

Max Ernst's Mythopoeic Ecocriticism: Beyond *Histoire naturelle*

Sandrine Welte

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract Pioneering various so-called chance techniques, Max Ernst embraced frottage for the realisation of *Histoire naturelle*, a compilation of 34 folios that unfold as a mythopoeic tale bringing together flora, fauna and humans. By this, Max Ernst sought to propose a narrative of creation differing from the Bible to illustrate an alternative account of interconnectedness between the actors. In a nod to multi-species ethics, the paper traces Max Ernst's explorations of intertwined existences across an oeuvre whose creative force led him not only 'beyond painting', but furthermore towards a vision of mutual entanglement across diverse forms of being.

Keywords Multi-species. *Histoire naturelle*. Surrealism. Max Ernst. Entanglement.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Ecocriticism as a Material(ity) in the Arts. – 3 First Hybridisations. – 4 Max Ernst's *Histoire naturelle*. – 5 Cosmologies of Interconnectedness: Max Ernst's Painted Mythopoeisis. – 6 Conclusion.



Peer review

Submitted 2025-03-13
Accepted 2026-03-06
Published 2026-10-08

Open access

© 2026 Welte | © 4.0



DOI 10.30687/QU/3103-5450/2025/02/005

1 Introduction

Among all the surrealists, it was perhaps Max Ernst who most fervently embraced André Breton's paradigm of the unspeakable nature of flora and fauna (Noheden 2022, 54). As a pioneer of the movement, his paintings establish a new vision of coexistence between different forms of life, by ruling out a rigid classification derived from an anthropocentrism as *tertium comparationis*. Fascinated by the forest since his early childhood,¹ Max Ernst refers to nature in his painted as well as sculpted work. His world, by this, is born from a very personal mythology where human beings and animals live in symbiosis.² The presence of his avian alter ego 'Loplop' dates from the 1920s, thereby coinciding with the creation of the 34 folios of *Histoire naturelle*. In this compilation of individual drawings made through the use of his frottage technique, Max Ernst sought to propose a narrative of creation that differs from that of the Bible to illustrate an alternative account of an equal co-existence and interconnectedness, shared between the different actors that populate the stage of life. An interest, he continued to pursue in later suites such as *The Nymph Echo* (1936) or *The Joy of Life* (1936) where characters and personae of various type inhabit jungle-like thickets of undergrowth.

Throughout his prolific career, the German painter worked in cycles, with the aim of formulating a cosmology guided by the ethos of analogy ('as above, so below')³. This *modus operandi* particularly formed the heart of the canvases executed in the early 1930s, a phase of great creativity. By isolating the constituent elements of one series and integrating them into another, he created links and meta-dialogues between his compositions, weaving an increasingly denser pattern of references. From *The Nymph Echo* (1936) to *The Joy of Living* (1936), Max Ernst crafted a universe of coexistence where the protagonists emerge as the emblem of a connected world. By tracing the narrative of mutual entanglement that rests at the heart of Max Ernst's art, the paper attempts a re-evaluation of his work

1 Max Ernst later noted that "almost everything he rubbed or scraped automatically became a forest". See Christie's Lot Essay Live Auction 23807. Lot 37 A. Max Ernst, *Simplicité* (1960). <https://www.christies.com.cn/en/lot/lot-6553795>.

2 In 1959, Max Ernst remarked that despite the lack of concrete depictions of man in his paintings, "tout est anthropomorphique: oiseaux, arbres" (Charbonnier 1959, 40) thus alluding to the shape-shifting quality of his chimerical characters while simultaneously hinting at the doppelgänger function his alter ego Loplop came to serve for.

3 Taken from the second verse of the *Emerald Tablet* (a short Hermetic text that first appeared in the late eighth or early ninth century), 'as above, so below' is a paraphrase of the Latin version from the original Arabic meant to reference the supposed effects of celestial mechanics upon terrestrial events. In a further interpretative bend, the verse also alludes to the similarities between the macrocosm and the microcosm that work in analogy.

from an ecological point of view by highlighting the creative force of paintings that speak to a cosmology of interconnectedness beyond man at the centre of the universe. In so doing, it shall be seen how ecocriticism can act as a material(ity) in the arts to rethink humanity's relationship with the more-than-human worlds as the creative gesture lends visual shape to the otherwise invisible to spark a dialogue that operates via imagery by virtue of a re-'present'-ation of the spiritual. From an anthropocentric view to a vision of multi-species ethics, the shift towards an inclusive stance will thus be traced as a defining feature of Max Ernst's mythopoeic anthology of images in a nod to entangled forms of life *ante litteram*.

2 Ecocriticism as a Material(ity) in the Arts

Originating in the field of literature studies, ecocriticism has been embraced by scholars to engage with environmental concerns through the lens of narrative-written output in a broad range of texts. From a focus on Nature or natural things in literature, the paradigm gradually got expanded to equally encompass art as a field to creatively address pressing issues related to forms of coexistence. As an effort to "reorient and widen the scope of cultural studies by emphasizing the ways in which human creativity [...] unfolds within a specific environment or set of environments" (Braddock 2009, 26), ecocriticism in the arts allows for a more pointed visual analysis that pays "close attention to the embeddedness of culture" in a larger eco-ethical setting (27).

In her article "The Ecological Imperative", Donna Roberts traces the peculiar concern with the integrative relations between man and environment, driven by a "radical epistemological shift" in order to "reassimilate connective analogical and poetic thinking into the processes of knowledge" (Roberts 2016, 217). Citing Roger Caillois, who affirmed that "L'homme ne s'oppose pas à la nature, il est lui-même nature" (Caillois 2008, 822) she iterates the continuities of an anthropological condition that extends to and originates from Nature as propagated by the Surrealists (Roberts 2016, 218). The assumed dichotomy of nature and civilisation – largely propagated by Enlightenment sources such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau – accordingly moved to the centre of critique, juxtaposed with an 'ecopoetry' and countered by a Romantic lyricism for an "imaginative reunification of mind and nature" (Bate 2000, 245). Concerned with a so-called 'ecopoeisis', the Surrealists sought to overcome a binary and hierarchical stance rooted in human exceptionalism. Distinguishing between 'anthropos' and Nature, Margot Norris explored biocentrism in Max Ernst's work where she discerned a striking tendency which she framed as "an interrogation of anthropocentric assumptions"

(Norris 1985, 21). The underlying 'environmental consciousness', as labelled by Kristoffer Noheden, acted as a unifying trope among the Surrealists as they questioned "views of nature as an emblem of backwardness, a resource to be exploited, and a realm for humans to lord over" – a stance permeating colonialist and capitalist ethe (Noheden 2022, 53).

Against the long-prevailing, dominant paradigm of (hu)man as the sole actor within a cosmological edifice that in line with the Biblical account placed them at the top of creation, an approach to the therefrom derived anthropocentrism through Max Ernst's work can offer a productive lens towards a re-writing of hierarchies. In their mutual entanglement, the individual actors of his pictorial worlds are characterised by their togetherness which destabilises an allegedly objective 'order to things'⁴ in favour of a symbiotic existence as in Diane Waldman's terms "[t]here is a frightening confusion between plant and animal life" (Waldman 1975, 53). While Max Ernst laid the foundation for a reconsideration of the dominant narrative with *Histoire naturelle*, it was with the later series of *The Entire City*, *The Nymph Echo* or *The Joy of Living* that the gradual blurring between human and animal, flora and fauna, man and nature unravelled its ideological thrust in an eradication of boundaries across different forms of life.

In a visionary gesture *ante litteram* – or in his case *ante imago* – the German Surrealist conjoined the diverse protagonists beyond a classificatory matrix that plots one against the other. Anthropocentric accounts get rectified while furthermore putting a patriarchal society in question as it is *Eve, the Only One Left to Us* who ultimately remains in a conjectural pre-enactment of the deluvian story of Noah's Ark (Gen 6:13-22). The alternative twists and turns of the narrative Max Ernst thusly anticipates find expression in the evolution of the 33 folios that culminate in the final one where woman appears as the saving grace. Projected as a non-sequitur through folio 34, Max Ernst's re-interpretation of the original account by this extends and anticipates the due course of events, formulating and conceiving a denouement of rather unexpected swerve instead, whose implications bear on a rewriting of the common origin account.

⁴ Allusion is made here to Michel Foucault's eponymous work.

3 First Hybridisations

From his early childhood, Max Ernst fostered a deep fascination with the forest and Nature. Frequent walks with his father in the woods of his native Rhineland introduced him to a world of fabled power and marvellous allure which from the 1920s onwards began to translate into his distinct oeuvre (Wilhelm 2020, 12). With a background in psychology, literature and philosophy (Trier 1979, 31), he constantly endeavoured to incorporate various scientific strands into his compositions, in search of new forms of expression 'beyond painting'.⁵

The first forays may in this regard be found in his collage oeuvre. Werner Spies has highlighted how the *modus operandi* served to create images whose semantic clout moved them past a literal translation of the individual elements towards a synthesis of newly coded constituents (Spies 2019). In its technical-iconographic ambition, collage allowed for a poignant commentary through a masterfully exercised 'alienating effect' (*Verfremdungseffekt*) of known imagery for a novel perspective – literal and proverbial – on given structures. By collating and integrating diverse references, Max Ernst formulated a visual inventory whose underlying ethos responded to the notion of cross-pollination.

Through the act of cutting and pasting, collage simultaneously originated in a gesture imbued with the zest of hybridisation, a 'breeding' of tokens and elements for a systematic construction of pictures. The final outcome of the hybrid image, on these grounds, proved pre-conditioned by the technique as multi-referentiality marked the very origin of the process itself.

From the first experiments with his collage technique, Max Ernst exploited its affordances in increasingly more complex compositions. While individual sheets had determined his early essays, starting from the late 1920s the cut and pasted images appeared in narrative cycles. While *Fiat modes pereat art* (*Let There Be Fashion, Down with Art*) (1920) constituted the first set of works in a portfolio tradition, the plates were still rooted in precise line drawing rather than a construction of pictorial worlds through the (re-)arrangement of source material. The collaged image correspondingly only appeared later in a chronological suite. Of distinct progression, *La Femme 100 têtes* (1929), *Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel* (1930) and *Une semaine de bonté* (1934) all share an interest in a morphology of the picture whose shape-shifting nature harbours a

⁵ 'Beyond Painting' recalls the eponymous autobiographic account by the German artist in which he explores forms of creating art other than by the application of paint on canvas using a brush.

concern with a subverting gesture that originates in the question of the 'stable' image.

Crossovers between different species – women with dragon wings, men with lion heads – feature in the folios, a constant play with forms of life that blur and merge. The hybrid, by this, surfaced as a prototype for a genesis of species that come together on the stages Max Ernst conjured *au-delà de la peinture*. Through the use of collage, the sourced and scavenged images were glued together in a pro-creative act, a collating of elements into forms of life.

The creative technique then emerged as a generative act whose results speak to a fabrication of the final image gleaned from the pool of pictorial tokens.

4 Max Ernst's *Histoire naturelle*

In a similar gesture, the principle of the sourced and collated image equally informed a panoply of subsequently developed 'chance' techniques. It was during Max Ernst's stay in a hotel room in Pornic on the French Atlantic coast in 1925, when intrigued by the pattern of the wooden floorboards he conceived a new technique that came to be known as 'frottage' by means of which he found a way of transferring the Surrealist principle of 'automatism'⁶ to painting and by extension art.⁷ In line with André Breton's dictum of "thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern" (Breton 1969, 26), this technique allowed to harness the chance effects achieved by rubbing a soft pencil over a textured surface in order to transpose a specific pattern to paper.⁸ "It is not a matter of drawing, but simply of tracing", André Breton had stipulated in his First Manifesto of Surrealism a year before (Spies 1991c, 128). A dictum, Max Ernst promptly responded to with his revolutionary technique. The thusly gained results, as poignantly formulated by Werner Spies, introduced a novel 'objectivity' (*Gegenständlichkeit*) to Max Ernst's oeuvre for conferring two disjointed planes of reality (*Wirklichkeitsebenen*) by virtue of combining an a priori structure with a pictorial object (*Bildgegenstand*) that proved semantically unrelated (Spies 2008, 203). The underlying iconographic concept opened up to a multiplicity of meaning as theme and execution

6 Born as a literary movement around the beginning of the 1920s, Surrealism only became an art movement with the First Manifesto penned in 1924, growing out of Dada by virtue of applying the dictum of the illogical, irrational and automatic to visual imagery.

7 Max Ernst describes this discovery of the frottage technique in his essay "Au-delà de la peinture" which he dates to August 10, 1925 (Spies 1991b, 21).

8 Ralph Ubl speaks of the hallucinatory effect created by these images (Ubl 2013, 126).

appeared in a novel relationship that no longer operated along a bi-lateral or mutual referentiality of a directly correlated Saussurean signifier and signified.⁹ On the contrary, by turning to frottage, Max Ernst was able to exploit and harness texture and patterns to synthesise images of autonomous nature. No longer tied to a figurative *re*-presentation, he subsequently embraced the technique to let himself be guided in the construction of his pictorial worlds. The explainable and rational (Spies 2008, 203) impetus as the driving forces of an enlightened Modernity thus came into question, thereby tipping a 'natural history' beyond its due course.

Inspired by the outcome, Max Ernst set about to use frottage to create his own *Histoire naturelle*, a cycle of 34 folios that recounts the history of Biblical beginnings. In this series dating from 1926 (Pech 2022, 142), he renewed his interest in natural phenomena which – through his creative gesture – were “transformed into images of potent cosmological forces” (Waldman 1975, 39). By this, the German Surrealist provided a savvy spin on the creation of Nature through the use of Nature while simultaneously questioning the surface of things via the material structures and patterns underlying the individual sheets. Seemingly disjointed at first glance, the compositions are unified by a narrative charge that comes to the fore through the deliberate choice of titles such as *Wheel of Light* or *Flood*, *Seismic Plants* which address and respond to the Biblical account of creation albeit in an enigmatic, elusive sense (Pech 2022, 144). The elements and constituents cited re-enact the origin story, arranged and presented as semantic units that operate by virtue of repetition, variation and exchange across a relational system to weave the folios into a non-linear, non-narrative sequence (Spies 2008, 207).

Comprising images of geological structures, evolving landscapes, sprouting vegetation and cavorting animals, the cycle unfolds as a witty commentary on the story in Genesis as Max Ernst reverted an established order of things. His transmutations of the automatically produced textures into a visual language of depiction, in Werner Spies' terms, “negated the linear course of human history, opposing it to a ‘histoire naturelle’” (Spies 1991b, 21). The implied allusion to Pliny the Elder and his eponymous tractate of ‘Natural History’ as the single largest work to have survived from the Roman Empire further expanded Max Ernst's interest in juxtaposing an allegedly objective structure of the natural world towards reality as an artefact (i.e. ‘artistically fabricated and made’) beyond mere classification.

Through his shrewd use of the textural constants, the German artist thus managed to break with established notions of a factual status quo, while arriving instead at a cosmogony that recurs to

⁹ For the Saussurean signifier and signified see Stawarska 2015.

the recombinant matrix of absolute structures which constituted his arsenal for a recreation of the world. Rather than a singular act of creation, Max Ernst's genesis of structures aligned with the Surrealists' "belief in a continuing process of re-creation" (Hubert 1972, 163). Five thematic groups may – broadly speaking – be made out, which upon closer inspection however reveal blurry. Among them range natural forces, vegetal landscapes as opposed to fossil spaces, contrasted with the animal kingdom. The visionary eye stars as a further framework, syncopated by *Eve, the Only One Left to Us*, as the ultimate culmination – an emancipated Eve freed from Adam (Pech 2022, 144). The folios rather convey the sensation of everything being in a state of metamorphosis and flux as the vegetal transforms into the animal while chimeras appear among other creatures.

In his typical gesture, Max Ernst poignantly re-synthesised semantic references in a cunning exploitation of surface appearances. From collage as an act of collating, conjoining and compiling different source materials he subsequently proceeded to frottage as the defining principle, thus moving from the cut-and-pasted images to the combining of textures-as-concepts. Recurring to the chance technique which Jürgen Pech poignantly described as a "filologia visuale" (Pech 2022, 142) the German Surrealist then coupled the Biblical account of creation with Pliny's 'natural history'. By synthetically re-integrating both, Max Ernst crafted a meta-narrative and commentary where both were overturned in favour of a vision that proceeded from a cosmos in flux whose 'Linnaean'¹⁰ boundaries got dissolved.

Faithful to his *modus operandi*, Max Ernst further exploited and extended the notion of hybridisation in a subtle (con)juncture of word and image. Keenly attuned to the charge of language, he regarded the act of 'baptising' his compositions as a way of freeing them from their visual or physical boundaries. By this, the Surrealist creed of chance procedures informed the process of naming: "Jamais je n'impose un titre à un tableau: j'attends que le titre s'impose à moi", he asserted, hinting at the appearance of the title "comme par magie" (Ernst 1970, 336).

Most of the titles in *Histoire naturelle*, on these grounds, read as a promise and a premise, highly evocative strings of words whose allusive – and elusive – force pushes the associative realm beyond a literal reading of both the written and the painted. Rather

10 A Swedish biologist and physician active in the eighteenth century, Carl Linnaeus (also known as Carl von Linné following his ennoblement) formalised the modern system of naming organisms in his binary nomenclature which earned him the sobriquet of 'father of taxonomy'.

than describing the visual counterpart, they operate by virtue of association and semantic activation, thereby extending the field of meaning in a nod to the Surrealist dictum of “psychic automatism in its pure state [...]”. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern” (Breton 1969, 26). With its punning clout, the free wordplay derides any dogmatic reading of the account in Genesis whose narrative requires a corrective lens.

Titles such as *Caesar's Palette*, *The Lime Tree is Docile* or *The Habit of Leaves* correspondingly forge links between semantically disjointed planes while endowing the often non-human protagonists with anthropomorphic traits. Flora and fauna, the vegetal and the animal merge and blur in Max Ernst's cosmogony while he infuses his compositions with a (literal) substrata of geological references in a cunning crafting – and creation – of an alternative universe. The thusly exercised world-building operates via constant vacillations beyond the rigid confines of a known or established order, wedding otherwise contradictory and exclusive elements in a savvy pun on the act of categorisation.

The resulting hybridisations interweave word, material and image such as in *The Fugitive (L'Évadé)* where the grill-like surface of a seascape serves as the backdrop for a bi(o)-morphic creature whose fish-shaped body shifts into the head of a bird. Of granular appearance, the chimera's rugged skin was likely obtained from rough linen (Pech 2022, 144) in a savvy application of the frottage technique. The natural texture of the underlying source materials constitutes the point of departure for Max Ernst's visual meditation on the interconnectedness of life forms as peculiar plants and bizarre animals are imbued with a mythopoeic ‘*élan vital*’.¹¹

5 **Cosmologies of Interconnectedness: Max Ernst's Painted Mythopoesis**

As poignantly formulated by Werner Spies, “Max Ernst's oeuvre[,] transcend[s] the historical man-made world” (Spies 1991b, 48). Amorphous apparitions of mineral shapes, crystalline solidifications of form and ever-changing vegetal structures characterise his pictorial universe where the lines between the vegetal, the animal and the human are faded and obscured in a constant re-writing and re-painting of forms of coexistence. His acute sense of natural history

11 Coined by French philosopher Henri Bergson in his 1907 book *Creative Evolution*, the term denotes the vital impulse and force of life, a creative principle that proceeds from the spontaneous morphogenesis and self-organisation of matter.

envisions modes of interconnectedness in a post-anthropocentric world where the individual actors emerge in constellations of mutual entanglement.

From the 34 folios of *Histoire naturelle* of the mid-1920s, Max Ernst continued his artistic research into the mythopoeic power of the image throughout the following years whereby his sensibility led him to conceive two cycles whose lush scenes and exotic landscapes recall a prelapsarian state that only upon second glance reveals permeated by a peculiar coexistence of flora and fauna.

The *Nymph Echo* (1936) along with *The Joy of Living* (1936) mark both a caesura as well as a continuation in Max Ernst's oeuvre as he integrated some of the decisive elements from former cycles such as *Garden Airplane Trap* (1935-36) or *The Entire City* (1935-37) into his compositions. In both series, human presences can no longer be told apart from flora and fauna, for rather than constituting singular, isolated entities, they appear in a state of symbiosis where the vegetal transforms into the bestial while the thusly conjured chimeras bear semblance to the human. Bird-headed creatures emerge from the thicket of the surrounding jungle, their manly hands peeling their way through the maze of foliage. Camouflaged amidst the impenetrable greenery, female bodies shine through, recalling ancient civilisations and cultures. Here is a world of entanglement and coexistence that painted in the mid-1930s effectively predates the premises of ecocriticism as coined in the 1960s.¹²

The lines between the different actants – otherwise so rigidly kept and upheld – accordingly begin to blur, in a transgressive vision exercised in a cunning updating of Linnean classification. *The Joy of Living* and *The Nymph Echo* resonate with a (pro)creative zest that finds its continuation in subsequent cycles such as *The Entire City* while simultaneously harking back to series like *Garden Airplane Trap*.

Across the three series, human, animal and plant appear in tangles of existence, jointly inhabiting alluring spaces of ancient civilisations, abandoned plateaux or voracious jungles. Flora and fauna merge and blur, either swallowing their surroundings or ejecting it while architectural realms and machine scraps speak to

12 As the interdisciplinary study of the connections between literature and the environment, ecocriticism draws on various strands (such as anthropology, natural sciences and literary criticism) to examine the differences and gaps between nature and its cultural construction. The 'discipline' emerged with the formation of the environmental movement upon publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962. However, it only fully took off in the 1980s with a second wave occurring in the 1990s. From an initial concern with nature as a field of study, the interest shifted to investigating the act of writing as a meaningful practice to challenge dominant hierarchies and binary conceptions of nature vs human beings vs culture.

forms of life that come together across the otherwise dividing lines of classification. Rather than separate entities, they all appear in states of togetherness, hybrid creatures that meet on the planes Max Ernst projected.

One of the most pertinent explorations in line with the eradication of boundaries may furthermore be found in his so-called 'Hesperides' (Spies 2008, 375). In a bold move beyond binary traditions, Max Ernst conjured images of hybrid creatures that conjoin both sexes – such as in *Two Sexless Figures. Chimerae* (1933) – while hovering between plant, animal and human. By irreverently conceiving forms of coexistence across the classificatory matrix otherwise in place, the German surrealist undid the dominant narratives as he breathed life into novel breeds and pedigrees. Featuring both male and female sexual characteristics and displaying traits of flora and fauna, the respective protagonists of his compositions such as in *Figure humaine* (1931) are born from visions of interconnectedness across the lines of biological classification. The composite beings originate in a biomorphic distortion of life forms, based on a classificatory matrix he reshuffles (Spies 2008, 375).

Intrigued by the enduring power of storytelling as a universal human trait, Max Ernst imbued his paintings with an underlying narrative current that feeds into his own mythology and personal myth. By this, he crafted his paintings in cycles to gradually build an inventory of recurring images which jointly unfold along a sequence. In their shared thrust, the suites of pictures progress with keen attention to a greater overarching storyline. Multiple fonts of inspiration feed into the compositions as the German Surrealist rendered tableaux that echo the great questions of life. The anthropological constant of origin accounts thereby lies at the heart of a quest for the parameters that frame life.

Passed along multiple generations, mythologies anchor human existence in a storied past, thus establishing a link between the present and times immemorial. On these grounds, they act as meaningful nodes across periods and eras, in a perennial updating of the origins of the world. The vagaries and fleetingness of things are overcome, substituted with a forever-'truth' that operates outside of limiting frames of days, months or years. By providing symbolic explanations for natural phenomena as well as cultural traditions, mythologies offer templates to make sense of a surrounding world while reflecting systems of belief and shared customs. As routes to the supernatural, they powerfully extend the human existence towards the divine.

6 Conclusion

As can be seen in Max Ernst's work, the artist's struggle and juggle with depicted reality and its visual imagery of reproductions, illustrations and collages in drawing and painting proceeds from an investigation of the inventory of form and content towards a construction of something "nie zuvor gesehen" (Spies 1991a, 15). The generative force of the artistic endeavour accordingly offers a powerful – and thereby pictorially eloquent tool – to operate as a visual figure of speech, employed to craft alternative cosmologies. Flora, fauna and human are entangled, jointly inhabiting nature as the lines of classificatory matrices dissolve along hybrid forms of being.

In Max Ernst's compositions, the material – as well as the materiality – of the image becomes a point of departure for a mythopoeic ecocriticism where chance techniques give way to visual worlds to take shape. By embracing the generative force of the image-making process, the German Surrealist crafted alternative cosmologies of interconnectedness, carried by a narrative thrust that refutes a nature-culture-divide in favour of symbiotic worldviews that speak to patterns of mutual dependence and exchange. A look into his creative cosmos may thus become a revelatory experience to discern an ecology of togetherness 'beyond painting'.

Bibliography

- Bate, J. (2000). *The Song of the Earth*. London: Macmillan.
- Braddock, A.C. (2009). "Ecocritical Art History". *American Art*, 23(2), 24-8.
- Breton, A. [1924] (1969). *Manifesto of Surrealism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Caillois, R. (2008). *Oeuvres*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Charbonnier, G. (1959). *Le Monologue du peintre*. Paris: Éditions de la Villette.
- Ernst, M. [1959] (1970). *La Nudité de la femme est plus sage que l'enseignement d'un philosophe*. Cologne: Galerie Der Spiegel.
- Hubert, R.L. (1972). "The Fabulous Fiction of Two Surrealist Artists: Giorgio de Chirico and Max Ernst". *New Literary History*, 4(1), 151-66.
- Noheden, K. (2022). "Toward a Total Animism. Surrealism and Nature". Strom, K. (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Surrealism*. New York: Routledge, 53-61.
- Norris, M. (1985). *Beasts of the Modern Imagination: Darwin, Nietzsche, Kafka, Ernst and Lawrence*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Pech, J. (2022). "Storia Naturale". Mazzotta, M.; Pech, J. (a cura di), *Max Ernst = Catalogo della mostra* (Milano, 4 ottobre 2022-26 febbraio 2023). Milano: Electa, 142-4.
- Roberts, D. (2016). "The Ecological Imperative". Fijalkowski, K.; Richardson, M. (eds), *Surrealism: Key Concepts*. London: Routledge, 217-27.
- Spies, W. (1991a). "Zum graphischen Werk". Spies, W. (Hrsg.), *Sammlung Lufthansa: Max Ernst Graphik und Bücher*. Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje Verlag, 7-31.

- Spies, W. (1991b). "An Aesthetics of Detachment". Spies, W. (ed.), *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*. Munich: Prestel, 9-53.
- Spies, W. (1991c). "Frottage and *Histoire Naturelle*". Spies, W. (ed.), *Max Ernst. A Retrospective*. Munich: Prestel, 128-36.
- Spies, W. (2008). "Max Ernst: Loplop. Die Selbstdarstellungen des Künstlers". Spies, W. (Hrsg.), *Max Ernst. Vom Material zum Stil*. Berlin: Berlin University Press, 231-415.
- Spies, W. (2019). *Max Ernst und die Geburt des Surrealismus*. München: C.H. Beck.
- Stawarska, B. (2015). "The Signifier and the Signified". *Saussure's Philosophy of Language as Phenomenology: Undoing the Doctrine of the Course in General Linguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 23-70. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190213022.003.0002>.
- Trier, E. (1979). "Was Max Ernst studiert hat". Spies, W. (Hrsg.), *Max Ernst: Retrospektive*. München: Prestel, 31-42.
- Ubl, R. (2013). "Max Ernst and the History of Modern Painting". Spies, W.; Drost, J. (eds), *Max Ernst: Retrospective*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 196-201.
- Waldman, D. (1975). *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*. New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation.
- Wilhelm, J. (2020). *Max Ernst. Wienands kleine Reihe der Künstlerbiografien*. Köln: Wienand-Verlag.

