

Man Ray

24.10.08 - 06.01.09

**Unconcerned
But Not Indifferent**

**Incurante
ma non indifferente**



Unconcerned But Not Indifferent

This exhibition draws exclusively on a collection of Man Ray's work that has remained largely untouched since it was brought to the United States in the mid 1990s. Housed in Long Island, New York, the collection of the Man Ray Trust is comprised of more than 4,000 drawings, photographs, paintings, and objects. Founded in 1980 to preserve Man Ray's legacy, the Trust's collection is unique, representing all of the different phases of Man Ray's career, including little known early works, documents of his private life, sketches for and documentation of major works, as well as innumerable familiar masterpieces.

The structure of *Unconcerned But Not Indifferent* follows the chronology of Man Ray's four working periods: New York, Paris, Los Angeles, Paris. Thus divided, the scope of the exhibition is defined by the scope of the collection itself. Examples of many of Man Ray's most important works are presented, sometimes as originals and other times as multiples. Alongside these masterworks, *Unconcerned But Not Indifferent* presents a selection of little known and rarely seen works and objects. These include source material used to create artworks, experimental variations of well known works, and documentation of finished pieces. Objects that belonged to Man Ray and personal documents, including an early draft of Man Ray's autobiography and his patent application for a magnetic chess set, are also presented.

The full scope of the Man Ray Trust's collection, in an exhibition that focuses on its masterpieces as well as its rarities, is presented here for the first time, providing a unique insight into his life and working process.

Early Years (New York 1890 – 1921)

The artist known as Man Ray was born Emmanuel Radnitzky in Philadelphia on August 27, 1890. His parents had emigrated to the United States from Russia in the 1880s. In 1897, the family moved to Brooklyn, New York, where Emmanuel grew interested in art and architecture. Finishing school in 1908, Emmanuel was drawn to the galleries and museums in Manhattan, and became a regular visitor at Alfred Stieglitz's 291 Gallery. There, he was introduced to the idea of photography as fine art and had his first encounters with European modernism. In 1912, the Radnitzky family changed their surname to Ray, and Emmanuel abbreviated his given name to Man. Thereafter his works bore the signature Man Ray (frequently abbreviated to MR).

In 1913, Man Ray left home and relocated to an artists' community in Ridgefield, New Jersey. There, he met and soon married the Belgian poet Donna Lecoeur, penname Adon Lacroix, who exposed Man Ray to the work of the French poets Mallarmé, Rimbaud, and Apollinaire. The French artist Marcel Duchamp visited the community in summer 1915, and Duchamp and Man Ray became lifelong friends and collaborators. In Ridgefield, Man Ray's work became increasingly abstract, and his canvases increasingly large. He learned photography in order to document his artwork. After leaving Ridgefield and moving to New York City, Man Ray struggled to earn his living through

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orari 10:00 - 13:00 / 16:30 - 20:30 lunedì chiuso

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photography, making portraits and documenting other artists' works in order to supplement the infrequent sale of his paintings. Marcel Duchamp returned to France in 1921, inviting Man Ray to join him there. Paris was then the center of the art world, and Man Ray, dissatisfied with the reception for his work in New York, soon announced his intention to relocate there.

Paris (1921 – 1940)

In Paris, Man Ray was immediately adopted by the Dadaists. He set up as a professional photographer, and over time he became a regular photographer for *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue*, *Vu*, *Vanity Fair*, and other popular magazines. As his popularity grew, Man Ray's clientele expanded to include the highest levels of French society. Although it was for his portraiture that Man Ray grew famous, it was for his rayographs that he was recognized as an art photographer. Solarization was another important element in Man Ray's photography, and many of his portraits combine solarization with textured screens to diffuse the printed image. As photography consumed more and more of his time, Man Ray grew increasingly frustrated.

In the 1930s, Man Ray increasingly withdrew from his photography business in order to focus on painting and collaborations with other artists. The political climate in Europe was changing, with growing signals of conflict coming from Italy and Germany. His works from the period reflect the tension of the atmosphere and the urgency that he felt to continue working. By June 1940, when the French government collapsed and the armistice was declared, most of Man Ray's friends had already left Paris. During his final four weeks there, Man Ray worked frantically to secure the safety of his artworks, then began the long journey south. On August 6th, Man Ray set sail from Lisbon for the United States. He arrived safely, ten days later, in Hoboken, New Jersey.

Los Angeles (1940 – 1951)

For Man Ray, now 50 years old, leaving France meant abandoning all certainty; a successful business, much of his life's work, loved ones and friends. In New York, feeling overwhelmed by depression, Man Ray accepted an offer to drive across the United States with a friend. On the morning after his arrival in Los Angeles, Man Ray telephoned Juliet Browner, an artists' model from the Bronx, New York. Within a short time they were settled in an apartment at 1245 Vine Street, and Man Ray hung a wooden sign reading "Man Ray Studio" outside. Man Ray and Juliet were married in 1946, in a double wedding with Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning.

Though he had many opportunities to exhibit in California, Man Ray was not taken seriously as a painter. Unaware of his involvement in the European art world, critics referred to him as an imitator. In California, Man Ray distanced himself from commercial photography. He committed himself to re-creating many of the works that he feared had been lost to the war, and he rekindled his old passion for chess, designing several sets of chessboards and pieces. Man Ray's greatest subject during the California years was Juliet, whom he sketched and photographed with affection, intensity, and a gentle humor. As the war in Europe came to an end, Man Ray heard from friends reassuring him that

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his artworks and possessions had survived and encouraging him to return to his adopted homeland. Man Ray and Juliet left Los Angeles in Spring 1951, and set sail to France from New York harbor on March 12th.

Paris (1951 – 1976)

Back in Paris, the 1950s were a period of renewed productivity for Man Ray. Although he declared himself finished with photography, Man Ray continued to make portraits, and experimented with color and instant photography. Throughout the 1950s and '60s, Man Ray continued to sketch, favoring ink on paper, and to paint. The acclaim for which Man Ray had worked so hard arrived with the award of a gold medal at the Venice Biennale in 1961, a retrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1966, and the inclusion of his work in the landmark exhibition *Dada, Surrealism, and their Heritage* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in 1968. He was awarded the Order of Artistic Merit by the French government in 1976. With his late success creating a greater market for his works, Man Ray began to extensively reproduce his early paintings as lithographs, and to create multiples of his unique objects.

In the 1970s, in spite of his crippling arthritis, Man Ray insisted on a daily routine of work in his studio. In November, 1976, complaining of shortness of breath and feebleness, Man Ray was taken to a private clinic. On November 18th, Man Ray died in his home with Juliet at his side. He was buried in the Cimetière du Montparnasse. On the 10th anniversary of his death, Juliet had a monument erected, beneath which she would later be buried beside Man Ray. On his gravestone she wrote, "Unconcerned but not indifferent – Man Ray – 1890–1976 – love Juliet." On her own gravestone, accompanying a photograph of Man Ray and Juliet, are the words "Juliet Man Ray – 1911–1991 – Together Again."

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