

SCHIRN KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT

SUZANNE DUCHAMP RETROSPECTIVE

OCTOBER 10, 2025 – JANUARY 11, 2026

WALL PANELS OF THE EXHIBITION

INTRODUCTION

Although Suzanne Duchamp was considered a renowned artist in France during her fifty-year career, her contribution to the Dada movement in Paris has remained largely overlooked until now. Indeed, so has the entirety of her body of work that included many different and dynamic pictorial pursuits. Suzanne Duchamp was introduced to Cubist circles in Paris through her older brothers, the artists Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon. She exhibited alongside them together with Marcel Duchamp, whom she was closest in age and who was her lifelong friend. She was also part of a successful artist couple and collaborated with her husband, the Swiss artist Jean Crotti, especially as part of Tabu, their shared avant-garde movement that expanded upon their Dada endeavors. Recent research has now revealed the extent to which Suzanne Duchamp broadened the scope of painting with poetry and wordplay, new artistic materials, and found objects. This exhibition is the first retrospective of the artist's work.

With around eighty works, the presentation mainly focuses on her paintings, collages, drawings, and poetry, and also features her photographs and prints as well as a selection of publications to which she contributed.

BIOGRAPHY

1889–1909

Suzanne Marie Germaine Duchamp is born on October 20, 1889, in Blainville-Crevon, Normandy, to Eugène Duchamp, a notary, and Lucie Duchamp. Her grandfather Émile Frédéric Nicolle was a painter and engraver, which contributed to the creative environment in which she was raised.

Two of Suzanne's brothers are significantly older: Gaston (1875–1963), who takes the pseudonym Jacques Villon and becomes a painter, and Raymond (1876–1918), who chooses the pseudonym Raymond Duchamp-Villon and embarks on a career as a sculptor. Of all the brothers, Suzanne is closest to Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968), only two years older than her.

Upon her father's retirement, the Duchamp family moves from Blainville-Crevon to Rouen in 1905, where Duchamp enrolls at the École des Beaux-Arts in Rouen.

1910 –1913

Duchamp exhibits at the Société Normande de peinture moderne in Rouen in 1910, and at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris in 1912. Her brothers Villon and Duchamp-Villon begin holding weekly gatherings at their studio homes in Puteaux, a suburb of Paris, which Duchamp is involved in, with artists and writers including Marcel Duchamp, Guillaume Apollinaire, Marie Laurencin, Francis Picabia, Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, Jean Crotti, and his then wife Yvonne Chastel. The group was known as the Puteaux Cubists, named after the location of their meetings. Several of these artists associated with Cubism, including Duchamp, present their work together at the "Salon de la Section d'Or" at the Galerie La Boétie in Paris in October 1912.

In 1911, Duchamp marries the pharmacist Charles Desmares in Rouen; she divorces him two years later in 1913 and moves to Paris. She is in contact with her brothers during this time, especially Marcel Duchamp, to whom she remains close.

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1914 –1921

Starting in July 1914, World War I spreads across Europe. Germany declares war on France on August 3. Duchamp begins working as a nurse at the Hôpital des Jeunes Aveugles in Paris, a hospital for the blind that is converted into a military hospital. In 1916, Duchamp creates her earliest works that can be associated with Dada.

Her brother, Marcel Duchamp, writes her a letter from New York in which he coins the term “readymade.” Duchamp marries Jean Crotti (1878–1958) in Paris on April 14, 1919. She is active in avant-garde circles and features in several notable Dada publications alongside artists such as Picabia, Man Ray, and Marcel Duchamp. In April 1921, Duchamp and Crotti exhibit their recent work at the Galerie Montaigne in Paris in their “Exposition des oeuvres de Suzanne Duchamp et Jean Crotti: Tabu”. Duchamp regularly exhibits at the “Salon des Indépendants” and the “Salon d’Automne”.

1922–1938

From 1922, Duchamp’s art shifts markedly away from abstraction toward figuration. During this period, Duchamp features in many solo and group exhibitions and salons in France, across Europe, and in the United States. She begins to distinguish herself more as an independent artist and often shows in group exhibitions of women artists.

Her work is presented for the first time in the United States in 1926, in the “International Exhibition of Modern Art” Assembled by Société Anonyme, which opens in November at the Brooklyn Museum in New York. The American artist and collector Katherine S. Dreier, who is close with Marcel Duchamp, organizes this exhibition and develops a deeper personal and professional relationship with Duchamp in the years afterwards.

1939 –1945

In September 1939, Germany invades Poland, marking the beginning of World War II. Duchamp continues to exhibit her artwork in Paris throughout the war, even though opportunities to do so are sparse. After the French armistice with the Nazis on June 22, 1940, which divided France into occupied and unoccupied zones, Duchamp and Crotti stay with her brother Marcel Duchamp and his partner Mary Reynolds in Arcachon, near Bordeaux, in occupied territory that summer. Duchamp and Crotti spend much of the war in the south of France. Duchamp’s painting during this period predominantly focuses on landscapes.

1946 –1957

In 1946 and 1947, Duchamp and Crotti spend an extended sojourn in the United States, visiting Marcel Duchamp and Dreier in New York, and Crotti’s brother André in Ohio, Duchamp’s first-ever visit to the country. At the end of her trip, Duchamp writes to Dreier: “I love America!”

In 1950, Dreier publishes a short biography of Duchamp that reflects their decades-long friendship. Duchamp remains close to her brothers, and in 1952, the exhibition “Duchamp frères & soeur: OEuvres d’art”, arranged by Marcel Duchamp and featuring himself with Duchamp, Duchamp-Villon, and Villon, opens at Rose Fried Gallery, New York. Duchamp begins to be included in early historizations of the Dada movement during this period.

In 1953, Duchamp is included in “Dada” at Sidney Janis Gallery in New York, the first international survey of the movement organized by Marcel Duchamp, and, in 1957, in “L’Aventure Dada, 1916–1922” at the Galerie de L’Institut in Paris.

1958 –1963

Crotti dies in Paris on January 30, 1958. Duchamp stays active as an artist and remains close to her siblings. Her painting reflects a broader shift toward abstraction in contemporary art. She continues to participate in group exhibitions of Dada such as “Dada. Dokumente einer Bewegung“ at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen in Düsseldorf in autumn 1958.

In summer 1963, Duchamp is diagnosed with a brain tumor, and she dies on September 11 in Neuilly-sur-Seine. She bequeaths her studio and the art remaining in her estate to Marcel Duchamp and is buried in the Duchamp family tomb in the Cimitière Mounumental de Rouen.

EARLY WORKS

AVANT- GARDE BEGINNINGS

Around 1911, Suzanne Duchamp began actively participating in notable exhibitions: introduced by her older brothers, the painter Jacques Villon and the sculptor Raymond Duchamp-Villon, to Cubist circles in Paris, she incorporated Cubist influences into her early work and exhibited at the “Salon des Indépendants” and the “Salon de la Section d’Or” in Paris in 1912. Still regarded as highly controversial at the time, Cubism was not a uniform movement, but rather a collection of different groups: the Duchamp brothers held weekly meetings in their studio homes in Puteaux, a suburb west of Paris, which led to the formation of the Puteaux Group of Cubists. This collective stood in

contrast to the Cubist experimentations of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque.

Although Suzanne Duchamp initially still lived in Rouen, she seems to have participated in these meetings and embraced their artistic goals. The motifs of her paintings during this period range from portraits to domestic interiors and cityscapes which all offered her the opportunity to explore new juxtapositions of colors, forms, and pictorial space.

PORTRAIT OF JACQUES VILLON [PORTRAIT DE JACQUES VILLON], 1910

Oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen

In this work, Suzanne Duchamp depicts her eldest brother Jacques Villon making a self-portrait. The construction of Villon’s body is rather unusual, for there seems to be no separation between his torso and legs as he leans toward the work he is painting that remains out of view of the composition. The palette beside Villon is covered in chunky dabs of paint – as if it were an abstract composition – that echoes the colors of the mirror he holds. This portrait was the earliest work Duchamp exhibited in modern art circles when she presented it in Rouen in 1910 at the “Société Normande de peinture moderne”, which also featured the work of Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia.

YOUNG GIRL WITH DOG [JEUNE FILLE AU CHIEN], 1912

Oil on canvas, Centre Pompidou, Paris, MNAM-CCI; at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen

In this painting, Duchamp depicts various views of a girl and her dog, who rotate across the canvas as if moving through time and space. The artist experiments with fragmented forms and creates a disorienting sense of multiple perspectives influenced by Cubism. The girl portrayed is Magdeleine Duchamp, the artist’s younger sister. This work was one of two paintings that Duchamp exhibited at the “Salon de la Section d’Or” at Galerie La Boétie in October 1912 and is her most well-known contribution to the Cubist group in Paris.

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CONSTRUCTION, 1913

Oil on canvas, Private collection

This image by Suzanne Duchamp is likely an abstraction of the industrial suburb of Puteaux in Paris (now La Défense), where the studios of her brothers Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon were situated. The area was dominated by smoking chimneys, spindly scaffolding, and rapid electrification. In a kind of restrained Cubism, the artist staggers horizontal and vertical lines and surfaces to convey the modern character of the urban landscape.

DADA INTERNATIONAL

In February 1916, at the height of World War I, Tristan Tzara and a group of other artists founded the revolutionary Dada movement at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. Using new artistic materials and found objects, as well as language and performance, these artists sought to provoke their audiences and highlight the absurdity and failure of existing social order. Around the same time, another group of Dadaists emerged in New York including artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Jean Crotti, Francis Picabia, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, and Beatrice Wood. Different groups associated with Dada later developed in Cologne, Berlin, and Paris with Suzanne Duchamp belonging to the latter. They embraced the ideals of a new artistic language and reinvented the idea of the role of the artist and the type of art this new kind of artist could make.

When World War I broke out, Suzanne Duchamp was living in Paris and she began working as a nurse at the Hôpital des Jeunes Aveugles. She started to develop some of her most important works around 1916. Duchamp was closely associated with the New York Dada group through her brother Marcel, which spurred on her artistic development. She also contributed to the invention of collage and used found elements such as clock gears, beads, metallic paper, foil, and string. Like other Dadaists, Duchamp incorporated poetic language into her pictorial compositions, and she took this in a particularly enigmatic and humorous direction. In her paintings, the titles of her works and the painted inscriptions became independent compositional elements.

FACTORY OF MY THOUGHTS, 1920

Gouache, ink, and watercolor on paper, Courtesy Galerie Natalie Seroussi

FACTORY OF JOY, 1920

Gouache, watercolor, pencil, and ink on paper, Private collection; Courtesy Galerie 1900–2000, Paris

In two major works on paper, Suzanne Duchamp drew on the language and imagery of industrial architecture and cityscapes. Close in form, color, and subject, the works can be read as a pair. In *Usine de mes pensées*, Duchamp placed an architectonic urban landscape atop diagonal lines that register like railroad tracks and bear the titular inscription, which translates in English as “Factory of My Thoughts.” The viewer is left wondering: What might a factory have to do to produce thoughts or joy? This connection between the machine and emotion was central to Duchamp’s work during this period.

SCOTTISH ESPAGNOLE, 1920

Gouache and watercolor on paper, Private collection

In this work, Suzanne Duchamp turns dance steps into a lively abstraction. The title refers to the “Scottish espagnole”, an animated French variant of the polka, which was extremely in vogue in Paris during this period. The titular subject was popularized in the song *La Scottish Espagnole* (1920) by André Perchicot, a cyclist turned singer. Duchamp drew upon instructional dance diagrams, such as those in *Toutes les danses modernes et leurs théories complètes* (n.d.) by

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Desiré Charles, as a reference for her painted geometries, which she makes come alive as if animated in dancing step.

MARCEL'S UNHAPPY READYMADE [LE READYMADE MALHEUREUX DE MARCEL], CA. 1920
Oil on canvas, The Bluff Collection

After Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti married in Paris on April 14, 1919, Marcel Duchamp sent them instructions for creating a readymade as a wedding gift: "It was a geometry book, which he (Crotti) had to hang by strings on the balcony of his apartment in the Rue Condamine; the wind had to go through the book, choose its own problems, turn and tear out the pages." Suzanne Duchamp and Crotti photographed the "unhappy" readymade, and Marcel created a print based on the photograph. However, the main result of this collaboration is this large-format painting by Suzanne Duchamp, who had already worked with Marcel on various of his readymades.

THE UNHAPPY READYMADE FROM: BOX-IN-A-VALISE [LE READYMADE MALHEUREUX DE: BOÎTE-EN-VALISE], 1959

Marcel Duchamp, Collage, Collotype with pochoir, Kunsthaus Zürich, 1978, (after a photograph by Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti)

Marcel Duchamp spent five years working on a portable museum containing 69 objects, the *Boîte-en-valise*, which was not only a scaled-down compilation of his works, but also a concentrated synthesis of his artistic ideas. The first series of 20 copies was produced between 1935 and 1941 as a so-called "luxury edition", and he added a special "original", a signed print or something similar, to each box. Numerous other editions were made from then up until the 1960s.

Interestingly, Marcel Duchamp chose to include a work by Suzanne Duchamp in his "museum". From the outset, the *Boîte-en-valise* contained a collage with a photograph of the 1919 *Readymade Malheureux*; Marcel Duchamp had sent the instructions for how to make the work in a letter as a wedding gift for Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti. This image shows the geometry book suspended by string, tattered by the wind, and the shadows of the object in on the balcony of the couple's apartment in Paris where it was attached.

In the collage Marcel Duchamp designed for the *Boîte-en-valise*, the photograph of the *Readymade Malheureux* is surrounded by historical photos from 1917–20 taken in his various studios. They document some of the earliest readymades, such as the one on the left: *In advance of the broken arm*, 1915, with a snow shovel hanging from the ceiling. The image used is part of a photo by Man Ray from 1920 and shows Duchamp's studio at 246 West 76th Street in New York. In the center at the top, under the title *Ready made*, 1917, you can see a section of a photograph taken by Duchamp himself in his studio at 33 West 67th Street. It shows the *Hat rack (Porte-chapeaux)* hanging from the ceiling alongside other objects. On the right is part of a photograph taken by Katherine Dreier in 1918 in Duchamp's studio in Buenos Aires. The *Sculpture de voyage*, 1918 hangs from the ceiling like a "spider web of all colors", according to Duchamp. He had cut up rubber bathing caps and stretched them across the room. For the publication in the *Boîte-en-valise*, Duchamp selected certain sections of the original photos and reproduced them as phototypes. In addition, he outlined the objects he wanted to highlight using an elaborate pochoir coloring technique.

In this context, Marcel Duchamp's presentation of the *Readymade Malheureux*, which in his view had at least as much significance as other early readymades, is noteworthy. Unlike some others—the snow shovel or the hat rack—it was never later duplicated as an object and produced in editions. Of course, it also highlights the significance he placed on his collaboration with Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti.

ARIETTE OF OBLIVION OF THE DAZED CHAPEL [ARIETTE D'OUBLI DE LA CHAPELLE ÉTOURDIE], 1920

Oil, wood, and glass on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Purchased with the Henry P. McIlhenny fund, W. P. Wilstach Fund, George W. Elkins Fund, and Edward and Althea Budd Fund, 2021

In an autobiographical text from the 1930s, Suzanne Duchamp wrote: "In 1916, she abandoned objective painting for subjective painting [...] *L'Ariette d'oubli de la Chapelle Étourdie* is one of her most typical works from this period." The unusual materials Duchamp used, which included a wooden relief with a face and an inset glass eye, and the enigmatic title are characteristic of the art she made while associated with Dada. So too are the painted images of a target and gear, which connect the human subject in the work to something rather more mechanical. The male figure, often considered a portrait of Jean Crotti, was later repurposed in a print.

RADIATION OF TWO SOLITARY SEPARATES APART [RADIATION DE DEUX SEULS ELOIGNES], 1916–1920

Oil, gold paint, string, wax, plastic, glass beads, and tinfoil on canvas, The Bluff Collection
The artist combines painting, poetry, and collage in her characteristic manner. Unusual artist materials abound, from glass beads to string to crumpled tinfoil, which Duchamp attached to her painting with glue and string that she sewed into the canvas from both sides. Geometric, functional shapes and machine-made materials meet a poetic and interpretive title. This triggers unexpected associations. The word "radiation" also connects the work to scientific developments, such as Wilhelm Röntgen's discovery of the X-ray in 1895.

BULLETIN DADA (DADA, NO. 6), PARIS, FEBRUARY 5, 1920

Edited by Tristan Tzara, Faksimile, Printed journal, Kunsthaus Zürich, Library

Just as Francis Picabia had his own journal *391*, Tzara was the editor of the journal *Dada* during the years he was associated with Dada in Zurich and Paris, publishing eight issues between 1917 and 1921. Sometimes, the different issues of Dada had special titles, as was the case with *Bulletin Dada*, which was published in Paris and suggested through its name that it was an announcement of sorts for the movement. The international list includes many (seemingly intentionally) misspelled names along with pseudonyms for various artists, arranged on the page like a calligramme.

Among the sixteen women included along with Duchamp are Céline Arnould, Alice Bailly, Gabrielle Buffet, Germaine Everling, Mina Loy (spelled Lloyd), and Sophie Taeuber.

DADA LIFTS IT ALL [DADA SOULÈVE TOUT], Paris, January 12, 1921

Edited by Tristan Tzara, Faksimile, Printed journal, Kunsthaus Zürich, Library

This printed handbill, edited by Tristan Tzara, repeatedly asks the question: "Que fait Dada?" (What does Dada do?). Duchamp was one of three women Dadaists, along with Gabrielle and Marguerite Buffet, who signed the tract. The handbill was a refutation of Futurism, the Italian avant-garde movement founded by the poet and theorist F.T. Marinetti in 1909, and it was distributed at Marinetti's lecture on "Le Tactilisme" (Tactilism) at the Théâtre de L'Œuvre in Paris a few days after its publication. Marinetti sought to bring Dada under the legacy of Futurism, and he was immediately booed by several Dadaists attending the event, particularly Louis Aragon, André Breton, and Tzara. The brouhaha emphasized the frenzy of these shifting avant-gardes, one that Duchamp was clearly a part of, given her signature on *Dada soulève tout*.

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JOURNAL 391, 1917–1924

edited by Francis Picabia, Faksimile, Printed journal, Kunsthau Zürich, Library

One of the significant ways Dadaist developments circulated internationally was through their various journals. Francis Picabia began publishing his journal *391* in 1917 and published twenty-four issues of it intermittently in Barcelona, New York, Zurich, and Paris until 1924. The title for the journal *391* was based on the American photographer Alfred Stieglitz's *291*, his New York avant-garde gallery and publication that took the same name.

The issue *391, no. 11*, is important with regards to Suzanne Duchamp because she appears within Picabia's irreverent text "Carnet du Docteur Serner" (Doctor Serner's Notebook), humorously published under the name of Walter Serner, a German writer associated with Dada in Zurich. Picabia wrote, "Suzanne Duchamp does more intelligent things than paint", pointing to her transformation of painting through her radical use of poetry and found materials.

QUESTIONNAIRE 148, 1920

Faksimile, Typescript with manuscript annotations, Private collection

Questionnaire 148 is a typescript poem, and it demonstrates a relationship between poetry and drawing. There are two extant versions of the work; the second incorporates the handwritten corrections that appear on the first, and it was this latter poem that Duchamp sent to Tristan Tzara for inclusion in his unrealized anthology *Dadaglobe* (slated 1921). Duchamp conflates wildly ranging subjects under the banners of "PASSÉ" (Past), "GLOIRE" (Glory), and "AMOUR" (Love), uniting bathtubs and sewing machines with the renowned dancer Loïe Fuller, an especially prominent performer in Paris, and with the never-ending countryside. The work explicitly "questions" the hierarchies between artistic genres through its title, forms, and language.

LA POMME DE PINS, SAINT-RAPHAËL, FEBRUARY 25, 1922

Edited by Francis Picabia, Faksimile, from Picabia: *La Sainte-Vierge* (Ronny van de Velde, 1993)
Printed journal, Private collection

Francis Picabia's *La pomme de pins*, an irreverent journal, took the intermixing of verbal and visual languages of Dada to extremes. Picabia orchestrated the publication with his friend Christian (Georges Herbiet) of the small publishing imprint "Le Bel Exemple." It was produced in support of André Breton's never-realized "Congrès de Paris," which would have represented the breadth of the avant-garde, from Futurism to Cubism to Dada. The texts reproduced in the journal consisted of aphorisms, poems, and other pithy remarks.

Duchamp's "La Valeur intrinsèque" (Intrinsic Value) appears on the top right interior page. She proposes: "Intrinsic value has a greater density than relative value." Christian's and Picabia's handbill *Plus de Cubisme* accompanied *La pomme de pins* and emphasizes Duchamp's place within Dada even further. Its provocative title equivocally announces: "NO MORE DADAISM / MORE DADAISM." Even as it denounced Dada, the reverse of the handbill includes the names of several Dadaists. "Suzanne DUCHAMP" is printed perpendicular to "ARENSBERG" near the center of the page.

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DADAGLOBE

Six photographs of her own paintings, submitted by Suzanne Duchamp for reproduction in Tristan Tzara's yet unrealized anthology *Dadaglobe* (slated 1921), Kunsthaus Zürich, Grafische Sammlung

Tristan Tzara, one of the founders of Dada, had ambitious plans to publish an international anthology of the movement entitled *Dadaglobe* (slated 1921). He invited a transatlantic group of artists to submit drawings, photographs of their works, book pages, and portraits of themselves. "New ideas," Tzara explained in his solicitation letters, "no matter how unexpected, whether for the layout or for anything else, are welcome."

Suzanne Duchamp responded to Tzara's prompt by sending him various contributions: six photographs of her paintings, a poetic questionnaire, and a quasi-biographical text of Jean Crotti, along with Jean Crotti's related text about her. Through these works, we can more fully understand how Duchamp situated, and also differentiated, herself within the international Dada movement. Although the publication was never completed, and Tzara was reticent to talk about what had happened afterwards, he carefully preserved the artworks, photographs, and documents that he received for *Dadaglobe*, making it possible to still consider today what Duchamp's position would have been within the book itself.

1920S TO 1950S

AN INDEPENDENT ARTIST

"The freedom of inspiration and rigour of execution that shaped the creation of my 'Dada works' have left me with an independence of spirit that is reflected in my work today." (Suzanne Duchamp)

The year 1922 marked a dramatic shift in Suzanne Duchamp's art. After her successful Dada phase, she returned to figurative paintings, but now with a distinctively ironic and almost caricatural style. She was no longer attached to an artistic movement like Cubism or Dada, and exhibited less frequently with her husband after their last joint exhibition together at Galerie Paul Guillaume in Paris in 1923. Instead, Duchamp's paintings were often shown in group exhibitions of women artists, including Marie Laurencin, Hermine David, and Valentine Prax, who were exploring new forms of figuration, too. For Duchamp, this period marked the return to her independent career as an artist. Her dynamic use of color was a focal point during these years and is a characteristic feature of her approach that carries across her body of work.

SELF-PORTRAIT [AUTO PORTRAIT], 1922

Oil on canvas, Private collection

This work signals Suzanne Duchamp's move away from Dada towards more figurative forms of painting. It also highlights portraiture, and especially self-portraiture, as a recurring subject across her entire career. With her characteristic short bob and chic attire, Duchamp presents herself as a modern woman, in a vein related to the self-portraits of women artists associated with *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity). In 1952, Marcel Duchamp included this painting in *Duchamp frères et soeur*, an exhibition of the siblings at the Rose Fried Gallery in New York, suggesting it marked a notable turning point in Duchamp's self-representation as an artist.

EARTHLY PARADISE [LE PARADIS TERRESTRE], 1924

Oil on canvas; Private collection

Suzanne Duchamp presents us with a droll interpretation of the Garden of Eden in this irreverent composition. Adam and Eve are placed at the center below the tree of knowledge dappled with

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apples. They cover themselves with leaves and Adam holds up his hand as if to apologize just before they are thrown out of this earthly paradise. But what a paradise it is: Duchamp relishes the opportunity to depict a chromatic and abundant mountainous landscape filled with animals and plants, which would become a recurring trope as her career developed.

THE WEDDING [LA NOCE], 1924

Oil on canvas; Private collection

Here, Suzanne Duchamp imagines a humorous and ironic wedding party. Rather than focusing on the married couple, Duchamp depicts the bride with a woman in a fancy dress and feathered hat in front of a sparsely laid table. Behind them are the blonde tuxedoed groom and an elderly man, while a comically small chef attends to the group. The juxtaposition of bright reds with muted greys and the interior's wood furnishings intensify the charged scene that seems to challenge the institution of marriage and ordinary constructs of society.

WATERCOLORS, LANDSCAPES AND STILL LIFES

During the mid-1920s and into the 1930s, Suzanne Duchamp worked between Paris and the Côte d'Azur and began to garner more attention as an artist in France and abroad. She deepened her relationship with Katherine Dreier, the American artist and collector who founded the Société Anonyme in New York with Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray in 1920.

Dreier included Duchamp in a major international exhibition of modern art at the Brooklyn Museum in 1926, organized a solo exhibition of Duchamp's watercolors in New York in 1933, and featured Duchamp in various Société Anonyme exhibitions. Duchamp held several solo exhibitions at galleries in Paris and continued to present her work in Parisian salons and with groups of women artists in Paris, as well as in Brussels and Prague. In terms of artistic subjects, the work Duchamp made during this period leading up to World War II is the most mixed in her career. She remained interested in portraiture and continued to expand upon the figurative paintings she had begun producing after her association with Dada ended.

Duchamp's engagement with landscape intensified during these years, and she often incorporated nature into her portraits and beach scenes. She also turned more towards still life painting, whether focusing on flowers and fruit on a table or the windows of a butcher shop. Painting primarily with oil and watercolor and relying on drawing as a structuring device in her compositions, she created unconventional images of everyday life.

LORENZO PICABIA, C. 1927

Oil on canvas; Collection Scott C. Magid

Suzanne Duchamp produced this unusually direct and dynamic portrait of Lorenzo Picabia, the son of her friends Francis Picabia and Germaine Everling, around 1927. In 1925, Duchamp and Jean Crotti bought a summer cottage in Mougins—they called it Le Minorange—across the street from Picabia and Everling's Château de Mai. The couples spent much time together and Lorenzo became a recurring subject in Duchamp's art. As can be seen from the watercolor portrait of Lorenzo installed nearby, Duchamp used this portrait of her friends' son to experiment with juxtapositions of color and form.

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UNTITLED (TWO NUDES IN AN INTERIOR) [SANS TITRE (DEUX NUDES DANS UN INTERIEUR)], C. 1939

Watercolor and ink on paper; Private collection

In this watercolor, Suzanne Duchamp presents two female nudes interacting in a pillowy landscape around a basket of fruit. The women's bodies are lit up with bands of color that unite them within this invented space that seems to be both a desert landscape and a domestic interior. The sense of being inside is compounded by the rectangular shapes at the horizon of the landscape, with their borders registering like frames hanging on a wall. Once again, Duchamp amplifies the expansiveness of the painting through her rich use of color.

WARTIME YEARS

Not much is known about Suzanne Duchamp's activities during World War II. She had an active year as an artist prior to Germany's invasion of Poland in September 1939, as she continued to exhibit her paintings and watercolors in Paris, and the art she made during the period she was associated with Dada began to be contextualized as an important part of the history of abstract art. At the same time, World War II disrupted everything for Duchamp. Although she and Jean Crotti maintained their long-time residence in Neuilly-sur-Seine, they spent much of the war in the south of France, sometimes in the company of her brothers Marcel Duchamp and Jacques Villon. Although the archival records from this period are limited, we can piece together some things from her paintings themselves, particularly her intensified exploration of landscape during the war. She appears to have painted specific scenes from her everyday environment, suggesting she and Crotti moved between different countryside locations. The landscapes she produced reflect a retreat into nature, perhaps both out of choice and necessity. Several of the landscapes she created during the war feature heavily shaded grey trees at the forefront of her compositions, which would be utterly impossible in reality. Duchamp's coloristic inventions suggest instead the darkness of this destructive period.

UNTITLED (THE TREE OF MOUGINS) [SANS TITRE (L'ARBRE DE MOUGINS)], C. 1945

Watercolor and pencil on paper; Collection Francis M. Naumann and Marie T. Keller, Yorktown Heights, NY

In this watercolor, Suzanne Duchamp focuses on the distinctive form of a tree overlooking a view of Mougins, in the foothills of Cannes, where she and Jean Crotti had long had a summer cottage. As with many of her landscapes, the colors of the tree diverge from nature, and drawing is central to how she composed her painting. Her subject also refers to earlier phases of her career: the intense magenta of the blocky tree bears a connection to Cubism, while the viewpoint relates to her portraits of Germaine Everling from the 1920s.

LATE WORKS

Following the end of World War II, Suzanne Duchamp experienced a resurgence in exhibition opportunities, international travels, and time spent with family. As had been the case earlier in her career, family portraits formed a significant part of Duchamp's work during this period. The Duchamp family also offered an important context for Suzanne Duchamp to exhibit her artwork when Marcel Duchamp organized a group show of the siblings at Rose Fried Gallery in New York in 1952. Increasingly in the 1950s, which saw the first wave of historical accounts of the Dada movement being organized on both sides of the Atlantic, Duchamp became more recognized for her vital contributions to the avant-garde, especially for the dynamic ways she created a hybrid of painting, poetry, and collage. She also featured in exhibitions of Dada and the pre-World War II avant-garde in Paris.

But Duchamp was not only looking back to the 1910s and 1920s, for in the mid-1950s she also began making abstract paintings that were in line with contemporary art movements such as "Art informel". Duchamp's move towards abstraction intensified after the death of her long-time partner Jean Crotti in 1958. She remained active as an artist until the very end of her life, when she was diagnosed with a brain tumor in the summer of 1963 and died in Neuilly-sur-Seine a few months later. As a whole, the trajectory of her career took many twists and turns, but what remained consistent was her ongoing pursuit of new artistic languages through painting.

THE UNDERWORLD [LE MONDE SOUTERRAIN], 1961

Oil on canvas; Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen

Suzanne Duchamp's color juxtapositions give this work a charged sense of embodied energy. The title *The Underworld* offers one way to interpret a work produced just two years before the artist died as Duchamp contends with the limits of life itself through paint and poetics. Here, we see Duchamp meditating on what might come in the afterlife, while continuing to explore the pictorial pursuits she had engaged with for more than fifty years: color, line, and how they can interact within the space of a painting.