bertelé Blotting Paper Stained with Ink From a Pen*).
Map A. Indonesia.
Map B. Western New Guinea with Lake Sentani at upper right.

Map. C. Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait.
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