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-- Dubuffet. Now, Dubuffet has been, since he first appeared in 1942, attacked, denigrated, derided, laughed at, but despite all this, I think most of us have come to the feeling now that he belongs in this second half of the twentieth century, to the major movement. In the same way [his?] personality is (inaudible) the first half of the twentieth century (inaudible) in a century when artists have striven to express the natural world in abstract terms, to create a universe from which there is no counterpart in nature. Dubuffet has attempted [01:00] not to abstract or to dematerialize nature, but to synthesize man and his environment. He is concerned, unlike our abstract brethren, with subject matter, content, and his subject matter is man. His physiognomy, his metropolis, his countryside, his meadows, his garden, his soil on which he walks, the topography of his earth and of his sky, the geography of his mind and even of his beards.

Dubuffet is a romantic, not a classicist, but not of the nineteenth-century romantic variety. For him, man is not the creator or the master of the universe, nor his victim, as we so often find in nineteenth-century romantic painting, but rather an [02:00] an integral member of the universe, subject to its laws and its rhythms, and composed of material substances, often ludicrous, tragic, ugly, or cruel. Dubuffet, as I said, is not a classicist, not a humanist. He depersonalizes. He observes. He does not comment. And he is not concerned with the notion of beauty. Therefore, we have had cast up always the term "ugly" in relation to his art. He is anti-art, anti-cultural. He believes that the simple everyday life of common people contains more art and more poetry that does academic art or great paintings. He has been known to say, "I wouldn't walk across the street to see a Renaissance painting," [03:00] which is blasphemy in a city which has passed over one million people past the Mona Lisa in the last month. He stands counter to the classicists and the humanists, which have occupied the attention of most of the imagists in the twentieth century.

His subject matter is everyday, and it is unbeautiful. Old walls, and back streets, and alleys, and cats, and cows, and weeds. And his materials are tar, and macadam, and plaster, straw, string, glass, things found in the trash heap. But, he says, his intent is to amuse and to interest the man in the street when he comes home from work. "It is the man in the street that I feel closest to," he says. "He is the one I want to please and to [04:00] enchant by means of my work." While it may be argued that the man in the street is the last person who has come to appreciate the work of Jean Dubuffet, and one must also, I think, point out that for all Dubuffet derives in intent and in background, and aims toward the everyday, the simple commonplace, that he is a highly sophisticated and extremely sensitive product of occidental culture.

But in this anti-cultural, anti-art attitude, of course, Dubuffet is not alone. The Dadaists before or just after World War I rebelled also against official academicism, a nineteenth-century concept of "Beauty" with a capital B, as well as [05:00] against the sterility in abstraction, which they all saw already at that time could be an end result of cubism. Whereas, however, the Dadaists were destructive in their anarchy, Dubuffet, although sometimes he is accused of being an anarchist, is not destructive. He is, rather, creative. And it is perhaps not to the Dadaists or to the surrealists, of whom he is not unconscious, but rather to Klee that we can look for some kind of comparison between other personalities or their aims and achievements.

They both strive for direct expression, direct expression of the creative impulse, beyond that learned or [06:00] acquired through centuries of culture and of art history, if we may say. Like Klee, Dubuffet is interested in the art of the insane, the art of children, folk art, the art of the untaught, for he perceived, as Klee, that these untaught artists, or creators who are not professional artists, can express directly and more powerfully, perhaps, the spirit and the vitality which lies at the base of human and inanimate motion and material.

Dubuffet's aim is to strip art of the learned and the inherited, to peel off these layers by shock techniques, by crudity, and to [07:00] reveal this vitality and this unity, which binds man and matter together. Then, he says, "Art will yell and dance like a madman, which is its function." *L'art brut* is the expression which has been associated with his work, "raw art," the art which streams uninhibited and unhampered direct from the creative, uncontrolled mind of children, insane, and primitives. This, he believes, is the most powerful art, and that power is the true form which art of our century must take or express, for all other forms have been so exhausted in our century.

In examining the work of Dubuffet, you may be amused, you may be repulsed, but I think [08:00] however one feels about it, and there's an enormous variety within his work, that one must be impressed with the vigor, the vitality, and the power which come through, and it is that which has made Dubuffet such a significant artist in a time when we are a little tired and a little fearful, when freshness, new points of view, new [context?] with a kind of basic underlying truths, which we all are groping for. We recognize some of that coming through, I think, in the works of Dubuffet.

Now, in examining his work, I should like to show you first a before and after comparison, because before we get down into [09:00] Dubuffet, I should like for any of those of you who have wandered in to our museum, as sometimes happens, who are shocked at certain aspects of contemporary art, let us get over that very first hurdle about, "This could be done by my six-year-old granddaughter," and let us also get over the old chestnut that, "He can't draw." On the right is a 1961 painting, which was shown here in New York in the big Museum of Modern Art retrospective. It's called *The Walk*, and it is typical of the mature work of Dubuffet. On the left is a pencil portrait of his grandmother, which was made in 1921 -- or was it 1923? My art history [10:00] deserts me at the moment -- when he was an art student. And when it bears -- 1921, when he was, at that point, 20 years of age. And it bears, as you can see, the skilful technical knowledge which a young gentleman interested in art, who had had six months' training at the famous Académie Julian in Paris, and who had started already upon a professional art career, could naturally, effortlessly, produce. Incidentally, it does look exactly like his grandmother. We have photographs of that period, so the likeness is remarkable. Therefore, I think we can conclude at the outset that what Dubuffet achieves is conscious, earnest, serious, and original, that it does look like [of the one?] on the 1961 bears superficial resemblances [11:0] to the work of [child's?] art. It is something which we will see and discuss as we go along.

Dubuffet's relation to the professional art world was not immediately established without effort. He had come from a moderately well-to-do family in La Havre, and having finished his early education, as I say, went to Paris to study art. He became somewhat discouraged with the academicism of the art instruction of that period and abbreviated his instruction, began to paint in

his studio, became interested in music and poetry, met the poets and artists of the period. He studied ethnology, anthropology, modern and ancient languages. And in 1923, he traveled to Italy. He made a trip to Brazil. In 1925, he went back to La Havre and married, and set up, [I'll say?], [12:00] in his father's business. He was a wine merchant. He found very little opportunity to pursue his art. He moved in 1930 to Paris to set up a branch wine business. But in 1934, he gave it up to return to painting.

Here he began, in this period, to develop these theories concerning the relation of his own art to the prevalent art of his day, but he had very little success, and one finds that he spent much of his time in his home entertaining his friends and carving papier-mâché life masks, as we have here, of two his friends, carving marionettes and giving puppet shows, and peripheral art activities [13:00] as a compensation for the disinterest which the art world showed him. And in two years later, he gave up his attempt to carry on art by himself, as a profession for himself, and returned to the wine business, which he carried on until the war broke out.

After his demobilization, however, he goes back again seriously, once more, to attempt to become a professional painter. And in 1944, just after the liberation of Paris, he showed -- he had his first one-man exhibition. At this time, he was 43, a time which is shockingly late in life to have one's first one-man show in Paris. It reminds one, somewhat parallelly, of Kandinsky, who came late into an artistic career, also, as a mature man. These paintings, as you see here -- the one on the left, which is called *Métro*, which dates from 1943, and the one on the right, which is called *Life of Pleasure*, 1944 -- are typical of the work which he painted from this period of his first to his second show, which was exhibited just after, in 1944. Excuse me, the first in 1944, and the second in 1946. And these paintings caused as scandal, as usual, in the art world. There were cries of anarchy, and *merdre*, and the paintings were slashed, and much commotion, which reminds you of, in French art history, the fate of any new style which is apt to, [15:00] when it first appears upon the artistic scene, is apt to be greeted with shouts of derision and displeasure. For obvious reasons, as you can see.

The influence of children's art, of folk art, primitive art, is obvious. In *Le Métro*, we have the painting, a large painting, organized according to the principles which we find in all art of the untaught; that is, there is no perspective. There is no interest in space. There are none of the professional tricks which artists learn in art school to recapitulate the scene nature as we see it, or think we see it, with our eyes. The subjects are expressed directly in a primitive kind of system, which is called, on the one hand, isocephaly, and on the other, which bears no relation to depth in space. [16:00] That is, the figures are all centralized, as one can see. Everything is arranged rigidly, up and down the canvas. The things closest to us are put closest to us. The idea of space is given to us only by overlapping. This man must behind in space and this behind here, because you can't see the total figure; therefore, they must be in a depth relationship in space. They're all rigidly organized according to a frontal system. Their eyes look forward, straight ahead. There is no foreshortening except of the primitive kind of shorthand in the use of the nose. It either is expressed full face or in profile. This is a kind of primitive expression which we find, as you're all familiar with, in children's art, and in primitive art, folk art, art of the untaught, and also we find it going way back to the art of the caves, and particularly [17:00] we find it in Egyptian art, where their art was hierarchized and immobilized at a period when it was still in a primitive formation, or stylistically primitive.

The same principles one finds in *The Life of Pleasure*, which shows the little back streets of Paris with people walking along the street joyfully, and one is reminded somewhat of certain works by Miró, where the idea of fun, of play, of vitality, of good spirits, gaiety, is expressed by the movements, the rhythms of the feet, the gestures of the hands, the wide grins of the faces. Those are the direct means by which we, and children, all simple people, recognize our manner in which we directly express our [18:00] emotions. And therefore, combined with the repetition of patterns, which one sees in these doorways and in the windows over and over again, and combined with the direct, hard, bright, color, which we find again bearing no relation to naturalism in type and color. The color is completely decorative. It bears no relation to actuality. We get a vivid, bright, gay, or in the *Métro*, the subway picture, somewhat tempered with the atmosphere of those underground tubes. It is a direct expression, but one which bears relation to certain primitive principles, but in its intent, goes much further than a child can go.

This is where most of the public have difficulty with an artist whose work is organized [19:00] on principles of folk art or on work of children, that the child can accidentally and occasionally produce a work which bears a direct relation to his intent. His problem, as with the chimpanzee, is that he cannot sustain this, and this is where the professional artist and the child part company, because it is an accident on the part of the child, whereas the artist intends and develops and studies means by which he can achieve the same sense of freedom that the child gets, but to enrich it, to deepen it, to make it more subtle, or more joyful, or more cruel, or whatever his intent may be. And I must say, perhaps just drop in here that Dubuffet is a prodigious painter. He has made over 5,000 works of art within a period of [20:00] 20 years. I mean, this is not something which is casual and accidental. This is something which takes enormous industry and most serious intent.

Also from this period are two other works, which bear relation to the common, everyday forms and subjects which interested him, the *Great Jazz Band* on the left, and *Four Men in a Car* on the right. You will observe that in these and in the previous paintings, there is no attempt toward elevated subject matter. This, as you can see, is part of his philosophy. The jazz band is a combo, such as one can find in most metropolitan areas, and there is a remarkable sense of observation, which, I must say, is quite amusing in these cases. The principle of isocephaly [21:00] and of lining up all these gentlemen in a strong vertical rhythm across the frontal plane, flattening everything out, inverting the piano keyboard here, keeping everything, as I say, in the front plane, and then combining it with the repetition of the same type of face, with these great, staring, intent eyes, conveys to us the feeling which we are often so startled with when we go to jazz bands, the sense of rapt concentration, which you find in any combo, as if they've existed in another world but were physically transported into our own present world.

In *Four Men in a Car*, what could be simpler? What is more ordinary and everyday than the commuter and his fellow carpool riders tootling along to work or from work in their little car? What one begins [22:00] to notice, however, in *Men in the Car*, is the interest which the artist is developing in material. In the two previous ones, interest in the background and of the color in the background is equal in value to his interest in the subject matter, but there is no interest in the background or in the paint for its own sake. Here in the *Four Men in a Car*, we begin to see this interest, which will preoccupy him throughout his entire career, the relationship of material, of

the matter itself, of the paint, to the subject matter. And one would see here that the car has been integrated with the surroundings, with its road, or its background, or its banks, the areas around it. It is not differentiated from it, except by a sort of [23:00] line which he has scooped out here, engraved out, with a palette knife or a spoon, in a very thick background painting. It becomes thicker and thicker, and more unconventional in its composition, until the matter itself serves less to be a background than to become the subject of his painting.

This we see already in a work in 1946, which we have here on the left, which is called *Smoker by the Wall*. We are so used to, now, the preoccupation which the artists of the new realism movement have taken with the wall for slightly different reasons, that one perhaps needs to point out [24:00] that Dubuffet is one of the early artists to be interested in the relationship of the mundane object, the unbeautiful object, the old, dilapidated wall. And you can see in comparison with a real wall, on the right, how it influences his work. It becomes a part of the subject matter. But it becomes even more than a background for the painting, a background for the smoker. It begins to envelope the whole painting. In other words, the smoker becomes incidental to the aesthetic of the wall, and our interest is less in the presentation of this casual, depersonalized person leaning against the wall, but we become involved in the character of the [25:00] wall itself, its patina, its irregularities, its variations from section to section. We come to look at it not as a representation of -- a subsidiary part of the painting, but as the real subject matter of the painting itself.

In the next year, Dubuffet becomes involved with a type of painting, which are, for want of a better word, called portraits. There are a group of portraits, rather large in scale, of his wife, we have on the left, *Lily in Metallic Black*, and of a friend, called Dhotel, and the title is *Dhotel with Yellow Teeth.* Now, these portraits have caused [25:00] an enormous amount of controversy, because, as you can see, they are not intended, in the academic sense, as portraits. Portraits, when we go to have our pictures taken at Bachrach or whatever, it is supposed to, at any rate, satisfy our human vanity to present the real us to the world without paying any more than passing regard for the external uglinesses, which we all really know we have, and we endeavor to put our best feet forward. And some of us even hate to go to what is known as portrait painters, because they might discover some defect in our personality, which would rise to the forefront in the painting. Neither of these attitudes towards portraiture are to be found in Dubuffet. Although, strangely enough, they bear a certain superficial resemblance to the sitter, [27:00] if you compare them with photographs, they're not intended as psychological interpretations of their characters, nor are they, as you can obviously see here, intended to be likenesses in a physiological sense.

Rather has he reduced these heads or personages to an abstraction, in a way, to types, to woman types, men types, and then subdividing those into angry men, tragic men, fearful men, and so on. These are presented again with the same principles of organizing them in frontal positions, removing all extraneous elements to the portrait like hands and legs, anatomical details. Only enough have been scratched out of the thick impasto [28:00] to indicate whether they are men or women, such as the curls of the hair, or, say, the outlines of the breasts, or of the collar or the suit jacket which makes it into a male rather than a female. The gentleman on the left is a literary man of note. The gentleman on the right may be familiar to you. He is Fautrier, very well known to us as a contemporary painter. They owe something to children's drawings, it is true,

but I have never seen -- and I've looked at quite a lot of children's art -- I have never seen any which carry such directness, and such power and vitality, as these do. This kind of portraiture has had an immense influence on many of the later artists. I think it's hard [29:00] to think of the portraits of Appel, the Dutch painter, without Dubuffet.

To carry this further, we have a series of men paintings, and then later of women paintings, which become even stronger and more powerful, and, if I may say, more crude in their presentation. This is called *Willpower*, and everything has been subordinated here to the head, the chest, and the sexual attributes which go along with such a conception. But within this, may I also point out, again, the increased occupancy of the artist with the material and with the background. It is, again, reduced to very simple terms, very thick impasto in the plain background [and?] the blue background [30:00] above, in which the white underpaint has been scratched through and come to the surface. But the figure itself has an almost pudding-like surface, as if he had been made out of some kind of mash, which has been manipulated and stirred up from the base to a surface, which is then ornamented and impregnated by the artist. If you look in this color slide of the detail here, you'll see how he has worked with that material. This is a section which is taken from this area right here. You may see this little stone here, and the stone here. Into this surface of paint, and plaster, and concrete, and various other materials, varnish and so on, he has worked stones, pebbles, whole cascades of pebbles, which gives not only an animation to the surface, but [31:00] is in character with the concept of strength, of power, of a kind of power which comes from earthiness and the direct, natural, male appeal. It is not pleasant. We may say it's crude. But it has a power, which I think cannot be denied, whether one likes it or not.

As so often happens in Dubuffet's work, we find him alternating some of the darkest and most powerful and crudest, cruel works, with things which are quite light, and which are quite charming or amusing in contrast. In 1947 and again in 1948, he made trips to the Sahara, to Africa, and made a series of paintings and drawings from that. One on the left is called *Fluting on the Hump*, [32:00] and it reminds one, in some ways, of certain of the works of Klee, where there is a definite amusing movement in the relationship, both of the camel to its rider, and also the incongruousness of the act in the setting. On the right is simply called *Arab and Footsteps*. He is much concerned with the vast spaces and emptinesses of the desert, and the marks of human footsteps in the sands.

In 1950, he begins a series, or devotes himself to a series, of female portraits, which is called *Women's Bodies*. [He has earlier?], as one sees in here, five years earlier in the left in the subject called *The Coffee Grinder*, been interested in [33:00] women's bodies. This rather pleasant -- well, I don't know how to describe it, but direct portrayal of a woman holding a coffee grinder on her lap. On the right, a few months later, is a portrait or a subject of Minerva, the goddess, you may remember, of wisdom, arts, and war. And you may interpret this in any way you care to, whether this is the angry fishwife goddess of war, or whether it is an ironic commentary on the goddess of the arts and the goddess of wisdom. It is a diabolical portrait, anyway, cast in female guise. You see him up to all sorts of interesting and amusing tricks, as in the repetition in the breasts here, with the eyes, which makes a sort of inverted [34:00] mirror reflection of the portrait of the head onto the rest of the body below.

It is, however, only in 1950 that we begin to get the series of female portraits which have caused so much concern to the critics and to the general public. The one on the right is called *Olympia*, and is a typical example of the *Corps de Dames*, or *The Women's Bodies*, series, which he painted in 1950. There he has spread out woman, cut off her legs, exposed her body, flattened it, emphasized various sexual appurtenances, reduced the human head, the controlling mental -- [35:00] the seat of mental control, to its least common -- in size, and has of her body, through a very rich, deep impasto, has made it into a geographical territory, one might say, which we are invited to inspect inch by inch. The degradation, the deformation, the reduction to ugliness, if one cares to use that term, is in quite contrast to the classical concept of beauty, and I show you, by comparison, the famous *Olympia* of Manet, which one has to be reminded with, I must say, enormous -- well, it seems incredible [36:00] that this, Manet's *Olympia*, caused a scandal in the salons of 1865. It seems rather beautiful to us, and certainly innocuous, in comparison with the presentation of Dubuffet of a similar subject.

Dubuffet, on another *Corps de Dames* of 1950 on the right, which is called *The Tree of Fluids*. Here the paint is much, much thinner, and the lady has been spread out, almost liquefied, as if her body were beginning to dissolve and to become part of the background, as if she were ectoplasm, perhaps, if that's the word I mean, life's fluids oozing through the cellular structure and becoming one with the background or with nature. The deforming, which annoys people so much, I present in contrast to that other major American painter, de Kooning, and his concept of women. He has also outraged, as you know, the general public, with his concept of woman, and it is interesting that both of these artists present these paintings at just the same period, de Kooning out of a background stemming from cubism, through abstract expressionism, Dubuffet coming out of the French environment. I don't know which is more terrible and which is more compelling. I can suggest that de Kooning has a kind of action, [38:00] and strength, and immediateness, which invites comparison with the Furies. You feel that she is about to take off immediately into some kind of terrible action. Dubuffet is more relaxed, almost decadent in a way. It's a very curious and interesting comparison between these, and, of course, the metaphysicians and the critics have made much of it in relation to "momism," and the Erdgeist, and all the other concepts which are wrapped up with this sacrilegious presentation of woman and womanhood.

As we have mentioned, this interest in the relation of man to his environment, the interest in matter and material, [39:00] the material with which he paints, to the point where the subject is becoming one and the same with its content, we find, becoming actually the subject of the painting from a period 1951, '52, '53, onward. The series that we see here is, on the left, *The Geologists*. They belong in a series called *Sons and Earths*. And on the right, it's called *Metaphysical Landscape*. Here, the thick layers of paint have been worked with putty knives, with fingers, with spatulas, with spoons, been worked and reworked, until they become a kind of substrata of the earth, and one wonders whether one is looking at a cut [40:00] through the world, or whether one is looking down, as from an airplane, down upon a metaphysical landscape, as it were. In the first, you see the little geologist who stands above it. In the second, you see he has abbreviated, or taken from his painting, any relationship to time and space, that now we are approaching into the world of abstraction in his paintings. And in these two, the rising of the moons on the left and the phantom landscape on the right, we have entered into a

kingdom where man no longer exists as such, but where we are concerned with a world of immaterial matter, where matter is animated and becomes the subject of the painting.

We can, of course, compare this with [41:00] the craters on the lunar landscape, which we see, or imagine we see, in paintings, and all such manner of ideas which can spring from it. Actually, these forms come from the way in which the paint and its underlying structure are manipulated by the artist. Here he uses such elements as the element of chance, building up layers of paint and plaster, allowing them to dry, allowing them to crinkle and to shred, as paint will when layers upon layers are put over varying layers of paint, which are in various states of dryness, and then manipulating these to bring forward, or to suppress, or to rework forms which interest him, brought about by the technique which he uses. [42:00] It is a kind of technique which has become very personal with him, and exploited very highly.

From "landscapes of the mind," as he calls them, he goes into another type of subject matter, which he calls, "sculptured tables" and "stones of philosophy." He takes the table as a subject, with forms upon it, a table which is upended without perspective, which legs are cut off, in which the background has been suppressed, where on the table have been placed objects which are unidentified but which, for reasons of their shape, and their color, and their texture, become of interest to us, so that we can look on them, and our eyes wander through and over them, and to, as I say, explore a kind of landscape in the mind. To personalize this, he very often [43:00] puts in counterdistinction an actual object.

This is his *Table with a Letter*, the table covered with forms, in which are embedded all manner of sands and pebbles, and bright bits of reflective material, and a painted letter, the subject of which one can see and translate, again, very commonplace in its attitude, that is, "I have received your letter. Thank you," and so on. Again, making from the material a new work of art which we can concern ourselves with, speculate with, ponder over, but still within, to some degree, within the realm of our experience. It is this kind of metamorphosis [44:00] which is at the heart of Dubuffet's work, and which makes it so interesting, and which makes it so significant, that he speaks in ambiguities. Although, in one hand, he presents us with something which is very commonplace and everyday, it is presented with a material and in such a fashion which is completely knew, and which calls forth our own contemplation in a way which is totally unexpected and therefore very challenging. You may not like it, but it offers possibilities for enjoyment which are totally new.

I show you here, for those of you who are getting a little tired of metaphysical landscapes, a series which he did in 1954, where he returns [45:00] to natural objects, looked at with a fresh and natural eye, a series of cows. This is a cow from a decade earlier, but it does show what he can do with a plain, ordinary cow, seen from rear. Some of you know the *Cow with a Subtle Nose* from 1954, in the Museum of Modern Art, which is on the right, and I show you one from a series of drawings which was done about the same time or a little after. These are cow and cow types, anxious cow, red-eyed cows, tragic cows, this one a little ludicrous cow, but very endearing. They can be extremely amusing in these. This is called, on the left, *Cow in the Black Meadow*. It looks as if it was about to have a nervous breakdown, frankly. (laughter) [46:00] I think it is one of the most enchanting cows I know. And the cow on the right is called *Swing of a Cow's Tail*. Again, the kind of agony which the cow goes through in this very human [motion?],

and there's a swing from terrible crudity and cruelty to that which is so simple, so everyday, and so direct, and yet so moving, which endears Dubuffet to so many of us.

Then at the same time, he can go off into experimenting with new materials, as in these two bits of sculpture, which, again, antagonizes everyone. As I remarked before, he used common, ordinary materials, plaster, string, straw, tar, macadam, and whatnot. In his sculpture, he goes [47:00] beyond the found sculpture sort of business, which has been so exploited by sculptors of the surrealist period, but takes actual objects, again, which belong in the trash heap. The one on the left is made out of a clinker, or slag iron. He went around collecting clinkers all over after he exhausted what he had in his own basement. And the one on the right is made of sponge. These were unsellable sponges, for some reason or another, in the Paris market. And with a little maneuvering, they come to make wonderful sculptures. The one on the left is called *Abundance*, and the one on the right, for our musical friends, is called *Maestro.* It rather looks it.

This preoccupation with materials, new materials, again results in some of the most delightful work. As I mentioned before, [48:00] he very often alternates between a period of great seriousness and almost crudity, and almost vulgarity, to others which are very light and very beautiful. And in 1955, he did a series of butterfly paintings, a second series, which he had done previously two years before. The one on the left is called *Butterfly Man*, and it is made out of wings of butterflies, which are attached to the background. He became intrigued with this when he was out in the country with a man who was chasing butterflies, and saw the possibilities of making compositions out of them. The one on the right is from the series in 1955, when he made a great deal, a whole group, of very small landscape paintings from butterflies. He got up very early in the morning and chased butterflies before breakfast, and then make little compositions out [49:00] of them. With butterflies, of course, they have the disadvantage of being somewhat ephemeral, and they're rather costly to repair, since you have to go find butterfly collectors in order to get them repaired with. But on the other hand, they have a kind of iridescence which perfumes the painting, which is almost impossible to duplicate in any other kind of painted or imitative material. So it is this lightness, and fantasy, and delicacy which you see on the one hand in him, which (inaudible) so entrancing.

This experiment with new materials led him into the development of what we now know so well, which is called assemblage, assembling pieces and gluing them to canvas. He has, as you have seen, glued pebbles and stones and all kinds of things, including butterflies, to his work, but he thought how nice it would be if one would paint endless [50:00] canvases, and then simply use them, parts of them, cut them up and glue them onto other canvases. One could then manipulate, almost indefinitely, a canvas, until you arrived at exactly the type of combination of things which you wanted. This was a somewhat slow-moving method, and also rather costly, he discovered, because you had to have infinite space for all these manufactured canvases, which you were painting, before you arrived at the canvas which you expected to paint from those you already had.

But he was also intrigued with the nature which he found around him in this period, and he made a lot of realistic drawings, as you see here on the left, of walls, of gardens, of areas along the borders of roads and walks, as we have here the flowers, and the weeds, and the rocks, the minerals, to be found at the foot of this post by the wall. And we have a delightful painting on

the right, *My Cart, My Garden*, where he has incorporated this material [in the?] earth, and cut out little pieces from other canvases and stuck them on, to give this variety of texture and of forms. In other words, to assemble. This is called *Grass at the Edge of the Road*, or the *Border of the Road*, and this is a detail of it, where you can see these bits of cut out canvases, which have been pasted on, over, in these star shapes which you see here, all sorts of fantastic shapes and colors, which have been worked and reworked, and assembled, and glued on over the surface, which gives it a tremendous variety of color and of depth, which these forms, these weeds, and dandelions, [52:00] and thistles, and mica stones come twinkling out in creating a little world, a little landscape, of their own.

Again, in this, *Door*, of which he has used substantially the same idea. He even had bought an old, weathered door, so that he could paint it, and has affixed to the bottom of the canvas, as you see there in the detail, bits of cut out canvases from other paintings, or painted for this reason, to add to the sense of the reality and the actuality of the little landscape kingdom, which he has created there.

Into a landscape which he has created comes a ghost, as we have on the left. This is called *Person Attached to [A Soil?]*. This is no person, [53:00] no personality. This is a being, a being almost shrouded. It sets up all sorts of haunting memories and ideas. And soon, that image haunts him more, so that the background fades away again, and we are in the black eye on the right. We are concerned with the image itself and not its background. The paint becomes oil, and thin, and fluid, and yet there is something so tender, and tragic, and comic about the figure. It becomes a very haunting specter for us.

And finally, to a world of the beards. The beards occupy him for a whole year. He wrote a book about them, illustrated them, poems about them. And they are among his most amusing, and his most horrifying, his most gripping [54:00] paintings of which I know. One thing, of course, which is disturbing always in a slide lecture. These are large paintings. These beards dominate in a way in which no Greenwich Village beard can ever dominate. These are stone sculptures, which remind us of Mesopotamia. These are [hieratic?] beings. These are gods of an ancient god world before our world was born. And yet, they are landscapes within the beards. You can follow through the crevices and the formations, the wrinkles and the contours, as you can within the landscapes of the mind. And yet, where are we, and why?

And in contradistinction, within the next year, Dubuffet is back in his metropolitan city, in his back streets, on his boulevards, with his little auto commuters in their little cars, one [55:00] to a car in this case. The bus with its bus driver and its poor herds of cattle being shuffled around through the traffic. Here, the streets and their signs are bent backwards, so they are no longer shown, even in the primitive childlike upright perspective, which we saw back in 1944. The signs are still there, a little dirtier, a little more full of puns, and a few other irreverancies, than in the very early paintings. But what we have, as you see, spread out now, is a landscape, a landscape, a tetralogy, a topography, or the other names which he has used for those landscapes of the mind.

But the man and his city are now become a kind of geographical world which bears but superficial resemblance to the world which we have been taught to see with our eyes, but which

we know is there. And that we can [56:00] enjoy it in a double capacity now. He has metamorphosized the city and its man from an object who controls or is controlled by nature. He has metamorphosized it into an ambiguous landscape, which we can enjoy, bit by bit, street by street, window or sign by sign, or we can look at it as an abstraction, which we enjoy for its color, its paint, its combinations of rhythms within rhythms, within rhythms, and within rhythms. And where the geography of the pigment itself we can explore, and contrast, and enjoy in all its richness. And we can, as you see here, find ourselves, our little men, our little people, enriched part of an enormous blanket, an enormous [57:00] carpet, perhaps, as we should say, a carpet which is our universe, a carpet which the artist has created for us. A part of it, a real part of it, of which we can partake, and be in, and be integrated into, and for which we can stand aside, and which we can enjoy for its own rich sake. Thank you very much.

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Jean Dubuffet / Louise Averill Svendsen. 1962/11/1. Reel-to-Reel collection. A0004. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York

