

# **THE COLLECTION**

by  
Al Schnupp

A collage of fictionalized vignettes  
inspired by real events  
with  
complementary images  
that celebrate  
the life and legacy of  
Peggy Guggenheim

## **CAST**

Peggy Guggenheim  
1 or 2 Female Actors Who Portray a Variety of Roles  
2 or 3 Male Actors Who Portray a Variety of Roles

(A suggested breakdown of featured roles is provided at the end)

## **ART**

The scenes occur in chronological order. The paintings and sculptures that complement the scenes – from the Peggy Guggenheim Collection – have been selected without respect to the time they were created or the time they were purchased. While the scenes are sequential, the images are part of a dreamscape, where time and memory are free-flowing, without direction. Generally, the pairing of images with dialogue is symbolic, metaphorical. Included with the images are design and directorial solutions that enable the artwork to be transformed within each scene. A summary of artworks is found at the end of the script.

**PROLOGUE**  
**(a pantomime)**

Three actors enter simultaneously – the actor playing Florette Guggenheim in Scene One and two ensemble actors, who hold up a large, empty picture frame. The three actors freeze. Peggy Guggenheim enters; she stands upstage of the frame and observes the invisible painting in the frame. She takes a step or two, moving closer to the frame. The painting transforms into an invisible mirror and then transforms into a window into Peggy’s past. The audience should sense Peggy is about to embark on a journey through her life. Florette unfreezes and says the first line of Scene One. Peggy responds and says her first word in Scene One: “Mother.” The actors holding the frame exit. Scene One continues....

1 - FATHER - 1

Home of Florette Guggenheim, widow of Benjamin Guggenheim, New York City, May 1912  
Peggy Guggenheim – Florette Guggenheim

FLORETTE (At desk, going through papers). How many mistresses did the man have!?

PEGGY (Entering). Mother...I have news!

FLORETTE Not now, Peggy. (To herself). How many mistresses?

PEGGY Please! Listen! Papa survived!

FLORETTE How...many...mistresses? Roses, sent to the Plaza Hotel every Wednesday, Room 876. Champagne delivered every Saturday to Waldorf Astoria, Room 620. Your father really was a cad.

PEGGY The postman just delivered a letter. It is Papa's handwriting.

FLORETTE How can that be!

PEGGY He's alive! He didn't drown at all!

FLORETTE The letter was posted before he boarded the Titanic, I suspect.

PEGGY Father will be home any day. I know it!

FLORETTE (Reading letter). Dearest Florette! What pretense! To call me dear. (She reads the letter silently to herself. PEGGY takes the model of the Titanic. Slowly, with fierce, controlled energy, she lifts it overhead, willing it to resurface from the bottom of the Atlantic. Her eyes are shut. It is an act of hope, a prayer. Simultaneously, she is being imbued with a life mission).

PEGGY What does he say?

FLORETTE All business! And boasting about his latest whim. He purchased a dozen paintings in Paris. Some artist named Corot. Such a waste of money! I must have the combination on the safe reset.

PEGGY Did he mention me?

FLORETTE The combination reset. The combination reset

PEGGY Nothing about me?

FLORETTE He sends you his love, Peggy. You and your sisters.

PEGGY Mama. May I have the letter? Please?

FLORETTE So much for his trifles. Those paintings are at the bottom of the Atlantic now. (Rips up letter).

PEGGY Mama!

FLORETTE I prefer Madame Aubart were at the bottom, but that French songbird survived.

PEGGY Who is Madame Aubart?

FLORETTE I know what that's about.

PEGGY Why did you tear up his letter!?

FLORETTE I know what that's about.

PEGGY Don't throw it away.

FLORETTE I know what that's about. Madame Aubart was more than an innocent shipmate.

PEGGY Can I have it? For my box of mementos?

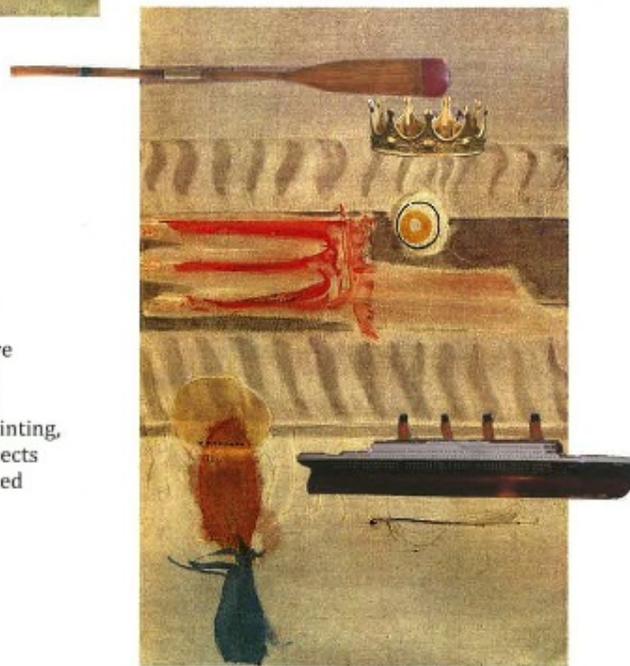
FLORETTE Peggy, you're fourteen. Aren't you a bit old for collecting frivolous, little trinkets...and imbuing them with sentiment? No! I want no record of his indiscretions. No record. No record. No record.



### Scene 1

*Sacrifice* by Mark Rothko (1943)

The oar, crown and ship model are three-dimensional objects. They may hang in front of the painting or they may be attached to the painting, resting/hanging on pegs. The objects are detachable; they can be handled by the actors.



## 2 - AN AUTOGRAPH - 2

Young Women's Hebrew Association, New York City,  
Exhibition on Modern Art - Arranged by Alfred Stieglitz, March 1919  
Peggy Guggenheim – Alfred Stieglitz

ALFRED Is that your favorite?  
PEGGY I think so. (Recognizing the speaker) Mr. Stieglitz!  
ALFRED (Also admiring the painting). *Blue and Yellow*. By Georgia O'Keeffe. It's impossible to resist her. She savors the mystery.  
PEGGY Will you autograph my program, Mr. Stieglitz?  
ALFRED Of course, my dear. To whom shall I address my remarks?  
PEGGY Peggy. Peggy Guggenheim.  
ALFRED Any relation to Solomon?  
PEGGY He's my uncle.  
ALFRED Quite a familiar name to those who make and deal in art. I sense you're not fond of him.  
PEGGY He is not always kind to our family. Mother calls him, "Mister Grub, Grub, Grub." Is Miss O'Keeffe here?  
ALFRED In image only. Have you ever seen such poetry, her hands as lyrical as birds in flight? (Removes painting from wall). What is it about *Blue and Yellow* that captivates you?  
PEGGY It's so...not New York.  
ALFRED I quite agree. What about New York displeases you? The Jewish lens?  
PEGGY I'm not sure what that means.  
ALFRED What we Jews, among ourselves, call "The ghetto legacy."  
PEGGY Oh, yes.  
ALFRED Honor the code. Protect the tribe.  
PEGGY Shun the goy.  
ALFRED Like a shutter, blocking the field of vision.  
PEGGY Like a shutter.  
ALFRED How old are you, Peggy Guggenheim?  
PEGGY Twenty.  
ALFRED That's old enough! I implore you, if New York is not to your liking, visit the great cities of Europe. The pleasures that await you are beyond description! My photographs, I hope, are proof of that.  
PEGGY I've been to Europe several times, Mr. Stieglitz. Someday I hope to live there.  
ALFRED Until then, I assure you, there is much in New York to enchant the eye. What do you do?  
PEGGY I work at a bookstore in the Village.  
ALFRED I certainly hope they sell my books.  
PEGGY Absolutely, Mr. Stieglitz! It's how I spend my spare time in the shop: looking at all the art books.  
ALFRED Shall I reserve the O'Keeffe piece for you?  
PEGGY Perhaps in a year, after I receive my inheritance, I will consider buying it. You've been a delight, Mr. Stieglitz.  
ALFRED (Signing the program). "To Peggy, may *Blue and Yellow* and all the colors of the rainbow someday grace your walls." Alfred Stieglitz.



## Scene 2

*Event # 247* by Edmondo Bacci (1958)

The photograph of Ms. O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* by Alfred Stieglitz (1916), resembles a film negative; it is transparent. At some point in the scene, the O'Keeffe image is transposed over the painting by Bacci.

### 3 - RENDEZVOUS - 3

La Rotonde Café - Montparnasse District, Paris, 1921  
Laurence Vail – Peggy Guggenheim – Diego Rivera

LAURENCE Miss Guggenheim. Have you come to Café La Rotonde, seeking me out, as I hoped you would?

PEGGY Last night, at dinner with the Fleischman's, you spoke so effusively about the place, I had to see it for myself.

LAURENCE To rendezvous at La Rotonde. That was my intent.

PEGGY You don't remember meeting me last year in New York at the bookstore, do you, Laurence?

LAURENCE I do, but we barely had a moment to speak.

PEGGY The woman, who I thought was your wife...

LAURENCE Turned out to be my sister. A frequent mistake. (Attempting to be scandalous). Were she and I too intimate? What would you like to drink? There is no Prohibition in France.

PEGGY Champagne. I understand you're quite a celebrity in Paris. *King of the Bohemians!*

LAURENCE (Suggesting promiscuity). Titles are easily acquired here. Surround yourself with the right company. Borrow a few clever phrases and repeat them often.

PEGGY I'll keep that in mind, Laurence.

LAURENCE I hear you've been inquiring about me. What have you been told?

PEGGY You're an Oxford grad. Writing plays. Painting. Sculpting. Reveling in your role, *King of the Bohemians*.

LAURENCE It's the hair. Miró clipped a lock and made it into a paint brush.

PEGGY I don't know Miró.

LAURENCE You will. Soon enough. A wonderful, contemptuous painter from Barcelona.

PEGGY Your hair *is* stunning.

LAURENCE Do you want to make love?

PEGGY I barely know you, Laurence.

LAURENCE That makes for the most intriguing encounters.

PEGGY I thought you're having an affair with Mrs. Fleischman.

LAURENCE No one takes that seriously. Not even her husband.

DIEGO (Enters). Señorita?

PEGGY Yes. Hello.

DIEGO May I? (Presents a sketch to PEGGY). A sketch of you, drawn from across the room.

PEGGY Thank you.

DIEGO Your face. Very handsome. Not, what you say, classic profile. Not pretty. But ripe...with...intra.

PEGGY And you are?

DIEGO Diego Rivera. From Mexico! Not Spain!

PEGGY Pleased to meet you, Señor Rivera.

DIEGO You live...with...Paris?

LAURENCE Miss Guggenheim is from New York City, new to Paris.

DIEGO (Refers to VAIL). Look out for this one. Laurence collects hearts, then breaks them.



### Scene 3

*Countercomposition XII*  
by Theo van Doesburg (1925)

The red triangle is a thin sheet  
hinged to the frame on the right;  
behind it is a Paris scene.

The black triangle is a thin sheet  
hinged to the frame on the left;  
behind it is a New York City scene.

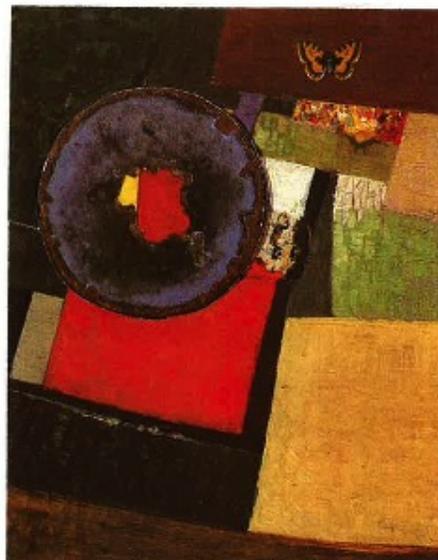
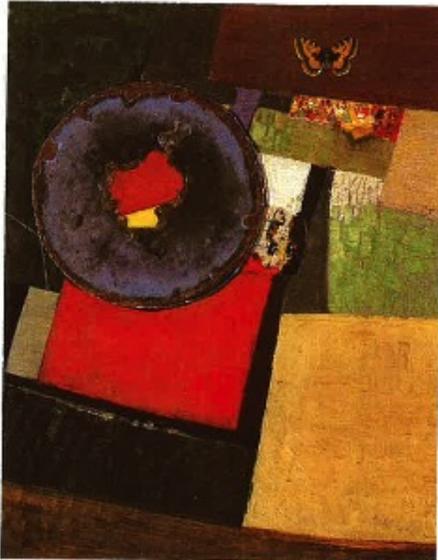
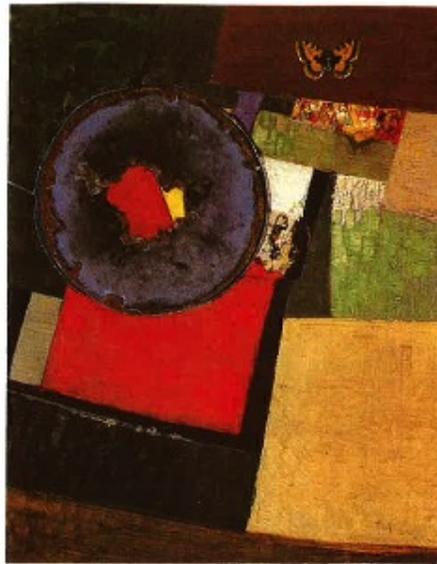
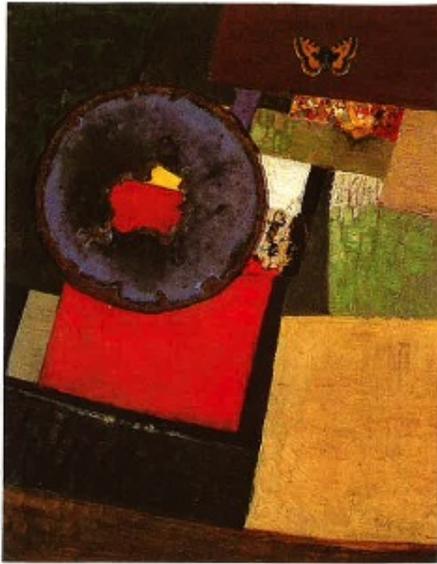
At the appropriate moment  
in the scene, the triangles are  
opened to reveal the hidden  
images behind them.



#### 4 - A PHOTOGRAPH - 4

Studio of Man Ray, Paris, 1924  
Man Ray – Peggy Guggenheim – Kiki de Montparnasse

PEGGY (Observing a dress held up by MAN RAY). The dress is a work of art!  
MAN Naturally. Designed by the *King of Fashion* himself, Paul Poiret!  
PEGGY (Removing her dress. Will put on the new one. Or she may simply hold up a beautiful piece of fabric and drape it across her). Why are the French are so enamored of titles? My husband continually broadcasts his: *King of the Bohemians*.  
MAN Laurence was never one to hide in the shadows.  
PEGGY He collects the most outlandish fabrics and has them made into shirts, garish as a peacock. I wish he'd reserve his sense of color for the canvas. Should I look directly into the camera?  
MAN I think so. How is Sindbad?  
PEGGY He's nearly one. (Bristling). Children. They are not...puppies. Please, no profiles.  
MAN Why is that?  
PEGGY I don't wish to brandish my frightfully large nose.  
MAN No, no, it is a proper nose.  
PEGGY It was not always this gigantic. In America, in Cincinnati, I commissioned a doctor to minimize its size, but midway through the operation he found the task too taxing. Now, it's larger than ever.  
MAN Mrs. Vail, I strive to capture personality. Not a flawless specimen.  
PEGGY I'm not that. Flawless. Nor is my husband, Laurence. His latest tantrum was in Capri. He slugged his sister's lover outside our hotel. Ten days in jail. Man Ray, although I've adopted my husband's name...I prefer Mrs. Guggenheim.  
MAN A wise decision. Marriages come and go. Not names. (They share a laugh).  
PEGGY (Suddenly wistful). My father was a darling man. I don't know what makes me think of him just now.  
KIKI (Enters. To MAN). Hello, dear. Was that Gertrude Stein I saw leaving the studio?  
MAN It was. Be nice.  
KIKI You know I have a soft spot for lesbians, but Gertie with her girth is looking a trifle grotesque, don't you think? Hello, Mrs. Guggenheim!  
PEGGY Hello, Kiki. (Affectionately). *Queen of Montparnasse*!  
MAN Kiki, how is it *you know* Mrs. Guggenheim prefers to go by her maiden name?  
KIKI Only women interested in fidelity assume their husband's name! Am I right, Peggy?  
PEGGY Excuse me for interrupting, but the earrings are all wrong, Man Ray. Here, try these on, Peggy. (PEGGY removes her earrings and puts on the pair belonging to KIKI).  
PEGGY For my birthday, father would design earrings for me and have them made by his favorite jeweler. I couldn't go by any other name.  
KIKI So so much better!  
PEGGY Is there an attitude I should assume? A character?  
KIKI A sphinx! Pretend to be a sphinx in the desert. Serene. Mysterious. Challenging men to solve your riddle.



*Merzbild* by Kurt Schwitters (1930)

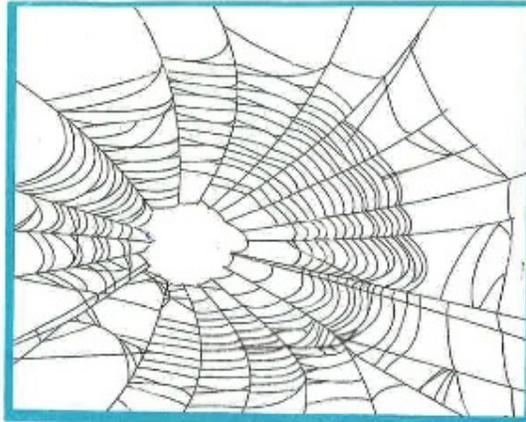
The circular shape rotates like a camera lens. Three times during the scene, Man Ray will turn this circular element. For the last adjustment, the circle will be returned to its original position.

Scene 4

5 - PATINA - 5

Home of Peggy Guggenheim and Laurence Vail, Pramousquier, France, 1926  
Laurence Vail – Peggy Guggenheim – Berenice Abbott

BERENICE Oh, my God, Peggy! Have you lost your mind? This place is so bleak.  
PEGGY What did I say, Laurence? Berenice hates the country.  
BERENICE What's to photograph here? Haystacks and goat turds? I want sidewalks and street vendors.  
LAURENCE I suspect Peggy didn't fully explain our situation.  
PEGGY We have yet to install electric lights or a telephone.  
BERENICE Smashing! It'll be like living in a barn!  
LAURENCE Perhaps you would prefer to stay at the village hotel. It's quite a modern facility, with *lovely* outhouses!  
BERENICE I'll manage.  
LAURENCE Well, if I'm not needed here, I promised to drive our gardener to Nice, to the flower show. (Exits).  
PEGGY Any chance Laurence gets, he's tooling people around in his Hispano. Did you bring the photographs?  
BERENICE I did. Thank you, Peggy, for lending me the money for the camera.  
PEGGY The money was a gift, Berenice, not a loan.  
BERENICE Having the proper equipment has made all the difference. Man Ray sends his love. I'm no longer working as his assistant, but he lets me use his darkroom.  
PEGGY I think Man Ray finds my bluntness unnerving. Let's have a look.  
BERENICE (Removing photographs from envelope). Don't you miss Paris, Peggy?  
PEGGY Oh, my god, they're adorable. Sindbad has never looked better. And Pegeen. How did you manage to catch her not pouting? They love it here in the country. But, to be frank, Pegeen much prefers our nanny to me. It seems my daughter and I are destined to be foes.  
BERENICE And Laurence? How are things with him?  
PEGGY He still hasn't forgiven me for leaving him stranded in the Switzerland with his sister while I went to Paris and had an affair.  
BERENICE In the meantime, naturally, you are expected to forgive him all his affairs!  
PEGGY When he hunted me down, there was a ferocious fight. Another arrest. And now another trial to broadcast our indiscretions. Some days I feel trapped in a web of my own making.  
BERENICE Come and stay with me if he gets to be too much! Have you heard I'm scheduled to have a one-woman show?  
PEGGY That's wonderful! Have you found a new girlfriend?  
BERENICE No, it's still just me...and the camera. For all the lesbians I've photographed, you'd think something would have come of it.  
PEGGY It's only a matter of time, Berenice. (Looks at photos again). They're precious children. Sometimes I forget that.



## Scene 5

*Nostalgia of Space*  
by Oscar Dominguez (1939)

A spider web constructed from string is attached to a frame. Actors should interact with the web. During the scene, the frame containing the web is placed in front of the painting.

6 - EXPOSÉ - 6

Home of Peggy Guggenheim and Laurence Vail, Pramousquier, France, 1927  
Laurence Vail – Peggy Guggenheim

LAURENCE (Pausing in the doorway) It's two am. Come to bed.

PEGGY (Seated, holding manuscript). I just finished reading your manuscript. (Pats manuscript). *Murder! Murder!* By Laurence Vail.

LAURENCE What do you think?

PEGGY It's funny. Unapologetic. Of course, the novel is a thinly-disguised story about us. We'll be recognized immediately.

LAURENCE I beg your pardon?

PEGGY Clearly the main character, Mr. Asp, is you. His wife, Polly – me! Not terribly enigmatic. I didn't realize your distain for me went so deep.

LAURENCE Even if a few events were inspired by life, the story is original.

PEGGY A few? Polly is me in every way! Her endless lists. Her obsession with money. Her love of sex. Me!

LAURENCE You're personalizing.

PEGGY (Wrapping manuscript in paper with "Zoomorphic Couple" printed on it). I'm not offended by your portrayal! I'm quite aware I can be a monster at times. But it is curious that Mr. Asp fails to mention he is completely indebted to his wife. His exceedingly generous wife.

LAURENCE Screw you!

PEGGY *Asp* is such a tepid pseudonym. Have you considered *Ass*?

LAURENCE Now you're being vengeful.

PEGGY Not at all. What I take exception to is your portrayal of Mr Asp's sister! She's not at all like your sister, Laurence.

LAURENCE Don't disparage my sister!

PEGGY For God's sake, Clotilde accompanied us on our honeymoon. You contrive skiing vacations together. You built a room just for her over the garage! Every time you're introduced to one of her boyfriends you have fits. Put that in *Murder! Murder!*

LAURENCE You vicious, detestable bitch!

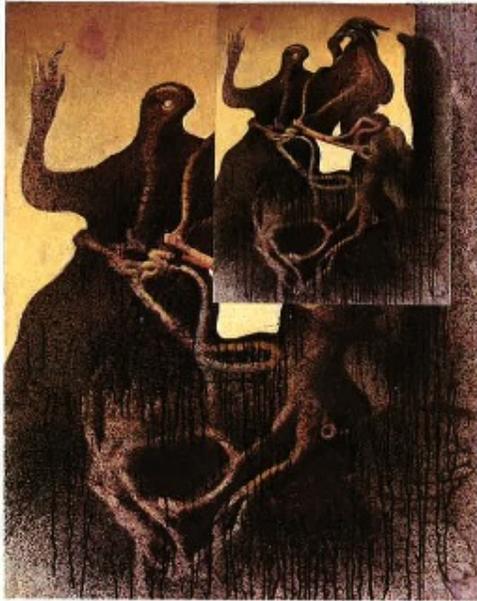
PEGGY (Remains calm throughout the scene, as LAURENCE becomes enraged). I always thought there was something peculiar there!

LAURENCE How dare you insult me...or my sister...in such a manner. (Grabs manuscript). This represents four years of work. I was counting on your support! And you mock it! (Throws manuscript into fireplace).

PEGGY That's dramatic – burning something that belongs to you. I've seen you destroy plenty of property over the years. But never your own! I suspect you have a second copy in your room. Or is it already sitting on a publisher's desk somewhere? (LAURENCE has been found out).

LAURENCE Just like in the novel. We're killing one another.

PEGGY *Murder! Murder!*



## Scene 6

*Zoomorphic Couple* by Max Ernst (1933)

The painting has a sheet of paper – a miniature of the real painting – clipped to the top of it. In the scene, Peggy removes the paper and uses it to wrap the manuscript.

7 - ANARCHY - 7

Rental Home in St.-Tropez, France, July 22, 1928  
Peggy Guggenheim – Emma Goldman – Emily Coleman

PEGGY (Enters, holding a bag and small potted plant). Emma, dear, how do you like your new typewriter?

EMMA I haven't had a chance to use it. Emily claimed it. I don't mind, really. She is such a whiz at the keys, I decided to simply dictate events as she furiously pecks away.

PEGGY Have you had breakfast? I brought some croissants and apricot jam from the market.

EMMA Sounds lovely. Thank you, Peggy. If you hadn't rented this cottage and hired Emily to assist me, I don't know if I'd even write my memoirs.

PEGGY So Emily is working out!

EMMA She's a godsend. But, if given the opportunity, she does go on and on about her days in the asylum.

PEGGY How far along are you?

EMMA 1919. I've just been exiled to Russia. I don't mean to disparage Emily. She has a penchant for psychosis. I for anarchy.

PEGGY When I look at all you've done, Miss Goldman, I feel so useless.

EMMA You're young, Peggy. There's plenty of time to make a difference. Laurence took me for a ride in his Hispano last week. He bragged that he'd been arrested, too. He laughed and said it was because he committed an act of "anarchy."

PEGGY An act of spite is what I'd call it. I told Laurence I visited a fortune-teller, who predicted I was about to meet a man who would become my second husband. Laurence slapped me, took out his cigarette lighter and a thousand-franc note and burned it. He wasn't arrested for hitting me...but for destroying government property.

EMMA I don't understand how you stay with him. It really is bullish of Laurence, even as a joke, to suggest his stints in jail in any way resemble mine. Does Laurence not appreciate I was arrested for promoting social justice, not committing domestic abuse!?

PEGGY I suspect it's only a matter of time before I leave him.

EMILY (Enters). Hello, Mrs. Guggenheim!

PEGGY Emily! Thank you for last night! It was so nice of you to introduce John Holms and his companion, Dorothy. (Offering plant). Rosemary.

EMILY Isn't John marvelous?

PEGGY Yesterday was the anniversary of my sister Benita's death. I wasn't in the mood to go out, but now I'm glad I did. And, yes, John is quite marvelous.

EMILY I'm a little in love with him, I fear.

PEGGY Did I make a fool of myself, Emily, dancing on the table?

EMILY I think everybody in the restaurant was sympathetic. You've had quite a trying year, Peggy.

PEGGY Tell me more about Dorothy.

EMILY She's been John's companion for nearly nine years. A bit possessive, but a sharp mind.

PEGGY Well, I'll have to invite the couple to our home and see what they're about.

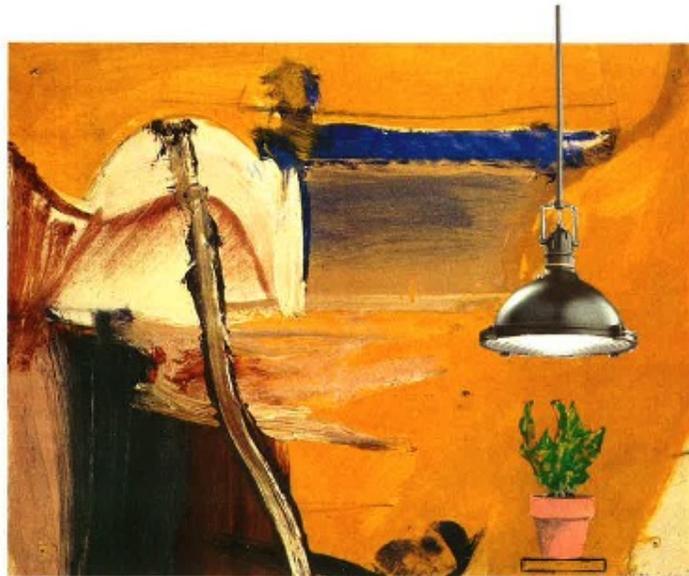
EMMA Dancing on the table? Sounds like someone's entertaining anarchy.



### Scene 7

*Untitled*  
by Willem de Kooning (1958)

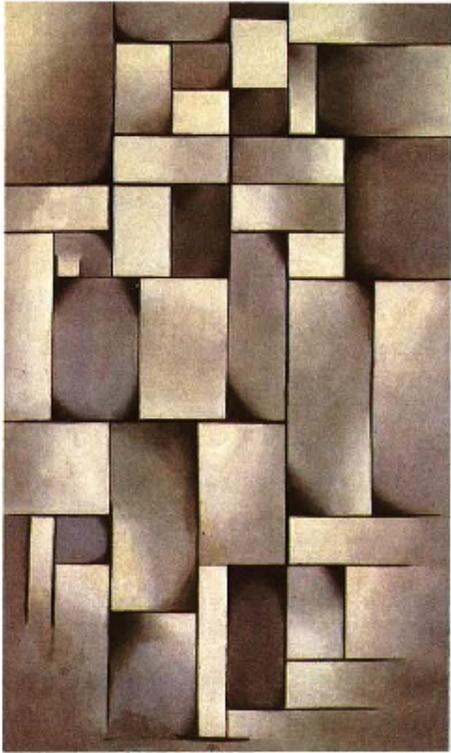
Emily pulls a hidden shelf out from the painting. The pot of rosemary is placed on the shelf. A lamp is flown in or pulled down from above. Emily waters the plant, using a small watering can.



## 8 - BOUNDARIES - 8

Hotel Bar in St. Tropez, France, 1928  
Peggy Guggenheim – John Holms

PEGGY John, what's wrong? Please don't say you're ending our affair!  
JOHN Dorothy's distraught...extremely distraught.  
PEGGY You mustn't let her interfere with our happiness.  
JOHN She's decided to go to Paris, and give us six months to sort out what we want.  
PEGGY That's diplomatic of her, John, but...I suspect it's a gamble Dorothy intends to win.  
JOHN What *do* we want?  
PEGGY My lawyer wants me to divorce Laurence, but I prefer a legal separation.  
JOHN Why not a divorce?  
PEGGY I want guardianship of both our children - Sindbad *and* Pegeen...and I'm afraid Laurence won't stand for it. He revels in his role as father. (Pause). Tell me, Mr...troubled...bewitched...John Holms. What is your father like?  
JOHN Have you ever seen a painting by Theo van Doesburg?  
PEGGY Not that I recall.  
JOHN What Theo paints - that's my father. Strong. Rigid. Organized blocks of color. As uncompromising as the Bible.  
PEGGY And your mother?  
JOHN More like a Renoir, but she remains under father's rule.  
PEGGY Where do your parents live? (Opens cabinet that contains mirror and makeup supplies).  
JOHN In Cheltenham. I see them once a year. That's quite enough.  
PEGGY Next time you visit, may I go with you? You'll introduce me?  
JOHN No. Don't be insulted. They haven't met Dorothy either.  
PEGGY After nine years!  
JOHN I told them Dorothy's my wife. I feel bad about lying, but it's easier for everyone.  
PEGGY I understand. They wouldn't approve of me, either. It seems to be a theme in my life. (Observes herself in the mirror).  
JOHN I'm sorry.  
PEGGY Now I really want to see one of Theo's paintings.  
JOHN The man is fluid, easy, not at all like his paintings. I can take you to Theo's studio in Paris. But I can't take you to see my parents.  
PEGGY I adored my father. (Applies lipstick).  
JOHN That doesn't surprise me.  
PEGGY I adore you.  
JOHN You haven't known me very long.  
PEGGY When all of this is settled, when Laurence and I and our lawyers sort out this mess, we'll take a long trip in my Citroën. All over Europe. Just the two of us. (Closes doors to mirror). Six months? Dorothy gives us six months? Something about her frightens me. (Pause). Why is it...whenever something good happens, I feel like I've stepped aboard the *Titanic*?



## Scene 8

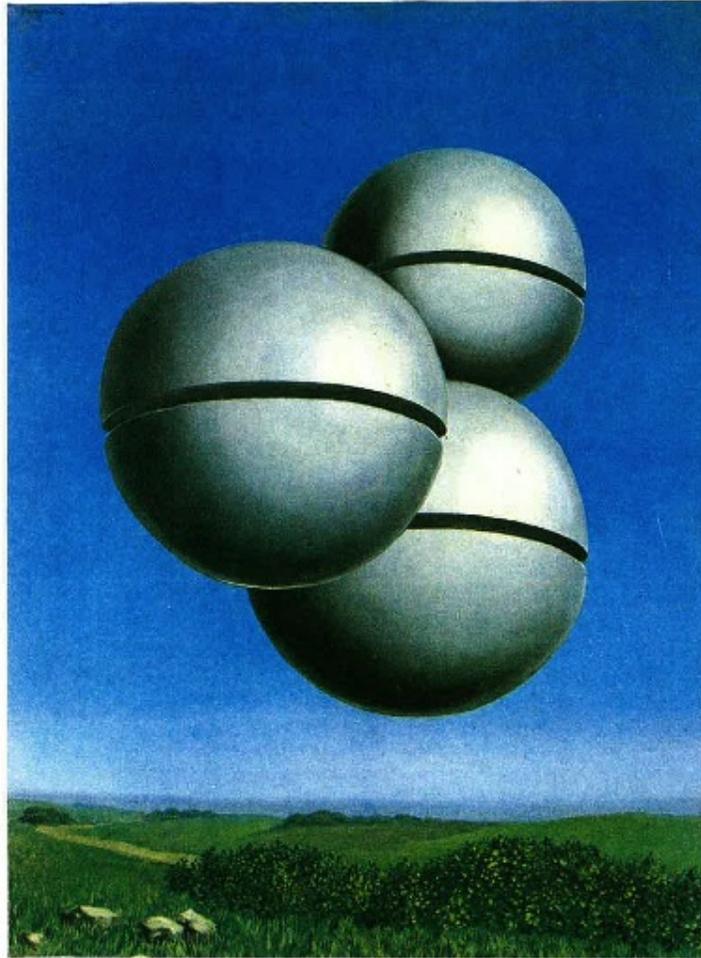
*Composition* Theo van Doesburg (1918)

Peggy will open two rectangular doors to reveal an alcove. It contains a mirror and makeup supplies. Peggy will briefly check herself in the mirror and retouch her lipstick or rouge.

9 - IRRITANTS - 9

Terrace of a Resort Hotel in Lugano, Switzerland, October, 1929  
John Holms – Peggy Guggenheim

JOHN (Enters with tennis racket and ball). What are you doing?  
PEGGY Writing a letter to Laurence.  
JOHN Oh. What does your husband want now? (Bounces ball up and down, off face of racket)  
PEGGY John, shouldn't you have the Citroën serviced for our trip to Milano?  
JOHN I thought you arranged that. Drink?  
PEGGY No. Perhaps you could go easy on the liquor tonight, John.  
JOHN (Puts down racket). Why are you writing your husband?  
PEGGY To say I am selling our country house, and he shall have all the profits.  
JOHN Isn't that a bit generous?  
PEGGY It's what I plan to do.  
JOHN Laurence was given the Hispano. We have to suffice with the Citroën.  
PEGGY Don't be bitter.  
JOHN Doesn't it strike you that your situation with Laurence is a bit cozy?  
PEGGY Though Laurence and I are still legally married, we are less bound to each other than Dorothy and you.  
JOHN Has Laurence published his precocious little exposé *Murder! Murder!*  
PEGGY Not to my knowledge. But he will.  
JOHN I wait with bated breath to read it. (Opens champagne).  
PEGGY I am surrounded by writers. Those who practice the craft...and those who talk about it.  
JOHN (Pouring champagne). Nagging me won't get anything written, Peggy.  
PEGGY Are we throwing our lives away, John? We treat life like a mad carousal, filling our days with trivia, without ever stopping to do anything serious.  
JOHN What's troubling you? Why are you saying this?  
PEGGY Sometimes I feel so unproductive.  
JOHN (Holds up glass to observe bubbles in champagne). I'm surprised you haven't gotten pregnant.  
PEGGY I have.  
JOHN Really?  
PEGGY I took care of it.  
JOHN Why didn't you tell me?  
PEGGY Oh, John, when have you ever concerned yourself with mundane affairs? You're too busy occupied with higher things to notice...discussing philosophy...debating art...dissecting literature...too busy preparing to write - whatever the hell it is you're going to write - I can never tell. Nothing ever seems concrete with you. When has my health, or the schedules of Sindbad or Pegeen, or the condition of the Citroën ever crossed your mind?



Scene 9

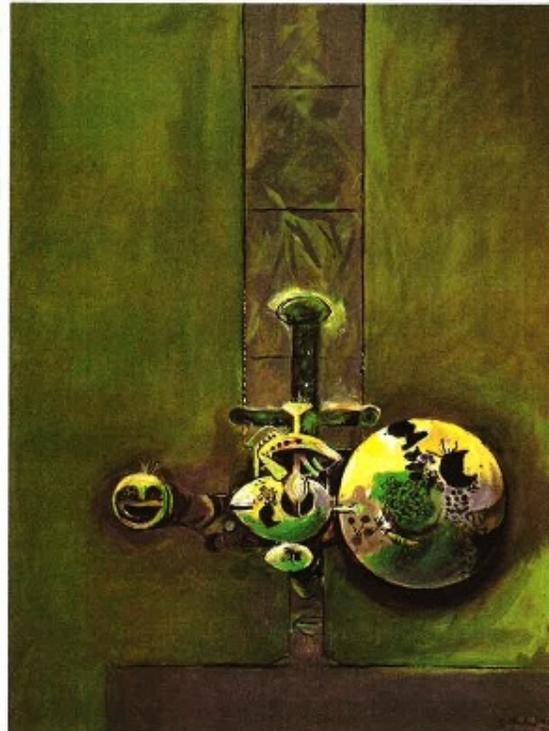
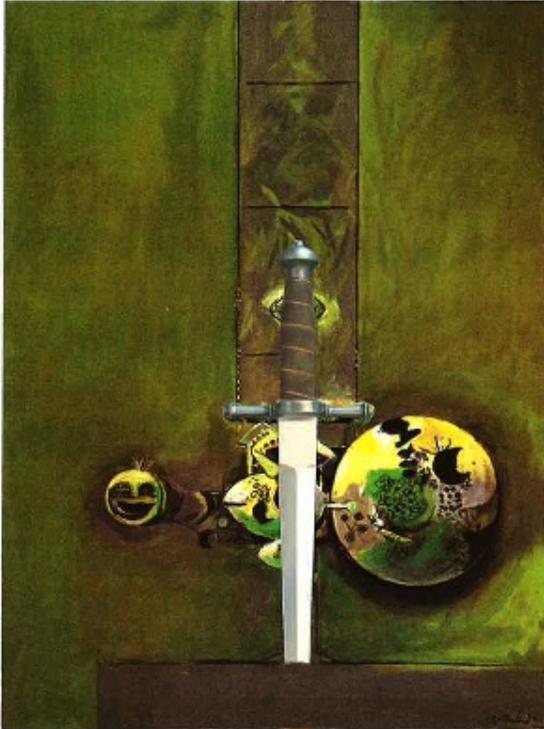
*Voice of Space* by René Magritte (1932)

The actions described in the stage directions will complement the image.

10 - DEMANDS - 10

Hayford Hall, Dartmoor, England, 1933  
John Holms - Peggy Guggenheim

JOHN Where is my revolver, Peggy?  
PEGGY I took it.  
JOHN Well, I'd like it back.  
PEGGY Smashed it! With a brick from the chimney! I'm tired of living with a man who carries around death in his pocket.  
JOHN I don't rummage through your belongings!  
PEGGY John, ever since I've known you – five years now - that pistol has been your companion!  
JOHN Destroyed it!  
PEGGY I've put up with your talk of despair long enough! No more! Fuck your pistol...and your brooding...and your empty promises!  
JOHN I cannot bring myself to write!  
PEGGY Take inspiration from our guests! Djuna is in the library, writing. Antonia is in her room, writing. Emily is having a gin and tonic in bed....  
JOHN Writing! Yes, yes! I know!  
PEGGY In all our time together you've written only one poem. One...poem! Meanwhile, our house guests persist, publish, win awards.  
JOHN Peggy!  
PEGGY Emily had it right. "You're a genius writer who manages not to write!"  
JOHN A finely-turned phrase from our most discerning, resident writer. I'll get the whiskey and toast her.  
PEGGY Do you want only to be an echo? Don't you wish to make something of substance?  
JOHN Am I not enough for you, Peggy?  
PEGGY You are, my dear!  
JOHN Why do I sense that isn't true?  
PEGGY You are my heartbeat! The prince of this house...who doesn't seem to live here.  
JOHN (Dazed). You destroyed my revolver, Peggy.  
PEGGY Tonight, at dinner, will you bring something you've written...and read it to us?  
JOHN Peggy, I recognize your desire to be a lifeboat to your friends, but I can't be induced to write. I'm going to saddle up Dickens and go for a ride.  
PEGGY Will you be back in time for dinner?  
JOHN Tomorrow morning, first thing, I'm taking the train to London. To purchase a new pistol.  
PEGGY I understand. I'm sorry.  
JOHN Could you...?  
PEGGY Yes. Get my purse.  
JOHN Thank you.  
PEGGY It's only right I should pay for it.  
JOHN (Kisses her). Patience, Peggy. Perhaps, someday....



Scene 10

*Organic Form* by Graham Sutherland (1962-68 )

A shelf is attached to the bottom of the painting; this shelf holds a three-dimensional sword that has a pencil ending. The sword is extracted by John near the end of the scene.

11 - VERDICT - 11

Hayford Hall, Dartmoor, England, January 19, 1934  
Peggy Guggenheim – Sonia, a French Chef – Doctor Mark Tilford

PEGGY (Pacing. She stops and calls out). Sonia, dear.  
SONIA (Enters). Yes, Mrs. Guggenheim.  
PEGGY Would you sit with me?  
SONIA Of course, Mrs. Guggenheim. I've begun a pot of soup. Should I turn it off?  
PEGGY Don't worry about dinner, Sonia. I doubt anyone will be in the mood to eat.  
SONIA Would you care for a cup of tea?  
PEGGY The doctors should be through by now.  
SONIA Don't worry. They say it is a simple operation.  
PEGGY Yes. A small incision...to break his wrist and reset it.  
SONIA All will be fine.  
PEGGY John stayed up all night drinking. Should the doctors have administered anesthesia in his condition?  
SONIA Perhaps a glass of sherry?  
PEGGY I have not always been kind to John. The louse refuses to end his relationship with Dorothy. So, to spite him, I said I was in love with Douglas Garmen.  
SONIA Are you in love with Mr. Garmen?  
PEGGY Sonia! It was only a ruse. To gain John's hand in marriage.  
SONIA Oh. What is a ruse?  
PEGGY Never mind. That damn horse, Dickens! (Has a physical outburst. In her frustration and rage, executes a series of slashes in the air, as if painting wildly on canvas). If anything happens to John, I'll have that beast destroyed! John is my Titanic. He can't go down. He simply can't.  
MARK (At the door). Mrs. Guggenheim. If I may?  
PEGGY (A short pause). No!  
MARK I'm sorry, Mrs. Guggenheim.  
PEGGY It's not possible! You called it a simple operation.  
MARK His heart just stopped.  
PEGGY A horse is spooked, throws its rider, and a man dies!?  
MARK There was nothing we could do.  
PEGGY (Stunned. Not with anger). Nothing...you...could...do?  
MARK Nothing. Nothing at all.  
PEGGY Oh, my darling prince.  
MARK It was a painless death. If that is of comfort.  
PEGGY When you realized the situation, why didn't you call me?  
MARK John always considered you something of a firecracker, Mrs. Guggenheim. His words, not mine. We couldn't risk having you in the room.  
PEGGY Who is going to tell Dorothy? Who will contact John's parents? They'll say I'm responsible for his death. Peggy, the home-wrecker. She destroys everything she touches. Sonia, where's that sherry.



Scene 11

*Image of Time (Barricade)* by Emilio Vedora (1951)

As indicated in the stage directions, Peggy will face the painting. In her fury and frustration, her gestures will coincide with some brush strokes and lines in the painting.

12 - POLITICS - 12

Yew Tree Cottage, Petersfield, England, 1935  
Peggy Guggenheim – Douglas Garman – Emily Coleman

PEGGY It's not enough that I blame myself for John's death...but to immediately leap into bed with John's friend, Douglas. Am I a wanton woman, Emily?

EMILY Other than the sex, what keeps Douglas and you together?

PEGGY Emily, admit it. You're doomed to hate Doug because you worshiped John.

EMILY Oh, the nights we'd all crawl into bed together! You, snoring away, while John and I drank cider and talked until dawn.

PEGGY You can join Douglas and me in bed, if you wish, but he will have little to say unless you're willing to discuss communism.

DOUGLAS (*Enters, carrying a suitcase*). Good afternoon, Ladies.

PEGGY Are you planning on leaving us, Douglas?

DOUGLAS I've been asked to give several lectures in Liverpool.

PEGGY How long will you be gone?

DOUGLAS Two, possibly three weeks.

PEGGY When was this planned?

DOUGLAS Several weeks ago.

PEGGY And you're only telling me now!?

DOUGLAS I knew you'd try to talk me out of it.

PEGGY Why is it the men I collect are always leaving me?

DOUGLAS I'm sorry. It's an important mission. One that could have significant historical impact.

PEGGY Why is it people with political ambitions speak in such stirring terms? I find politics dull. I find you dull.

DOUGLAS I'm sorry you don't share my passion.

PEGGY Are you taking the train? Or the Delage?

DOUGLAS I was planning on the Delage.

PEGGY I should think you'd take the train. Isn't that the transportation of the proletariat? You know who else found you dull? John.

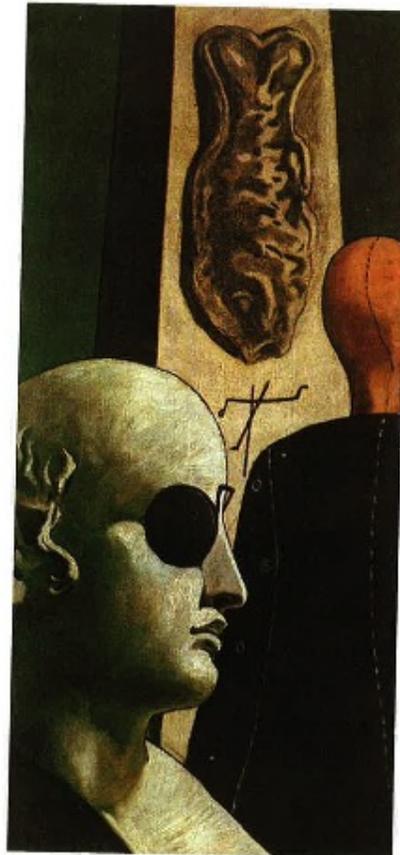
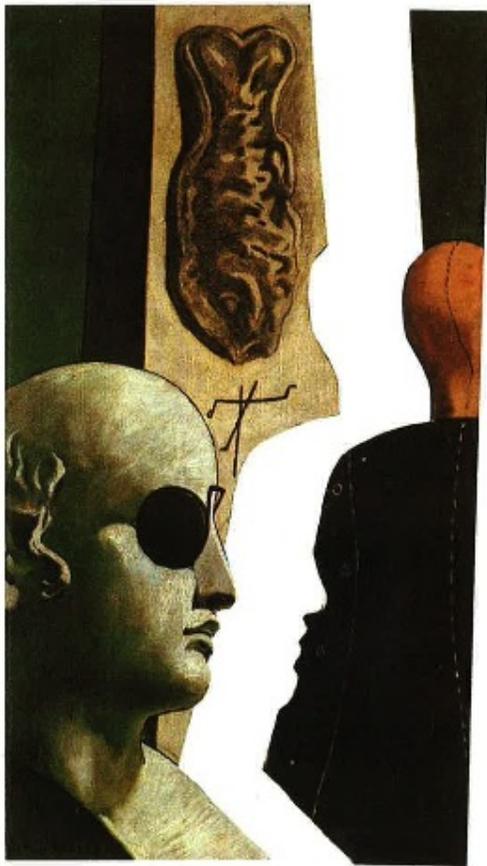
DOUGLAS (*Sets down the suitcase slowly*). John Holms and I knew each other for many years...long before you meet and fell in love with him. Never, in all our time together, did he indicate he found me dull!

PEGGY Emily? Do you find Douglas, with all his talk of Marx and Engels and revolution, dull?

EMILY Leave me out of this!

DOUGLAS Are you going to ruin what we have, Peggy? Am I to leave with that as your last words?

PEGGY (*Rises. Goes to him*). No, Douglas. It's just me being...*Peggy*. I'm sorry. Don't you understand my tantrums are simply my way of saying I wish to spend more time with you? Go. Inspire the masses. When you return, I'll join your party. I'll even write them a check. But don't ask me to go to Russia. Emma lived there; I've heard her stories. I know all I need to know about Russia.



Scene 12

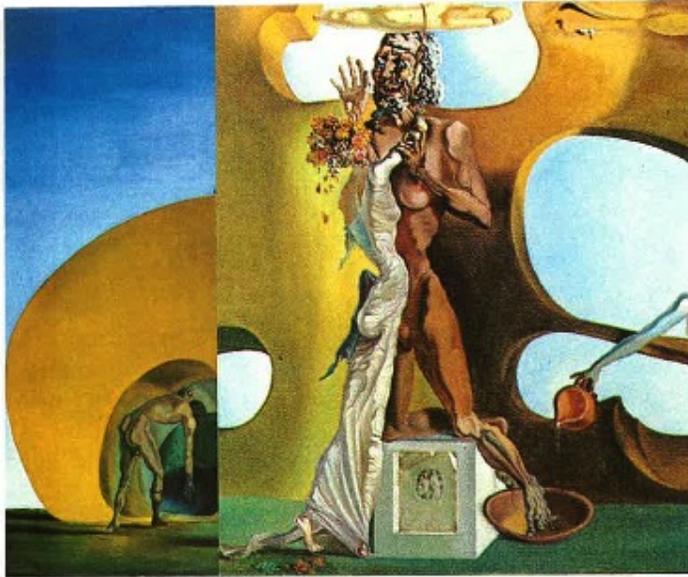
*The Nostalgia of the Poet* by Giorgio de Chirico (1914)

The painting begins as two halves. Peggy brings them together during her final speech in the scene.

13 - EXHIBITION - 13

Yew Tree Cottage, Petersfield, England, 1936  
Peggy Guggenheim – Douglas Garman

DOUGLAS Peggy, it seems my wife is on a warpath.  
PEGGY Oh, Douglas, must you adopt such a radical tone?  
DOUGLAS Her lawyer contacted me. She wants a divorce.  
PEGGY Until now, she always looked the other way. What changed?  
DOUGLAS The woman is a capitalist. Obviously, it's economics.  
PEGGY Let me guess. Her boyfriend is well-to-do. Marrying him would be the smart move – financially.  
DOUGLAS That describes the situation fairly accurately.  
PEGGY Good riddance to the bitch! Give her what she wants.  
DOUGLAS It's not that simple. I refuse to file for divorce. It's up to her.  
PEGGY Up to her!? After all your talk of revolution, where we're concerned, you're unwilling to take the offensive!  
DOUGLAS Perhaps I am a little more Catholic than I've lead myself to believe.  
PEGGY And your comrades don't object?  
DOUGLAS To be granted the divorce, my wife needs cause. *Proof of cause.*  
PEGGY We've been photographed together all over Europe! What more does your wife need?!  
DOUGLAS Apparently the court needs something more explicit. Which is why she wants to send a detective down from London on Saturday.  
PEGGY We're to be investigated?  
DOUGLAS As proof of my infidelity, the court wants a scurrilous photograph of us. You in bed. Me in a dressing gown.  
PEGGY This is outrageous! Me, portrayed as the temptress. You, innocently caught in my snare. Why not you...in bed...nude?! With an erection! Better yet, both of us - without a stitch of clothing! That will make them choke.  
DOUGLAS Peggy, I'm trying to be reasonable. Why is it a problem...so long as the detective arrives early and is gone before the children are up.  
PEGGY You were actually given instructions on how we should pose? And you agreed to their demands!  
DOUGLAS I thought you would welcome the divorce.  
PEGGY If the divorce is granted, Douglas, what then? Will you propose? Will you take me as your wife?  
DOUGLAS Let's not get ahead of ourselves.  
PEGGY Fine! I'll consent to the charade. Do they want my chuff smooth or au naturel?  
DOUGLAS Sometimes, when all I want is your kindness, you can be so cruel.  
PEGGY And conspiring with your wife and her lawyer...to have me play the whore isn't cruel? God, Douglas, sometimes you're the very thing you're fighting against.



Scene 13

*The Birth of Liquid Desire* by Salvador Dalí (1932)

An enlarged detail of the painting obscures the image. During the scene the detailed section is moved aside to reveal the complete painting.

14 - ROMP - 14

A Room in Hospital Leopold Bellan, Paris, January 7, 1938  
Samuel Beckett – James Joyce - Peggy Guggenheim

PEGGY (Rushes in, followed by JAMES JOYCE, to observe SAMUEL BECKETT in bed).  
Samuel! What happened? You're not going to die on me, are you? (There are random red items throughout the room: roses in a vase, a glass of red juice with a red straw, etc...  
These items spook PEGGY).

SAMUEL We're back on speaking terms? Two nights ago, when I called...you refused to talk.

PEGGY I'm sorry. I'm sorry. What happened?

SAMUEL After you hung up, I went for a walk. A pimp steps out of a doorway, pushing his tricks. I say, "Not interested, Buddy." So he stabs me.

PEGGY Oh, my God!

SAMUEL Was the pimp one of your henchmen, Peggy, commissioned to murder me?

PEGGY Be serious, Sam. James, talk to him!

JAMES (Pulls out and puts on red-framed glasses). Let's set this straight. I know about your affair!

PEGGY Sam! You told him!

SAMUEL Peggy! You tattled!

JAMES A twelve-day romp in the hay! (Pause). You could have written a play in that time, Mr...Samuel...Beckett!

SAMUEL (To PEGGY). Twelve-day romp! *That* he didn't learn from me!

PEGGY It wasn't all romp!

JAMES (Cleaning glasses with red handkerchief). I invite the two of you to dinner. And while I'm serving bouillabaisse, you sex-craved maniacs are conspiring an affair! What's the situation, buddy?

SAMUEL The blade barely missed my heart.

JAMES Peggy would not have missed.

PEGGY Mr. Joyce! I thought we were friends.

SAMUEL Would you get me a cigarette?

JAMES What was the quarrel about, Peggy? Tell me. Samuel and I fight all the time, but we get over it.

PEGGY (From jacket, getting a cigarette from a red case). During our "romp in the hay," as you put it, Samuel had a few other romps.

JAMES We've always known the chap was a rake.

PEGGY To be honest, James, the sex wasn't that great.

SAMUEL A knife to the heart!

PEGGY But, oh, walking around Paris with Samuel! Such discussions we had! He, probing my thoughts. Encouraging me to corral the artists I know and open a gallery. Sharing his vision for a new theatre. It was thrilling. Absolutely thrilling.

JAMES Samuel has that effect.

PEGGY I get drunk just listening to his words.

JAMES I would pay for such a review: "I get drunk on the words of Mr. James Joyce."



#### Scene 14

Composition by Tancredi Parmeggiana (1955)

Several red props, as well as the bed sheet shown here, mirrors the Parmeggiana painting, and reflects the psychological vision of Peggy.



15 - INAUGURATION - 15

Peggy Guggenheim's Office at Gallery Guggenheim Jeune, 30 Cork Street, London, January 24, 1938  
Peggy Guggenheim – Wyn Henderson – Marcel Duchamp

PEGGY We did it, Wyn! We did it!

WYN Gallery Guggenheim Jeune is officially launched.

PEGGY I couldn't have done it without you, Wyn. While I was running around Paris with Marcel Duchamp, collecting art...you stayed here, preparing the gallery.

WYN (Handing PEGGY a paper). A telegram from Mr. Beckett. It came this morning.

PEGGY You kept it from me! (Reads telegram). He sends his wishes for a grand opening. That man has gotten under my fingernails!

MARCEL (Knocking on the edge of the door frame). May I?

PEGGY Marcel! Come in!

WYN Where were you, Marcel?

MARCEL I was never one for receptions. Too many people, paying more attention to the clientele than the art. Had a lovely go of chess at the pub. Did anyone from Customs show up?

WYN (Opening and pouring champagne). It wouldn't have mattered. Peggy hung Cocteau's offensive drawing here in the office, shielding it from the public.

MARCEL God forbid...a subject showing her pubic hair.

PEGGY That didn't prevent me from bringing in my friends, for a private showing!

MARCEL (Citing title of drawing). *Fear Giving Wings to Courage*. Lovely piece. Lovely title.

PEGGY I'm going to buy it.

MARCEL A wise purchase.

PEGGY It's like Cocteau created the piece specifically for me. What do you think of the earrings?

MARCEL Lovely.

PEGGY No. What do you think of them? They were designed by Alexander Calder.

MARCEL Quite dashing. They compliment you.

PEGGY See! There I am! I can't even decipher whether a simple pair of earrings is tasteful or not. I need a friend to tell me. Will you continue to help me, Marcel, and decide which paintings I should show?

MARCEL Absolutely.

PEGGY It's quite embarrassing, at the age of forty, not to have a sense of purpose, not to have discovered my gift. The gallery feels more like an excuse to flirt with artists than a real enterprise.

WYN Now, now, this is no time to be low.

MARCEL Peggy, you have a wonderful gift!

PEGGY (Apologetically). Yes. I know. Father's inheritance. Being the benefactor of his labors. It's quite a shallow attribute compared to artistic talent.

MARCEL Your gift is not having the money, Peggy. Your gift is knowing how to use it.

PEGGY (Deeply sincere). Oh, Marcel, that's very kind. (Laughs). I suppose now I must buy a painting or two of yours.



Scene 15

*Fear Giving Wings to Courage* by Jean Cocteau (1938)

Actors may refer to the painting while talking about it.

16 - STAND-OFF - 16

Office of James B. Manson, Director, Tate Gallery, London, Spring 1938  
Peggy Guggenheim – James Bolivar Manson

PEGGY (Storms in). Mr. Manson. Don't get up!

JAMES Mrs. Guggenheim.

PEGGY What authority anointed you God!?

JAMES Please! I am not a fan of theatrics! (Will play with domino blocks throughout the scene).

PEGGY Being Director of Tate Gallery may impress you. I, however, do not genuflect at the title!

JAMES How are things on Cork Street?

PEGGY You needn't be told I'm organizing a sculpture exhibition at the gallery. It's a well-known fact.

JAMES I hadn't been paying attention. Really. So many galleries. They come and go.

PEGGY The Guggenheim Jeune is not going anywhere. She intends to be here a long, long time, Mr. Manson.

JAMES Best of luck.

PEGGY I'm vested in my artists. I take their success – or failure – personally. Brancusi. Calder. Laurens. These are just a few of the sculptors who consented to exhibit their works

JAMES Names one is not accustomed to hearing in my circle.

PEGGY I think you recognize them more than you let on! (Pause). They all shipped their pieces to me, here in London. The sculptures were detained at customs. That is where you come in.

JAMES I admit, proudly, I am employed, on occasion, as a consultant for the custom authorities.

PEGGY I can see it now. You on the docks of the Thames, in some warehouse, poking about, with your Finati walking stick.

JAMES I was summoned, yes, and I was shown their wares.

PEGGY And you ordered them returned. Why?

JAMES Our laws are very precise, Mrs. Guggenheim. We happily accept shipments of art for distribution in England, but I did not deem the works of Brancusi, Calder or Laurens works of art. They fall under the category: manufactured goods.

PEGGY Which prohibits me from selling them.

JAMES I'm sorry, Mrs. Guggenheim.

PEGGY Manufactured goods?!

JAMES Something easily reproducible. Capable of being distributed in mass quantities.

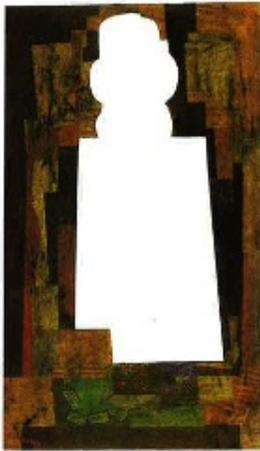
PEGGY Surely, you don't think Mr. Calder will sell his mobiles in department stores! Rejecting the sculptures, Mr. Mason, is simply your attempt to create a monopoly in the art market.

JAMES I've seen more enthralling whirligigs in the gardens of my friends than your Calder mobiles.

PEGGY I am prepared to take this matter to the House of Commons. Even now, as we speak, my lawyer is drawing up a petition.

JAMES It sounds very American, Mrs Guggenheim. To petition politicians with private grievances.

PEGGY You will be fired! I can assure you that!



## Scene 16

*The Habitué* by Louis Marcoussis (1920)

The figure in the painting is backlit. This can be done with points of light surrounding the figure or as a contained effect. When the lights brighten on the foreground, the painting is fully revealed. The actor portraying Mr. Mason plays with blocks of dominoes.

17 - LIAISON - 17

Yew Tree Cottage, England, Summer, 1938  
Peggy Guggenheim – Yves Tanguy

PEGGY How's Yves, my newly anointed *Prince of Surrealism!* (Holds up bottle of medicine).

YVES On the verge of killing myself.

PEGGY (Opening bottle). I'm assured this will bring relief. I don't know why your stomach is rebelling, Yves. The show went exceedingly well.

YVES Until reviews come out, I'm always a bundle of nerves.

PEGGY Where is your wife? What have you been up to?

YVES Your daughter and I exchanged paintings.

PEGGY (Mock seriousness, with a twinge of resentment). Pegeen gets a Yves Tanguy painting free! I had to pay for the two I own!

YVES Your daughter is a charming child...and a talented painter.

PEGGY Pegeen broods. I have little patience for it. No wonder she abhors me.

YVES Nonsense. You expect your children to act like adults. They're not ready for those shoes. And why should they be? Adults can be quite boorish, don't you think?

PEGGY Motherhood is so passé. I prefer to be a muse. (Sits on his lap. Lighthearted. Runs her hand through his hair). I can tell. You're a little drunk. Where is your wife?

YVES She took a taxi into town. No doubt she's at the village pub.

PEGGY I like her very much. It's dreadful we're deceiving the poor dear. We should feel guilty. (They kiss). You are delicious, Yves. That is *real*, my *Prince of Surrealism!*

YVES Thank you for arranging the show, Peggy. I didn't expect to sell so many pieces. Where will you hang yours?

PEGGY *The Sun in Its Jewel Case*. I haven't given it thought. Do you know, every time I buy a painting I ask, "Would father approve?" I can't help it.

YVES Would he approve?

PEGGY I doubt it. He'd find the landscape too bleak. That's not the point, really.

YVES What is the point?

PEGGY That I keep hoping to hear his voice. After all these years.

YVES Jeannette and I leave tomorrow for Paris. When can we see each other again?

PEGGY I'll arrange for Pegeen to visit her father. Sindbad can stay with Douglas. So next weekend.

YVES Still friends with the firecracker and the communist? It's quite remarkable how you manage to remain on good terms with all the men in your life.

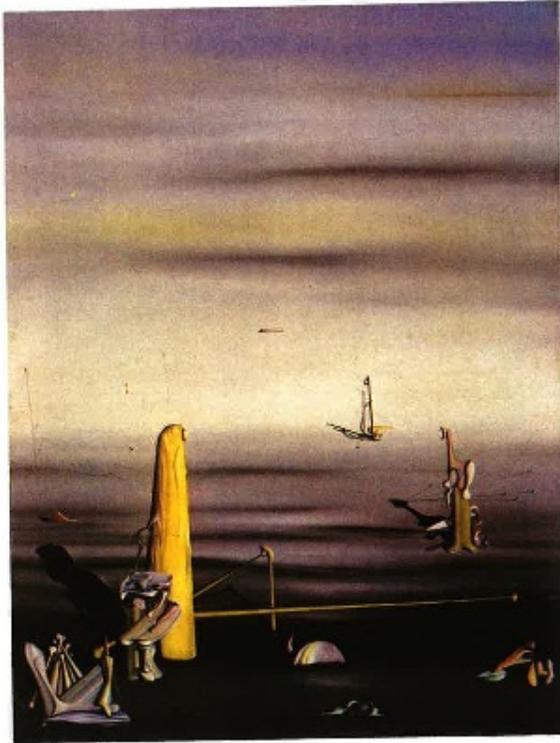
PEGGY Men fascinate me. They always have.

YVES More than women?

PEGGY Infinitely more. But that hasn't kept me from sharing their bed. I'm far too curious and adventuresome to keep a closed bedroom door.

YVES Be careful when traveling the continent. Europe is changing. It's not a good time to be Jewish. If Jeannette puts an end to our tryst, will we remain friends?

PEGGY Of course! (They kiss).



Scene 17

*The Sun in its Jewel Case/The Sun in its Casket* by Yves Tanguy (1937)

## 18 - ACQUISITIONS - 18

Nelly's house in Meudon, on the edge of Paris, October 1939  
Petra (Nelly) van Doesburg – Peggy Guggenheim

NELLY This week we acquired eleven paintings. Congratulations, Peggy. You surpassed your quota: one painting a day.

PEGGY (Dully. Distracted). I wonder if we spent too much for Brancusi's *Bird in Space*.

NELLY Stop fretting about Brancusi's sculpture. It was a bargain. With artists fleeing Europe, I've never seen prices so low. Why do you keep staring at the clock?

PEGGY What's on the schedule for today, Nelly?

NELLY We are to meet Jean Héliou at noon. His art is stored in different locations throughout Paris. Are you up for a lengthy outing?

PEGGY I don't know why I can't seem to regain my strength. I recovered so quickly from my previous abortions. Yes. Count me in. Tomorrow?

NELLY Gala scheduled an appointment to show some of her husband's work. I know you're not a fan of Dali, but I suggest we add a few of his paintings to the collection. *Why* do you insist on staring at the clock?

PEGGY The ship should be pulling out of Genoa about now. Bound for America. I'm going to miss Djuna. She was a handful, but all the same, I shall miss her sass and writing escapades.

NELLY Djuna confuses me. Whenever I'm with her, I think, "Either you're a lesbian or your not. Which is it?"

PEGGY And Yves Tanguy, my *Prince of Surrealism*. He's on the same ship. A little more than a year ago he had an exhibition at the gallery and we were in the midst of a lovely affair. Now the gallery is closed. (Pause). I wonder how America will treat them? (Pause). I'm losing my friends, Nelly. Damn Hitler to hell. Where is the list?

NELLY (Knowing precisely to what PEGGY is referring). Right here.

PEGGY Your assistance has been invaluable, Nelly. But more than that, you are perhaps my best friend.

NELLY Oh, I'm not much at all.

PEGGY No, I mean it. I could not have undertaken this task without you. You're very dear to me. How many more artists do we need to contact? Read their names.

NELLY Miro, Man Ray, Klee, Chagall, Ernst, Picasso....

PEGGY Picasso! Cross out his name! Firmly and completely, the fucker!

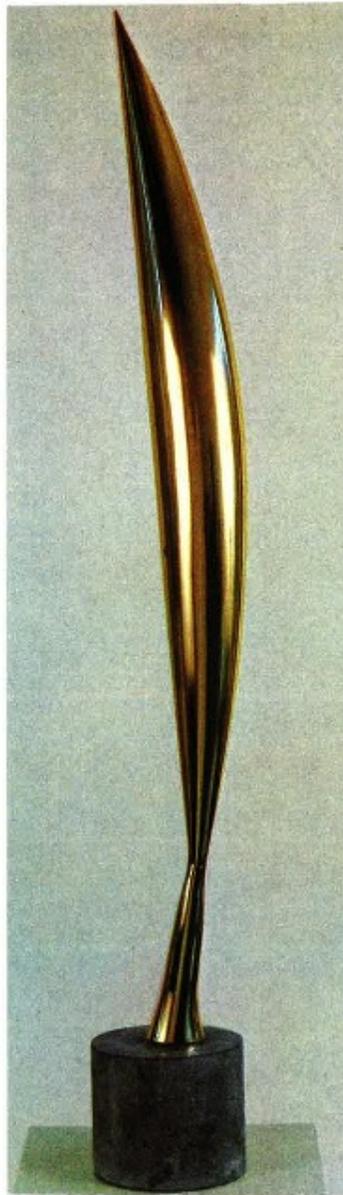
NELLY Picasso. Eliminated!

PEGGY Last time I visited his salon, I was ignored by the pompous ass for thirty minutes as he conversed with his disciples. When he finally did deign to speak, he said, "Madame, the lingerie department is on the second floor."

NELLY Noted. Work with Picasso's dealer only!

PEGGY I will not be trifled with! No matter *who* does the trifling!

Arp  
Bacci  
Balla  
Boccioni  
Brancusi  
Chagall  
Dali  
Davie  
Delaunay  
Delvaux  
Duchamp  
Ernst  
Giacometti  
Gleizes  
Gris  
Hélion  
Klee  
Laurens  
Léger  
Lipchitz  
El Lissitzky  
Magritte  
Man Ray  
Marcoussis  
Metzinger  
Miró  
Mondrian  
Ozenfant  
Pevsner  
Picabia  
Picasso  
Schwitters  
Severini  
Tancredi  
Tanguy  
Villon



*Bird in Space* by Constantin Brancusi (1940)

A photograph of the sculpture accompanies a list of artists, talked about in the scene, whose works Peggy collected.

Scene 18

## 19 - CONDEMNATION - 19

Home of Mary Reynolds in Paris – March 1940

Mary Reynolds     Peggy Guggenheim

MARY            Peggy, I'm not sure...buying all these paintings, that you're putting your money to its best possible use.

PEGGY            What are you implying, Mary?

MARY            You seem far too preoccupied with saving your collection.

PEGGY            Mary, the paintings are treasures! They are the creative works of our generation! They can't be reproduced!

MARY            The war has misplaced so many people. Paris is teeming with refugees. Thousands of families are waiting to emigrate. Why not help them?

PEGGY            That is not my gift. I have a different mission.

MARY            Peggy, this isn't like you, to be so hard-hearted.

PEGGY            Ask Pegeen. She'll tell you what an iron fist I am.

MARY            If you packed all your paintings into an armored truck, got behind the wheel and headed south, I bet you'd run over the refugees on your way out of town!

PEGGY            What a horrid thing to say, Mary!

MARY            Those paintings mean more to you than....

PEGGY            I can only do so much! If you want to sacrifice yourself and all your assets, be my guest! Close your bank accounts, sell your house, donate the money to charity! Have at it!

MARY            I'm tempted. Believe me, I'm tempted.

PEGGY            I've never known you to be cruel, Mary.

MARY            It's just...when I compare a collection of paintings...to the suffering of people...

PEGGY            How many paintings are in the Louvre, Mary?

MARY            I have no idea.

PEGGY            If it's a choice, Mary...destroy the Louvre and all its paintings or a village and all its people...what would you choose?

MARY            I would save the people. Absolutely. Without a doubt.

PEGGY            Destroy centuries of masterpieces! All the da Vinci's, Michelangelo's, Titian's – rubble?

MARY            The next Michelangelo might be living in your village.

PEGGY            What are the odds of that? In the world geniuses are one-in-a-million. In the Louvre there are thousands living side by side. Thousands!

MARY            Stop this! These are all hypotheticals. I don't want to play your game.

PEGGY            Okay! Dali! Dali's your great friend! Would you say to him, "Salvador, it's been great getting to see your work and all, but now we need to burn the paintings to keep the refugees warm"? I doubt it! Don't ask me to do the impossible! (She breaks down).



Scene 19

*Sad Young Man on a Train* by Marcel Duchamp (1911)

The painting. The painting as it might appear if it were burned.

20 - SANCTUARY - 20

Nelly's house in Meudon, on the edge of Paris, April 1940  
Marie Jolas – Peggy Guggenheim – Petra (Nelly) van Doesburg

PEGGY Marie, I'm sorry you must leave Paris. Your school has been a sanctuary for my children.

MARIE With the war, I considered going home...back to Kentucky, but I decided to relocate the school to Vichy.

PEGGY I understand. The Germans may storm Paris within a few months.

MARIE You've been so generous, Mrs Guggenheim. If there's ever anything you need, let me know.

PEGGY Marie, this is Nelly van Doesburg. Nelly has been my partner, helping me develop my collection.

NELLY We cannot risk Peggy's collection falling into the hands of the Nazi. If you recall, two years ago the Germans mounted an exhibit called *Degenerate Art*.

MARIE I know about it. Dreadful.

PEGGY Many of the paintings I own are by those same artists.

NELLY You can imagine what the Germans will do if they lay hands on them.

PEGGY We've tried to find a safe house.

NELLY We had the pictures removed from the stretchers, rolled and packed.

PEGGY So far, we've been unsuccessful in locating a custodian.

NELLY We hoped to rent a small storage space in the basement of the Louvre.

PEGGY They said my collection was not noteworthy. That it was too modern for their taste.

NELLY Other collectors are facing the same dilemma. Some have placed their artwork in bank vaults. A few have stored their artifacts in caves. One went so far as to bury his collection.

MARIE The answer is yes.

NELLY What.

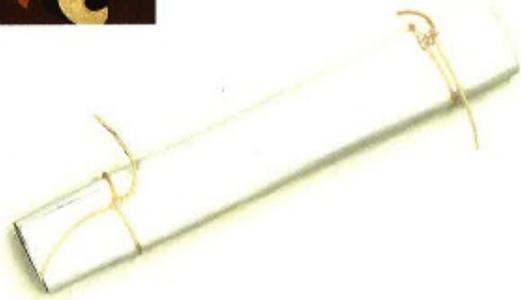
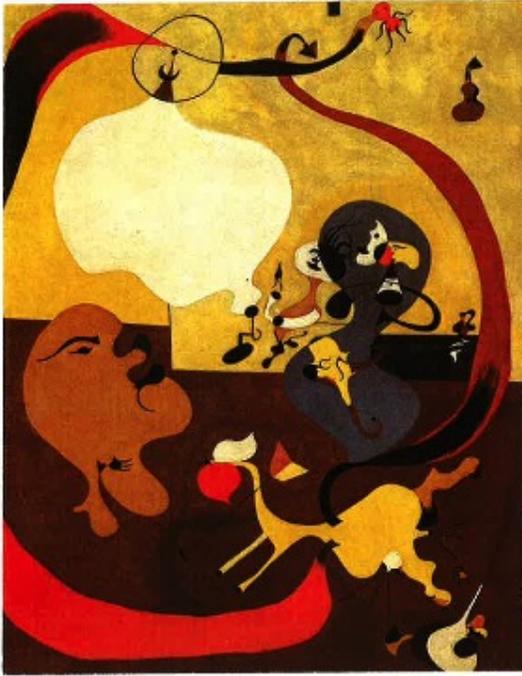
MARIE Yes. You can have the art sent to my new school. There's a barn on the property – an unassuming barn – that just might be the right place to store your collection.

PEGGY Oh, Marie, I can't tell you how grateful I am.

MARIE The region is sympathetic to the Reich, so we assume there will be less scrutiny of local affairs.

NELLY Thank you, Marie. You know, what you're doing is not without risk.

MARIE Nelly, I understand. Do you think the Nazi would approve of all *my* possessions?



## Scene 20

*Dutch Interior* by Joan Miró (1928)

The painting has been removed from its frame. During the scene it is taken down and the canvas is rolled up.

21 - PASSAGE - 21

Exterior of Musée de Grenoble, Grenoble, France, Spring 1941  
René Lefebvre-Foinet – Peggy Guggenheim – Sergio

RENÉ (With PEGGY, observing, offstage, a loaded truck). This deserves a photograph. Peggy Guggenheim's collection, packed and crated...ready for America. I hope the tires on Sergio's truck are sturdy!

PEGGY The lot has undergone quite a journey. Thank God it didn't rain when they sat outside on the Annecy train platform for a week.

RENÉ Only a few more hurdles. To Marseilles. Through customs. Then onto New York City.

PEGGY Can you stay the night?

RENÉ No, it's critical I ride with Sergio, and speak with the dock hands face-to-face, to offer them a little sweetness if need be.

PEGGY After that?

RENÉ I'll swing through Paris, close shop and set sail for Los Angeles.

PEGGY You've been wonderful these past two months, René. I shall miss you.

RENÉ Had we not gotten sidetracked, we could have completed the job in two weeks.

PEGGY I preferred the leisurely pace. (Kisses him on the mouth). You've saved them, René. You saved my dearest possessions. (Kisses him again). I feel a little like my Alberto Giamocetti sculpture. *Woman with Her Throat Cut*. (She turns away). Europe has been so good to me...until the fascists came along. America simply can't bear up.

RENÉ Now, now. You have many friends in New York.

PEGGY I'm frightened.

RENÉ The war can't last forever.

PEGGY No. Frightened the ship might sink. I lost my father to the sea. Tell me I won't lose my Miros and Kandinksys and Tanguys.

RENÉ They'll survive. I promise you.

SERGIO (Enters). We should be going. If we leave now, we can make it by nightfall.

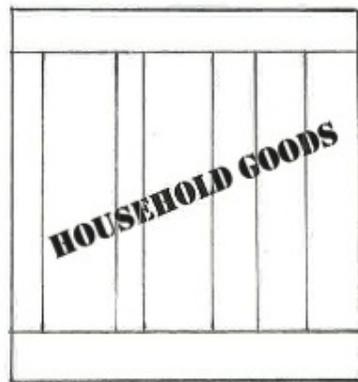
RENÉ I won't have you speeding. We can always lay over for the night. And what is it we're transporting, Sergio?

SERGIO Household goods. As it says on the crates. Household goods.

PEGGY I've managed to bring a few extra containers of gasoline. In case you run short.

RENÉ Always thinking ahead. Hoping to avoid the catastrophe. My hellos to Sindbad and Pegeen! (Tips his hat and exits. The sound of the truck starting up).

PEGGY (A deep, lingering longing). This can't be the end.



### Scene 21

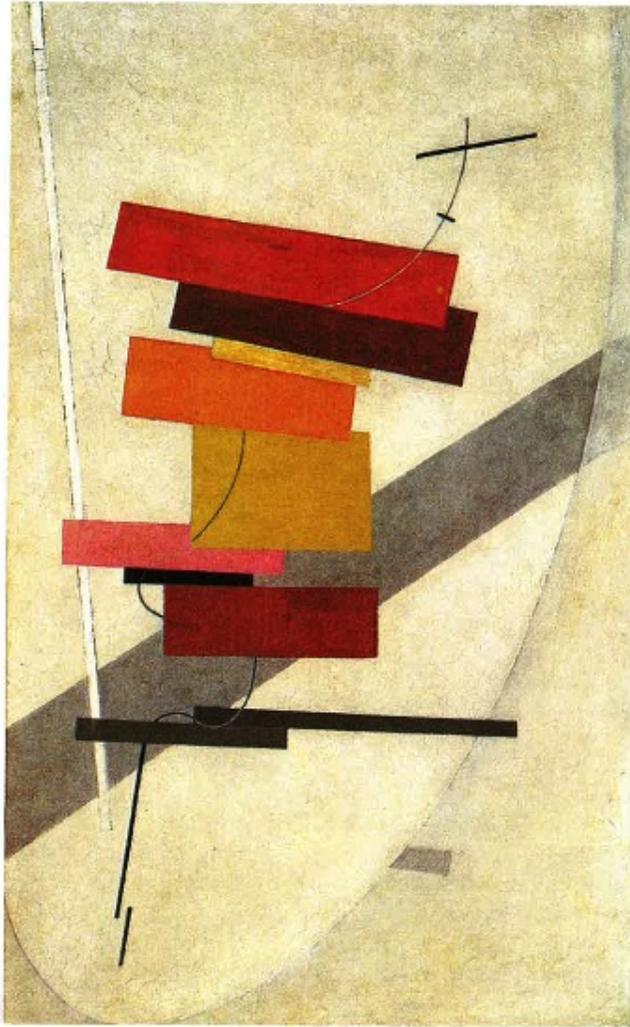
*Woman with her Throat Cut* by Alberto Giacometti (1933-32)

The photograph of the sculpture is constructed as a triptych. The two outer panels fold inward to reveal the facing of a crate.

22 - FAREWELL - 22

Hotel Monte Estoril, near Lisbon, Portugal, July 12, 1941  
Peggy Guggenheim – Laurence Vail

- LAURENCE Have a drink with me, Peggy. Tomorrow we depart for America and I'm feeling nostalgic.
- PEGGY (Doing needlepoint). You should be relieved, Laurence. We're escaping the inferno.
- LAURENCE I'm not sure any of us will be coming back.
- PEGGY We can't stay in Europe. I'm Jewish. Max is a fugitive. None of us are French.
- LAURENCE How will we explain our party to the porter? (Raises two fingers). Kay and me, married in name only. (Raises a third finger). An ex-wife who loves (Raises a fourth finger) Max who still loves Lenora who loves Renato. (Raises six more fingers, for a total of ten raised fingers). Six children from two marriages and one (Readjusts hands to have one thumb raised) tag along girl, whose name I keep forgetting. What do you call that?
- PEGGY A modern family.
- LAURENCE (Laughs good naturedly). Surreal. You don't prefer surreal?
- PEGGY I bought a painting from El Lissitzky entitled *Composition*. It represents our family precisely. Independent, overlapping shapes connected with what appears to be a thread, a needle on each end, passing through a single button. When you see it, you'll know what I mean.
- LAURENCE How long have we known each other, Peggy?
- PEGGY Twenty years.
- LAURENCE You still look good.
- PEGGY Thank you, Laurence.
- LAURENCE You've been very generous to Kay and me and the children.
- PEGGY It's only right.
- LAURENCE For a divorced couple, we've gotten along quite well, don't you think?
- PEGGY Your wife's another matter. And Pegeen, of course. She continues to hate me.
- LAURENCE What's going to happen to Max and you in America?
- PEGGY What's going to happen to Kay and you?
- LAURENCE I expect we'll divorce. Isn't it apparent? (Pause). I'm not sure Max is right for you.
- PEGGY Oh, dear, don't make me cry, Laurence.
- LAURENCE (Takes her hand). Thank you, Peggy, for arranging the voyage.
- PEGGY We're lucky. There are so many people wanting to leave. When we board the ship tomorrow, Laurence, be sure to investigate the location of the lifeboats. And read the instructions, so you know how to launch them.
- LAURENCE Peggy, we're going by airplane. There are no lifeboats.
- PEGGY Oh, yes. By airship.



Scene 22

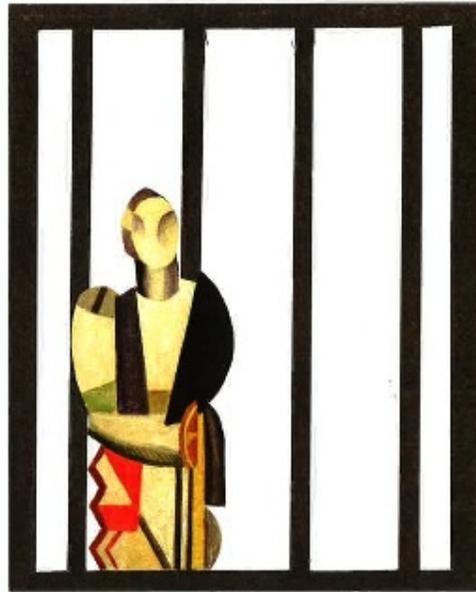
*Composition* by El Lissitzky (1921)

The painting is described by Peggy in the scene.

23 - PURGATORY - 23

Immigration Processing Center, Ellis Island, New York City July 18, 1941  
Peggy Guggenheim Julien Levy

JULIEN I'm sorry America hasn't been more welcoming, Mrs. Guggenheim.  
PEGGY Isn't there something you can do, Julien?  
JULIEN I'm an art dealer. What do you expect of me? I'm to change the immigration policy?  
PEGGY It's all been so barbaric and humiliating. To get off the airplane and be accosted by detectives who handcuffed Max and escorted him away.  
JULIEN Max is German! The man isn't going to be admitted into the country without a proper hearing.  
PEGGY Max is not a spy, for God sake. He was in three Nazi camps. Three!  
JULIEN His situation will be explained at the hearing.  
PEGGY Max must not be expatriated back to Germany!  
JULIEN I'm certain Max will be allowed to remain in America. Members of the Museum of Modern Art will testify for him.  
PEGGY Thank god the shipment of art arrived safely.  
JULIEN There's no need for you to stay. Why not take a ferry back to Manhattan and treat yourself to a nice dinner?  
PEGGY I'm in no mood to party, Julien!  
JULIEN I was wondering... It has to be stressful for Max, too. Locked in a holding room with a bunch of strangers. Not knowing the language. Do you think...I should arrange to have someone meet him when he's released?  
PEGGY What are you saying? I'll be here when he's released. *If* he's released.  
JULIEN Yes. Certainly. But someone . . . who might comfort him .... in a way that you or I couldn't.  
PEGGY What are you saying, Mr. Levy? That you intend to regale Max with a prostitute?  
JULIEN I wouldn't put it quite so crudely, but, yes, someone who might *comfort* him.  
PEGGY Mr. Levy, for two days we've been together....holding vigil...and you haven't seen....you don't recognize....that I am the woman to look after his needs?!JULIEN Oh? You're involved in that way? The thought had crossed my mind. Briefly. But it seemed...well, shall we say, preposterous.  
PEGGY You cannot picture Max and I being in love? You're an art dealer, for God sake. Where are your eyes? In the back of your head!  
JULIEN I'm sorry. I apologize. I should have asked.  
PEGGY America!



### Scene 23

*Men in the City* by Fernand Léger (1919)

Initially, a frame of bars with a duplicate image of the woman is in front of the painting. These bars are moved aside during the scene.

24 - DÉJÀ VU - 24

Hale House, 51<sup>st</sup> Street, New York City, 1942  
Peggy Guggenheim – Max Ernst

MAX Peggy! I thought you were out, scouring the streets of New York, looking for a place to open your new gallery.

PEGGY I've been sitting here, studying your latest painting, Max.\* You've been hiding it from me.

MAX I wasn't sure you'd care for it.

PEGGY It tells quite a story. Why have you not shown it to me?

MAX We'll discuss it later, when it's finished.

PEGGY Max, it's clear who the figures represent. You, on the right, portrayed as the regal horse, clad in knightly armor. And leaning into you, with her long blond hair, Pegeen, whose hand seems to touch your genitals. Behind her, the ghostly figure, Lenora, still an object of your desire. And on the left, me, in my signature red shoes, portrayed as a monster.

MAX You're reading far too much into the painting.

PEGGY Am I? It does not escape me that Pegeen and you have gone off... alone... numerous times... riding horse... playing tennis. I know that Pegeen idolizes you. Is it more than that? Have you taken advantage of her feelings?

MAX Please! Are you suggesting...?

PEGGY I know your penchant for younger women, Max!

MAX Screw you!

PEGGY First there was Laurence, with his book *Murder! Murder!* – a literary exposé of our relationship. Now you! With a visual rendition.

MAX That's ludicrous.

PEGGY God what a farce! Laurence - with his sister! You - with my daughter!

MAX This is pure, simple jealousy on your part – envying the beauty of youth. Nothing more.

PEGGY For gods sake, I'm your wife!

MAX Yes, by law you are.

PEGGY What does that mean?

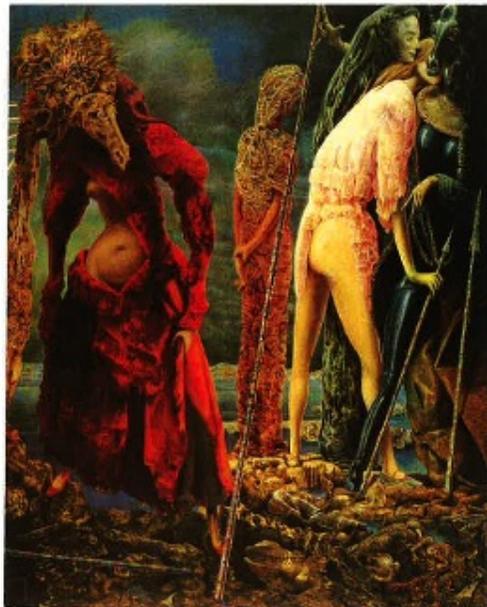
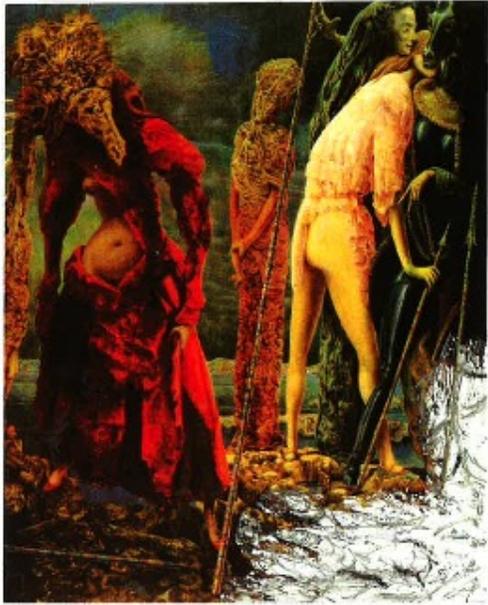
MAX We both know the situation! You coerced me into marrying you... threatening me with my status – “undesirable, enemy alien” - saying I could be deported back to Germany if I didn't marry you.

PEGGY It was true! It *is* true. Don't forget, Max, America is not your safeguard. I am!

MAX We have an understanding... and share a home, but I'm not in love with you. I never was.

PEGGY Don't sell the painting, Max. I want to display it in my new gallery.

- *The Anti-Pope*, Version Two by Max Ernst



#### Scene 24

*The Anti-Pope* by Max Ernst (1941-42)

A nearly-completed image of the painting is moved aside, near the end of the scene, to reveal the fully-completed painting.

25 - UNFRAMED - 25

Opening Night of Art of the Century Gallery, 30 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, October 20, 1942  
Peggy Guggenheim – Frederick Kiesler – Max Ernst

PEGGY Is this what they call déjà vu? Four years ago I opened the gallery in London. Tonight it is New York City. (Opens bottle of champagne). Congratulations, Frederick! You designed an utterly unique gallery, unlike anything that's ever been done.

FREDERICK (Raises glass). To all the architects and entrepreneurs who snubbed me. Go to hell!

PEGGY If only Nelly were here. And Wyn, my plump little redhead assistant, how I miss them.

FREDERICK I'm so grateful, Peggy, you didn't hire that prig Mr. Frank Lloyd Wright to design the gallery!

PEGGY Max, which of the whores who came tonight are you fucking?

MAX Peggy, I can't understand you. At the precise moment you should be celebrating, you find a way to poison the mood.

PEGGY Is it Xenia?

FREDERICK Oh, dear. Can we talk about something else?

PEGGY Is it Madeline?

FREDERICK This gallery was months in the making. Your sexual affairs are begun and over in days.

MAX I might ask the same of you. Is it Tanguy? Is it Calder?

PEGGY He mocks my earrings. Who are you fucking, Frederick?

FREDERICK Mrs. Guggenheim, I find this conversation highly distressing. Ernst, you haven't told me. Do you like the gallery design? Are you happy with the way your paintings are displayed?

MAX Yes. The blue walls and turquoise floor with the abstract paintings were weirdly compatible.

FREDERICK Paintings on walls seemed passé. Did you like the cables?

MAX Absolutely. The paintings seemed to float.

FREDERICK And...and the furniture...?

MAX The biomorphic chairs felt like an extension of the surreal paintings.

PEGGY Leaving the paintings unframed turned out to be a brilliant idea.

FREDERICK Thank you.

PEGGY Have you heard...?

FREDERICK Thank you.

PEGGY I think I've found my next protégée....

FREDERICK Thank you.

PEGGY His name is Pollock. Jackson Pollock

FREDERICK Thank you.

PEGGY Frederick, my dear little architect, for someone so daring in his craft, you're far too timid in matters of sex.



Scene 25

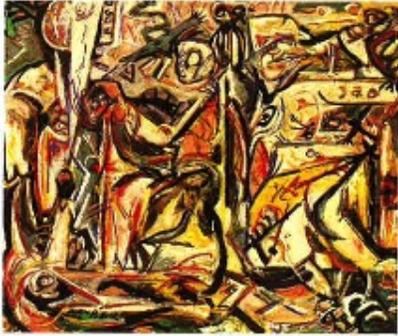
*Heavenly Bodies* by Rufino Tamayo (1946)

A clear but textured plexiglass sheet suspended by two wires/cables is positioned in front of the painting. The plexiglass sheet is moved aside by Keisler during the scene.

26 - INSTALLATION - 26

Duplex at 155 East 61<sup>st</sup> Street, New York City, January 1944  
Peggy Guggenheim – Jackson Pollock – Marcel Duchamp

JACKSON Thank god you came home, Peggy. I've been phoning the gallery all morning.  
PEGGY I know, Jackson. I answered it; I was the one you spoke to.  
JACKSON That was you?  
PEGGY Oh, god. You found the liquor!  
JACKSON I need help.  
PEGGY This is Marcel Duchamp. Remember him? My advisor?  
JACKSON You look vaguely familiar.  
PEGGY You are a fool, Mr. Pollock, to not recognize the greatest artist of this century!  
(To MARCEL) I knew Jackson was coming over, so I hid the liquor, but leave it to Jack to sniff out the goods.  
JACKSON Are you going to help me?  
MARCEL What's the problem?  
JACKSON The painting is eight inches too long.  
PEGGY You discover this now? The day of the party? (To MARCEL).  
JACKSON Eight inches. When's the party?  
MARCEL Cut it off!  
PEGGY In five hours!  
JACKSON What?  
MARCEL The extra eight inches. Cut it off. Peggy, get a scissors.  
PEGGY You're kidding!  
MARCEL Which edge, Jackson? I don't think it matters. Both sides are a bloody mess.  
JACKSON That painting represents fifteen hours of very, very, very intense work.  
MARCEL Nobody's going to miss it.  
PEGGY I think the left side is less interesting than the right. We're just going to cut it off?  
MARCEL Nobody's going to give a shit about Pollack in ten years. It's not like we're butchering a masterpiece.  
PEGGY Jackson, you don't mind?  
MARCEL To hell with Jackson's opinion! There's a party. We have to hang the painting. Does it have a title?  
PEGGY *Mural.*  
MARCEL Leave it to Jackson to pick something prosaic.  
PEGGY Jackson! What are you doing?  
JACKSON What does it look like I'm doing? Taking a leak.  
PEGGY That's the fireplace! God, how I miss Europe! Is this your way of insulting Marcel?  
JACKSON Huh?  
PEGGY Marcel's sculpture: the urinal. "The Fountain." Are you insulting him?  
JACKSON No, it's just me. Pissing.



## Scene 26

*Circumcision* by Jackson Pollock (1946)

A detail from the painting is duplicated several times and is attached to a horizontal bar. This bar is lowered in front of the painting, slowly, during the course of the scene.

27 - VENICE - 27

Biennale, Venice, Italy, Summer 1948  
Peggy Guggenheim – Bernard Berenson

PEGGY Mr. Berenson, welcome to the Venice Biennale. I've anticipated your visit for days.

BERNARD (Indicating the grandeur of the interior of the building). Your very own pavilion! Are you now a country, Mrs. Guggenheim?

PEGGY Don't be silly. The Greeks are embroiled in a civil war so their pavilion was empty. I am thrilled to be back in Europe and show my collection.

BERNARD (A passing survey of the art. Sneers). I must say, your taste has a tone of consistency.

PEGGY Though we've never met, I feel I know you, Mr. Berenson! I read every book you published. Those books taught me everything I know about art.

BERNARD (Without moving, still looking about, surveying the art from a distance). If in any way my words inspired your taste in art, either you failed to comprehend the material or I was a woefully poor instructor.

PEGGY I know you prefer the classics, Bernard, still, your explanations of color and composition were inspiring.

BERNARD (Shaking his head). You would have been wiser to have invested in the old masters.

PEGGY Raphael. Botticelli. Tintoretto. I couldn't afford those prices!

BERNARD Why didn't you contact me? I would have found you some marvelous bargains. (Sweeping gesture). Thank god the paintings are signed, otherwise they could be hung sideways or upside down and who would know the difference? Where is the anchor for these modern artists? They defy reason! Take this piece. Who painted this little farce?

PEGGY Marc Chagall.

BERNARD It's title?

PEGGY *Rain*.

BERNARD I would call it *Confused*. The point of view changes. There is no singular perspective. Can you not see that, Mrs. Guggenheim?

PEGGY That is part of its appeal.

BERNARD And who is that figure in the clouds, flagellating the goat? It defies reality.

PEGGY Think of him as one of the angels in your Botticelli paintings, Bernard.

BERNARD And the figure on the left. Is he urinating?

PEGGY I believe so.

BERNARD What am I to make of that? That the storm clouds unleash piss!?

PEGGY Quite possibly.

BERNARD Thank god, Mr. Chagall had the foresight to provide one of his characters with an umbrella!

PEGGY How ironic. I always thought...even though the man is prepared for the storm, he is about to trip and fall.

BERNARD Mrs. Guggenheim, I'm beginning to think you are as mad as your paintings.



Scene 27

*Rain* by Marc Chagall (1911)

The painting is observed and critiqued by Mr. Berenson.

28 - PALAZZO VENIER DEI LEONI - 28

Peggy's Bedroom, Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, Venice, Italy, 1949  
Peggy Guggenheim – Roloff Beny

- PEGGY Roloff, was I a fool to spend sixty thousand dollars on a palazzo in a city that is sinking into the sea?
- ROLOFF Not at all. To be on the Grand Canal. It seems very reasonable. Besides, who cares? You'll be long gone when Venice breathes her last.
- PEGGY You spare no one, do you, Roloff? What do you think of my Calder headboard? Solid silver.
- ROLOFF A scene of life underwater. A premonition of what's to come?
- PEGGY Be nice.
- ROLOFF (Picks up framed portrait). Who is this? You?
- PEGGY Yes. The other portrait is my sister, Benita. She died over twenty years ago. These paintings are the greatest treasures of my childhood.
- ROLOFF And your infamous earring collection - naturally - displayed like art. That is so Peggy.
- PEGGY Have a lie down. So you can experience the room from my perspective. (ROLOFF lies down in her bed). In the morning, when the light spills in the window it's especially inviting...the way it illuminates the glass figures designed by Picasso and fabricated by Constantini. (Pause). What a darling picture you make, Roloff. I'd insist on joining you...if you weren't homosexual. (Pause). I'm not averse to observing two men making love, Roloff. Not in the least!
- ROLOFF Your reputation as a sexual libertine is well known.
- PEGGY Loan me your camera! I'll take the photographs and arrange an exhibition. I suspect it would be a popular...two-man show! Do you know, when I was young, I had a set of cards from Pompeii, showing people making love in various positions! When I met Laurence, my first husband, I made him attempt all the poses. I think I tired him out. (Sits on the bed. Touches ROLOFF lightly on the leg). Oh, Roloff, You're not like so many people I know. A parasite, waiting to scrounge off Peggy. Whenever we eat out, you always insist on paying your portion. Do you know how rare that is? Do you know how much that endears you to me? (Pause). What is your next assignment?
- ROLOFF I'm scheduled to photograph the temples of Paestum.
- PEGGY Someday I hope to display my entire collection here and open it to the public. In the meantime, the paintings are being held hostage by the Italian government. They won't release them unless I pay an import duty. It means I have to pull a few strings.
- ROLOFF Peggy, you're the youngest-at-heart, most outrageous old dame I know. No wonder all the young gay men flock to your side.
- PEGGY This is my home, Roloff. I'm fifty-one. I don't expect to live anywhere else. I need to be surrounded by my collection.



## Scene 28

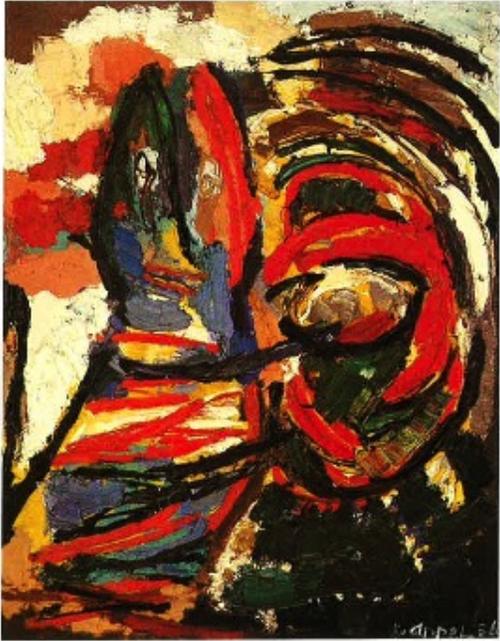
Vertical Planes by Frantisek Kupka (1911-12)

The view from Peggy's bedroom window in Venice: the grill and glass sculptures, designed by Picasso and manufactured by Egidio Constantini. The painting by Kupka becomes visible behind the grill, then the grill is removed.

29 - ARROWS - 29

Dining Room, Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, Venice, Italy, 1951  
Peggy Guggenheim – Pegeen Guggenheim

PEGGY Pegeen, how does the basement studio suit you?  
PEGEEN Fine.  
PEGGY It's not too damp?  
PEGEEN No.  
PEGGY Let me know if you're in need of supplies. What are you working on?  
PEGEEN I'm sure you peeked, Mother.  
PEGGY I admit I have. You know me. I catch the scent of oil paint and I have to go exploring.  
PEGEEN I don't expect you to like them.  
PEGGY Sometimes the colors are a little flat...but it's not something you can't fix.  
PEGEEN They're meant to be flat! That's the point.  
PEGGY Of course. I should have known.  
PEGEEN You'll never get me, mother. You never have.  
PEGGY You don't mind sharing the basement with Tancredi?  
PEGEEN He's in a completely different room!  
PEGGY But you do bump into each other from time-to-time.  
PEGEEN Yes! We do *bump* into each other. God!  
PEGGY Would you like me to have a bed installed in the basement?  
PEGEEN Why?  
PEGGY I know the two of you are fucking!  
PEGEEN Mother! What business is it of yours?  
PEGGY You are married. With children. But who am I to speak of infidelity? Just keep your hands off Raoul! He's mine!  
PEGEEN You know Raoul sleeps around!  
PEGGY Of course. I encourage it. The man is thirty, for gods sake. I'm fifty-three.  
PEGEEN You disgust me. You know you're the laughing stock of Venice. In more ways than one.  
PEGGY That will change. And don't begrudge me Raoul. I love him!  
PEGEEN He's using you, Mother, to support his hobby...collecting cars and sporting around the mainland.  
PEGGY Dear, dear Pegeen, it is neither so simple nor so one-sided. I'm using him, too. Can we talk about something innocuous?  
PEGEEN Yesterday I was working, thinking.... You've given me shows at your gallery. But you never bought one of my paintings. Not a single one. All the other artists you've exhibited...you bought at least one painting for your collection. But not from me. What does that say?



Scene 29

*Crocodile* by Karen Appel (1956)

The painting has muted mirror image.

30 - RETREAT - 30

Bowles' Winter Home - Tabrobune Island, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), 1954  
Peggy Guggenheim – Paul Bowles – Jane Bowles

PEGGY Thank you, Paul and Jane, for opening up your home. When Raoul was killed in that horrific car crash, I simply had to get out of Venice.

PAUL Of course. We love sharing our little, private island.

PEGGY Raoul would love it here.

JANE It's going to be another gorgeous sunset.

PEGGY Dali would approve. What is it about me and the men I pick? Volcanoes. My paintings don't argue. They don't have tantrums.

JANE That may be. But does a painting take you out to dinner or make you laugh?

PEGGY There's that. Still, I don't think it will be possible for me to ever love again. (Looking at the sunset). It's stunning, how seamlessly the colors transform. "How calmly does the orange branch observe the sky begin to blanch."

PAUL Something you wrote, Paul?

PEGGY No, my friend, Tennessee Williams. From his short story, *The Night of the Iguana*. He asked me to read it, to see if I thought it might become a play.

JANE I can never get it out of Paul, if he and Tennessee had been lovers. You know, Paul wrote music for Tennessee's plays.

PEGGY Tennessee visited me in Venice. I'm afraid I embarrassed him when I asked what he did. Jane, I hear you have a play on Broadway.

JANE *In the Summer House*. The reviews were mixed.

PAUL Tennessee loved it. He calls Jane, "one of America's finest writers."

PEGGY Critics! To be one requires such little investment.

JANE It's true.

PEGGY Jane. Paul. How do you do it? How have you survived as a couple all these years?

JANE We've learned not to be jealous. To be generous with each other.

PAUL From the outset, Jane and I admitted our predilections. She was attracted to women. Me to men.

JANE In the midst of all my affairs, I realized Paul is my home.

PAUL And she is mine.

PEGGY It must be paradise.



Scene 30

*Overtured Blue Shoes with Two Heels Under a Black Vault* by Jean Arp (1925)

31 - RIVALRY - 31

Redfern Gallery, Venice, Italy, 1957  
Peggy Guggenheim – Pegeen Guggenheim – Ralph Rumney

PEGGY           Ralph, come, sit next to me. Pegeen, would you offer the darling a cigarette? (To RALPH). I'm thinking you should be my next protégé.

RALPH           I'm flattered.

PEGGY           You're one hell of a painter. And thank you for suggesting the Francis Bacon show. I couldn't attend the opening, so I sent Pegeen. The following day I stopped in the gallery and bought my first Bacon, *Study for Chimpanzee*.

RALPH           Excellent.

PEGGY           Now, you know, Ralph, I have my eye on your piece, *The Change*.

RALPH           I've already told you. I can't sell it to you privately. It wouldn't be fair to the gallery, to swindle them out of their commission.

PEGGY           You're quite right. So I'm prepared to pay full price. With the promise of first option on any future paintings. That's fair, isn't it?

RALPH           Unfortunately, the painting is no longer available.

PEGGY           Not available!? To whom was it sold?

RALPH           (Turning red). It wasn't sold. I've given it to someone.

PEGGY           (Looks at RALPH who is looking at PEGEEN. PEGGY looks at PEGEEN). What's going on? (PEGGY looks back at RALPH). Am I to understand you gave the painting to Pegeen?! Oh. You've met?

RALPH           At Bacon's opening. Yes.

PEGGY           I've been the victim of deceit.

PEGEEN          Ralph didn't know I was your daughter, Mother.

PEGGY           You gave the painting to Pegeen? What else have you given her?! I must say, Pegeen, you are fucking your way into owning quite a collection of art.

RALPH           I resent that!

PEGGY           You resent that, do you? (To PEGEEN) Of all the paintings you might have chosen, you selected the one I chose!

PEGEEN          Mother!

PEGGY           A deliberate choice! To spite your mother! Ralph, how old are you!

RALPH           Twenty-three.

PEGGY           Has Pegeen told you how old she is?

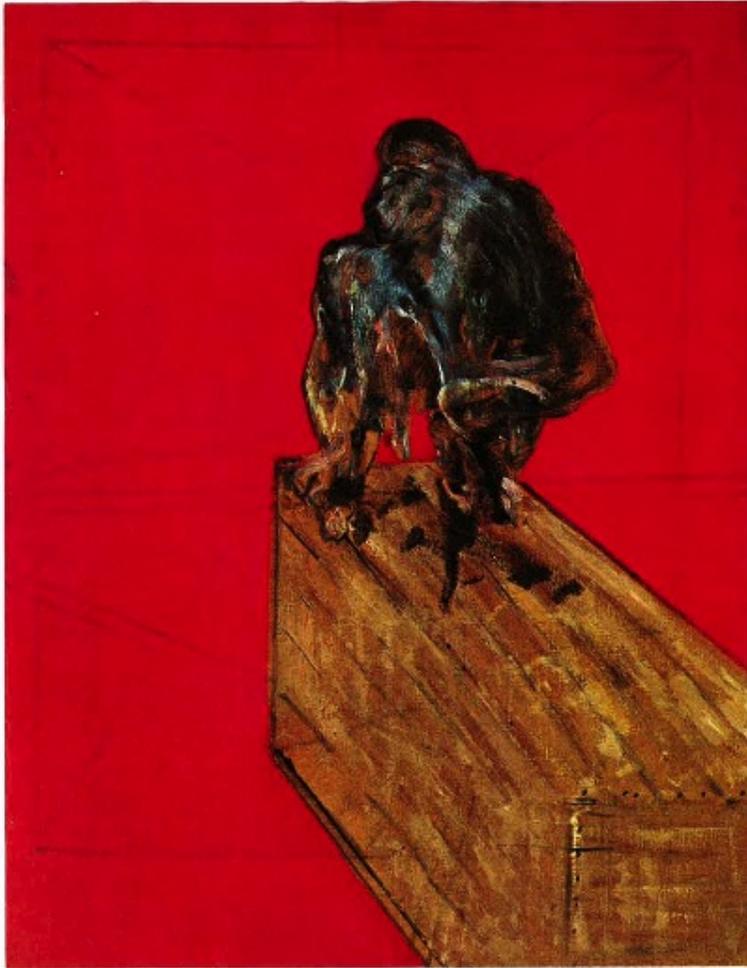
RALPH           Thirty-two.

PEGGY           Has she told you she's married!?

RALPH           Pegeen has no intention of deceiving me, Mrs. Guggenheim. Excuse me.

PEGGY           I could have done things for you that my daughter cannot even dream of doing!

RALPH           I'm sure you could. Nevertheless, I'm in love with Pegeen, not you.



Scene 31

*Study for a Chimpanzee* by Francis Bacon (1957)

32 - CONFESSION - 32

Study, Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, Venice, Italy, 1967  
Peggy Guggenheim

PEGGY (Finishes writing last sentence of letter. Puts down pen. Reads aloud the letter she has just composed). My dear, dear Robert Brady,

I was with you in Mexico when I learned of the death of my daughter, Pegeen. I remember having looked at your Frida Kahlo painting and remarking that it reminded me of Pegeen's work...primitive... childlike... tortured.

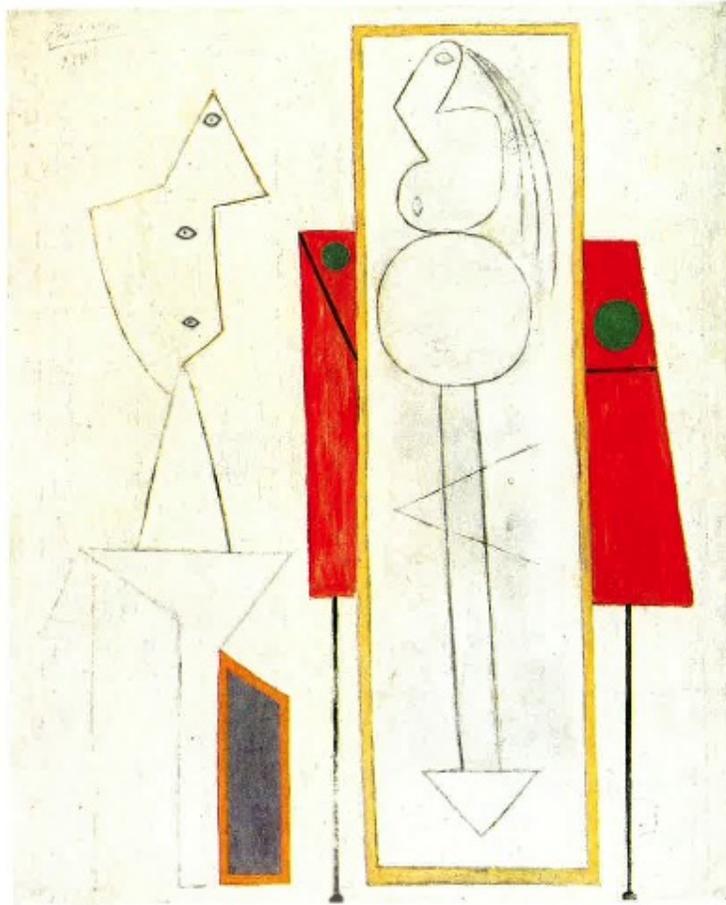
The forensic report said Pegeen died of a drug overdose. Her death was ruled a suicide, but I refuse to believe she took her own life. Pegeen would never have abandoned her children. I'm convinced her husband is to blame.

Her funeral is on Saturday. Her ashes will be interred at Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris. I cannot attend. I cannot bear to be near Ralph.

As I write this letter, to my right is Picasso's *The Studio*. Until now, it had been one of my favorite paintings. In a fit of anger I once said to Pegeen, "I'd rather have a Picasso than a daughter." What a horrid thing to say! And, worse, to add to her humiliation, I said it in front of others. I look at the painting in a new light now. A part of me wants to destroy it. And if it brought back Pegeen, I would rip it to shreds. I have a mouth that knows no limits.

Please destroy this letter, Robert. I have said too much in public that shames me. I don't need a record of my sins in writing.

Your devoted friend,  
Peggy.



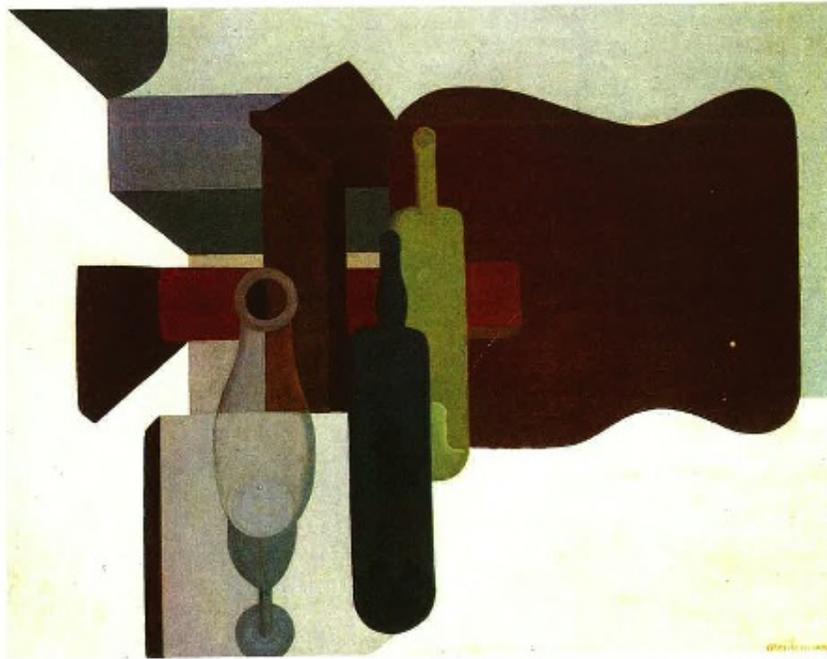
Scene 32

*The Studio* by Pablo Picasso (1928)

33 - TRIBUTE - 33

Forge of Angels, Murano, Italy, 1968  
Peggy Guggenheim – Egidio Constantini

EGIDIO Mrs. Guggenheim! What brings you to the forge!  
PEGGY Dear Egidio, it's good to see you.  
EGIDIO You look stunning. I will never forget your generosity. Without you, the *Forge of Angels* would not exist. When I went bankrupt, you were the only one who would help.  
PEGGY Egidio, your tears, more than your grim finances, touched me.  
EGIDIO I am so sorry to hear that Pegeen is gone.  
PEGGY That's why I'm here, Egidio. (Indicating packet of drawings). Pegeen drew a series of figures. I'd like, if possible, for you to execute them in glass.  
EGIDIO Of course. Let me have a look.  
PEGGY There are so many of your glass figures about the palazzo, Egidio; I wouldn't be surprised if Pegeen's designs were inspired by them.  
EGIDIO I will be glad to do it. For you, Mrs. Guggenheim, no charge. Chagall and Picasso will just have to wait for their vases.  
PEGGY You know I can't resist a bargain, but, no, Egidio, I insist on paying.  
EGIDIO Let me see, first, if you are pleased with the result.  
PEGGY You are one of the few artists I've helped who's remained grateful for my assistance.  
EGIDIO With your help, my colleagues are now showing Murano glass around the world. Would you like to see what I'm currently working on? Can I show you?  
PEGGY Another time. I have an appointment to see about having some of Pegeen's paintings framed. (She is suddenly overcome with emotion. EGIDIO brings a chair for her to sit in). I'm sorry, Egidio. I never thought of myself as a brittle person.  
EGIDIO No, no. It's okay. It is a great loss. (Touches PEGGY). I will make beautiful sculptures of her drawings.



Scene 33

*Guitar and Bottles* by Amédée Ozenfant (1920)

34 - GRATITUDE - 34

Les Deux Magots, Paris, France, December 1974  
Peggy Guggenheim – Petra (Nelly) van Doesburg

PEGGY I used to frequent Les Deux Magots Café when I first came to Paris, back in 1920. Fifty-five years ago.

NELLY It seems to be mainly tourists, today.

PEGGY Back then the place was teeming with artists and writers from around the world. Did you like the exhibit?

NELLY Seeing all those paintings brought back such memories.

PEGGY We have our revenge, Nelly. Years ago, with the war all around us, the Louvre refused to store our paintings. Now they're exhibiting them! How times have changed.

NELLY Have you settled plans for your estate?

PEGGY Yes. My uncle's foundation will take possession of the Palazzo and the art. The collection will remain in Venice, intact. I saw the Guggenheim edifice in New York. What a monstrosity! Poorly sited. Poorly designed. Poorly constructed. Frank Lloyd Wright. Ugh!

NELLY You're never one to keep an opinion to yourself.

PEGGY The world of collecting art has changed so much from when we went racing around Europe, snatching up paintings. We met the artists. We took risks, picked pieces we liked. Now it is one huge business. People don't care for their paintings. They buy them as investments and place them in storage. It's all gone to hell, Nelly.

NELLY Not all. There is a long line of people outside the Louvre, waiting to see your collection.

PEGGY Of all the paintings we purchased together, Nelly, which is your favorite?

NELLY I'm not going to say.

PEGGY But you have one? A favorite.

NELLY So what if I do.

PEGGY Well, tell me. I have one.

NELLY Absolutely not. You'll disagree and start an argument right here in Les Deux Magots, where it all began.

PEGGY It could be we both agree.

NELLY Not a chance! And you know it, Peggy!

PEGGY So be a stubborn prig. The truth is, I don't have a favorite one. What I love changes daily.

NELLY (Takes PEGGY'S hand). That's just a trap. To trick me into talking.

PEGGY (Pulls a photograph from her purse). But I *do* have a favorite photograph. (Hands the photograph to NELLY, who is overcome with emotion).

NELLY That's us! We are packing the paintings...to send to Marie's school, to be hidden in her barn under a pile of hay. And we're holding one of my husband's paintings. Theo. How I miss him.

PEGGY Are we good for another glass of champagne?

NELLY Oh, we are! Indeed we are.



Scene 34

*The Break of Day* by Paul Delvaux (1937)

## NOTES AND ARTWORK

The scenes occur in chronological order. The paintings and sculptures that complement the scenes – from the Peggy Guggenheim collection - have been selected without respect to the time they were created or the time they were purchased. It is an impressionistic choice on the part of the playwright to pair the artwork with the scene. While the scenes are sequential, the images are part of a dreamscape, where time and memory are free flowing, without direction.

- 1 *Sacrifice* by Mark Rothko (1943) HAND PAINTED
- 2 *Event #247* by Edmondo Bacci (1958) PHOTOCOPY  
*Georgia O'Keeffe* by Alfred Stieglitz (1916) and *Blue-02* by Georgia O'Keeffe (1916)
- 3 *Countercomposition XIII* by Theo van Doesburg (1925) HAND PAINTED
- 4 *Merzbild* by Kurt Schwitters (1930) HAND PAINTED
- 5 *Nostalgia of Space* by Oscar Dominguez (1939) PHOTOCOPY
- 6 *Zoomorphic Couple* by Max Ernst (1933) PHOTOCOPY
- 7 *Untitled* by Willem de Kooning (1958) PHOTOCOPY
- 8 *Composition* by Theo van Doesburg (1918) HAND PAINTED
- 9 *Voice of Space* by René Magritte HAND PAINTED
- 10 *Organic Form* by Graham Sutherland (1962-68) PHOTOCOPY
- 11 *Image of Time (Barricade)* by Emilio Vedora (1951) PHOTOCOPY
- 12 *The Nostalgia of the Poet* by Giorgio de Chirico (1914) HAND PAINTED
- 13 *The Birth of Liquid Desire* by Salvador Dali (1932) PHOTOCOPY
- 14 *Composition* by Tancredi Parmeggiani (1955) PHOTOCOPY
- 15 *Fear Giving Wings to Courage* by Jean Cocteau (1938) HAND PAINTED
- 16 *The Habitué* by Louis Marcoussis (1920) HAND PAINTED
- 17 *The Sun in its Jewel Case/Casket* by Yves Tanguy (1937) HAND PAINTED
- 18 *Bird in Space* by Constantin Brancusi (1940) TBD
- 19 *Sad Young Man on a Train* by Marcel Duchamp (1911) PHOTOCOPY
- 20 *Dutch Interior* by Joan Miró (1928) HAND PAINTED
- 21 *Woman with her Throat Cut* by Alberto Giacometti (1932-33) TBD
- 22 *Composition* by El Lissitzky (1921) HAND PAINTED
- 23 *Men in the City* by Fernand Léger (1919) HAND PAINTED
- 24 *The Anti-Pope (Version Two)* by Max Ernst (1941-42) PHOTOCOPY
- 25 *Heavenly Bodies* by Rufino Tamayo (1946) HAND PAINTED
- 26 *Circumcision* by Jackson Pollock (1946) PHOTOCOPY
- 27 *Rain* by Marc Chagall (1911) PHOTOCOPY
- 28 *Vertical Planes* by Frantisek Kupka (1911-12) HAND PAINTED
- 29 *Crocodile* by Karen Appel (1956) HAND PAINTED
- 30 *Overtuned Blue Shoes with Two Heels Under a Black Vault* by Jean Arp (1925)  
HAND PAINTED
- 31 *Study for a Chimpanzee* by Francis Bacon (1957) PHOTOCOPY
- 32 *The Studio* by Pablo Picasso (1928) HAND PAINTED
- 33 *Guitar and Bottles* by Amédée Ozenfant (1920) HAND PAINTED
- 34 *The Break of Day* by Paul Delvaux (1937) HAND PAINTED

### SUGGESTED BREAKDOWN FOR FEATURED ROLES (2 F – 3 M)

#### Female 1

Florette Guggenheim – 1  
Berenice Abbott – 5  
Emma Goldman – 7  
Sonia – 11  
Mary Reynolds – 19  
Marie Jolas – 20  
Pegeen Guggenheim – 29  
Pegeen Guggenheim – 31

#### Female 2

Kiki de Montparnasse - 4  
Emily Coleman - 7  
Emily Coleman - 12  
Wyn Henderson - 15  
Nelly van Doesburg - 18  
Nelly van Doesburg - 20  
Jane Bowles - 30  
Nelly van Doesburg- 34

#### Male 1

Alfred Stieglitz – 2  
Man Ray – 4  
Douglas Garman – 12  
Douglas Garman – 13  
Marcel Duchamp – 15  
Yves Tanguy – 17  
Sergio – 21  
Frederick Kiesler – 25  
Marcel Duchamp – 26  
Egidio Constantini - 33

#### Male 2

Laurence Vail – 3  
Laurence Vail – 5  
Laurence Vail – 6  
Dr. Mark Tilford – 11  
Samuel Beckett – 14  
Laurence Vail – 22  
Julien Levy – 23  
Jackson Pollack – 26  
Bernard Berenson – 27  
Paul Bowles – 30

#### Male 3

Diego Rivera - 3  
John Holms - 8  
John Holms - 9  
John Holms - 10  
James Joyce - 14  
James B. Manson - 16  
René Lef - 21  
Max Ernst - 24  
Max Ernst - 25  
Roloff Beny - 28  
Ralph Rumney – 31

### SUGGESTED BREAKDOWN FOR FEATURED ROLES (1 F – 2 M)

#### Female

Florette Guggenheim – 1  
Kiki de Montparnasse - 4  
Berenice Abbott – 5  
Emily Coleman - 7  
Sonia - 11  
Emily Coleman - 12  
Wyn Henderson – 15  
Nelly van Doesburg - 18  
Mary Reynolds – 19  
Nelly van Doesburg – 20  
Julien Levy – 23 (male)  
Pegeen Guggenheim – 29  
Jane Bowles - 30  
Pegeen Guggenheim – 31  
Nelly van Doesburg- 34

#### Male 1

Alfred Stieglitz – 2  
Diego Rivera – 3  
Man Ray – 4  
John Holms - 8  
John Holms – 9  
John Holms – 10  
James Joyce - 14  
Marcel Duchamp - 15  
Yves Tanguy – 17  
Maria Jolas – 20 (female)  
René Lef - 21  
Frederick Kiesler - 25  
Marcel Duchamp - 26  
Bernard Berenson - 27  
Paul Bowles - 30  
Egidio Constantini - 33

#### Male 2

Laurence Vail – 3  
Laurence Vail - 5  
Laurence Vail - 6  
Emma Goldman - 7 (female)  
Dr. Mark Tilford - 11  
Douglas Garman - 12  
Douglas Garman - 13  
Samuel Beckett - 14  
James B. Manson - 16  
Sergio - 21  
Laurence Vail – 22  
Max Ernst – 24  
Max Ernst – 25  
Jackson Pollock- 26  
Roloff Beny – 28  
Ralph Rumney - 31