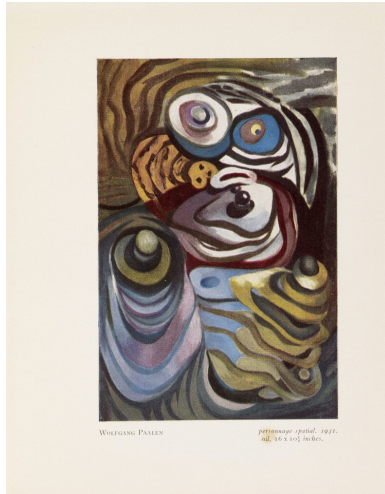




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*Space Person*, 1942. Wolfgang Paalen (Austrian, 1905-1959). Letterpress, offset print. As printed in *Dyn*, no.3 (Mexico City, 1942). The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. © Succession Paalen, Paalen Archiv, Berlin.

GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE PRESENTS  
***FAREWELL TO SURREALISM:  
THE DYN CIRCLE IN MEXICO***

***Exhibition explores the ideas of the unique journal  
Dyn, created by an international group of writers  
and artists collaborating in Mexico in the 1940s***

At the Getty Research Institute, Getty Center  
October 2, 2012–February 17, 2013

LOS ANGELES—In 1939, three artists, Wolfgang Paalen (Austrian, 1905-1959), Alice Rahon (French, 1904-1987), and Eva Sulzer (Swiss, 1902-1990), left Paris to explore the pre-Columbian ruins of the Pacific Northwest and Mexico. They remained in Mexico, becoming part of an international group of surrealist artists and writers who settled in Mexico City during the 1940s.

These artists—haunted by the Second World War, inspired by science, and seduced by archaeological discoveries—defined a new direction for their art. In dialogue with and in opposition to their surrealist colleagues in New York, they also created a journal called *Dyn*. From 1942 to 1944, six issues of *Dyn* were published and distributed in New York, London, Paris, and Mexico City. The journal included the work of avant-garde writers, painters, and photographers, as well as scholarly contributions by anthropologists and archaeologists.

On view October 2, 2012 through February 17, 2013, ***Farewell to Surrealism: The Dyn Circle in Mexico*** features paintings, photographs, drawings, letters, ephemera and other objects from more than a dozen artists and writers connected with *Dyn*, including Paalen,

-more-

Rahon, Sulzer, as well as Manuel Alvarez Bravo (Mexican, 1902-2002), Miguel Covarrubius (Mexican, 1904-1957), Gordon Onslow Ford (English, 1912-2003), Doris Heyden (American, 1915-2005), Robert Motherwell (American, 1915-1991), César Moro (Peruvian, 1903-1956), Rosa Rolando (American, 1985-1970), and others. The exhibition is curated by Annette Leddy, senior cataloguer and a consulting curator at the Getty Research Institute, and Donna Conwell, associate curator at Montalvo Arts Center in Saratoga, California.

"While art history has noted the contributions of the individual artists in this circle, it is important to examine the new aesthetic found in *Dyn* itself, which played a critical but under-recognized role in the transition from surrealism to abstract expressionism," said Leddy.

The title of the exhibition is taken from Paalen's essay, "Farewell au surrealism," which was published in the first issue of *Dyn* in 1942, signaling his public break with surrealism. Paalen criticized surrealism's philosophical foundations, particularly what he describes as its simplistic application of the ideas of Marx and Freud. On view in the exhibition, letters between members of the *Dyn* group reveal that the French founder of the Surrealist movement, Andre Breton (1896-1966), was angered by Paalen's manifesto and the very existence of *Dyn*, which he saw as a rival of his New York-based journal, *VVV*.

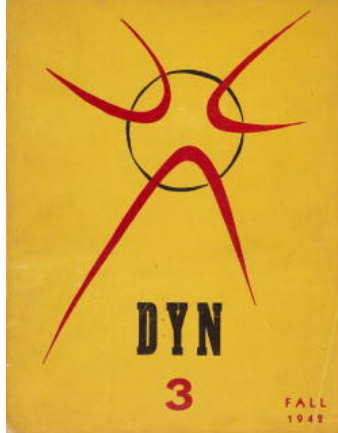
*Dyn* derives from the Greek *to dynaton*, which means "the possible." It was selected by Paalen, the circle's primary theorist, who held that revolutionary art must not represent what exists but rather "pre-figure the possible." *Dyn's* contributors shared a fascination with the pre-Columbian past of the Americas, as well as mathematics, physics, geology, and ethnography. The exhibition explores how each of these themes manifested in their paintings, photographs, poetry and other works.

*Dyn* painters often conjoined scientific imagery with motifs from pre-Columbian objects to create works of visual abstraction. For example, Gordon Onslow Ford's painting *The Marriage*, 1944 is reminiscent of diagrams about condensation and evaporation, yet it also recalls depictions of nature in pre-Columbian seals.

Photographers extended the ethnographic impulse that was part of traditional surrealism to generate images that oscillate between anthropological document and anti-realist image. Manuel Alvarez Bravo's photograph *Un pez que llaman sierra* (A Fish Called Sierra), unsettles the depiction of Mexican "popular types"—a tradition dating back to the



*Un pez que llaman sierra*, negative 1944; print later. Manuel Álvarez Bravo (Mexican, 1902-2002). Gelatin silver print. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser. © Colette Urbajtel/ Archivo Manuel Álvarez Bravo, SC



Cover of *Dyn*, no. 3, 1942. The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. © Succession Paalen, Paalen Archiv, Berlin.

1800s in which photographers, both foreign and domestic, recorded picturesque images of Mexico's indigenous poor as symbols of Mexican identity. Instead of readily offering herself up to the viewer, Alvarez Bravo's subject stares off into the distance with remote detachment and is puzzlingly placed next to an overturned fishing boat with the head of a swordfish placed on it.

Turning to the physical science of geology for artistic material was an established surrealist practice. Alice Rahon took up that strategy in her abstract aerial landscapes involving mountains, ice, and water. In her painting, *Meeting of the Rivers*, 1942,

published in *Dyn*, no. 3, Rahon integrates incised figures and emblems she encountered in Canada and Mexico, which also appear in the pages of *Dyn* as archaeological photographs.

Much of the material on display in this exhibition comes from the papers of Peruvian poet, essayist, artist, curator, and editor César Moro. The Getty Research Institute's César Moro papers include numerous affectionate cards and letters from members of the *Dyn* circle. The most notable among these praise Moro's book-length poem *Lettre d'amour* (Love letter), which was published by Éditions Dyn, the journal's offshoot book imprint.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an eighty-page, color illustrated publication, also called *Farewell to Surrealism: The Dyn Circle in Mexico* published by Getty Publications and written by the exhibition's curators Annette Leddy and Donna Conwell, with an introduction by Dawn Ades.

# # #

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