

THE GALLERY OF  
**EVERYTHING**

**JANET SOBEL**  
**20TH CENTURY WOMAN**

FRIEZE MASTERS (BOOTH H07)  
REGENT'S PARK, LONDON NW1  
13TH TO 17TH OCTOBER 2021

THE GALLERY OF **EVERYTHING**  
4 CHILTERN STREET, LONDON W1  
10TH OCTOBER TO 14TH NOVEMBER 2021





*UNTITLED*, c 1944  
OIL, CANE ON BOARD  
76.5 X 56.3 CM  
30 $\frac{1}{8}$  X 22 $\frac{1}{8}$  IN



# JANET SOBEL

BORN 1893, UKRAINE

DIED 1968, NEW JERSEY

THE GALLERY OF EVERYTHING RETURNS TO FRIEZE MASTERS 2021 WITH *JANET SOBEL: 20TH CENTURY WOMAN*.

THIS MUSEUM-LEVEL PRESENTATION OF PAINTINGS ON CANVAS AND BOARD BY JANET SOBEL OPENS AT THE FRIEZE MASTERS ART FAIR AND CONTINUES AT THE GALLERY OF EVERYTHING WITH AN INSTALLATION OF WORKS ON PAPER.

THE DUAL EXHIBITIONS FOLLOW THE ARTIST'S CRITICAL INCLUSION IN: *WOMEN IN ABSTRACTION* AT CENTRE POMPIDOU IN PARIS (2021), CURATED BY CHRISTINE MACEL; *OUTLIERS AND AMERICAN VANGUARD ART* AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART IN WASHINGTON DC AND LACMA IN LOS ANGELES (2017), CURATED BY LYNNE COOKE; *ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM* AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY IN LONDON (2016), CURATED BY DR DAVID ANFAM AND EDITH DEVANEY.

*JANET SOBEL: 20TH CENTURY WOMAN* IS THE ARTIST'S FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION OUTSIDE AMERICA.



*UNTITLED*, c 1943

OIL ON MASONITE

57.1 X 45.4 CM

22½ X 17⅞ IN



*UNTITLED, c 1948*

OIL ON PANEL

34.9 X 27.3 CM

13<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> X 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> IN



*UNTITLED*, c 1942  
GOUACHE ON BOARD  
32.5 X 25 CM  
12 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> X 9 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> IN



*UNTITLED, c 1947*

GOUACHE ON CANVAS BOARD

50.8 X 40 CM

20 X 15¾ IN



*HER WORK IS EXTRAORDINARILY FREE FROM SELF-  
CONSCIOUSNESS AND PRETENCE.*

JOHN DEWEY, PHILOSOPHER AND WRITER

BORN IN UKRAINE, 1890, **JANET SOBEL** IS ONE OF THE UNSUNG HEROINES OF 20TH CENTURY ART. HER IDIOSYNCRATIC AND SHAPE-SHIFTING AESTHETIC WAS CHAMPIONED BY COLLECTOR PEGGY GUGGENHEIM, ARTISTS MAX ERNST AND MARK ROTHKO, AND CURATOR WILLIAM RUBIN.

**SOBEL**'S SELF-TAUGHT PRACTICE BEGAN IN HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE LATE 1930S, WHEN ENCOURAGED BY HER ART STUDENT SON, THIS UKRAINIAN IMMIGRANT BEGAN TO SKETCH MEMORIES OF HER JEWISH UPBRINGING IN EASTERN EUROPE. HER EARLY WORKS, REMINISCENT OF MARC CHAGALL, DELIGHTED FRIENDS AND FAMILY WITH THEIR SWIRLING FACES AND BRIGHT COLOURATION.

THE IMAGERY FROM THIS PERIOD REVEALED AN INSTINCTIVE CERTAINTY OF COLOUR, SHAPE AND FORM. IT SPOKE NOT JUST OF **SOBEL**'S PAST, BUT OF HER IDENTITY IN THE NEW WORLD. IT ALSO BROUGHT HER TO THE ATTENTION OF LEGENDARY GALLERIST AND CURATOR SIDNEY JANIS, WHO INCLUDED A PAINTING BY **SOBEL** IN HIS SHOW *AMERICAN PRIMITIVE PAINTINGS* AT THE ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO IN 1943.



*ARTISTS AT THE PREVIEW, c 1943*

ENAMEL ON CANVAS

60 X 75 X 1.5 CM

23<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> X 29<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> X <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> IN



*UNTITLED*, c 1942

OIL ON PANEL

30.8 X 25.4 CM

12½ X 10 IN



*UNTITLED, c 1947*

CRAYON ON CARDBOARD

23.4 X 18.5 CM

9¼ X 7¼ IN



*UNTITLED*, c 1948  
CRAYON ON PAPER  
34.9 X 25.4 CM  
13¾ X 10 IN

*JANET SOBEL WILL BE EVENTUALLY KNOWN AS  
THE MOST IMPORTANT SURREALIST PAINTER IN  
THIS COUNTRY.*

SIDNEY JANIS, GALLERIST AND CURATOR

SOBEL SOON EVOLVED A PARTICULAR FORM OF ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM, WHICH IN TURN LED TO AN ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION BY THE GREAT AND THE GOOD OF NEW YORK'S ART SCENE.

SOBEL FOUND HERSELF WELCOMING, PHILOSOPHER JOHN DEWEY, ARTIST MAX ERNST, AND EVEN THE KING OF THE SURREALISTS, ANDRÉ BRETON, TO THE FAMILY HOME IN BROOKLYN.

SOBEL WAS EXHIBITED AT NORLYST ART GALLERY BY MAX ERNST'S SON JIMMY IN 1944; AND HER INCLUSION IN *THE WOMEN* AT PEGGY GUGGENHEIM'S ART OF THIS CENTURY GALLERY (ALONG WITH LOUISE BOURGEOIS, IRENE RICE PEREIRA AND KAY SAGE) LED TO A SOLO SHOW AT THE SAME VENUE IN 1946.





*UNTITLED*, c 1946  
MIXED MEDIA ON CARDBOARD  
66 X 55.9 CM  
26 X 22 IN



*UNTITLED, c 1946/48*

ENAMEL ON CANVAS

50.8 X 40.6 CM

20 X 16 IN



*UNTITLED, c 1945*

OIL ON MASONITE

45.7 X 35.6 CM

18 X 14 IN



*UNTITLED, c 1947*

CRAYON, ENAMEL ON CANVAS BOARD

41 X 30.5 CM

16½ X 12½ IN



*THE BEST WOMAN PAINTER.*  
PEGGY GUGGENHEIM, COLLECTOR AND GALLERIST

AD REINHARDT'S INSIDERS' ART MAP OF 1945, *HOW TO LOOK AT MODERN ART IN AMERICA*, LOCATES SOBEL ALONGSIDE MARK TOBEY, ARSHILE GORKY AND ANDRÉ MASSON; AND IT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED THAT HER TECHNIQUE OF *DRIP PAINTING* - WHEREBY PAINT IS DRIBBLED AND SPLATTERED ACROSS THE CANVAS - WAS SEEN AND ADMIRER BY JACKSON POLLOCK, AND WOULD GO ON TO REVOLUTIONISE HIS OWN TRAJECTORY.

YET SOBEL WAS NOT CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH AS HER PEERS. SHE MOVED TO NEW JERSEY, STOPPED CREATING WORK AND GRADUALLY SLIPPED OUT OF THE SPOTLIGHT. DESPITE HER STELLAR ASCENT, ART HISTORY LABELLED HER A *PRIMITIVE PAINTER* AND *HOUSEWIFE*.

EVEN THE CURATOR WILLIAM RUBIN'S SUPPORT AND PATRONAGE, ACQUIRING PAINTINGS FOR THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART IN 1968, WERE NOT ENOUGH FOR A SOCIETY FIXATED ON THE ART-EDUCATED CAUCASIAN MALE GAZE.



*UNTITLED*

OIL ON CANVAS

811.3 X 63.5 CM

32 X 25 IN



*PRO & CONTRA*, 1941

OIL ON BOARD

76.2 X 50.8 CM

30 X 20 IN





*UNTITLED, c 1947*  
GOUACHE ON PAPER  
45.1 X 30.5 CM  
17¾ X 12 IN

*POLLOCK ADMITTED THAT THESE PICTURES HAD  
MADE AN IMPRESSION ON HIM.*

CLEMENT GREENBERG, ART CRITIC

SOBEL DIED IN 1968. IT WOULD BE ALMOST 50 YEARS BEFORE HER WORK WAS AGAIN SINGLED OUT FOR ITS INFLUENCE AND INNOVATION.

TODAY HER PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS ARE HIGHLY SOUGHT AFTER AND REGULARLY INCLUDED IN EXHIBITIONS ON FEMALE ART, MODERNISM AND TWENTIETH CENTURY ABSTRACTION, WITH ADVOCATES RANGING FROM LYNNE COOKE, CHIEF CURATOR OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY AT THE SMITHSONIAN, TO ALICE WALTON, FOUNDER OF CRYSTAL BRIDGES MUSEUM.

JANET SOBEL'S MONUMENTAL PAINTING, *THE MILKY WAY* (1945), IS CURRENTLY ON DISPLAY AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART IN NEW YORK.



*UNTITLED, c 1942*

GOUACHE ON PAPER

15 X 9.5 CM

5 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> X 3 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> IN



*UNTITLED, c 1947*

GOUACHE AND INK ON CARDBOARD

24.13 X 15.56 CM

9½ X 6⅛ IN



*THE ILLUSION OF SOLIDITY, c 1945*

OIL ON CANVAS

108.5 X 68.6 CM

42<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> X 27<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> IN



*SOBEL'S WORK IS FURTHER PROOF OF MODERNISM'S  
IMPURE, NONLINEAR PATHS. IT IS GREAT THAT HER  
SHORT STRANGE CAREER IS VISIBLE AGAIN.*

ROBERTA SMITH, NEW YORK TIMES



SELECTED COLLECTIONS

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM, NEW YORK CRYSTAL BRIDGES MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, BENTONVILLE HIRSHHORN MUSEUM AND SCULPTURE GARDEN, WASHINGTON, D.C. LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART, LOS ANGELES THE MENIL COLLECTION, TEXAS MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF FINE ART, PHILADELPHIA SAN DIEGO MUSEUM OF ART, SAN DIEGO THE MUSEUM OF EVERYTHING, LONDON WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, NEW YORK

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

*AMERICAN PRIMITIVE PAINTING OF FOUR CENTURIES*, ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO, CHICAGO, 1943  
*27-30 ANNUAL*, BROOKLYN MUSEUM, NEW YORK, 1943-46  
*ABSTRACT AND SURREALIST ART IN AMERICA*, MORTIMER BRANDT GALLERY, NEW YORK, 1944  
*JANET SOBEL*, PUMA GALLERY, NEW YORK, 1944  
*ABSTRACT AND SURREALIST ART IN THE UNITED STATES*, MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, SAN FRANCISCO; SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM; SEATTLE MUSEUM OF ART AND OTHERS, 1944  
*CHRONICLE OF OUR ELDERS*, NORLYST ART GALLERY, NEW YORK, 1944  
*ART OF THIS CENTURY: THE WOMEN*, PEGGY GUGGENHEIM, NEW YORK; SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF ART AND OTHERS, 1945  
*ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE*, PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS, PHILADELPHIA, 1945  
*THE WOMEN*, ART OF THIS CENTURY, NEW YORK, 1945  
*JANET SOBEL*, ART OF THIS CENTURY, NEW YORK, 1946  
*RECENT ACQUISITIONS*, MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, 1970  
*AMERICAN WOMEN ARTISTS PART I: 20TH CENTURY PIONEERS*, SIDNEY JANIS GALLERY, NEW YORK, 1984

*PEGGY GUGGENHEIM'S OTHER LEGACY*, PEGGY GUGGENHEIM, VENICE; SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM, NEW YORK, 1987/88  
*ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM: OTHER DIMENSIONS*, WHITNEY MUSEUM OF ART AT PHILLIP MORRIS, NEW YORK AND OTHERS, 1989/90  
*ART OF THE FORTIES*, MOMA, NEW YORK, 1991  
*ARTIST'S CHOICE: ELIZABETH MURRAY: MODERN WOMEN*, MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, 1995  
*VITAL FORMS: AMERICAN ART AND DESIGN IN THE ATOMIC AGE, 1940-1960*, BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART AND OTHERS, 2002  
*ACTION/ABSTRACTION: POLLOCK, DE KOONING AND AMERICAN ART, 1940-1976*, JEWISH MUSEUM, NEW YORK, 2008  
*APPROACHING ABSTRACTION*, AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM, NEW YORK, 2010  
*IN WONDERLAND: THE SURREALIST ADVENTURES OF WOMEN IN MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES*, LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART, LOS ANGELES, 2012  
*ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM*, ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS, LONDON, 2016; GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, BILBAO, 2017  
*THE MUSEUM OF EVERYTHING #6*, KUNSTHAL ROTTERDAM, ROTTERDAM, 2016  
*MAKING SPACE: WOMEN ARTISTS AND POSTWAR ABSTRACTION*, MOMA, NEW YORK, 2017  
*OUTLIERS AND AMERICAN VANGUARD ART*, NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON DC, 2018; HIGH MUSEUM OF ART, ATLANTA, 2018; LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART, 2018/19  
*THE MUSEUM OF EVERYTHING #7*, MUSEUM OF OLD AND NEW ART, TASMANIA, 2017/18  
*WOMEN IN ABSTRACTION*, LE CENTRE POMPIDOU, 2021; GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, BILBAO, 2021/22



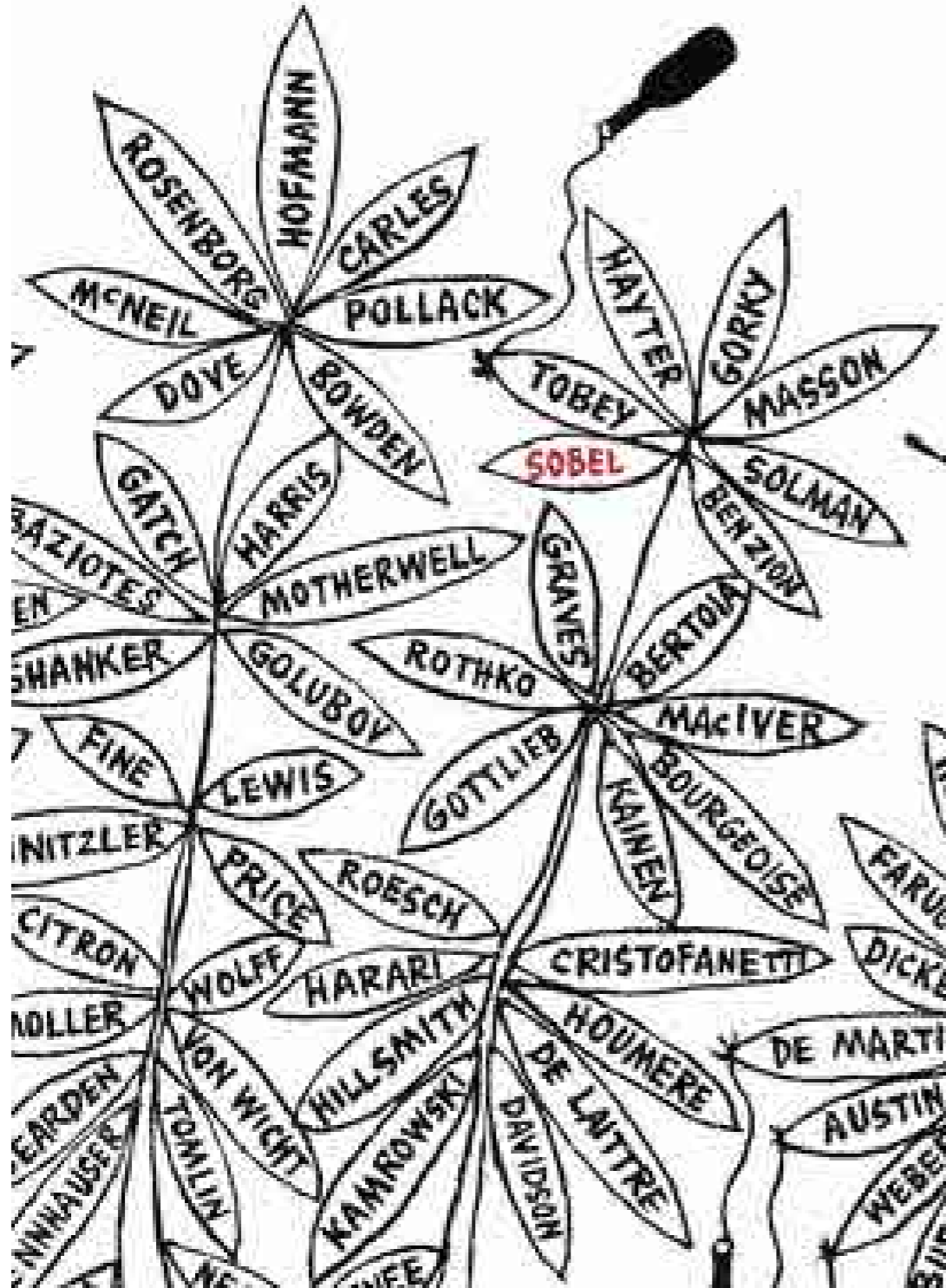
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FOR SALE ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT [GE@GALLEVERY.COM](mailto:GE@GALLEVERY.COM)



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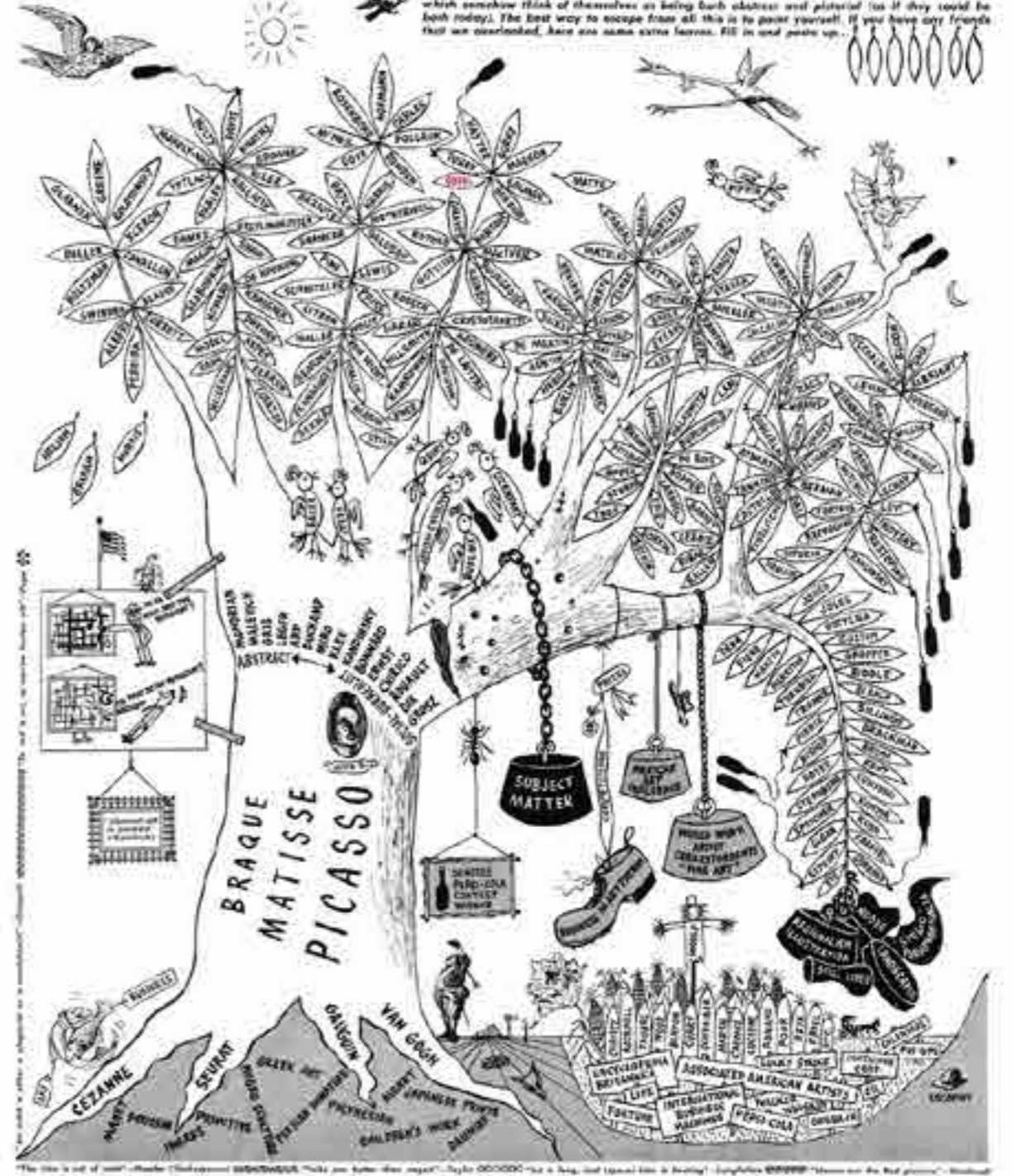
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### HOW TO LOOK AT MODERN ART IN AMERICA

by Ad Reinhardt

Here's a guide to the galleries—the art world in a nutshell—a tree of contemporary art from pure (abstract) "paintings" (on your left) to pure (illustrative) "pictures" (down on your right). If you know what you like but don't know anything about art, you'll find the artists on the left hardest to understand, and the names on the right easiest and most familiar (famous). You can start in the middle, where no demand is made on you and work your way up and around. Be especially careful of those various schools situated on that overhanging section of the tree, which somehow think of themselves as being both abstract and pictorial (as if they could be both today). The best way to escape from all this is to paint yourself. If you have any friends that are overworked, here are some extra leaves. Fill in and paste up.



AD REINHARDT, HOW TO LOOK AT MODERN ART IN AMERICA (1946)