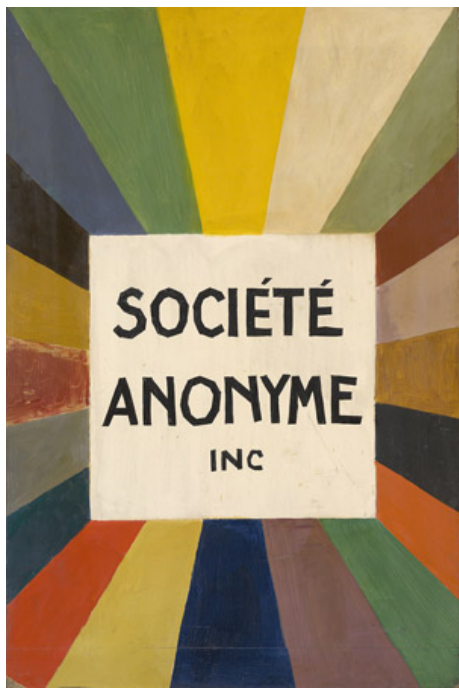


**GALLERY PRESENTS LEGENDARY SOCIÉTÉ ANONYME COLLECTION IN MAJOR EXHIBITION TRAVELING TO LOS ANGELES; WASHINGTON, D.C.; DALLAS; AND NASHVILLE**

*Features more than 240 works by artists including Duchamp, Mondrian, Kandinsky, Léger, and Man Ray, among many others*

The Yale University Art Gallery has announced a major two-year traveling exhibition drawn from its renowned collection of artworks once held by the Société Anonyme. Organized by the Gallery, the exhibition marks the first time that a substantial portion of this historic collection has traveled. It begins its tour at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (April 23–August 20, 2006), before traveling on to The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. (October 14, 2006–January 21, 2007); Dallas Museum of Art, TX (June 10–September 16, 2007); and Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, TN (October 26, 2007–February 3, 2008).



Artist unknown, Societe Anonyme Inc. Signboard, n. d.  
Paint on panel. Yale University Art Gallery

*The Société Anonyme: Modernism for America* features more than 240 works, including examples by Constantin Brancusi, Marcel Duchamp, Louis Eilshemius, Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, Lazlo Peri, Man Ray, Joseph Stella, and Nadezhda Udaltsova. The exhibition includes a representative selection of paintings, sculpture, drawings, and prints, as well as historical photographs and other memorabilia. Together, these offer a vivid portrait of the Société, including its history, activities, and the context in which it functioned.

Known as an “experimental museum” for modern art, the Société Anonyme was founded in New York in 1920 by artists Katherine S. Dreier, Duchamp, and Man Ray. It was an extraordinary organization, established in order to present contemporary art to American audiences from the point of view of artists rather than curators, critics, or art historians. It thus offered a non-hierarchical view of modernist art, one that included the work of both artists who had received the

blessings of curators and critics, and lesser-known artists who nonetheless contributed to the development of modernism.

The Société Anonyme fulfilled its mission by presenting exhibitions and other programs. In time, the organization also amassed, through artist donations, an exceptional – and exceptionally broad – collection of European and American art dating primarily from 1920 to 1940. In 1941, Dreier and Duchamp gave the majority of this collection to Yale. In the ensuing years, Dreier and Duchamp continued to solicit artist donations and give them to the University, and in 1953, the year after Dreier’s death, Duchamp

bequeathed the remainder of Dreier's personal collection, which includes one of the largest groups of works by Duchamp in America. Together, these gifts became the cornerstone of the Yale University Art Gallery's distinguished collection of modern art.

Jock Reynolds, the Henry J. Heinz II Director of the Yale University Art Gallery, states, "In 1920, when the Société Anonyme held its first exhibition, there were no museums in America that specialized in modern art. Most of this country's critics regarded such movements as Cubism as unworthy of serious consideration, while those who did value avant-garde work focused on a select few artists. Some thirty years, eighty exhibitions, and forty publications later, when the Société Anonyme disbanded, The Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum were all thriving institutions, and New York was emerging as the new international center of the avant-garde.

"Katherine Dreier's energetic and visionary espousal of the art and artists of her time, and her ability to generate that same enthusiasm in others, played a crucial role in America's embrace of modernism. The Société Anonyme story, and the extraordinary collection of works that Dreier and Duchamp assembled, deserve to be better known. We are delighted to have this opportunity to share this fascinating and important exhibition with new audiences across the country."

The exhibition and its accompanying publication have been organized by Jennifer R. Gross, the Seymour H. Knox, Jr., Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, with Susan Greenberg, the Horace W. Goldsmith Assistant Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, both of the Yale University Art Gallery. The exhibition will be presented at the Yale University Art Gallery in fall 2010, upon completion of the museum's renovation.

### Exhibition Highlights

*The Société Anonyme: Modernism for America* is organized in five sections. The first portrays the Société's inaugural exhibition, comprising sixteen works. It was Duchamp's first curatorial endeavor, and he affixed paper doilies to all of the paintings, making the exhibition one of the first manifestations of Dada in the United States. The second section of the exhibition presents work by some of the artists who were given



Francis Picabia, *Midi (Promenade des anglais)*, ca. 1923–26. Oil, feathers, macaroni, and leather on canvas in snakeskin frame (by Pierre Legrain), 21 3/4 x 39 1/4 in. (55.3 x 99.7 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Collection Société Anonyme

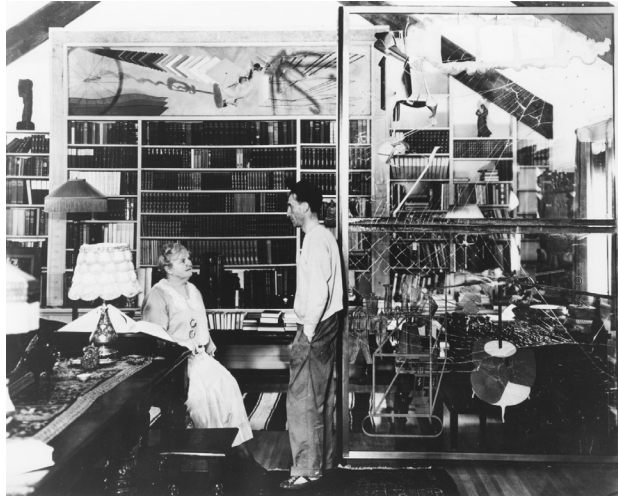
one-person shows by the Société, while the third section examines the organization's 1926 exhibition at The Brooklyn Museum. Following this is an exploration – including a film screening, a tape of a radio interview with Dreier, and other documentation – of the diversity of the Société's programming. Finally, the exhibition looks at the building of the collection, demonstrating how the frequently opposite aesthetics of Duchamp and Dreier yielded a rich and broad selection of work.

Highlights of works on view in the exhibition include a major work by Duchamp: *Tu m'*; a ten-foot-long canvas commissioned by Dreier in 1918 to hang over the bookcase in her New York City apartment. The painting (the title of which may refer to *Tu m'ennuis*, French for "You bore me") has been interpreted as the artist's farewell to oil painting, and wittily reprises many of his earlier works.

Other works include Kandinsky's *The Waterfall* (1909), an early landscape painted during his sojourn in Munich; Kasimir Malevich's *The Knife Grinder* (1912–13), also an early work, and one in which he is experimenting with Cubism and Futurism's multiplicity of forms; Brancusi's *Yellow Bird* (1919); Suzanne Duchamp's *Chef d'Oeuvre Accordion* (1921); László Perí's *Room (Space Construction) (Zimmer)* (1920–21); Francis Picabia's *Midi* (ca. 1923–26); Kurt Schwitters's *Monument to the Artist's Father* (ca. 1922–23); and

Mondrian's *Fox Trot A* (1930), inspired by one of the artist's favorite dances.

Examples by important American pioneers of modernism include Joseph Stella's *Brooklyn Bridge* (1919–20), one of the artist's signature images; Man Ray's sculptural *Lampshade* (1921); and Arthur Dove's *Sunrise III* (1936–37).



Katherine S. Dreier and Marcel Duchamp in the library at The Haven, her estate in West Redding, Conn., in the late summer of 1936. Above the bookshelf is *Tu m'*, installed there in 1931. Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

### **Katherine Dreier and the Société Anonyme**

Born in Brooklyn to German émigré parents, Katherine S. Dreier (1877–1952) studied painting in Europe during the early 1900s. There she was exposed to the progressive approaches to art espoused by Kandinsky and others. Upon returning to the United States, Dreier became dismayed by what she perceived to be America's un-informed and generally negative view of

avant-garde art, and in 1920 she collaborated with French expatriate artist Duchamp and American Surrealist Man Ray to found the Société Anonyme, Inc. (The title, reportedly a suggestion of Man Ray's, is the French idiomatic phrase denoting a company, and meaninglessly translates as "Incorporated, Inc.")

The new endeavor began in New York in 1920, when the Société Anonyme presented an exhibition in two rented rooms of a brownstone at 19 East 47 Street. The group went on to organize dozens of exhibitions. Of particular note were the first one-artist shows in the United States of Louis Michel Eilshemius, Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Léger. Dreier, with the help of international Société Anonyme colleagues, then organized the 1926 International Exhibition of Modern Art, held at The Brooklyn Museum. With 300 works by artists from ten countries, the exhibition was the most significant presentation of international modern art in America since the famed Armory Show of 1913. In years to come, Dreier would also organize a vigorous program of exhibitions, concerts, dance performances, and lectures throughout the United States.

In the 1940s, Dreier, in failing health, became concerned about the long-term care of works she had collected under the auspices of the Société Anonyme. She and Duchamp therefore decided to establish a permanent collection as the final mission of the organization, and they solicited gifts from many of the artists—including Josef Albers, Jean Arp, Max Ernst, and Mondrian, among others. The collection grew to number more than 1,000 works, and Dreier initiated negotiations for the transfer of the collection to the Yale University Art Gallery, where she and Duchamp believed the Société Anonyme's educational mission would be preserved. In addition to works of art, the University also received Dreier's extensive archive of correspondence, publications, photographs, and other memorabilia relating to the Société Anonyme.

These materials are now held at Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

In 1950, shortly before Dreier's death, the Société Anonyme was officially dissolved.

### **Exhibition Catalogue**

*The Société Anonyme: Modernism for America* will be complemented by a fully illustrated catalogue, copublished with Yale University Press, which includes a foreword by Mr. Reynolds; an introduction and essay by Ms. Gross; and essays by a team of scholars, including Ms. Greenberg, David Joselit, Ruth L. Bohan, Dickran Tashjian, Kristina Wilson, and Elise K. Kenney, discussing various aspects of the Société Anonyme.

### **Exhibition Support**

The exhibition is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support provided by Mr. and Mrs. James H. Clark, Jr. (B.A. 1958); Mr. and Mrs. James Howard Cullum Clark (B.A. 1989); Ms. Helen Runnells DuBois (B.A. 1978) and Mr. Raymond F. DuBois, Jr.; Mr. Leonard F. Hill (B.A. 1969); Mr. and Mrs. S. Roger Horchow (B.A. 1950); Mr. and Mrs. George T. Lee, Jr. (B.A. 1957); Dr. and Mrs. Edmund P. Pillsbury (B.A. 1965); Mr. Mark H. Resnick (B.A. 1978); Ms. Cathy R. Siegel and Mr. Kenneth Weiss; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph B. Smith (B.A. 1950); Mr. Michael Sullivan (B.A. 1973); and Mr. and Mrs. John Walsh (B.A. 1961).

### **Exhibition Web Site**

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Yale University Art Gallery has created a special web site, which is linked to the Gallery's main site. It features a comprehensive selection of images from the Société Anonyme Collection and information about the history and mission of the organization, as well as details about the current traveling show. Highlights include early Société Anonyme exhibition materials, video clips of works by Duchamp, and an audio interview with Katherine Dreier. The out-of-print 1984 catalogue raisonné of the collection will also be accessible on this site.

### **The Yale University Art Gallery**

Founded in 1832, the Yale University Art Gallery is the oldest and one of the most prestigious college art museums in the United States. With renowned collections of more than 185,000 objects from around the world, and from ancient times to the present day, the Gallery is one of the nation's leading teaching museums.

The Gallery's main building—the first museum designed by American architect Louis Kahn—is currently undergoing a comprehensive renovation, and is scheduled to reopen in late 2006. This work is part of a major renovation and expansion of the entire Gallery, to be completed in phases, and scheduled for completion in 2010. While the Kahn building is closed, the Gallery's internationally celebrated collections of American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts, as well as diverse special exhibitions, are displayed in the adjacent wing. The Gallery's collection can also be explored on the Gallery website: <http://artgallery.yale.edu>.

\* \* \*

For additional press information, please contact Libby Mark or Stephanie Ruggiero, Jeanne Collins & Associates, LLC, New York City, 646-486-7050, or [info@jcollinsassociates.com](mailto:info@jcollinsassociates.com).