

**JEAN  
DUBUFFET  
BRUTAL BEAUTY**

**LARGE PRINT  
GUIDE**

# INTRODUCTION

**‘Art should always make you laugh  
a little and fear a little. Anything but bore’**

Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985) was one of the most provocative artists in postwar France. He rebelled against conventional ideas of beauty, hoping to capture the poetry of everyday life in a gritty, authentic way. Working like an alchemist in his studio, he experimented endlessly with materials: from coal dust, gravel and tar to butterfly wings and silver foil. As the critic Michel Tapié put it, he turned painting into ‘a sort of living matter working its perpetual magic’.

Born in Le Havre, Dubuffet moved to Paris when he was 17 to study at the prestigious Académie Julian. He left after six months, realizing that he would do better to create his own syllabus of favourite subjects, which included philosophy, literature and ethnography. He went to work for his father’s wine business and then established his own. It was only at the age of 41, in the midst of the German occupation of Paris, that he decided to devote himself wholeheartedly to being an artist.

From the outset, Dubuffet was drawn to other untrained artists: work by graffitiists, tattooists, spiritualists, the incarcerated, children and individuals in psychiatric care felt much more alive to him than anything on display in museums. He called this work ‘Art Brut’ (literally meaning ‘raw art’) and from 1945 dedicated himself to its research and recognition. *Brutal Beauty*, which is the first major exhibition of Dubuffet’s work to take place in the UK since 1966, celebrates his career in dialogue with work by some of those who radically affected his thinking about what art could be.

# MATTER AND MEMORY

**'I aim for an art that is directly  
plugged into our current life'**

In June 1944, just days after American troops landed in Normandy, Dubuffet created a series in which he wrote graffiti-inspired messages onto French and German newspaper. The intimacy of these hand-written notes – 'The key is under the shutter'; 'I've been thinking of you' – contrasts sharply with the formality of the typed news beneath. These fragile works reflect the swell of conflicting information at the time and the secret modes of communication that the Resistance fighters were forced to adopt in order to avoid persecution.

Dubuffet had long admired the photographer Brassai, who had been documenting Parisian graffiti since the 1930s. Both were struck by the vitality of graffiti, which was anonymously authored but collectively addressed. Lithography (a type of printing based on the resistance of oil and water) was the perfect medium for the subject, as Dubuffet could attack the lithographic stone to recreate the textures of a defaced wall. The two series shown here, 'Matter and Memory' and 'The Walls' – accompanied by a text by Francis Ponge and a poem by Eugène Guillevic, respectively – give an impression of the endurance of everyday life despite the Occupation. Like Dubuffet's paintings from this period, they speak to his belief that 'the very basic ... scribbles on a wall with a knife-point' might have more 'precious meaning than most ... large pretentious paintings'.

## Room 1

### CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Message 'Georges Arrives Tomorrow Morning ...'

*Message 'Georges arrive demain matin ...'*

17 June 1944

Message 'Ledru-Rollin Station Exit ...'

*Message 'Ledru-Rollin, sortie de métro ...'*

25 June 1944

Message 'I Think about You ...'

*Message 'Je pense à toi ...'*

June 1944

Message 'Since I Don't Like ...'

*Message 'Vu que j'aime pas ...'*

27 June 1944

[please note that the translated title should read 'don't like' and not 'do not like']

Message 'Émile is Gone Again ...'

*Message 'Émile est reparti ...'*

17 June 1944

Message 'Always Dedicated to your Orders ...'

*Message 'Toujours bien dévoués à vos ordres ...'*

25 June 1944

## FROM RIGHT TO LEFT

Miss Swing

*Mademoiselle Swing*

(Plate 22)

31 October 1944

Bird Eaters

*Mangeurs d'oiseaux*

(Plate 20)

28 October 1944

Nose Blower

*Moucheur*

(Plate 34)

1944

Telephone Torment

*Le Supplice du téléphone*

(Plate 30)

1944

Typist

*Dactylographe*

(Plate 18)

25 October 1944

Coffee Grinder

*Mouleuse de café*

(Plate 32)

18 November 1944

Maternity  
*Maternité*  
(Plate 24)  
1944

Bicycle Tourism  
*Cyclotourisme*  
(Plate 1)  
13 September 1944

Profile of a Moustached Man  
*Profil d'homme moustachu*  
(Plate 7)  
1944

All from 'Matter and Memory' ('Matière et mémoire')  
Lithographs on Auvergne paper  
Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris

BACK WALL, FROM RIGHT TO LEFT:

Pianist

*Pianiste*

(Plate 15)

1944

Waltz

*Valse*

(Plate 29)

14 November 1944

Sophisticated Lady

(Plate 21)

30 October 1944

All from 'Matter and Memory' ('Matière et mémoire')

Lithographs on Auvergne paper

Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris

Large Black Landscape

*Grand paysage noir*

September 1946

Oil on hardboard

Tate: Accepted by HM Government in lieu

of tax and allocated to the Tate Gallery 1996

The Walls

*Les Murs*

January–March 1945

Illustrations for Eugène Guillevic,

*The Walls (Les Murs)*

(Paris: Éditions du Livre, 1950)

Lithographs on Montval cardboard

Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris



# TRUE FACE

**‘Funny noses, big mouths, crooked teeth,  
hairy ears, I’m not against all that’**

In the summer of 1945, Dubuffet made a number of portraits of his friend Jean Paulhan, a prominent French intellectual and former editor of the *Nouvelle Revue française*. Paulhan was critical in bringing Dubuffet’s revelatory work to the attention of a wider social circle in Paris – including the wealthy American expatriate Florence Gould, who hosted a weekly lunch at her home. When Dubuffet gifted her one of his Paulhan portraits, she suggested that he depict other guests from her salon; in August 1946 he wrote to her saying, ‘what an adventure you have thrown me on! Now it’s all I think about.’

With each sitter, Dubuffet spent hours just looking at them before returning to his studio to paint their portrait entirely from his recollection, creating what he called ‘a likeness burst in memory’. He made a thick paste from oil paint mixed with materials like plaster and varnish, which he would layer up and dust with sand or ash and then cut into with a scraper. Subverting the traditional genre of portraiture, Dubuffet set out to capture a kind of truth beyond resemblance. As his friend Georges Limbour described, the crudely rendered images seem ‘charged with a magical and hallucinatory secret power’. The portraits were exhibited together at the René Drouin gallery in October 1947 under the playful title *People Are Much More Handsome than they Think. Long Live their True Face*.

## Room 2

Portrait of Jean Paulhan

*Portrait de Jean Paulhan*

July 1945

India ink on paper

Collection of Milly and Arne Glimcher

*Michel Tapié*

August 1946

Wax crayon on paper

Private Collection

*Antonin Artaud*

1947

Ink on paper

Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris

Francis Ponge, Traces of Ink

*Francis Ponge traits à l'encre*

June–July 1947

India ink on paper

Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris

Bertelé the Socialite

*Bertelé mondain*

December 1946

Oil on canvas

Private Collection

*Dhôtel*

July–August 1947

Oil and sand on canvas

Private Collection, Courtesy Gray, Chicago/New York

Monsieur Plume, Botanical Specimen (Portrait of Henri Michaux)

*Monsieur plume pièce botanique (portrait d'Henri Michaux)*

December 1946

Oil and mixed media on wood

Collection Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. The

Charles E. Merrill Trust and Elisabeth H. Gates Fund, 1967

# ART BRUT

**‘Millions of possibilities of expression  
exist outside the accepted cultural avenues’**

In 1923, while working at the meteorological centre in the Eiffel Tower as part of his military service, Dubuffet came across drawings by the visionary Clémentine Ripoché. He was amazed by her sketchbooks, which were filled with scenes of tanks and carriages amid clouds. The following year, he discovered Hans Prinzhorn’s book *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* (1922), but it was not until 1945 that he began actively to research ‘Art Brut’. He visited psychiatric institutions in Switzerland and France with the aim of publishing articles about artists working there. Two years later, he turned the basement of the René Drouin gallery into a ‘Foyer’ for exhibitions, and in 1948 he co-founded the Compagnie de l’Art Brut, which would collect more than 1,200 works by over 100 artists during its three-year existence.

This gallery (which is about the same size as the original Foyer) brings to life the experimental spirit of that space, featuring the work of eight artists selected by Dubuffet for a final exhibition in July 1948, which for unknown reasons never took place. By 1951, Dubuffet felt he was carrying the weight of the ‘Art Brut’ project alone. When the artist and collector Alfonso Ossorio offered to house the collection at his home on Long Island, New York, Dubuffet gratefully accepted, arranging for the precious works (and his filing cabinets of research materials) to be shipped across the Atlantic.

## Room 3

ALOÏSE CORBAZ

Abduction of the Bride of Gaule

*Enlèvement de la mariée de Gaule*

1946–47

Coloured pencil and gouache on paper

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

ALOÏSE CORBAZ

Selection of 12 drawings from Aloïse's notebook

1946–47

All graphite and coloured pencil on paper

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

MAURICE BASKINE

Back Wall, Right

Untitled

*Sans titre*

Date unknown

Mixed media on mounted canvas over hardboard

Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Cordes-sur-Ciel

MIGUEL HERNANDEZ

Back Wall, Centre

Untitled

*Sans titre*

1947–48

Oil on wood panel / Oil on paper

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

FLEURY-JOSEPH CRÉPIN

Top: *Composition No. 6*

Middle Left: *Composition No. 43*

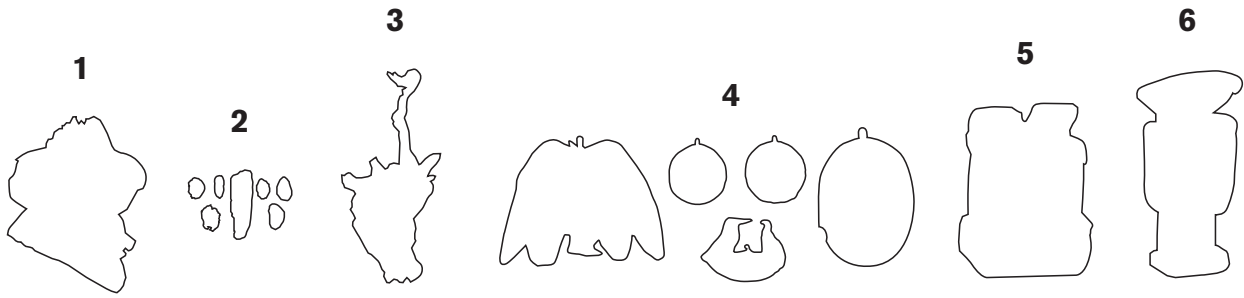
Middle Right: *Composition No. 32*

Bottom: *Composition No. 33*

1939

Oil on canvas

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne



1 JOAQUIM VICENS  
GIRONELLA  
And the Sun Cried  
*Et le soleil pleura*  
1946–48  
Carved cork  
Collection de l'Art Brut,  
Lausanne

4 HENRI SALINGARDES  
Untitled  
Sans titre  
1936–43  
Painted cement moulding  
Collection de l'Art Brut,  
Lausanne

2 GASTON CHAISSAC  
Untitled  
Sans titre  
c. 1948  
India ink on oyster shells  
glued to wooden board  
Collection de l'Art Brut,  
Lausanne

5-6 JAN KRÍŽEK  
Untitled  
Sans titre  
c. 1946–47  
Sandstone  
Courtesy of The Museum  
of Everything

3 GASTON CHAISSAC  
Untitled  
*Sans titre*  
c. 1948  
Wood and mixed media  
Collection de l'Art Brut,  
Lausanne

# LADIES' BODIES

**‘Nothing seems to be more false, more stupid,  
than the way students in an art class are placed  
in front of a completely nude woman ...  
and stare at her for hours’**

In April 1950, Dubuffet began work on a series that many considered his most controversial to date. First in paint and then using ink, he depicted female bodies that appear to have collapsed into a visceral landscape of flesh. He acknowledged that his imagery was violent but was clear that his attack was intended not at women but at the Western tradition of the female nude. In a catalogue text written for the Pierre Matisse gallery in New York in 1952, he explained that he wanted to protest against the ‘specious notion of beauty (inherited from the Greeks and cultivated by the magazine covers)’, which he found ‘miserable and most depressing’.

He started by mixing a thick paste from zinc oxide and a viscous varnish, applying it to the canvas with a putty knife to create ‘textures calling to mind human flesh (sometimes perhaps going beyond the point of decency)’. This mixture would repel oil paint, so that when he brushed on thin layers of sensual colours they would marble into unexpected patterns, suggesting the ‘invisible world of fluids circulating in bodies’. The amorphous figures, which lack clear definition, are reminiscent of ancient fertility statues, while botanical titles such as *The Tree of Fluids* reflect Dubuffet’s belief that ultimately we are all made from the same organic stuff: we come from, and will return to, the earth.



## Room 4

Lady's Body

*Corps de dame*

November–December 1950

Gouache and crayon on paper

Collection les Abattoirs, Musée – Frac Occitanie Toulouse

Lady's Body

*Corps de dame*

December 1950

Watercolour on paper

Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

The Tree of Fluids

*L'Arbre de fluides*

October 1950

Oil on canvas

Tate: Accepted by HM Government in lieu  
of tax and allocated to the Tate Gallery 1996

## LEFT TO RIGHT

Lady's Body

*Corps de dame*

June–August 1950

India ink on paper

Galerie Natalie Seroussi

Lady's Body

*Corps de dame*

June–August 1950

India ink on paper

Galerie Natalie Seroussi

Lady's Body

*Corps de dame*

June–December 1950

India ink on paper

Collection of Milly and Arne Glimcher

Lady's Body

*Corps de dame*

June–December 1950

India ink on paper

Collection Olivier Varenne, Geneva

Lady's Body

*Corps de dame*

June–December 1950

India ink on paper

Galerie Natalie Seroussi

# MENTAL LANDSCAPES

**'It's about the universe that surrounds us,  
the places that confront us, all the objects  
that meet our gaze and occupy our thoughts'**

Dubuffet's relationship to landscape painting was just as unusual as his approach to the female nude – and his work on these two traditional subjects partly overlapped. He did not want to capture a specific site or represent an idealized place; he considered these works a journey into 'the country of the formless'. His interest in landscape sprang from three extended trips to Algeria between 1947 and 1949, where he learned Arabic and lived with Bedouin communities in the desert. He kept small sketchbooks while he was away and after returning to Paris tried to capture the spirit (rather than the likeness) of the extreme Saharan environments he had experienced.

This gallery, which presents work from 1952–53, shows Dubuffet's interest in the interior of the mind as a kind of landscape. He thought of the brain as populated by a 'disorder of images, of beginnings of images, of fading images, where they cross and mingle'. In these paintings, he coated canvas or hardboard with a thick putty to create a physical, tactile relief; similarly, his works on paper used a density of ink to give the impression of a ground teeming with energy and a mind brimming with thought. Typically, Dubuffet's landscapes have a high horizon line and only a sliver of sky at the top, encouraging the viewer to devote more attention to the world beneath the surface.

## Room 5

The Abandoned House  
*La Maison abandonnée*  
January 1952  
Oil on hardboard  
Private Collection

Sun without Virtue  
*Soleil sans vertu*  
January 1952  
Oil on hardboard  
Acquavella Galleries

The Roses of the Earth  
*Les Roses de la terre*  
February 1952  
Oil on canvas  
Acquavella Galleries

Landscape with Dead Dog  
*Paysage au chien mort*  
June 1952  
India ink on paper  
Collection of Milly and Arne Glimcher

Dazzling Glory of Earth and Sky  
*Éblouissante gloire de la terre et du ciel*  
September 1952  
India ink on paper (feather and reed pen)  
Private Collection

Crystallization of the Dream

*Cristallisation du rêve*

October 1952

India ink on paper

Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

# THE GARDEN

**‘I was fascinated by the tiny botanical  
world at the foot of walls’**

Dubuffet’s question of how to animate materials found a more literal answer when he began using butterfly wings in 1953. He had been on holiday in Savoie with his friend Pierre Bettencourt, who had been catching butterflies and gluing them to paper, inspiring Dubuffet to experiment with his own butterfly collages. He arranged the wings into jaunty characters and ornate landscapes, inspired by the gardens in the South of France. The colours of the butterflies were more subtle than he expected, so he stained the background page and added touches of watercolour to dramatize the lustre of their wings.

Dubuffet had previously incorporated rough elements into his paint (shards of glass, twists of string), and he regularly used unusual tools (razor blades, sandpaper), but these were his first experiments with assemblage – a term he preferred to ‘collage’. He felt excited by the new technique, not least because it gave him a great deal of flexibility. In November 1955, he began creating and then cutting up oil paintings for new works, such as *Coursegoules*, which is a study of greenery pushing up between cobblestones. When the writer Alexandre Vialatte visited Dubuffet in 1956, he gave a vivid account of the scene: ‘Dubuffet is there, with a flowery hat and socks with green polka dots. He no longer paints with butter, cement, bitumen, but with shoemaker’s glue.’

## Room 6

Clown's Point

*La Pointe au pitre*

September 1956

Oil on canvas (assemblage)

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

BACK WALL, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Character in a mole or mouse-coloured Landscape

*Personnage dans un paysage couleur de taupe ou de souris*

May 1957

Butterfly wings, gouache, ink and paper collage on paper  
mounted on board

Private Collection

Landscape

*Paysage*

1953

Butterfly wings on board

David and Ezra Nahmad

Landscape with Argus

*Paysage aux argus*

August 1955

Collage with butterfly wings

Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris

Portrait of a Man

*Portrait d'homme*

May 1957

Collage with butterfly wings, ink and gouache on crushed paper

Collection of Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy

Garden with Melitaea

*Jardin aux Mélitées*

4 September 1955

Butterfly wings, ink, gouache and paper collage on paper laid down on paperboard

Collection of Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy

*Coursegoules*

November 1956

Oil on canvas (assemblage)

Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris



# PRECARIOUS LIFE

**‘My feeling is, always has been ...  
that the world must be ruled by strange systems  
of which we have not the slightest inkling’**

In 1954, Dubuffet took his experiments with assemblage to a new dimension with his ‘Little Statues of Precarious Life’. He made these figures out of discarded materials, ranging from steel wool to newspaper, grapevine, charcoal and lava stone. For *Character with Rhinestone Eyes*, which is now the earliest surviving work from this series, he used the debris of a burnt-out car that he had found in the garage of his building. He revelled in the peculiar qualities of his materials, salvaging sponge, for instance, that had been deemed too ‘grotesque’ by a wholesaler. He turned these ordinary fragments into fantastical characters and tried to minimize his interventions.

That same year, he also began using quick-drying enamel paints, perhaps inspired by the American Abstract Expressionists, whose work he had admired on recent visits to New York. He mixed the industrial paints with oil, which created a ‘lively incompatibility’, especially as he worked into each thin layer before the last was fully dry. The technique generated what he called ‘strange bewildering worlds that exercise a kind of fascination’. Titles such as *The Extravagant One* feel fitting for the beguiling characters – part beast, part human – who emerge from the field of paint like phantoms in a dream.

## Room 7

*Intervention*

January 1954

Oil on canvas

Collection Karsten Greve, St Moritz  
Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Köln/Paris/St Moritz

The Extravagant One

*L'Extravagante*

July 1954

Oil on canvas

Private Collection, New York

Knight of the Night

*Chevalier de nuit*

July 1954

Oil on canvas

Private Collection

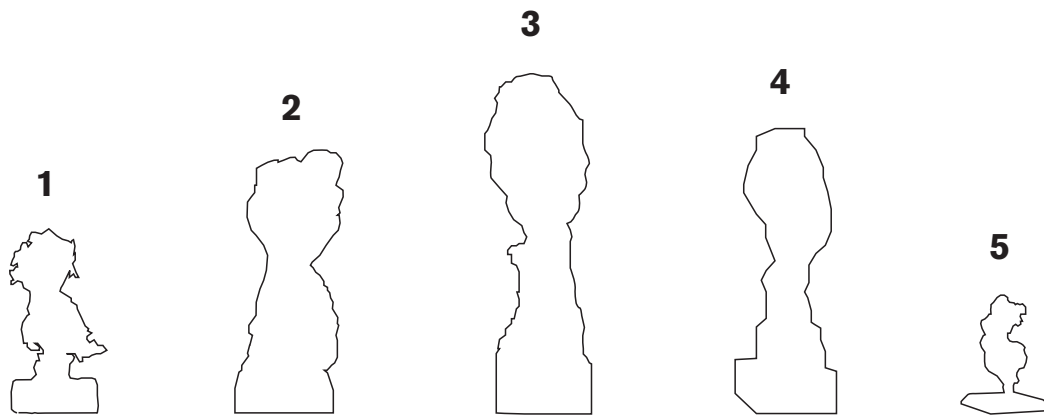
Blueing Head

*Tête bleuissante*

January 1954

Oil on paper on hardboard

The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation Collection, New York



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- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>1</b> Character with Rhinestone Eyes<br/><i>Personnage aux yeux de strass</i><br/>April 1954<br/>Remnants of a burnt car<br/>Private Collection, New York</p> | <p><b>4</b> Coquettish Grin<br/><i>Minaudage aux dents</i><br/>4 December 1959<br/>Papier mâché<br/>Private Collection</p> |
| <p><b>2</b> The Astonished Man<br/><i>L'Étonné</i><br/>October 1959<br/>Silver foil and driftwood<br/>Private Collection, New York</p>                              | <p><b>5</b> Witch<br/><i>Sorcière</i><br/>July 1954<br/>Cork root and stones<br/>Private Collection</p>                    |
| <p><b>3</b> Madam I Order<br/><i>Madame j'ordonne</i><br/>September 1954<br/>Lava<br/>Olnick Spanu Collection,<br/>New York</p>                                     |  |

# TEXTUROLOGY

**‘Teeming matter, alive and sparkling,  
could represent a piece of ground ... but also  
evoke all kinds of indeterminate texture,  
and even galaxies and nebulae’**

Dubuffet’s ‘Texturology’ paintings were inspired by the rich natural surroundings of Vence, where he moved in the hope that the fresh air would improve his wife Lili’s ailing health. Started in September 1957, they were originally intended to be cut into fragments for use in his series of ‘Topography’ assemblages. To make them, he borrowed a technique from Tyrolean stonemasons, who would shake a branch loaded with paint over fresh plaster in order to soften its colour. The delicate speckles of the ‘Texturologies’ have a spellbinding effect as they pivot between two extreme perspectives – the micro and the macro – reflecting on our place within the universe.

In 1959, the ‘Texturologies’ were exhibited at the Galerie Daniel Cordier in Paris under the title *Celebration of the Soil*, reflecting Dubuffet’s fundamental belief that humble matter, such as soil or the pavement, is worthy of our contemplation. With titles such as *The Exemplary Life of the Soil* or *Grey-Beige Earth Element*, the paintings bring attention to the subtlest nuances of the ground, in which Dubuffet saw expressions of an infinitely expanding cosmos. Conflating views of the earth, sky and stars, making the ground philosophical and the philosophical base, the ‘Texturologies’ were considered by Dubuffet to be ‘gadgets of fascination, exaltation, revelation: sort of divine services to celebrate living matter.’

## Room 8

Nuances on the Ground (Texturology XLIII)

*Nuancements au sol (Texturologie XLIII)*

27 May 1958

Oil on canvas

Private Collection

*Texturology XXXVII (Grave)*

May 1958

Oil on canvas

Musée Unterlinden, Colmar

The Exemplary Life of the Soil (Texturology LXIII)

*Vie exemplaire du sol (Texturologie LXIII)*

13 October 1958

Oil on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1966

Grey-Beige Earth Element (Texturology XVI)

*Élément de sol gris-beige (Texturologie XVI)*

19 March 1958

Oil on canvas

Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark.

Long-term loan: Museumsfonden af 7 December 1966

Texturology XLVI (with Ochre Flashes)

*Texturologie XLVI (aux clartés ocrées)*

30 May 1958

Oil on canvas

Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

# PARIS CIRCUS

**‘I want my street to be crazy,  
my broad avenues, shops and buildings  
to join in a crazy dance’**

When Dubuffet returned to Paris in 1961, he had been away for six years. His retrospective had just closed at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, which led him to reflect on his earliest work. He wrote to his friend Geneviève Bonnefoi: ‘I live locked up in my studio doing, guess what? Paintings in the spirit and manner of those I was making in 1943. [I have] decided to start all over again from the beginning.’ But Paris had changed dramatically: the population had swollen and the postwar period of economic expansion had created a new consumer society. Dubuffet used billboards, cars, shop windows, restaurants and bars as symbols of this capitalist spectacle he called the ‘Paris Circus’.

As the title suggests, the works feature a kaleidoscope of imagery drawn from the frenzy of street life. The philosopher Max Loreau described how ‘Dubuffet has shed his ground-worshipper tunic to make way for the playful and theatrical Janus.’ As in his early paintings, each scene appears to have been flattened, the perspective deliberately skewed between a frontal and an aerial view, as if the city were reeling or drunk. In *Paris-Montparnasse*, made between 5 and 21 March 1961 and Dubuffet’s first oil painting in the series, a bus navigates a sprawl of urban traffic on the famous Left Bank. In later works such as *Caught in the Act*, cars jostle with shop signs reading ‘scoundrel’ or ‘underground bank’, suggesting the city’s seedy underside.

## Room 9

*Restaurant Rougeot I*

28–29 March 1961

Oil on canvas

Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris

Caught in the Act

*La Main dans le sac*

24–25 September 1961

Oil on canvas

Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

*Paris-Montparnasse*

5–21 March 1961

Oil on canvas

Private Collection

# THE COLLECTION RETURNS

**‘Art Brut has been dormant during  
this vacation ... but I am on the lookout’**

After his return to Paris, Dubuffet wrote to Alfonso Ossorio pleading for his Art Brut collection to be sent home. He had been separated from it for over a decade and was desperate to be reunited. Ossorio asked to keep one or two works and Dubuffet implored him to be modest in his selection: ‘seeing several pieces separated is a sacrifice like losing an eye.’ In the end, at least 13 works remained in Long Island, and the rest of the collection was shipped back to Paris in the spring of 1962. Dubuffet had renovated a mansion on the rue de Sèvres into six galleries, with archives and offices. He personally installed the works in dynamic arrangements of old favourites and new acquisitions, mirrored in the selection of work by the eight artists presented here.

Dubuffet’s passion for Art Brut had been reignited: he reactivated his network of contacts and began to research and collect again. By 1963 he had acquired nearly 1,000 new works. When the drawings of the spiritualist Laure Pigeon were being thrown away after her death in 1965, it was he who was telephoned to see if he might save them. The larger spaces on the rue de Sèvres also allowed him to collect more sizable works, such as Émile Ratier’s towering wooden sculptures and Madge Gill’s vast calico drawings. Dubuffet’s involvement in Art Brut during this period catalysed a dramatic shift in his own practice – he felt compelled to create a truly immersive world for himself and his viewer.



## Room 10

SCOTTIE WILSON

From Left to Right:

*Untitled*

1938–40

*Untitled*

1950–51

*Untitled*

1950–51

*Untitled*

1950–51

All coloured pencil, ink and pastel on paper

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

SYLVAIN LECOCQ

Tour de France Bocycliste – The Tour of Love

*Tour de France Bocycliste – le tour d'amour*

July 1949

Lead pencil and gouache on wrapping paper

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

AUGUSTE FORESTIER

Untitled

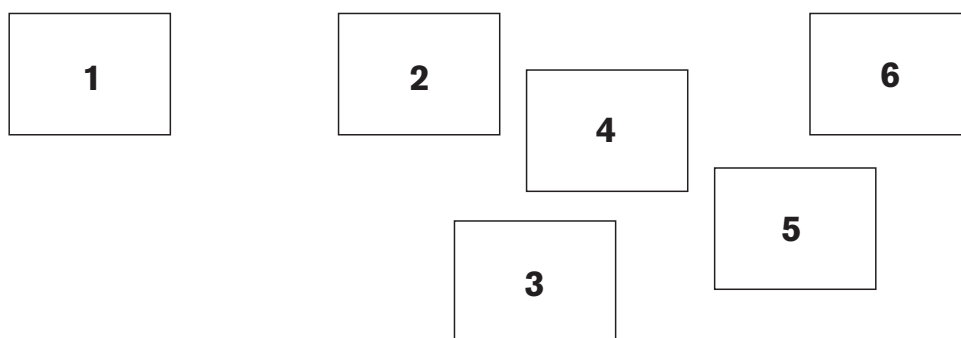
*Sans titre*

1935–49

Wood and mixed media

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

# ADOLF WÖLFLI



- 
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>1</b> Insurgency Plan of St Adolf Castle in Breslau<br/><i>Plan d'insurrection du château de St-Adolf à Breslau</i><br/>1922</p> | <p><b>4</b> Heart-shaped Rosalie Crown of Thorns<br/><i>Couronne d'épines de Rosalie en forme de cœur</i><br/>1922</p>                                  |
| <p><b>2</b> The Garden of Heaven in the East<br/><i>Jardin du paradis Eeden en Orient</i><br/>1923</p>                                 | <p><b>5</b> The Great Budapest Clock<br/><i>La Grande horloge de Budapest</i><br/>1922</p>  |
| <p><b>3</b> Saint Adolf with Snow White<br/><i>Saint-Adolf avec Blanche-Neige</i><br/>1922</p>   | <p><b>6</b> The Holy Trinity in the Giant City of Chant-Saint-Adolf<br/><i>La Sainte trinité dans la ville géante de Chant-Saint-Adolf</i><br/>1923</p> |

All coloured pencil on paper  
Collection de l'Art Brut,  
Lausanne

MADGE GILL

*Untitled*

1947

Pen on calico

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

LAURE PIGEON

Clockwise from Top Left:

30 December 1953

*30 décembre 1953*

21 August 1953

*21 août 1953*

14 November 1953

*14 novembre 1953*

20 May 1954

*20 mai 1954*

11 December 1953

*11 décembre 1953*

26 February 1954

*26 février 1954*

All ink on paper

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

AUGUSTIN LESAGE

Symbolic Composition of the Spiritual World

*Composition symbolique sur le monde spirituel*

1923

Oil on canvas

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

GASTON DUF.

Left to Right:

*Rinâûsêrôse viltritiês*

1950

*Pâûlîchinêle gânsthêrs vitrês'-he*

1949

*Pâûlichinelle flâûgrûse nâins*

1950–56

*Le nâin pôlichinêle pâstriqûe*

1950–56

All coloured pencil on paper

Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

# L'HOURLOUPE

**'It is the unreal that enchants me now'**

'Hourloupe' is an invented word that echoes the French *entourloupe* (to play a kind of trick) as well as *hurler* (to roar), *hululer* (to hoot) and *loup* (a male wolf). Dubuffet liked the animal associations, describing his word as sounding like 'some wonderland or grotesque object or creature'. He used it for a new cycle of works that he had begun quite by accident while doodling on the telephone in July 1962. Using a four-colour ballpoint pen, he had made a series of fluid shapes and figures, which he embellished with blue and red stripes before cutting them out and placing them against a black background. These initial drawings became the gateway to an all-consuming series of paintings, sculptures, environments and performances that would occupy him for more than 12 years.

'L'Hourloupe' is characterized by sinuous webs with areas hatched or coloured in, primarily in red, white and blue. Sometimes images are enmeshed within the patterning, like a figure or a typewriter, creating visual confusion. Dubuffet wanted his meandering line to transform everything into a graphic surface, in order to remind us that the distinction between the so-called real and the imaginary is arbitrary. He was also clear that his 'renewed interest in Art Brut's productions was not unrelated to this sudden turning point'. Being surrounded by his collection again had sparked his interest in creating a stylized world of his own – 'a dive into fantasy ... a parallel universe'.

## Room 11

*Solario (portrait)*

1 March 1967

Vinyl paint on canvas

Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris

Nimble Free Hand to the Rescue

*Main leste et rescousse*

6 December 1964

Vinyl paint on canvas

Tate: Presented by Galerie Beyeler, Basel and Galerie Jeanne Bucher, Paris 1966

Site Inhabited by Objects

*Site habité d'objets*

1–3 May 1965

Vinyl paint on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1966

Skedaddle

*L'Escampette*

31 October 1964

Vinyl paint on canvas

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

Bed II

*Le Lit II*

27 August 1964

Vinyl paint on canvas

Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris

Domestic Site (Swordfish Rifle) with Inca Head  
and Small Armchair on the Right

*Site domestique (au fusil espadon) avec tête d'Inca  
et petit fauteuil à droite*

28 January 1966

Vinyl paint on canvas

Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris

# COUCOU BAZAR

**‘It must not look like a theatrical production properly speaking but like a painting’**

From 1971 to 1973, Dubuffet worked in a former munitions factory in Vincennes to fabricate 175 freestanding elements based on his ‘L’Hourloupe’ work. He called these ‘theatrical props’ (*praticables*); some were mounted on metal stands and others had electronic mechanisms to allow them to move independently. A selection of these objects, joined by dancers wearing costumes that he had also designed, featured in his performance *Coucou Bazar* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1973, timed to coincide with his retrospective there.

According to the handout, the one-hour ‘spectacle’ involved 60 artworks ‘animated and articulated by various means’. The non-narrative scenes were accompanied by dramatic lighting and a musical score by the composer İlhan Mimarog˘lu, which Dubuffet specified should be ‘brutally loud with abrupt interruptions of silence’. The ‘living painting’ was performed again at the Grand Palais in Paris, and in 1978 Dubuffet devised a new version for Turin, with revised choreography and his own music. The elements are now too fragile for the work to be restaged as Dubuffet originally intended, but this installation gives a sense of how intimately *Coucou Bazar* connected to Dubuffet’s broader ‘L’Hourloupe’ project: ‘it is a painter’s work rather than a playwright’s ... Painting is its only parent.’



## Room 11

Selection of 16 *praticables* and 4 costumes from  
*Coucou Bazar*

1971–73

Acrylic paint on Klégécell, vinyl paint on Klégécell,  
acrylic paint on polyurethane foam and mixed media

Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris

# THEATRES OF MEMORY

**‘These assemblages have mixtures of sites and scenes, which are the constituent parts of a moment of viewing ... the mind recapitulates all fields, it makes them dance together’**

For his ‘Theatres of Memory’, made between October 1975 and May 1979, Dubuffet returned to assemblage, layering fragments of paintings into enormous collages that evoke a mind swarming with thoughts and images. He installed metal panels in his studio so that he could arrange and rearrange the cut-out elements using small magnets before settling on a final composition. Given that he was now 75, these large-scale works were physically challenging to produce; *Vicissitudes* is more than 3.5 metres wide and so required ‘a good deal of gymnastic exercise on a ladder’.

The title of the series refers to *The Art of Memory* (1966) by Frances Yates, a book about the mnemonic techniques used by classical orators. The chaotic imagery in these panoramic ‘theatres’ reflects Dubuffet’s interest in how our imagination bleeds into our impressions of the everyday world. When they were exhibited at Pace Gallery in New York in 1979, the works attracted the attention of artists including Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat. The graphic black-and-white drawings that Dubuffet made using felt-tip pen in 1978–79 form a dialogue with the work of this younger generation. The name of the wider series, ‘Circumstances, Records, Rememberings’, suggests that Dubuffet was thinking of both how we remember and what kind of memory his own work might leave behind.

## Room 12

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Remembering XXII

*Mémoration XXII*

1 January 1979

Record V

*Annale V*

9 September 1978

Circumstance CXII (Site with Tree)

*Situation CXII (site à l'arbre)*

1 March 1979

All black felt-tip pen on paper with collage

Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris

Vicissitudes

*Les Vicissitudes*

21 January 1977

Acrylic on paper mounted on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1983

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Record IV

*Annale IV*

8 September 1978

Site in Glory

*Site en gloire*

1 September 1978

Recording

*Enregistrement*

30 August 1978

Record II

*Annale II*

6 September 1978

Remembering IV

*Mémoration IV*

10 September 1978

Circumstance LXXXIII (with Dogs)

*Situation LXXXIII (aux chiens)*

6 February 1979

All black felt-tip pen on paper with collage

Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris

# NON-PLACE

**‘I have been concerned ...  
to represent not the objective world,  
but what it becomes in our thoughts’**

In 1984, Dubuffet exhibited in the French pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Ever inventive, he presented a radical new series called ‘Mires’. Each work features a dense cluster of interweaving lines and shapes in primary-coloured acrylic. Sitting at a table (to give respite to his back), he painted on individual sheets of copy paper which he then tiled together into larger works, such as the epic *Mire G 177 (Bolero)* of 28 December 1983. Unlike his recent ‘Theatres of Memory’, the compositions featured no recognizable imagery, reflecting Dubuffet’s lifelong oscillation between the body and the landscape, figuration and abstraction. The mark-making also references his ongoing interest in graffiti, a subject that had inspired him for more than 40 years.

Dubuffet followed this series with another, titled ‘Non-Places’, which features similarly bold lattices of colour. Now aged 83, he was questioning existence with the same fervour as in his earliest philosophical musings on matter. Both of these bodies of work demonstrate Dubuffet’s commitment to exploring interior and exterior, mind and matter, as no longer distinguishable spaces. They exemplify his relentless interest in painting as a tool to interrogate reality and to propose alternative possibilities. As he wrote in a letter to Arne Glimcher, founder of Pace Gallery, he wanted ‘to challenge the objective nature of being’. The ‘Non-Places’ were to be his final series of paintings: Dubuffet died, at his desk, on 12 May 1985.

## Room 13

Body Failure I

*Échec au corps I*

6 June 1984

Acrylic on paper

Collection Fondation Dubuffet, Paris

*Mire G 177 (Bolero)*

28 December 1983

Acrylic on paper mounted on canvas

Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris

Fulfilment

*Épanouissement*

11 November 1984

Acrylic on paper mounted on canvas

Collection of Milly and Arne Glimcher

Ideoplasma II (L3)

*Idéoplasme II (L3)*

18 September 1984

Acrylic on paper mounted on canvas

Collection of Milly and Arne Glimcher

# **DUBUFFET IN HIS OWN WORDS**

**‘Painting is a technique for acquiring  
knowledge, a way of seeing that  
is superior to mere sight’**

Few artists have been as obsessed with questioning the nature and purpose of art as Jean Dubuffet. As if wanting to make up for lost time, he was prolific in the volume of work that he produced – enough to fill 38 volumes cataloguing his 40-year career – and in the numerous writings and interviews that accompanied it. This archival video offers an opportunity to hear directly his philosophy for an art that could shatter our assumptions about the world around us.

At times combative, at others charming, Dubuffet was always deeply committed to challenging what art can do. He continually revised his thinking, particularly on Art Brut, but some of his ideas now feel outdated. He himself recognized that he had been idealistic in thinking that any artist could be entirely ‘untouched’ by societal forces. However, his belief in a broader definition of art and the disruptive power of artists remains as radical and relevant as ever.

## Room 14

Jean Dubuffet Exhibition Film

12 mins 26 secs

Belle Vue Productions, 2021