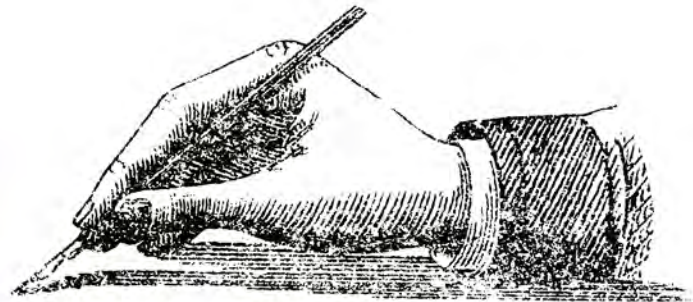


## AUTOMATISM

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THE PRIMARY METHOD OF SURREALISM. AS A PROCEDURE IT FORMS PART OF MANY OF THE GAMES AND ACTIVITIES DESCRIBED IN THIS BOOK. SOLITARY AND COLLECTIVE AUTOMATIC TECHNIQUES, AND THE EXPLOITATION OF *CHANCE* ARE CENTRAL TO MANY SURREALIST GAMES. THE ORIGINAL SURREALISTS SOON CAME TO REALIZE THE LIMITATIONS OF 'PURE AUTOMATISM'. AUTOMATIC TECHNIQUES MAY BE USED AS A **BEGINNING** OF CREATIVE ACTIVITY, TO STIMULATE AND ENCOURAGE SPONTANEITY OF UTTERANCE OR IMAGE-MAKING.



*It is not to be despised, in my opinion, if, after gazing fixedly at a spot on the wall, coals in the grate, clouds, a flowing stream, if one remembers some of their aspects; and if you look at them carefully you will discover some quite admissable inventions. Of these the genius of the painter may take full advantage, to compose battles of men and animals, landscapes or monsters, devils and other fantastic things . . .*

LEONARDO DA VINCI (Treatise on Painting)

*How to Open at Will the Window onto the Most Beautiful Landscapes in the World and Elsewhere.*

ANDRÉ BRETON (on Decalcomania)

THE PURPOSE OF SURREALIST VISUAL TECHNIQUES IS TO OPEN A WINDOW ONTO THE MARVELLOUS THAT LIES CONCEALED BEHIND THE EVERYDAY. THIS REVELATION CAN BE ACHIEVED BY DIFFERENT MEANS: BY MANIPULATING MATERIALS, OR BY PLAY WITH IMAGES, WHETHER GIVEN OR FOUND.

THE FIRST CATEGORY OF TECHNIQUES INCLUDES THOSE THAT ARE ESSENTIALLY AUTOMATIC; THESE 'FREEZE' CHANCE EVENTS IN WHATEVER MEDIUM IS BEING USED, TO CREATE ARTIFICIALLY LEONARDO'S 'BLOTS' AND 'CLOUDS', AND IN THIS WAY THEY PROVOKE SPONTANEOUS IMAGES FREE OF CONSCIOUS INTENTION. ONCE THESE IMAGES APPEAR THEY CAN BE ELABORATED; IN MARCEL JEAN'S WORDS, THEY PROVIDE "THE POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR POETIC HALLUCINATION".

INTO THE SECOND CATEGORY FALL VARIOUS METHODS OF DIRECTLY RE-INTERPRETING EXISTING IMAGES TO PRODUCE NEW, MORE PROVOCATIVE OR BEAUTIFUL VISIONS, DELIRIOUS AND MONSTROUS AMALGAMATIONS.

# MANIPULATING CHANCE

## AUTOMATIC DRAWING

*As with automatic writing, put yourself in a receptive frame of mind, draw without thinking, and avoid conscious control over the image. Keeping your pencil on the paper can help the flow.*

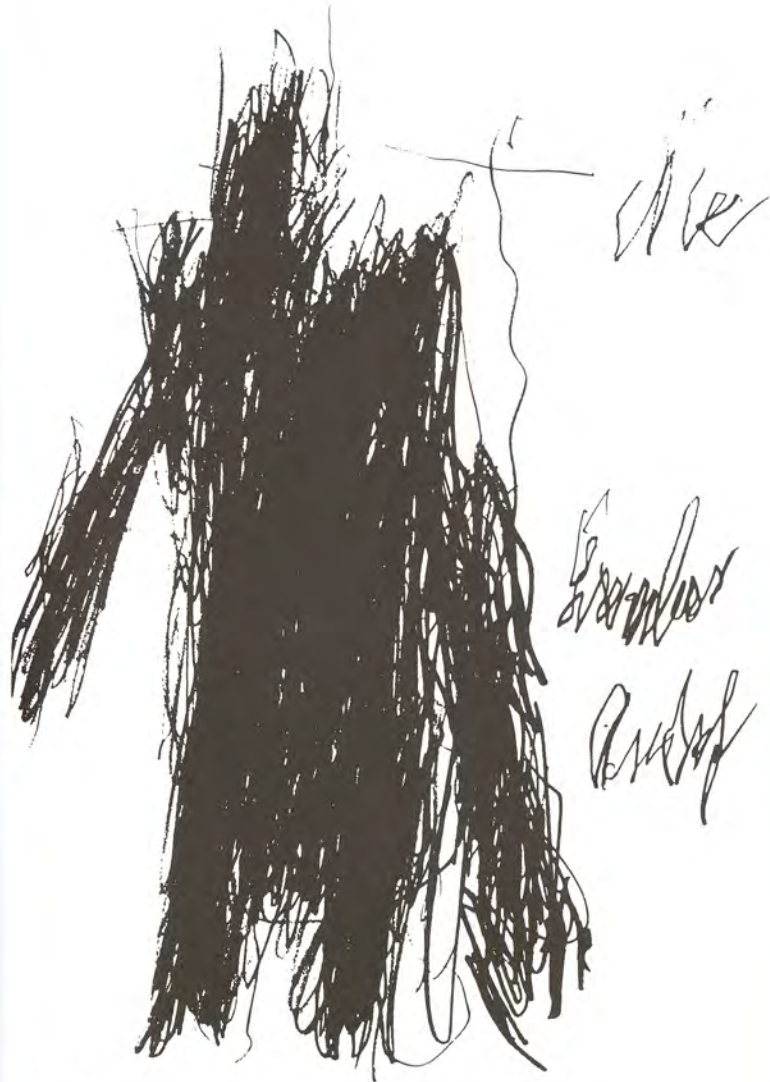
*In fact, automatic drawing is a sort of accelerated or intensified doodling, in which unexpected and unpredictable images can be made to appear, and used as the basis for further visual play.*



MADAME SMEAD, Martian Man and Woman



WOLFGANG PAALLEN, Drawing, 1954



MAX, Human Figure



ANDRE MASSON, *The Lovers*, 1924

## FUMAGE

*A method of creating images or effects by passing paper or canvas over a smoking candle or petroleum lamp. The image is then fixed and perhaps worked on.*



WOLFGANG PAALEN, *Untitled*, 1938

## FROTTAGE

*This is the same technique as that of brass-rubbing. A sheet of paper is placed on any natural or manufactured surface possessing a relief or incised pattern. The paper is rubbed with crayon, a soft pencil, charcoal, etc. By combining frottages from different surfaces complex effects can be achieved within one drawing. The pattern or image obtained can be coloured, cut up, or combined with other materials in collage.*

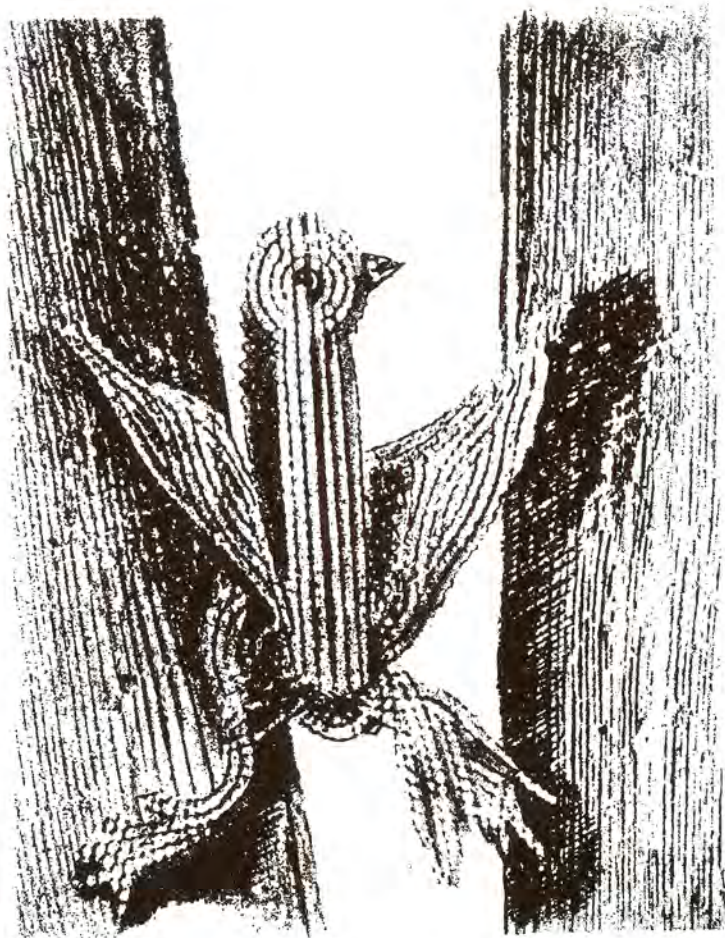


## DECALCOMANIA (WITH NO PRECONCEIVED OBJECT)

*Spread gouache, ink or oil paint, diluted in some places, on to any suitable non-absorbent surface (coated paper, glass, etc.) press on to this, your sheet of paper or canvas, then lift or peel away.*

*Decalcomania is related to other games and procedures that resemble the celebrated Rorschach Test used by psychologists, in which an ink-blot is folded in two to create a roughly symmetrical image. The parlour game equivalent is called GHOSTS OF MY FRIENDS, in which players' signatures are folded in two while still wet. The resulting image is interpreted for revelations about the signatory.*

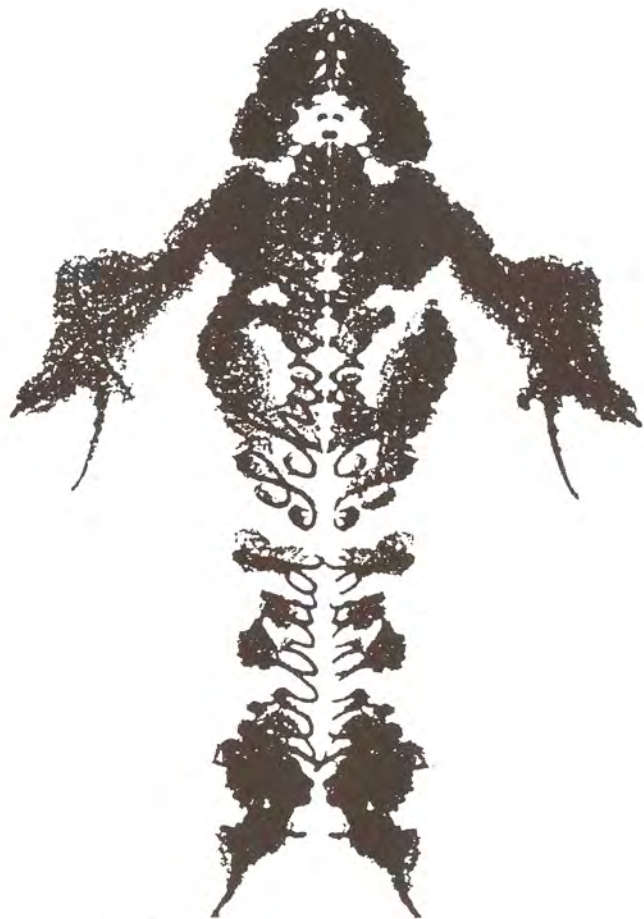
*A variation of decalcomania is *écrémage*, a form of 'marbling'. In this, an image is drawn into an oily liquid with a water-based pigment (or vice versa). A sheet of paper is then placed upon or made to slide across this surface, and the image lifted or 'creamed' off the liquid.*



MAX ERNST, Frottage



MARCEL JEAN



Name *Gertrud Schwerdtner*

From *The Ghosts of My Friends*



## TORN PAPER COLLAGE (ACCORDING TO THE RULES OF CHANCE)

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*This form of collage was invented by Hans Arp.*

*Paper is torn or cut up, randomly or in shapes, and the pieces dropped on to a sheet of paper. These random configurations are then fixed with glue.*

*In a variation of this technique, the torn paper already bears an image, which is thus dislocated and re-assembled unpredictably according to the fall of the paper. It can then be 're-interpreted' by subsequent working over with pencil or brush.*

## SOME OTHER AUTOMATIC TECHNIQUES

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### GRATTAGE

The process of scraping wet or dried paint (or a mixture of both) from a canvas or other surface with a blade.

### SAND PAINTING

Glue is first randomly smeared on the canvas, then sand sprinkled upon it. It may be left to dry as it falls, or further manipulated with brushes, knives etc.

### FROISSAGE

A sheet of paper is screwed up, then smoothed out again. When soaked in coloured inks, the creases take up the colour, creating a veined effect.

### COULAGE

A variety of three-dimensional decalcomania created by pouring molten metal (usually lead) or other molten materials such as wax or chocolate into water. The material solidifies into fantastic shapes.