



# LECTURE 4.4 MODERN ART & THE AVANT-GARDE

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MMW 122 S2



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WHAT WAS THE AVANT-GARDE  
NOT?

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# “The Unknown Citizen” by W.H. Auden (1939)

*(To JS/07 M 378*

*This Marble Monument*

*Is Erected by the State)*

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be

One against whom there was no official complaint,

And all the reports on his conduct agree

That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a  
saint,

For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.

# “The Unknown Citizen” by W.H. Auden

Except for the War till the day he retired  
He worked in a factory and never got fired,  
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.  
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,  
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,  
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)  
And our Social Psychology workers found  
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.

# “The Unknown Citizen” by W.H. Auden

The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day  
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every  
way.

Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,  
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it  
cured.

Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare  
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Instalment Plan  
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,  
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.



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# THE MODERN WORLD

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- Ideal of “Progress”
  - Consumerism and Spectacle
  - Photography and Film
  - Scientific discoveries
    - Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
    - Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882)
    - Albert Einstein (1879-1955)
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# TRISTANTZARA ON SCIENCE AND SACRIFICE

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“Ideal, ideal, ideal

Knowledge, knowledge, knowledge

Boomboom, boomboom, boomboom”

*(Reader 288)*

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# TZARA ON SYSTEMS

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- “I am against systems, the most acceptable system is on principle to have none. To complete oneself, to perfect oneself in one’s own littleness, to fill the vessel with one’s individuality, to have the courage to fight for and against thought, the mystery of bread, the sudden burst of an infernal propellor into economic lilies”
  - “The first to tender his resignation from the Dada movement *was myself*. Everybody knows that Dada is nothing. I broke away from Dada and from myself as soon as I understood the implications of *nothing*.”
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# MODERN ART: THE “AVANT-GARDE”

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- “Avant-Garde” as a term
  - As opposed to classical art
  - Collection of -isms:
    - Cubism
    - Futurism
    - Dadaism
    - Surrealism
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# CUBISM

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- Most influential of the new visual art movements
  - Portray 3-D on a 2-D frame
  - Primitivism
  - Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973)
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# Primitivism: Paul Gauguin, *The Spirit of the Dead Watching*





# Cubism: Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger* (O.J.) (1907)





# Pablo Picasso: Guernica









# Cubism Georges Braque, *Houses at l'Estaque* (1908)





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# FUTURISM

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- Energy of the pre-WWI avant-garde
  - Enthusiasm for the new, interests in machines and time
  - Radically break with the past
  - Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968)
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# Futurism: Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912)





# Marcel Duchamp descending a staircase





# Futurism: Umberto Boccioni, *Dynamism of a Cyclist* (1913)





# Futurism: Umberto Boccioni, *Dynamism of a Soccer Player* (1913)





# Futurism: Umberto Boccioni, *The City Rises* (1910)





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# AVANT-GARDE AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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# THE SECOND COMING (1919)

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Turning and turning in the widening gyre / The falcon cannot hear the falconer; / Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, / The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned; / The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity. // Surely some revelation is at hand; / Surely the Second Coming is at hand. / The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out / When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi / Troubles my sight: a waste of desert sand; / A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun, / Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it / Wind shadows of the indignant desert birds. / The darkness drops again but now I know / That twenty centuries of stony sleep / Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle, / And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

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# DADA

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- After WWI
  - Protest against bourgeois society and capitalism
  - Literature
    - Tristan Tzara
  - Visual Arts
    - Marcel Duchamp
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# WHAT IS DADA?

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- “Every product of disgust capable of becoming a negation of the family is Dada: a protest with the fists of its whole being engaged in destructive action. [ . . . ] Freedom: Dada, Dada, Dada, a roaring of tense colors, and interlacing of opposites and of all contradictions, grotesques, inconsistencies: LIFE”
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# Dada: Marcel Duchamp, *The Fountain* (1917)









# Dada: Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919)





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# SURREALISM

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- Latest and last of the -isms
  - Subconsciousness and dreams
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# Surrealism: Giorgio De Chirico, *Mystery and Melancholy of a Street* (1914)



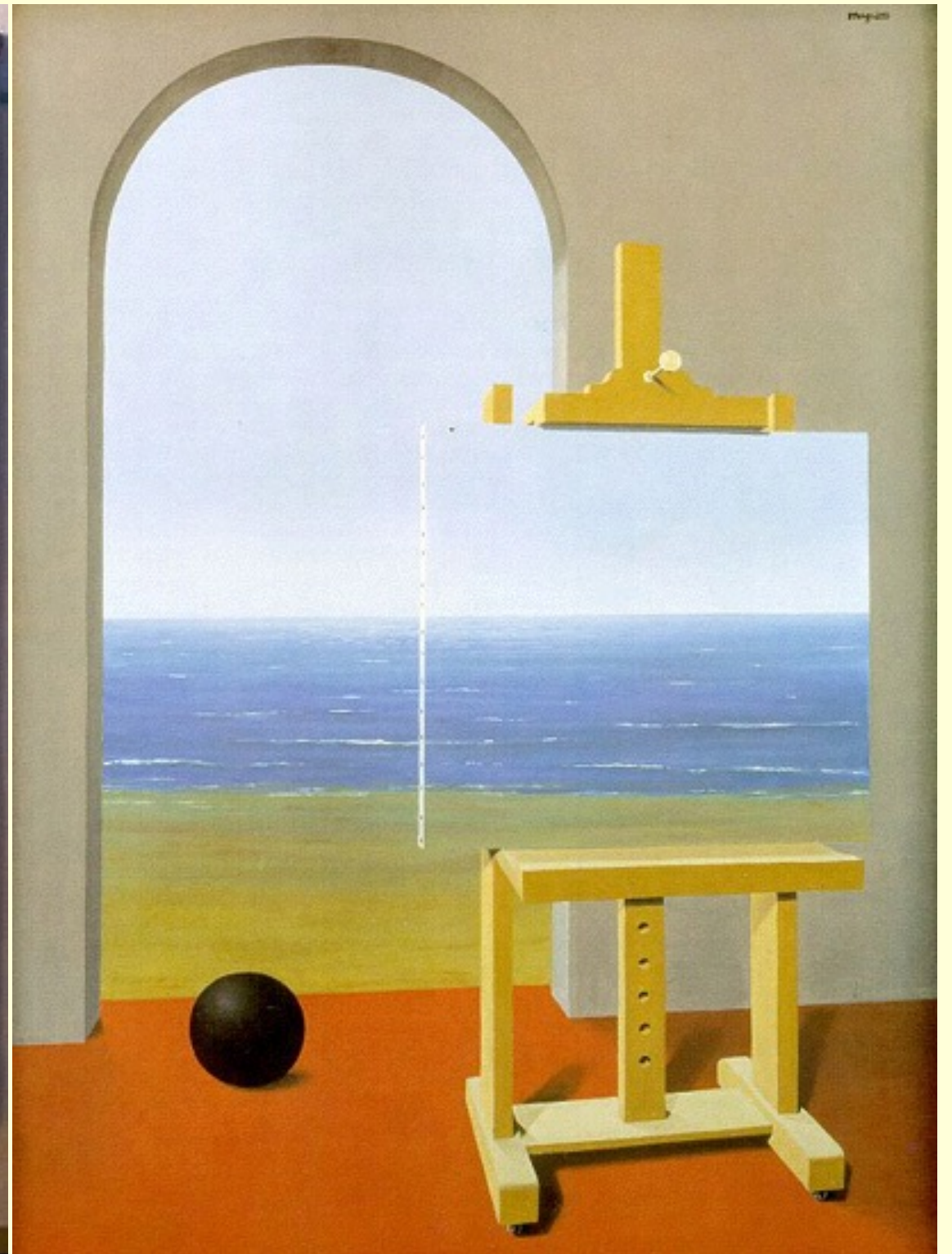


# Surrealism: Giorgio De Chirico, *The Disquieting Muses* (1918)





# Surrealism: Rene Magritte, *The Human Condition, I and II* (1933 and 1935)



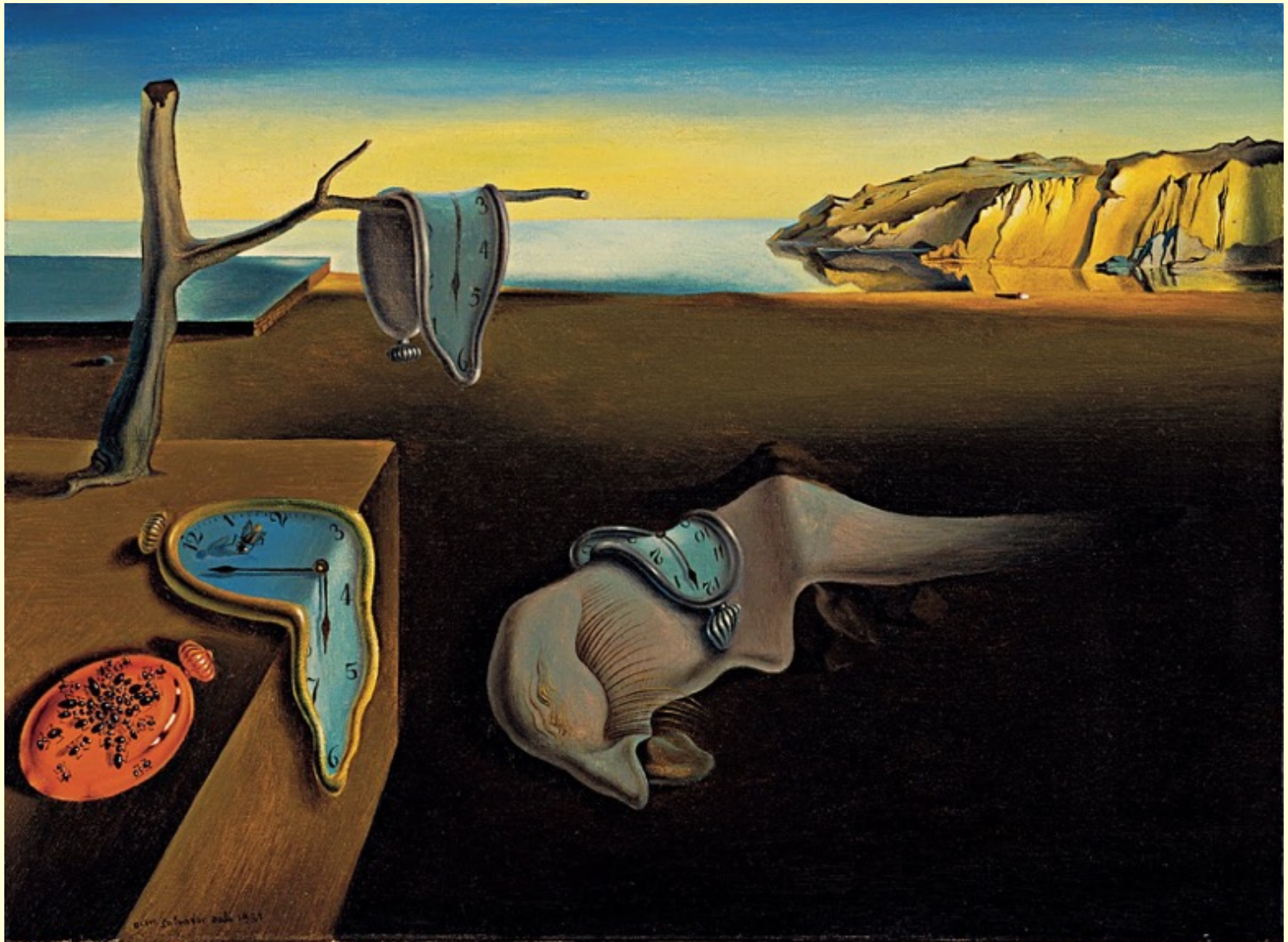


# Surrealism: Salvador Dali, *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1937)





# Surrealism: Salvador Dali, *The Persistence of Memory* (1931)







Dali - The Specter of Evening (1930)



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# CONCLUSION

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- Avant-garde movement
    - New ways of seeing
    - vs. the modern world
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