

5. European Events (1940-1950)

1940: Germany: conquers the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Walter Benjamin commits suicide when he is unable to escape across the French-Spanish border.

Italy: enters the war as Germany's ally. Invades Egypt and Greece

France: signs an armistice with Germany, dividing the country into a German-occupied northern zone and a southern zone under the Vichy regime. Sartre publishes *The Imaginary* dealing with how we construct images. Varian Fry, an American, set up an office in Marseilles to arrange for secret emigration of threatened intellectuals and artists to the US, called the CAS – Centre Americain de Secours.

The Battle of Britain begins.

GB: Dylan Thomas publishes *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*. Publication of 153 pieces for piano of Béla Bartók's *Microcosm*.

Mexico: International exhibition of Surrealism organized by Wolfgang Paalen and Cesar Moro at the Galería de Arte in Mexico.

1941: Japan attacks Pearl Harbor.

Argentina: Jorge Luis Borges publishes *Fictions*.

France: with the publication of *Le crève-coeur*, Louis Aragon returns to a classical verse form. Nazis hold exhibition of "front-line" art at the Jeu de Paume.

Germany: conquers Yugoslavia and Greece. Hitler begins Operation Barbarosa and invades the Soviet Union. Olivier Messiaen composes *Quatuor pour la fin des temps* in a concentration camp.

US: Julien Levy Gallery exhibits works of Dalí. MOMA exhibits Miró and Dalí. Exhibition "French Modern Masters" at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in NY. Arshile Gorki retrospective at the SF Museum of Art. Chagall, invited by MOMA, arrives in US.

GB: Penrose works with army as an instructor of camouflage, using Cubism to break up forms visually and teaching them to smear their faces with cow dung to conceal them.

France: Othon Friesz exhibition at the gallery Pétridès. French artists such as Friesz, Derain, Van Dongen, and Vlaminck travel to Germany to visit studios, etc. Denis, Bonnard, and Matisse refuse the invitation from the Nazi regime.

Japan: Writer Takigushi and painter Fukuzawa are imprisoned in Tokyo for having introduced Surrealism to Japan.

1942: American forces take Guadalcanal.

British and American forces begin attacking in North Africa.

France: *The Silence of the Sea* by Vercors is published secretly by Éditions de Minuit. First issue of the underground magazine *Les lettres françaises*. Francis Ponge publishes *Le parti pris des choses*. Albert Camus publishes *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Stranger*. Exhibition at the Musée de l'Orangerie presents the works of the most famous Nazi sculptor, Arno Breker. Opening an official event. Musée National d'Art Moderne opens at the Tokyo Palace built for the 1937 International Exposition. Only a third of the rooms were open, and the twenty Vuillard paintings from the collection not displayed out of concern for their

- safety. NY becomes the symbol of liberty – artists who moved to Paris are now joining Frenchmen, etc. in coming to the US. “First Papers of Surrealism” exhibit in NY organized by Duchamp, which he covers with “3 miles of string” preventing the audience to even enter the exhibition. Peggy Guggenheim opens up her gallery, Art of this Century, to the Surrealists – in a room which looks like a subway station with the sound of a train car and the lights blinking every time.
- US: Foundation of VVV – three Vs for victory, over the forces of death now unleashed across the planet, victory over the exploitation of man by man, and victory over the enslavement of the soul. Ernst, Breton, and Duchamp all involved. Breton publishes “Prolegomenon to a Third Surrealist Manifesto or Not.” Pierre Matisse gallery exhibits “Artists in Exile,” including Zadkine, Tanguy, Ernst, Chagall, Fernand Léger, Breton, Mondrian, Masson, Ozenfant, etc. Arshile Gorky gives a course in camouflage painting at the Grand Central School of Art.
- Brazil: Wolfgang Paalen founds the magazine *Dyn*, on which exiles such as Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo, and Benjamin Péret collaborate, as well as Robert Motherwell.
- 1943:** Roosevelt and Churchill meet at Casablanca.
The Battle of Stalingrad ends with a German defeat.
American and British troops invade Sicily and Italy.
France: Antoine de Saint-Exupéry publishes *Flight to Arras* and *The Little Prince*, illustrated by the author. At the Théâtre de la Cité, Charles Dullin produces Sartre’s first play, *Les Mouches*.
GB: TS Eliot publishes *Four Quartets*.
- 1944:** American troops land in the Philippines.
D-Day invasion of Normandy opens up a second front. The Battle of the Bulge.
France: Antoine de Saint-Exupéry does not return from a reconnaissance flight. His *Letter to a Hostage*, written in the US in 1942 to a Jewish friend, is published in Switzerland. Poet Max Jacob dies in the Drancy Camp. Éluard publishes secretly, *Au rendez-vous allemand*. Premiere of *Antigone* by Jean Anouilh. March 19, *Le Desir attrapé par la queue*, Surrealist play written by Picasso three years earlier, is acted out by Sartre, Beauvoir, Queneau, Leiris, Dora Maar, and Camus. SNCF simulates technical accidents to keep 48 cases of paintings confiscated from Jewish collections from going to Czechoslovakia to be sold to finance the Nazi war effort.
US: Hans Richter films *Dreams That Money Can’t Buy*, with the collaboration of Duchamp, Léger, Ernst, Calder, and Man Ray. Norman Rockwell illustrates Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms.
GB: Laurence Olivier creates *Henry V* inspired by Shakespeare.
Germany: Publication of the Scholtz report, which lists 21,903 objects of art that have been confiscated by the Nazi authorities.
- 1945:** Atomic bombs are dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan surrenders.
The Yalta Conference.
Germany surrenders.
Potsdam Conference.

- Germany: Hitler and Eva Braun commit suicide. Goebbels serves as chancellor for one day before his suicide.
- France: Sartre founds the magazine *Les temps modernes*. Picasso paints *Charnel House* in response to the concentration camps.
- 1946:** Winston Churchill calls for a “United States of Europe” in a speech he gives at the Zurich University.
- The European Federalists Union is set into place in France.
- France: Immense success of Sartre’s *Morts sans sepulture* and *The Respectful Prostitute* (plays). First international film festival at Cannes. Jean Cocteau films *Beauty and the Beast*, which receives the Louis-Delluc prize. Gertrude Stein dies in Paris. Auguste Perret begins the reconstruction of the city of Le Havre, largely destroyed in the bombardments of 1944. Opening of the Galerie Maeght with Henri Matisse exhibition.
- Russia: Sergei Eisenstein completes *Ivan the Terrible*.
- 1947:** Fostered by Winston Churchill, the United Europe Movement is created. It is hostile to supranational organs and in favour of an intergovernmental cooperation. René Courtin creates the French Council for a United Europe that will later be absorbed by the European Movement (1953). Fostered by Christian Democrats, the Nouvelles Equipes Internationales, that later known as European Union of Christian Democrats (1965), is created.
- The Socialist United States of Europe Movement is created. In 1961 it will be renamed European Left.
- The Marshall Plan, set up for the economic revival of Europe, is announced.
- The European Union Federalists Congress is held in Montreux, Switzerland.
- Federalist and Unionist organizations meet within the International Coordination of Movements for the Unification of Europe Committee.
- Germany: Publication of *Doctor Faustus* by Thomas Mann.
- France: Performance of Francis Poulenc’s opera *The Breasts of Tiresias*, from the play by Guillaume Apollinaire. International Exhibition of Surrealism at Gallery Maeght. Exhibition of drawings by André Masson for *Terre érotique* by Georges Bataille at the gallery du Chêne is prohibited by the police. Musée National d’Art Moderne is finally fully accessible to the public.
- GB: Erskine Caldwell’s *Tobacco Road* is prohibited by the courts.
- Switzerland: Max Bill creates a sculpture representing *Continuity* (marriage of art and science), a monument to be erected in Zurich. According to Robert Le Ricolais, the great specialist of pliable structures. “Shape doesn’t take space, but space is controlled by shape. The mind is lost in an endless eddy like liquid under the blades of a propeller.” (448 AC)
- 1948:** The custom convention between Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands enters into force.
- The Western Union Treaty (Brussels Treaty) is signed by Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.
- The Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) is created to coordinate the Marshall Plan.
- Fostered by the International Coordination of Movements for the Unification of Europe Committee, the Europe Congress meets in The Hague, The Netherlands. It

- is chaired by Winston Churchill and attended by 800 delegates. Participants recommend that a European Deliberative Assembly and a European Special Council, in charge of preparing political and economic integration of European Countries, be created. They also advise the adoption of a Human Rights Charter and, to ensure the respect of such charter, the creation of a Court of Justice.
- France: Nathalie Sarraute publishes a novel, *Portrait of a Man Unknown*. Michel Leiris publishes the essay *Biffures*. Jacques Prévert publishes *Paroles*. Three important plays are performed in Paris: *State of Siege*, by Albert Camus, *The Tidings Brought to Mary*, by Paul Claudel, and *Les Mains sales*, by Jean-Paul Sartre. The Cobra Movement of **C**openhagen, **B**russels, and **A**msterdam chooses to be born in Paris – Asger Jorn, *The Face of the Earth*. Rejects all dogmatism and theoretical influence – a reaction to “the Parisian myth.” (454-455 AC)
- Picasso seized by a passion for ceramics. Picasso goes to Poland to attend the congress of intellectuals for peace after Éluard and Ehrenburg convince him to go. Thought would aid in freeing his friend Pablo Neruda, at the time imprisoned in Chile. Jean Dubuffet founds the Art Brut group in Paris.
- 1949:** France, Great Britain and the Benelux countries decide to set into place a Council of Europe and ask Denmark, Ireland, Italy Norway and Switzerland to help them prepare the statute of such Council.
- Signature in Washington of the North Atlantic Treaty.
- The statute of the Council of Europe is signed in London, United Kingdom.
- The statute of the Council of Europe enters into force.
- The first session of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe is held in Strasbourg, France. Federalist members of parliament request the institution of a European political authority.
- Argentina: Publication of *The Aleph and Other Stories* by Jorge Luis Borges.
- France: Simone de Beauvoir arouses controversy with the publication of her feminist work *The Second Sex*. Triumphant Louis Armstrong concert at the Salle Pleyel in Paris. Jacques Tati’s first long film premieres – *Jour de fête*.
- GB: Enthusiastic reception of George Orwell’s novel *1984*. *The Third Man* by Carol Reed, with Orson Welles. April 20, Paloma (Dove) Picasso is born and Picasso’s drawing of a dove is chosen for the flyer for the World Peace Congress to take place on April 20-23 in Paris at the Salle Pleyel.
- Germany: Bertholt Brecht founds a theater company in Berlin, the Berliner Ensemble.
- 1950:** In a speech inspired by Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, proposes that France and Germany and any other European country wishing to join them pool their Coal and Steel resources (“Schuman Declaration”).
- Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany subscribe to the Schuman declaration.
- The Council of Europe Assembly approves the Schuman plan.
- The European Union of payments is created.
- Signature of the Human Rights and Fundamental Rights Conventions in Rome, Italy.

Robert Schuman proposes pooling Europe's coal and steel industries. The European Union -- previously known as the European Community -- is an institutional framework for the construction of a united Europe. It was created after World War II to unite the nations of Europe economically so another war among them would be unthinkable.

Korean War begins.

Chile: Publication of Pablo Neruda's *Canto general*.

France: Marguerite Duras publishes her first novel, *Un barrage Contre le Pacifique*. Premiere of *La cantatrice chauve* by Eugene Ionesco.

Ireland: Publication of *Insurrection* a novel by O'Flaherty.

Mexico: Octavio Paz publishes *The Labyrinth of Solitude*.

GB: Nijinsky dies at 60.

US: Firm of architects headed by Walter Gropius is commissioned with new buildings of Harvard University.