

Credito Valtellinese Gallery

Refettorio delle Stelline

Milan, Italy

JIL SANDER

Max Ernst

*da collezioni francesi e italiane pubbliche e private
from public and private French and Italian collections*

22 November 1996 - 9 February 1997

The exhibition was possible thanks to the cooperation between the Credito Valtellinese and **JIL SANDER** featuring the Centre Culturel Français de Milan

This solo exhibition of Max Ernst, 20 years after his death, wants to retrace his evolutionary itinerary through a display of more than 80 important works (divided into paintings, drawings, frottages, collages and documents from 1909 to the '70s), which come from important French and Italian collections, mostly displayed for the first time in Italy.

The works by Max Ernst portray a very personal interpretation of the artistic vision of Surrealism, a movement in which the artist is one of the main representatives. In combining images of different nature and absolutely estranged to each other Ernst finds the suitable technique to represent the idea of systematic disorientation at the basis of his art. His natural strength of invention took him to experiment new techniques; of interest is the collage, where Ernst is the inventor and the *frottage*, the scrubbing of wood grains, of a leaf, of burlap, on colored surface or simple paper. Max Ernst has experimented with the *frottage* using both pencil and oil painting in "magic" works, born from the vision of a wood material that reveals elements and images from the subconscious, which can all be interpreted according to different points of view.

As Alain Jouffroy illustrates, the invention of collage and frottage corresponds to the "need to take distance from things and ordinary representations, the refusal of identifying life with whichever task or social work [...]. In 1919, in Cologne, in front of a catalogue for school supplies, Ernst felt the first visionary hallucinations which in his work precede the creation of a new technique. Abruptly he sees these sketches and figures appear on these never thought of before backgrounds. [...] Some colour brushes were enough to give substance to these ghosts and the collage - in the filmmaking definition of cutting - was on the right path, like a new automatic movie camera".

Between 1922 and 1924 in Breton's atelier, Ernst dedicates himself to automatic writing and painting: he talks, writes and draws aiming at bringing out a world that is perceivable only with closed eyes. It is the submerged world of the subconscious, which must be probed to land at a better understanding of the human being. Such interest for the inner world together with a refusal of any form of propagandist art will bring Ernst to claim: "Before the immersion,

no deep-sea diver knows what will resurface. At the same time, the painter has no choice over his subject. To impose a subject on yourself, even the most subversive, the most elating, and treat it in an academic way, it will mean to create a work with poor revolutionary effectiveness".

Therefore starting from fragments of reality not yet interpreted and so possible, Ernst adds on them his own inner world. At the end there is no starting point left, but "the masterful burst of irrationality in all the art fields" able to destroy the reality at their foundations. In those who observe them the new techniques should result in the awakening not of the attempt to recognize something, but of several perceptions and associations.

The exhibition is promoted by the Gruppo Bancario Credito Valtellinese and JIL SANDER, featuring the French Cultural Centre.

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