

GAGOSIAN



MAN RAY

The Mysteries of Château du Dé

Opening reception: Tuesday, January 14, 6–8pm

January 14–February 29, 2020

657 Howard Street, San Francisco

Man Ray, *Film still from L'étoile de mer*, 1928, gelatin silver print, 9 1/8 × 11 7/8 inches (23 × 30 cm)
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January 8, 2020

I have finally freed myself from the sticky medium of paint, and am working directly with light itself.

—Man Ray

Gagosian is pleased to present *The Mysteries of Château du Dé*, an exhibition of works by Man Ray.

During his storied career, Man Ray, a multidisciplinary artist with a rare breadth, worked in a variety of mediums, including painting, photography, sculpture, printmaking, film, poetry, and prose. While for him photography and painting were paramount, his work in early film and cinema is often overlooked.

Man Ray's first experience in making film was in New York, in 1920, when he worked with Marcel Duchamp on an unsuccessful attempt to create a three-dimensional film. After moving to Paris, in 1921, his diverse experimentation in the medium of photography eventually led him back to the moving image.

The film *Emak Bakia* (1926), with its dreamlike distortions and tilted camera angles, veers toward Surrealism, which Man Ray had embraced, as the Dada movement dwindled. *L'étoile de mer* (1928) features his oft-depicted muse, Kiki de Montparnasse (Alice Prin), and André de la Rivière. Made by shooting into mirrors and through rough glass, the distorted, out-of-focus images are interspersed with intertitles from an otherwise lost work by poet Robert Desnos. Through his film work, which functioned as a kinetic extension of his still photography, Man Ray became a leading exponent of Cinéma Pur, or "Pure Cinema," which rejected such "bourgeois" conceits as character, setting, and plot. At the request of the Vicomte de Noailles, Man Ray made a film, in 1929, to document the Vicomte's art collection and château in the South of France. The longest of Man Ray's films, *Les Mystères du Château du Dé* was not intended for public screening, and is thus a more personal film, paying homage to Stéphane Mallarmé's 1897 modernist poem "*Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*" (A throw of the dice will never abolish chance). *Les Mystères du château du dé* follows a pair of travelers on a journey from Paris to the Villa Noailles in Hyères, which features a triangular Cubist garden designed by Gabriel Guevrekian.

In addition to these three key films, the exhibition also includes objects, drawings, and photography. Moving fluidly between media, Man Ray often made several iterations of a work—photographing it, assembling and disassembling, or making multiples—reproduction being crucial to his concept of the art object. For example, the motif of the soccer ball recurs in two discrete works, both titled *Jeux Nocturnes* (c. 1970), in which a functional ball is bound in a net and hung on the wall like a painting. Throughout his vast body of work, Man Ray alluded to relationships between the real and the fictive, the literal and the imaginative, with a deft mastery over the liminal territory between the abstract and the figurative form.

An introductory text for this exhibition was written by Timothy Baum, a dealer, collector, and writer specializing in Dada and Surrealism. Together with Andrew Strauss, Baum is working on a catalogue raisonné of paintings and objects by Man Ray. This exhibition was developed in collaboration with the Man Ray Trust.

Man Ray (Emmanuel Radnitzky) was born in Philadelphia in 1890, and died in Paris in 1976. Exhibitions include Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands (1971, traveled to Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, and Louisiana Museum, Humlebæk, Denmark, in 1972); Philadelphia Museum of Art (1972); Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1972); Centre Pompidou, Paris (1981); *Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray*, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC (traveled, 1988–89); *A Practical Dreamer: The Photographs of Man Ray*, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (1998); *Man Ray: Photography and its Double*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (1998, traveled, 1998–99); *Unconcerned But Not Indifferent*, PHotoESPAÑA, Museo Colecciones ICO, Madrid (2007, traveled, 2007–10); and *Man Ray: African Art Through the Modernist Lens*, Phillips Collection, Washington, DC (2009–10, traveled, 2010–11).

#ManRay

Press

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