

MAURICE
LEGRAND
LESUEUR
SULLINS



PAINTINGS 1970 - 1986





Grand Maurice Le Grand Le Suivre SULLINS



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PAINTINGS 1970 - 1986

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Maurice LeGrand LeSueur Sullins: Paintings 1970-1986

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Preface	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	ix

CONTENTS

Outsider Art: Modernism's Parallel Aesthetic Michael Bonesteel	1
Maurice Sullins: Inside an Outsider Lynda K. Martin	5
Color Plates	13
Exhibition Checklist	23



546

Danse d'Esagne by Edgar Degas—Spanish Moon Glow #9

PREFACE

In late 1986 Maurice Sullins decided it was time for people to know about the paintings that he had begun creating nearly 17 years before. After he announced his interest in showing the results of his years of effort, his friends and others who thought his work was of consequence passed the word. Sullins was soon featured on the front page of the *Chicago Tribune's* Tempo section and the world came to his doorstep.

The Illinois State Museum became involved when Gerald Adelman, Executive Director of the Upper Illinois Valley Association, suggested that our curators see the work of Maurice Sullins. Adelman had seen Maurice's paintings and felt that the work might be of interest to us. A date was set with Maurice's agent, and on March 4, 1987, Terry Suhre, Lynda Martin, and I were standing on the porch of Maurice's turn-of-the-century house in Joliet.

We pulled open the turned spindle screen door, knocked, and when the door opened, there was Maurice. His bright blue eyes scanned his visitors in detail as he invited us in. We stood single file on one of two major pathways in his living room, defined on both sides by stacks of wonderful paintings. Maurice's excitement was matched by ours. He showed us the tables where he painted. We paged through his journals—a rich composite of writing, drawing, and collaged elements. Then we looked at the three to four hundred paintings in this room, as Maurice explained his sources, symbolism and painting techniques in a running commentary.

By the time we left several hours later, the deluge of images and impressions upon us had begun to make a kind of perfect sense. We were convinced that Sullins' work was significant and decided that an exhibition must be organized before the collection was disbursed. Here was a rare chance for complete documentation of an artist's production and an opportunity to gain an overview of a highly personal body of work created by an outsider artist in urban isolation.

Lynda Martin, curator of the exhibition, has worked with Timothy O'Keefe, Maurice's friend and agent, to document each painting. Their sustained efforts over the last year have ensured a permanent visual record of Maurice's oeuvre. The essays included in this catalogue and Martin's insightful selection of work—made after many hours of conversation with the artist, provide us with a map to Maurice's visionary world.

Maurice no longer lives crowded in among hundreds of his paintings in the old house at Joliet. The paintings have been moved to a separate location and safely stored in preparation for exhibition and sale. However, the memory of a late-winter afternoon spent in a maze of wonderful paintings in the company of the artist persists. Maurice Sullins' work is one example of the rich diversity and individuality which characterize the artists of Illinois. We are pleased to present his retrospective.

*Kent J. Smith
Asst. Director for Art
Illinois State Museum*



864
Picasso's Harlequin

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The organization of any exhibition requires the time, energy, and commitment of a great many individuals. This exhibition would not have been possible without the support and enthusiasm of the following people:

Maurice Sullins, who not only provided the reason for this exhibition, but welcomed me into his home and shared his thoughts, as well;

Timothy W. O'Keefe, Maurice's friend and agent, who's cooperation and hard work have been invaluable in the documentation of Maurice's work and in the organization of this exhibition;

Maurice's son, Victor Sullins; daughter-in-law, Kathy; and grandchildren, Jessica and Michael, whose whole-hearted support of this project has been of great help;

Gerald Adelman, who brought Maurice and his work to our attention.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the following people at the Illinois State Museum:

Kent J. Smith, Assistant Director for Art, for allowing me to organize this exhibition and for his guidance and support during the project;

Carole Petersen, Fine Art Registrar; and Robert Sill, Exhibition Designer and Preparator, for their participation in organizing and presenting the exhibition.

Dennis Campbell, Managing Editor; Amy Knox, Assistant Editor; and Orvetta Robinson, Museum Librarian, who were kind enough to edit and proofread the catalogue manuscripts and offer many valuable suggestions;

The Art Section staff for their interest, encouragement, and assistance, especially John McAdam, Kelli Richie, and James Zimmer.

Lynda K. Martin

#703

MAY 10

THURSDAY

16448 St. C.

1973 72hr. day 230 days before

Title: "Calder
Versus
Michelangelo"

NOTES:

- ① Winslow Homer, (1836-1910).
- ② Sculpture - covered left corner - by Michelangelo. 2 Calder's; mobile, a "Lighter + rag and stick tail," 1939.

100% Sky ③ Venus & Virgin white atmosphere Very faint a. a soft blurred catch on top of profile. mobile hand corner.

FINISH OK.

⑤ Title refers to fact that both were sculptures. a. Calder's father was a famous Philadelph. sculptor himself.

⑥ Ruby-throated Hummingbird a. Breast of subject of picture - right hand corner - Ruby dived - to nest in the birds' nest - timber land.

START: -

2:00 AM = 7 hrs. TOT 4h.

AUGUST

Saturn
563

Thursday, August 26, 1971

30X40 St. C.

S	M	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30
31				

Title: -
Breegel's
Dancing Couple

NOTE: Vermeer's ducks
Boggs: ancient Chinese

Sierra → water → "chain of mirrors reflected in water"

Start: -

1. "Ruff" bird.
2. "night wind"
3. The wedding dance by Pieter Breegel, the Elder.

~~4. Courtyard in Castile~~
4. old mill horse.

1:00 AM = 8 hrs. ⊕ →

INTRODUCTION

It is highly unusual to find an artist's whole body of work virtually intact and available for study and exhibition. Maurice Sullins painted from 1970 until 1986 and, until 1987, refused to sell his work. When this exhibition was being organized in 1987, there were approximately 1,200 paintings from which to choose.

During an initial meeting with Maurice and his agent, I viewed over 300 paintings. Later, when considering how to best organize an exhibition of Maurice's work, it dawned on me that I had only seen about one-fourth of his paintings. It seemed impossible to narrow the selection down to only 50 or 60 wonderful paintings from 300, and there were still about 900 more to be seen!

Most of the paintings were stored in boxes, and few had been photographed. This meant that if we were to have a representative sampling of Maurice's work in the exhibition, each painting would have to be taken out and examined. It soon became obvious that Maurice's creative output had to be documented and studied chronologically in order to even decide what criteria to use in selection of work for the exhibition.

The documentation process began with photographing each painting. This entailed moving boxes containing six to eight paintings, which were mostly 30 x 40 inches to 36 x 48 inches in size; removing the paintings from the boxes; taking slides of each painting; recording information; returning the paintings to the boxes; and moving the boxes back into storage. Without the cooperation of Timothy W. O'Keefe, Maurice's friend of 17 years who has recently become his agent, this phase of the work would have been almost impossible. O'Keefe organized the work, did most of the physical labor involved, and even took the slides. His assistance speeded up the documentation phase considerably and allowed me the opportunity to look closely at the paintings and record information during the process.

Maurice had written the number and title on the reverse of each painting; however, after the first 100, almost none were dated. In his nine journals, though, the artist had recorded each painting's number, title, date, and other information regarding the work. In order to provide the information required for the exhibition and to obtain copies of the journals for the Illinois State Museum's archives, O'Keefe rented a copier, had it taken to Maurice's home, and copied the journals. This was necessary because Maurice would not allow the journals to be taken out of his house.

The next phase of organizing the exhibition was sorting the slides and placing them in numerical/chronological order. This made it possible to view the evolution of Maurice's painting rather than seeing his work in terms of isolated canvases. It

was interesting to note how rapidly his techniques for expression changed and how images were used in varying contexts and ways throughout his work. It also became evident through repeated viewings that there were far too many excellent paintings for the selection process to be easy.

The challenge was to select works that showed Maurice's development as an artist over the entire period that he painted, works that reflected his patterns of thought and narrative, and works that have aesthetic merit. Fortunately, Maurice worked primarily in series, so the first task was to group the paintings according to series, then choose the series that were most representative of the progression of his work. When this process was complete, representative paintings were chosen from each series that showed the way in which Maurice's treatment of each series' subject developed. As for aesthetic merit, it was extremely difficult to select only 60 paintings for the exhibition from the more than 1,200 available. There are many exceptional paintings by Maurice Sullins that are not included in the exhibition strictly due to limitations on space.

Getting to know the person behind the paintings has been a privilege. The insights gained from conversing with Maurice about his life and work have added a dimension to this project that would otherwise be missing. I have come to agree with Tim O'Keefe's assessment of Maurice—"He's the genuine article. What he paints comes from the heart. He's authentic." This exhibition is intended to reflect the free-flowing creativity, wit, energy, and beauty that is Maurice Sullins.

*Lynda K. Martin
Asst. Curator, Fine Art
Illinois State Museum*



485
Elegant Moment in Paris

The notion that Outsider Art may be considered a Modernist aesthetic—like Cubism, Expressionism, Surrealism or abstract art—seems rather tenuous at first. But it might be argued that the phenomenon of Outsider Art would never have seen the light of day had it not been for the development of Modernism and the early Modernist artists who sought it out. They perceived in Outsider Art a spirit kindred to their own: a concern for inner realities, for psychological and spiritual dimensions. Modernists and Outsiders have been separated by cultural barriers of class and education, and the materials they chose to work with have reflected those differences. Still, the history of Modernism and Outsider Art is inextricably bound, and the motivations of the artists involved coincide in many respects.



649
*The Queen Madonna
of Blue Skies under
Blue Waters*

OUTSIDER ART: MODERNISM'S PARALLEL AESTHETIC

Michael Bonesteel

Modernists and Outsiders are, in essence, innovators spurred by the same urges and instincts as all vanguards of the 20th century, in that they produce unprecedented, novel creations of personal significance. The fact that Outsider artists are self-taught and their styles sometimes crude and awkward in comparison to academically trained artists seem less a discrepancy—considering the breakdown of conventional realist depiction and virtuoso technique in Modern Art—than the discrepancy between the expanded vision of the Outsider artist and the limited parameters of the Folk artist. When it comes to Modernist standards of innovation and original vision, it may be that a leading Outsider artist like Adolf Wolffi has more in common with Marcel Duchamp, than he does with Grandma Moses and the Folk milieu in which Wolffi normally has been lumped. In truth, Outsider artists differ from Folk artists in the same way that avant-garde Modernists differ from utilitarian craftspeople, commercial artists, portrait painters, or makers of sofa-sized landscapes and still lifes.

Prior to Modernism, with the exception of the Romantic and Neo-Romantic movements from which Modernism sprang, visual art concerned itself primarily with the subject of outward reality. With the Symbolists and Post-Impressionists, however, an awareness of other realities, subjective states of consciousness, hallucinatory phenomenon, transcendental visions, and dreams developed; all of which were insinuated in the new art. The outward form of this new art changed dramatically as it became increasingly determined by such inward-looking content, conforming to the ideas that shaped Cubism, Expressionism, Surrealism, and the other Modernist schools.

Most naive art in pre-Modernist times looked like 19th-century salon-style art. Erastus Salisbury Field and Edward Hicks may have been unschooled, but their art imitated the portrait and landscape schools of academia. Although there were naive practitioners making work in the 19th century tantamount in expression to modern Outsider Art (the "Ideal Palace" constructed by Ferdinand Cheval, for example, or the rock sculptures of Adolphe-

Julien Fouré), it was not until the emergence of Modernism that what we have come to call Outsider Art was viewed and appreciated.

Henri Rousseau was certainly not an Outsider artist, but it would be even more incorrect to call him a Folk artist. He is a central figure in Modernism as well as the premier naive artist of the 20th century. Moreover, he was the first major unschooled artist to probe the realm of the psychological, making him at once a Modernist and a pre-Outsider artist (or conversely, a post-Folk artist). Rousseau's so-called "primitivism" paved the way for more radical Modernist shifts.

Outsider Art is, by definition, an art form concocted by people unfamiliar with, or otherwise cut off from the academic art world. How, then, could it become privy to the same impulses as Modernist art? One theory might be that early Modernists and Outsider artists developed independently, but with synchronicity, in the same way that inventors on opposite sides of the world come up with similar ideas simultaneously. Per-

Modernists and Outsiders are... innovators spurred by the same urges and instincts as all vanguards of the 20th century, in that they produce unprecedented, novel creations of personal significance.

haps some ideas were simply "in the air" psychically. Such ideas not only manifested themselves in the minds of trained artists, but in the minds of fertile, — yet untrained — individuals, originals, eccentrics, and recluses who expressed themselves through whatever means were at their disposal. It is interesting to speculate that in the academic artist's mind such ideas formed the tenets of Modernism; while in the untrained artist's mind, they became Outsider Art.

Much may be gained by entertaining the idea of Outsider Art as a parallel esthetic to Modernism. As phenomena, they developed individually, but were conditioned by the same *zeitgeist*. Outsider Art and the schools of Modernism share significant similarities and common concerns, running along separate tracks that, at times, touch and intersect.

Before continuing this discussion, it is necessary to clarify some terms. The all-purpose, general term "Naive Art" — indicating the gamut of unschooled, self-taught, non-academic work — may be viewed as the broadest context within which three sub-categories fall. Those sub-categories are diagrammed on the Naive Art continuum beginning with Folk Art at one end and Outsider Art at the opposite end. Between the two, a gray middle range is postulated for what may be called Mainstream Naive work. Folk Art is defined as work which has a

sense of history, of motifs and craft-forms passed from one generation to the next with only the slightest deviation or individual trademark. Much Folk Art consists of anonymous pieces without a recognizable style. Weather vanes, quilts, duck decoys, fishing lures, and furniture, no matter how "artistic," still have utilitarian functions. Whirligigs, dolls, wood carvings, and Folk Art paintings made for aesthetic pleasure may be less utilitarian, but, nevertheless, reinforce safe and uncontroversial social and cultural views of life rather than personal or psychological ones. All of this work has roots, technically and conceptually, in the 19th century. As Folk Art demonstrates more idiosyncrasies and begins to hint at a personal approach, it progressively merges into the Mainstream Naive category. Grandma Moses and Mattie Lou O'Kelley, for instance, are artisans residing on the borderline between Folk Art and Mainstream Naive work.

Mainstream Naive art displays more individuality and personal direction than typical Folk Art, yet it is by no means as original or eccentric as Outsider Art. Much of the work was previously and indiscriminately labeled either Folk or Outsider Art. Generally, Mainstream Naive work may exhibit an individualism that sets it apart from Folk Art, but it will not be consistently innovative work and will tend to be somewhat repetitious, using a formula that might have been provocative once, but now offers only superficial variations from piece to piece. As some Outsider artists become co-opted into the commercial market (Howard Finster comes to mind here), their work becomes more Mainstream Naive.

Although the terms "Outsider Art" and Jean Dubuffet's "*l'art brut*" have been used interchangeably, "Outsider Art" is probably the preferred term today. It is a little less strict about such matters as pure isolation from cultural influences. It is possible for people who are aware of artistic elements in the culture to make Outsider Art — and who is to say that they haven't always been? — as long as they are not formally schooled in aca-

demical principles. At this juncture, it might be just as well to dismiss the Art Brut definition altogether; there are few practitioners left untouched by modern communications and travel who have not seen an academic work of art and been influenced by it. What remains is the fact that Outsider artists touch upon profound and even taboo areas of human consciousness in their work and, regardless of technique or source materials, make work which is indisputably their own.

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To juxtapose the work of Outsiders and Modernists is not to make outward, formal connections between the work, although these do occur. Rather, it is to suggest, once again, an inner connection of content, motives, and intentions which may or may not determine consequent similarities in formal expression. It is no secret that a good number of prominent Modernists drew on the methods and approaches of Outsider Art; among them Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Emil Nolde, Jean Arp, Max Ernst, Jackson Pollock, Richard Lindner, the CoBra artists, the entire school of French Surrealism, and several generations of Chicago Imagist artists.

For the sake of argument, it might be intriguing to select an artist who probably had very little contact with Outsider Art and who would most likely be considered the extreme antithesis of the Outsider artist. Marcel Duchamp is the classic,

archetypal Modernist artist, yet it doesn't take much investigation to discover that he employed a number of methods and attitudes assumed to be Modernist, but in fact are equally Outsider in inclination.

Anne d'Harnoncourt wrote in her introduction to the book *Marcel Duchamp* (The Museum of Modern Art, 1973, p. 38):

He asked perhaps the crucial question of his career in an early note to himself: "Can one make works which are not works of 'art' 'Art' in the sense of being loaded with conventional structures as to how it should look, and be looked at. Duchamp's private mission, with its attendant public repercussions, was to strip the "Art" bare of all its accumulated paraphernalia and return it to one of its etymological meanings — simply "to make." He protested that the label "anti-art" did not describe his position: "Whither you are 'anti' or 'for,' it's the two sides of the same thing." Instead, he sought to eliminate the demand for a definition of art. Later, in a 1957 lecture on "The Creative Act," he stated, "We must then deny him (the artist) the state of consciousness on the esthetic plane about what he is doing or why he is doing it."

Despite the fact that Duchamp went through intellectual acrobatics and along the way became known as the "Father of Conceptual Art", others found a more direct answer to the dilemma of how to make non-art. Some of the world's greatest Outsider artists simply chose to make work for themselves alone and never displayed it to the public or friends.

In his masterwork, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even*, also referred to as the *Large Glass*, Duchamp chose, for the most part, non-traditional mediums, as many Outsider artists do. When paint was used, he often applied it with his fingers instead of using brushes. The most Outsider-reminiscent act was his "dust-breeding" technique in which he let three months' worth of dust build up on a portion of the "Large Glass" and then fixed the dust permanently with varnish.

It would be wrong to give the impression that Outsider Art should be embraced as an equivalent

school or movement within the Modernist tradition. That would be misleading and historically inaccurate. Some have argued that Outsider Art's very identity depends upon its segregation from academic influences. These arguments come from two camps: that of the academician who views Outsider Art as something less than credible because it does not pay homage to academic agendas; and that of the advocate of Outsider Art purity who has soured on academic contrivance and seeks to keep Outsider Art precious and unspoiled. Inadvertently, both points of view have been calculated to keep Modernist and Outsider artists apart, when in reality they are brothers beneath the skin and equal heirs to this century's innovative spirit. It is possible that what Dubuffet and others originally saw in Outsider Art was truly the fulfillment of Modernism's promise to explore new dimensions and create new visions; a promise that became ever more difficult to keep as each subsequent Modernist generation compromised its position or simply mined out the territory.

Admittedly, there are no hard and fast rules governing the relationship between Modernists and Outsiders. But perhaps a hundred years from now, and viewed through the more detached perspective of history, Modernism and Outsider Art may be seen as partners in mutual pursuit of a wider, more generous and, for its time, revolutionary definition of what it meant to make art in the 20th century.

Michael Bonessteel is an art critic, Chicago correspondent for Art in America, and former editor of the New Art Examiner.



1220
Miss Chicago Under the Old Apple Tree

Early in his 60th year, prompted by a dream, Maurice Sullins began to paint. Upon awakening from the dream, Maurice, in his haste to start his new life as an artist, began drawing on whatever pieces of paper he could find around the house. When he ran out of paper, he cut apart record album covers and drew on the blank inside surfaces. Within a few weeks he had bought acrylic paint and was applying it to old mirrors, plywood panels, and masonite—scrap materials that were stored in his garage. From that time in 1970 until his wife Mary died in 1986, Maurice painted continuously and obsessively, producing over 1,200 paintings in 16 years.



2A
*Tahitian Pink Pony
Under Mango Tree*

MAURICE SULLINS: INSIDE AN OUTSIDER

Lynda K. Martin

There is little in the artist's background that would indicate such an extraordinary turn of events. The third child in a family with seven children, Maurice was born in 1910 in Medora, Illinois, a town located approximately 40 miles north of St. Louis on Highway 67. His father, Van Buren Sullins, a Methodist minister, was frequently required to move his family from one small town in Illinois to another. Maurice retains vivid memories of living in places such as Elkhart, Sadorus, and Galesburg during the early 1900s.

In 1928, Maurice enrolled at the University of Illinois at Champaign. Although he originally planned to graduate in 1932, Maurice had to delay the completion of his degree because of economic difficulties which required that he work while attending classes part-time. He completed his studies in 1934 and was awarded a B.S. in Geography. He also married in 1934. In 1940, he and his wife, Mary, moved to Joliet, Illinois, where he still resides.

Maurice was never employed in his field of study, probably because he graduated during the Depression. Over the years, he worked at various jobs, including one as foreman at the Fisher Body Plant in Willow Springs, Illinois, and another waxing and detailing airplanes at the Joliet Municipal Airport.

Timothy O'Keefe, Maurice's agent, recalls the first time he met the artist back in 1970. O'Keefe, who owns an outdoor advertising company and does the lettering and artwork on his billboards, was painting a large graphic design on the terminal building at the Joliet Municipal Airport. Around 7 a.m., when he was setting up his scaffolding, O'Keefe noticed an older man vigorously waxing and hand-buffing a mid-sized airplane.

As the hours went by and the September day turned hot, the older man kept up a steady, energetic pace. "Then," O'Keefe relates, "all of a sudden, there he was, under the scaffolding yelling up,

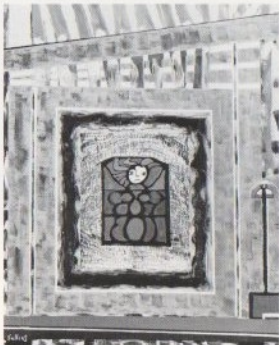
'Hey! I'm a painter, too!' 'Oh, yeah,' I said, 'what do you paint, airplanes?' and Maurice quickly replied, 'I paint on canvas.'" As the day progressed and Maurice and O'Keefe became acquainted, they discovered that they share a deep, abiding interest in art. O'Keefe, also a sculptor whose work is mainly large statuary for churches, attributes his lasting friendship with Maurice to this mutual appreciation of art.

O'Keefe asked to see Maurice's paintings. "Because," he says, "I thought if his paintings were half as interesting and unique as Maurice is, I just had to see them." The next day, Maurice brought six paintings to the airport in the trunk of his immaculate 1964 Cadillac. He lined them up against the side of the car and invited O'Keefe to take a look. "Each painting almost looked like it had been painted by a different artist," relates O'Keefe. "All of them were unique. I instantly knew that Maurice had a natural talent for painting."



Maurice claims that he didn't do any artwork prior to his 60th birthday, a claim verified by his older brother, Marion Sullins. The artist did, however, confide in O'Keefe that as a young man he had considered becoming an artist, but the poverty that most artists had to endure discouraged him.

It seems odd that someone contemplating a career in art would not be producing artwork. Maurice's art, however, evidently takes place primarily in his head, and the physical, material expression of it is secondary. While he was still employed at the Joliet Airport, Maurice would compose a painting in his mind during the day, refining it until it was complete. After working 10 to 12 hours, he would rush home and paint until 1 or 2 a.m. in order to record his painting on canvas. Maurice would then sleep a few hours and get up to paint another



61
Gay Paree

205
Madonna of the Sky

hour or so before going off to his job where he would compose yet another painting.

When Maurice began painting in 1970, his work was somewhat primitive and clumsy, but always exuberant, carefully composed, and richly colored. Without ever attending an art class, he progressed rapidly, learning how to handle his paint to best effect while trying out various techniques and styles in quick succession. During much of his first year of painting, Maurice used acrylic paint on canvas panels; however, by year's end he had switched over to acrylic on stretched canvas. Always prolific, Maurice purchased pre-stretched canvases in boxes of six and sometimes used a whole box in less than a week. Usually, the finished canvases went back into the boxes as soon as they were dry.

In the past, when Maurice finished painting a box of canvases, he would phone Timothy O'Keefe and tell him to "come over and take a look." According to O'Keefe, if he couldn't get over to see Maurice within a day or two, the paintings would be boxed up and stored away. When his works were being documented, Maurice mentioned that there were many paintings that he was seeing for the first time since they were completed 10 or 15 years ago.

With no formal training in art, Maurice began painting without the structure or restrictions imposed by academic art programs. Over the years he has built his own philosophical framework, made his own rules, and developed very strict ideas about what is right and acceptable in the practice of art.

"Each painting looked almost like it had been painted by a different artist. All of them were unique."



40

Girl with a Pink Doll or Little Sister

Maurice scorns the palette, preliminary drawings, live models, and other tools and techniques usually associated with painters. He painted in his living room with his canvas lying flat on two small tables. Maurice says, "...anybody that paints upright on an easel is a dabber...they dab on the sky the same as they dab on bricks." Maurice usually began a painting by "floating on" a wash which he calls "clouds." "Floating on clouds," he explains, "is the nearest you can get to the Universe and how it is."

Maurice's images were applied over the wash with a brush or directly from the tube. He has terms for his various methods of applying paint and for different types of lines. His "Naughty Line" is a horizon line representative of Mother Earth that

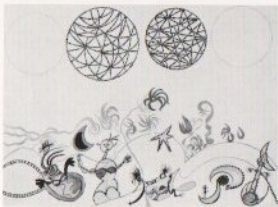
forms the lower back and buttocks of a female figure as in paintings 952 and 1170. A wavy line squeezed directly from the tube, as in painting 922, is a "Master Stroke." A "Grand Stroke" is a horizontal line made in one sweep, and a "Grand Sweep" is a horizontal line that goes off the canvas and "into eternity." According to Maurice, "The grandeur and glory of the sky has never been revealed on canvas before because no artist had a Master Stroke, and if you don't have a Master Stroke you can't have a Grand Stroke, if you don't have a Master Stroke and a Grand Stroke you can't have a Grand Sweep."

Maurice frequently manipulated his pigment with objects such as a comb or the handle of a brush. His term for running a comb through the paint is



952 (top left)
*Matisse's Three
 Oranges—Calder's
 Three Oranges*

120 (near right)
*Lovers at Bois de
 Vincennes—Noontime*



1170 (middle left)
*Miss Chicago Eagerly
 Awaits 1992*

129 (far right)
Canal de Bourgogne



922 (bottom left)
Joan Miró's Green Moon

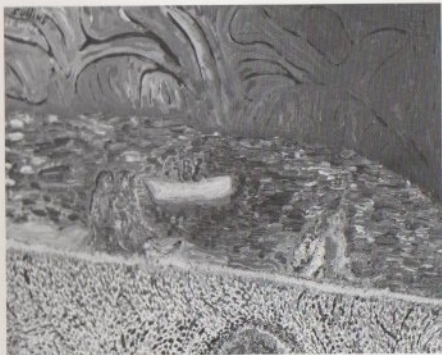
"sheen" because of the way the ridges catch the light, and he calls the application of paint with a brush handle "scubbling." He also used masking tape to form elements of composition within his paintings. He would paint over the tape and canvas, then remove the tape to reveal the composition—a technique he refers to as "X-outs." As a result of his methods, Maurice's canvases exhibit textural diversity ranging from thick impasto to thin washes—sometimes in the same painting.

Maurice, a voracious reader, can expound on almost any subject at a moment's notice. His home and garage are filled with books, magazines, and encyclopedias which he calls the "threads of life" because all the knowledge contained in them "ties together." He likes to point out that "everything in the world, everything in the Universe everywhere, *everything* ties together."

When he began painting, Maurice read everything he could find relating to art and artists. As he became aware of the elements of art such as shape, form, and positive and negative space, he saw everything in life in terms of these elements. In reference to this, he will often state that "art is total living." His art is woven into the fabric of his life, and his unique, inventive personality is expressed in his lifestyle, speech, and dress as well as on canvas, reflecting the philosophy that he calls "total living."

Maurice educated himself about well-known artists by reading and by studying photographs of their work—O'Keefe refers to him as a "walking art encyclopedia." While he has never copied directly from others, images appropriated from artists such as Calder, Picasso, Rodin, Moore, Chagall, and Matisse appear in his work along with his own set of personal symbols. Maurice views his use and transformation of other artist's images as a way of "paying tribute" to them and continuing their work.

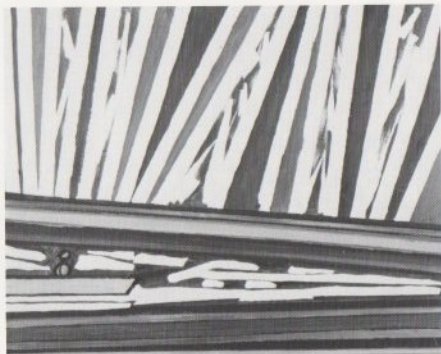
Some of Maurice's personal symbols are largely confined to one series of paintings, while others



His term for running a comb through the paint is "sheen" because of the way the ridges catch the light.

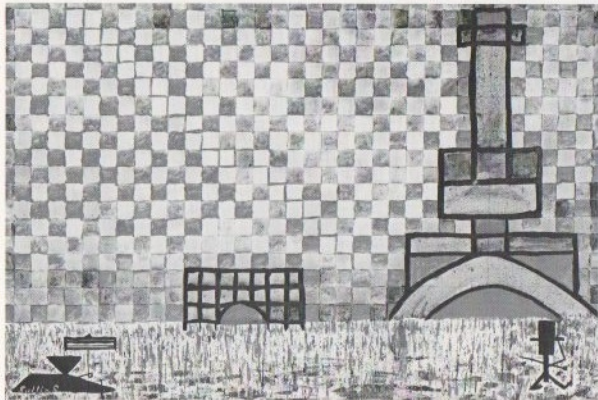
appear frequently throughout his work. For instance, of the 60 paintings in this exhibition, "The Dapper Frenchman," Maurice's alterego who is often accompanied by "His Dog," can be found in 13 paintings (230, 231, 287, 302, 308, 314, 489, 563, 546, 857, 922, 1034, and 1170). In each painting the artist combines and juxtaposes both his personal and borrowed images in unexpected ways in order to relate a story, and each canvas is a continuation in the narrative pathway that is evident throughout his work.

One of Maurice's favorite pastimes is reading the dictionary, and he delights in playing with words. The titles of some of his paintings are derived from literature, and many are as imaginative and creative as the paintings. *Mr. Eiffel Tower and His Wife*



the Former Arc d'Triomphe, Miss Chicago Sails into Summer in a Royal Blue Strapless Maillot, and Personage Before the Moon are among the titles he has assigned to his work. Whatever the title, each painting is a highly inventive visual treat, and many are intellectually stimulating as well.

During the years that he worked as an artist, Maurice numbered, titled, and carefully entered into his journals each of the more than 1,200 paintings that he created. He began keeping a record of his work on April 1, 1970 with painting number 2. His first journal is a blue 4 X 6 inch spiral-bound "Daily Reminder" in which the artist recorded his work from May through December 1970. Not wanting to waste January through May, Maurice began 1971 in the same book, meticulously altering the



incorrect days of the week. The other eight journals are recorded in appointment books, a spiral notebook, the 1954 *Britannica Book of the Year*, and the book *All About Moths and Butterflies*. In the last two books, Maurice just wrote his information over the printed words.

On the back of some of the earliest paintings, Maurice noted how many hours he spent on each work, how many ounces of paint he used, and the number, title, and date of the painting. In his journals and on the backs of a handful of the earlier paintings, he provided an explanation of the work which often included literary references, geo-

graphical data, and line drawings analyzing the composition. As his work progressed, the extensive written explanations of his paintings became less frequent.

Maurice has never lacked confidence in his work or the ability to discuss it at length. Once during the 1970s, when he had new slides of some of his paintings, Maurice went to St. Francis College in Joliet and asked if he could use a projector. The artist was set up in a room equipped with projector and screen, and he began to look through his slides. People drifted in, and very shortly Maurice was lecturing unselfconsciously on his work to a



230
*Madame Etienne de
Silhouette Strolls under
a Mosaic Sky*

the Dapper Frenchman



Maurice Sullins

roomful of faculty, staff, and students.

As with many artists The Grand Maurice, as he sometimes refers to himself, works in series in order to explore ideas, images, and concepts. For instance, his *Spanish Moonglow* series, which consists of 36 paintings, is filled with flamenco dancers, bullfights, castles, and crescent moon shapes, while the 225 paintings in his "Miss Chicago" series contain images and geometric shapes within circles. He adapts his way of using paint, color, shape, and composition to suit the theme of each series.

Maurice's treatment of a theme or subject sometimes changes dramatically within a short space of time. For example, in his "Canal de Bourgogne" series, the progression from organic shapes composed of short brushstrokes in painting 120 to a rather hard-edged composition in painting 129 takes place in eight paintings. Painting 120 is dated October 10, 1970, while number 129 was painted on October 16, 1970, a mere six days later.

At first glance, paintings from different series may not look as though they are done by the same artist. Upon closer examination of the work, however, certain shapes and images tend to be repeated in different sizes and contexts. As an example, the Matisse-inspired leaf shapes that fill the canvases of paintings 504 and 505 are transformed into smaller images that float through painting 1034 and are confined to one circle within painting 1071.

Maurice's freewheeling definition of himself has led him to sign his paintings in a number of ways and in a number of places. "Sullins," "LeSueur," "Rue LeSueur," or even "The Grand Maurice" may appear anywhere on the canvas. One of his more fanciful signatures appears on the back of a number of his earlier paintings—"Grand Master Painter Maurice Sullins Symphonic Style of Impressions." Maurice's playfulness and love of language are also reflected in a title that he has created for himself—"The Sublimely Serene Celestially Divine Golden Grand Transcendent American-French Painter Deluxe Elite Golden Sovereign Majestic Imperial Maurice LeGrand LeSueur Sullins."

The artist uses the name "Maurice LeGrand LeSueur Sullins" in order, he says, "to honor" his French heritage. The Gallic elements of his name were adopted from his grandmother LeSueur and his mother, Jennie LeGrand. Although quite a number of his paintings are based on scenes of the French countryside and well-known landmarks of Paris such as the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de Triomphe, Maurice has never travelled to France—

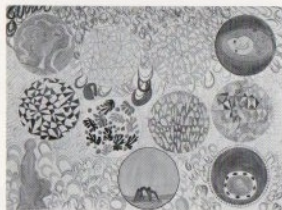
his images of that country having been found in books and magazines. Maurice feels that it is not necessary for him to actually travel to a location in order to depict it accurately because, according to him, everything in the Universe is connected and "goes on endlessly."

One of the remarkable features about Maurice and his work is the way in which he has absorbed information, combined it with his life experiences, filtered it through his philosophy, and turned it into art. At 77, he has no television or radio, but stays abreast of current world events through the printed word. He is vitally interested in everything that happens, especially in the art world, and possesses an incredible memory for what he reads. Maurice Sullins is an accomplished artist who has worked outside the art mainstream. While his vision is unique, it is still very much a part of modern culture, and his work is a reflection of contemporary life.

Like most outsider artists, Maurice painted for his own satisfaction and, until recently, was extremely reluctant to sell or even show his work. Timothy O'Keefe states, "Although Maurice appears to be an extrovert, when it came to his painting he was extremely introverted." "Over the years," O'Keefe says, "other than his immediate family, I was the only person to see the variety and quantity of Maurice's paintings, and because of this, I always felt very fortunate."

Robert Baitinger of Joliet recalls the difficulty he had in trying to purchase a painting from Maurice in 1975. He says that Maurice refused to sell him any of the paintings that were already completed

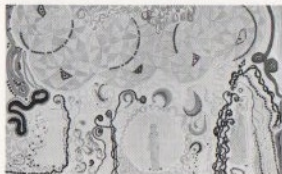
1071
Alexander Calder's Last Major Work

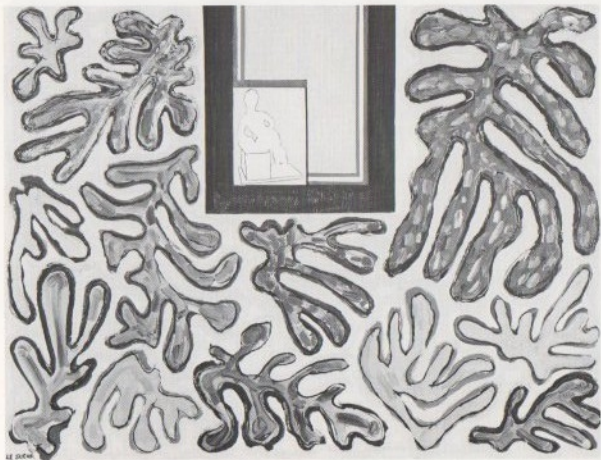


1147
Miss Chicago's Standing Nude Profile



1189
Maryross Jane Byrne





but did offer to visit Baitinger's house and then do a painting specifically for it. At eight o'clock one evening Maurice showed up at the Baitinger home and stayed to discuss his work until three o'clock in the morning. The artist finally agreed to sell Baitinger a painting, but only because he needed money to buy more art supplies. Other than a few canvases Maurice parted with in order to pay for car repairs and some that have been lost or misplaced, his entire body of work was in his possession until 1987.

Maurice and Mary were happily married for 51 years. Mary, who was by all accounts a kind-hearted, good-natured person, was not very interested in art, however, she was supportive of Maurice's desire to paint. After her death in February 1986, Maurice went into seclusion for eight months. He refused to see anyone but his son, Victor; daughter-in-law, Kathy; and grandchildren, Jessica and Michael. During that time, Maurice seemed to come to grips with his own mortality and decided that it was time for him to show and sell his work. Maurice, a man devoted to his family, says his primary motivation for this

505
Matisse's Seated Figure

His home and garage are filled with books, magazines, and encyclopedias which he calls the "threads of life" because all the knowledge contained in them "ties together."

change of heart is his desire to provide a "legacy" for his grandchildren.

Although he occasionally mentions an idea for a new painting, Maurice seems reluctant to resume his work. O'Keefe believes that "Maurice is a true painter, and that's what he should be doing. It would be the best thing for him if he started painting again." O'Keefe has supplied him with a new box of canvases and fresh tubes of paint, and his family has encouraged him in his work, but it remains to be seen whether Maurice will add to his already impressive body of work.



18
Palm Tree Frond—Tasia—Tahitian Style



126

Canal de Bourgogne—Fallen Autumn Leaves



308

Ariette Dances Under a Sky-Bow of Trees (Les Arbres)

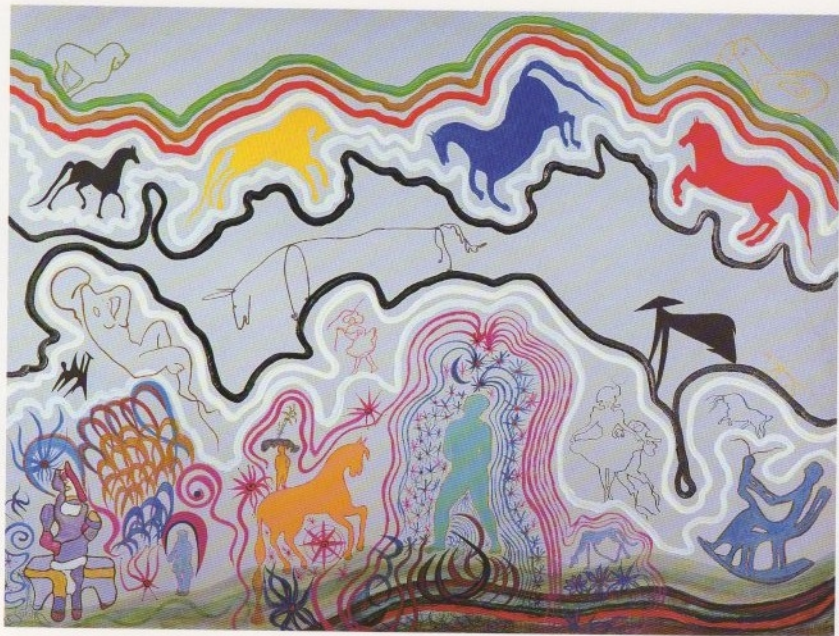


216
Skyscape of Ballet Dancing Couple



796

Matisse's Heavenly Blue Nude



774
Cub Calder's Sunflower



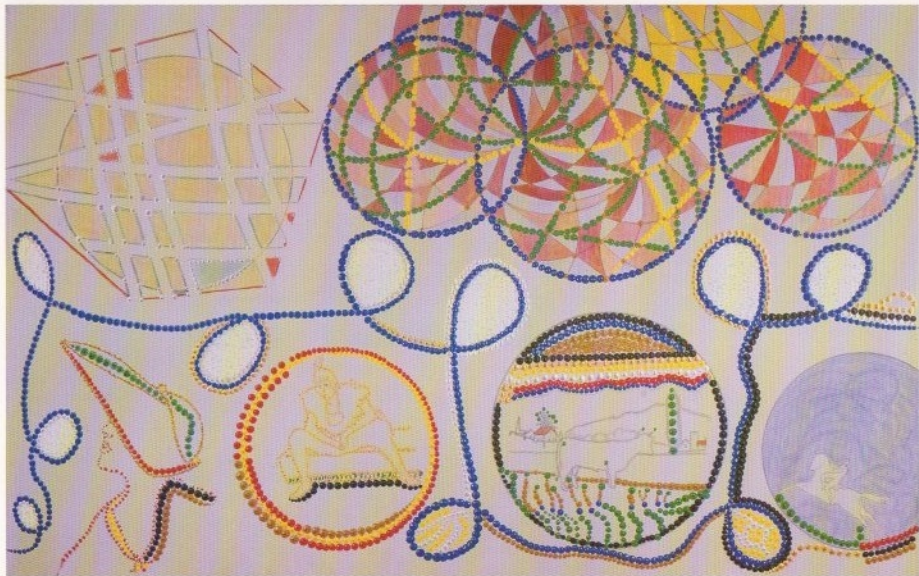
902

Drifting Picasso Nude Cloud



643

Alesienne Sprites Dance Under Bright Sun of Wine Harvest Festival



1098
Miss Chicago's White Riding Horse



57
Paris—Break of Dawn
August 10, 1970
24 x 20 inches



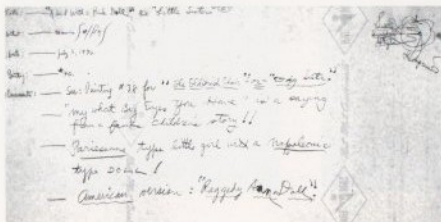
2A (page 5)
Tahitian Pink Pony Under Mango Tree
April 1, 1970
15 x 30 inches

40 (page 7)
Girl with a Pink Doll or Little Sister
July 7, 1970
40 x 30 inches

61 (page 6)
Gay Paree
August 15, 1970
30 x 24 inches

109
Flamboyant
September 31, 1970
30 x 24 inches

In the following checklist of the exhibition, dimensions are given with height preceding width. All paintings are acrylic on canvas and each is illustrated. Citations for works illustrated elsewhere in the catalogue include the page number where the painting appears. Although none of the paintings in the exhibition are dated later than 1982, Maurice was still working on some of the later canvases up until 1986.



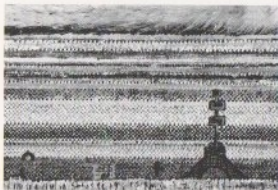
40
back of painting (detail)

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST



114
Marianne, French Beauty
October 4, 1970
30 x 24 inches

116
Marianne, French Beauty
October 5, 1970
30 x 24 inches



231
*Madame Etienne de Silhouette Strolls under
 Parisian Sunset*
 January 5, 1971
 24 x 36 inches

287
Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon
 January 29, 1971
 30 x 40 inches



314
Arlette and Friends Dance in Bois de Bourgogne
 May 1, 1970
 24 x 36 inches

302
Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon
 April 18, 1971
 30 x 40 inches

120 (page 9)
Lovers at Bois de Vincennes—Noontime
 October 10, 1970
 24 x 30 inches

126 (page 14)
Canal de Bourgogne—Fallen Autumn Leaves
 October 13, 1970
 24 x 30 inches

129 (page 9)
Canal de Bourgogne
 October 16, 1970
 24 x 30 inches

205 (page 6)
Madonna of the Sky
 December 13, 1970
 30 x 24 inches

216 (page 16)
Skyscape of Ballet Dancing Couple
 December 23, 1970
 24 x 36 inches

230 (page 10)
*Madame Etienne de Silhouette Strolls under a
 Mosaic Sky*
 January 3, 1971
 24 x 36 inches

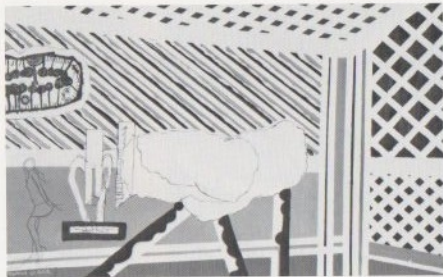
308 (page 14)
*Arlette Dances Under a Sky—Bow of Trees
 (Les Arbres)*
 April 24, 1971
 24 x 36 inches

485 (page x)
Elegant Moment In Paris
 December 25, 1971
 30 x 40 inches

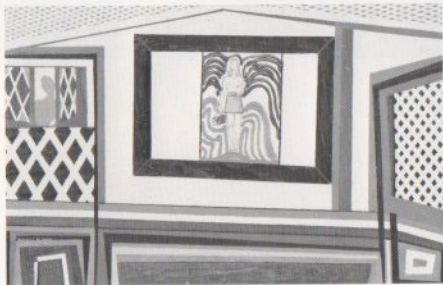


331
Bouquet of Red, White and Yellow French Poppies
May 18, 1971
30 x 24 inches

489
Musician in White Plays
Picasso's Grand,
Grand Piano
December 31, 1971
30 x 48 inches

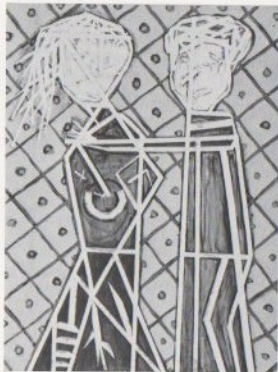


491
Les Desmoiselles
d'Avignon
January 2, 1972
30 x 40 inches





373
French Dancing Couple Before a Mirror
July 3, 1971
40 x 30 inches



375
French Dancing Couple Before a Mirror
July 4, 1971
40 x 30 inches



376
French Dancing Couple Before a Mirror
July 5, 1971
40 x 30 inches

505 (page 12)

Matisse's Seated Figure

April 8, 1972

30 x 40 inches

546 (page iv)

Danse d'Espagne by Edgar Degas—Spanish Moon

Glow #9

July 27, 1972

36 x 48 inches

643 (page 20)

Arlesienne Sprites Dance Under Bright Sun of

Wine Harvest Festival

January 3, 1973

30 x 48 inches



316

Sunset over Seated Arlette

May 3, 1970

24 x 48 inches

By Maurice Le Grand Le Noir Lullins

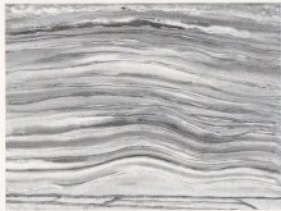


669

Perfume Harvest in Flower Fields at Grasse

February 24, 1973

36 x 48 inches



672

Fragrant Fields of Lavender near Valensole

Avait Harvest

March 4, 1973

36 x 48 inches



703

Caldar Versus Michaelangelo

May 10, 1973

36 x 48 inches



504
Matisse's Le Serpentine in Venetian Red
April 1, 1972
30 x 40 inches

512
Personage Before the Moon
May 10, 1972
30 x 40 inches

563
Bruegel's Dancing Couple
August 26, 1972
30 x 40 inches



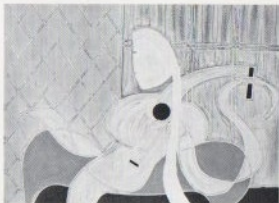
649 (page 1)
The Queen Madonna of Blue Skies under Blue Waters
January 12, 1973
24 x 48 inches

774 (page 18)
Cub Calder's Sunflower
October 20, 1973
36 x 48 inches

796 (page 17)
Matisse's Heavenly Blue Nude
February 22, 1974
30 x 48 inches

864 (page vi)
Picasso's Harlequin
April 18, 1975
30 x 40 inches

902 (page 19)
Drifting Picasso Nude Cloud
October 7, 1975
36 x 48 inches



624
Arlette Plays Guitar—A Variation
November 27, 1972
36 x 48 inches

627
The Dream—Arlette Plays Guitar on Picasso's Velvet Red Couch—Variation B
December 4, 1972
36 x 48 inches



793
Matisse's Nude in the Bushes
February 12, 1974
36 x 48 inches

875
Degas: Rearing Horse
March 25, 1975
36 x 48 inches



788
Serene Interior at Venice
January 19, 1974
30 x 48 inches



896
Picasso #1
September 2, 1975
36 x 48 inches

864 (page vi)
Picasso's Harlequin
April 18, 1975
30 x 40 inches

922 (page 8)
Joan Miro's Green Moon
March 5, 1976
36 x 48 inches

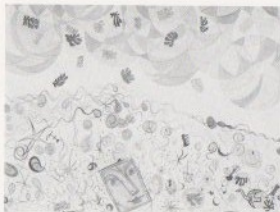
1071 (page 11)
Alexander Calder's Last Major Work
May 3, 1979
36 x 48 inches

1098 (page 21)
Miss Chicago's White Riding Horse
November 15, 1980
30 x 48 inches



992
Matisse's Seated Nude
May 1, 1977
30 x 40 inches

1042
Matisse's Blue Standing Nude
February 20, 1978
30 x 48 inches



1034
Braque's Studio Bird
January 16, 1978
36 x 48 inches



1147 (page 11)
Miss Chicago's Standing Nude Profile
March 20, 1981
30 x 48 inches

1170 (page 8)
Miss Chicago Eagerly Awaits 1992
September 7, 1981
36 x 48 inches

1189 (page 11)
Mayorress Jane Byrne
November 11, 1981
30 x 48 inches

1220 (page 4)
Miss Chicago Under the Old Apple Tree
July 6, 1982
36 x 48 inches



1105
Miss Chicago Plays the Harpsichord
December 5, 1980
36 x 48 inches

1096
Miss Chicago Loves Dappled Horses
November 11, 1980
30 x 48 inches









Maurice LeGrand LeSueur Sullins: Paintings 1970-1986
Presented by the Illinois State Museum