1925

Discovery of penicillin 1928

First Soviet Five-Year Plan 1928

1927 Charles Lindbergh flies nonstop from New York to Paris

1928 First television broadcast

1929 U.S. stock market crash; Great Depression begins

Dada and Surrealism

Founded simultaneously in Zurich, Berlin, Paris, and New York during the war, **Dada** took up Futurism's call for the annihilation of tradition but, as a result of the war, without its sense of hope for the future. Its name referred, some said, to a child's first words; others claimed it was a reference to a child's hobbyhorse; and still others celebrated it as a simple nonsense sound. As a movement, it championed senselessness, noise, and illogic. Dada was, above all, against art, or at least art in the traditional sense of the word. Its chief strategy was insult and outrage. Perhaps Dada's chief exponent, Marcel Duchamp always challenged tradition in a spirit of fun. His *L.H.O.O.Q.* (**Fig. 21-8**) is an image of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* with a moustache drawn on her upper lip. Saying the letters of the title with French pronunciation reveals it to be a pun, *elle a chaud au cul*, roughly translated as "she's hot in the pants." Such is the irreverence of Dada.

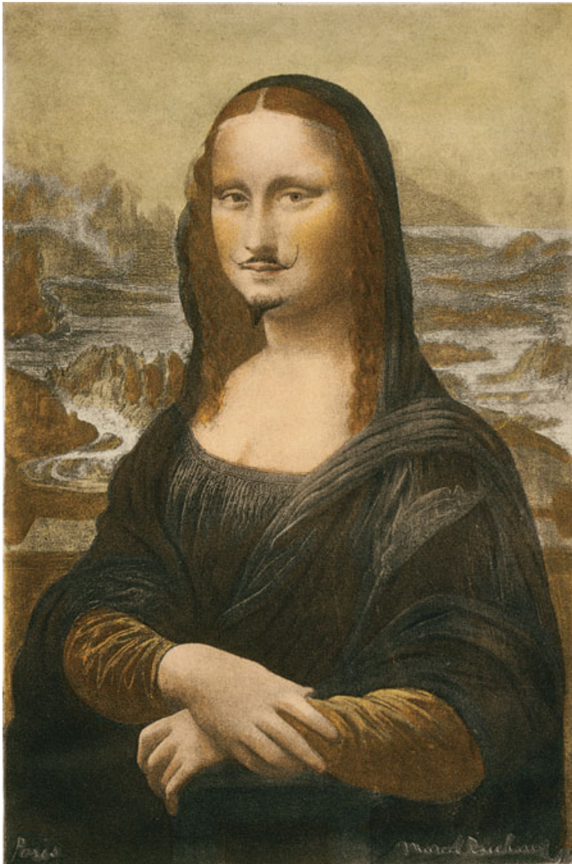

Fig. 21-8 Marcel Duchamp, *Mona Lisa (L.H.O.O.Q.)*, 1919. Rectified Readymade (reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* altered with pencil), $7\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$ in. The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection. Lynn Rosenthal, 1998/ Philadelphia Museum of Art.

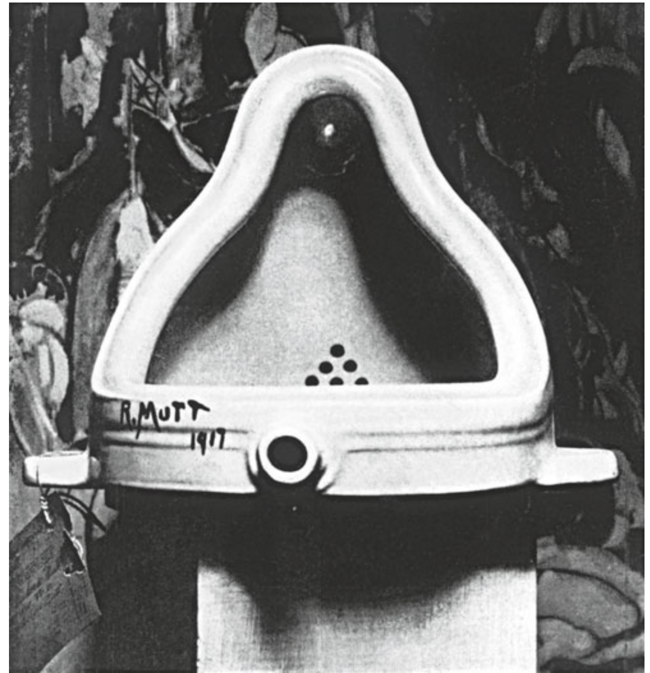

Fig. 21-9 Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917. *Fountain* by R. Mutt. Glazed sanitary china with black print. Photo by Alfred Stieglitz in *The Blind Man*, No. 2 (May 1917); original lost. © Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950. 1998-74-1.
The Philadelphia Museum of Art/Art Resource, NY. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris/Succession Marcel Duchamp.

In New York, Duchamp submitted a common urinal to the Independents Exhibition in 1917, titled it *Fountain*, signed it R. Mutt, and claimed for it the status of sculpture (**Fig. 21-9**). At first it was rejected, but when Duchamp let it be known that he and R. Mutt were one and the same, it was accepted. Thus, whether something was art depended on who made it—or found it, in this case. It also depended on where it was seen—in the museum it was one thing, in the plumbing store, quite another. Furthermore, on its pedestal, in the context of the museum, Duchamp's "fountain" looked to some as if it were indeed sculpture. Duchamp did not so much invalidate art as authorize the art world to consider all manner of things in aesthetic terms. His logic was not without precedent. Cubist collage had brought "real things" like newspaper clippings into the

Amelia Earhart first woman to fly across the Atlantic alone
1932

1932
30 million unemployed in U.S. and Europe

1932–33
Mass famine in the U.S.S.R.

Hitler comes to power in Germany
1933

1933

space of painting, and photography, especially, often revealed aesthetic beauty in common experience. But Duchamp's move, like Dada generally, was particularly challenging and provocative. "I was interested," he explained, "in ideas—not merely in visual products."

The art of **Surrealism** was born of Dada's preoccupation with the irrational and the illogical, as well as its interest in ideas. When the French writer André Breton issued the First Surrealist Manifesto in 1924, the nihilist spirit of Dada was clearly about to be replaced by something more positive. Breton explained the direction his movement would take: "I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality." To these ends, the new art would rely on chance operations, automatism (or random, thoughtless, and unmotivated notation of any kind), and dream images—the expressions of the unconscious mind. Two different sorts of imagery resulted. The first contained recognizable, if fantastic, subject matter. It was typified by the work of René Magritte (see Fig. 2-1), Giorgio de Chirico, who was acknowledged as an important precursor to the Surrealist movement by the Surrealists themselves, and Salvador Dalí. De Chirico claimed not to understand his own paintings. They were simply images that obsessed him, and they conveyed, Breton felt, the "irremediable anxiety" of the day. Thus, in *Melancholy and Mystery of a Street* (**Fig. 21-10**), the little girl rolls her hoop toward the ominous black shadow of a figure lurking behind the wall. Dalí called paintings such as *The Persistence of Memory* (**Fig. 21-11**) "hand-painted dream photographs." The limbless figure lying on the ground like a giant slug is actually a self-portrait of the artist, who seems to have moved into a landscape removed from time and mind.

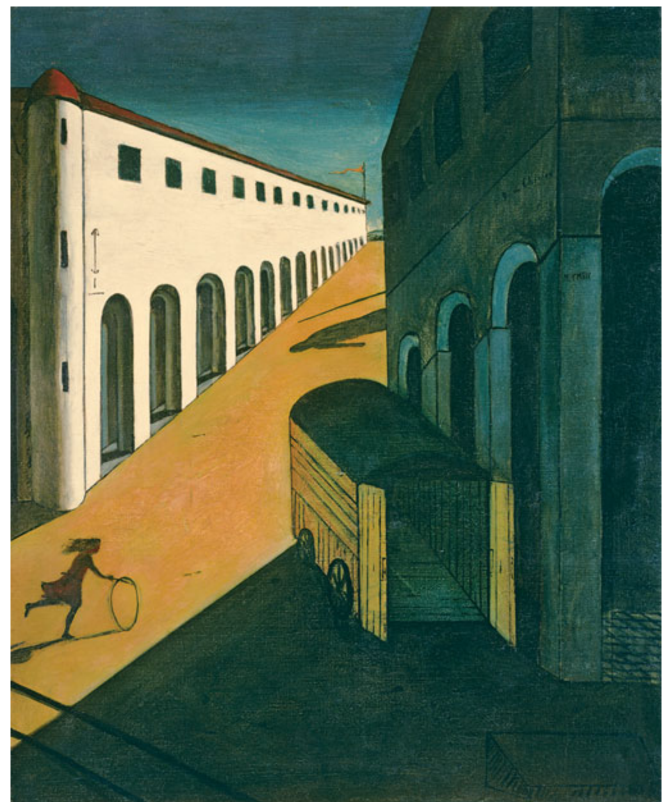

Fig. 21-10 Giorgio de Chirico, *Melancholy and Mystery of a Street*, 1914.
Oil on canvas, $24\frac{1}{4} \times 28\frac{1}{2}$ in. Private collection. Acquavella Galleries, Inc., New York.
© 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome.

View the Closer Look on *The Persistence of Memory* on myartslab.com

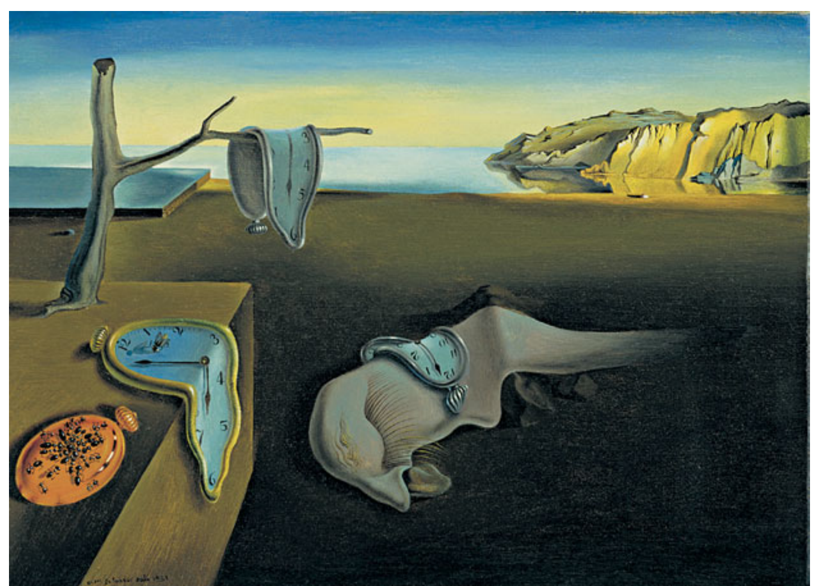

Fig. 21-11 Salvador Dalí, *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931.
Oil on canvas, $9\frac{1}{2} \times 13$ in. (24.1 × 33 cm) Given anonymously. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, U.S.A.

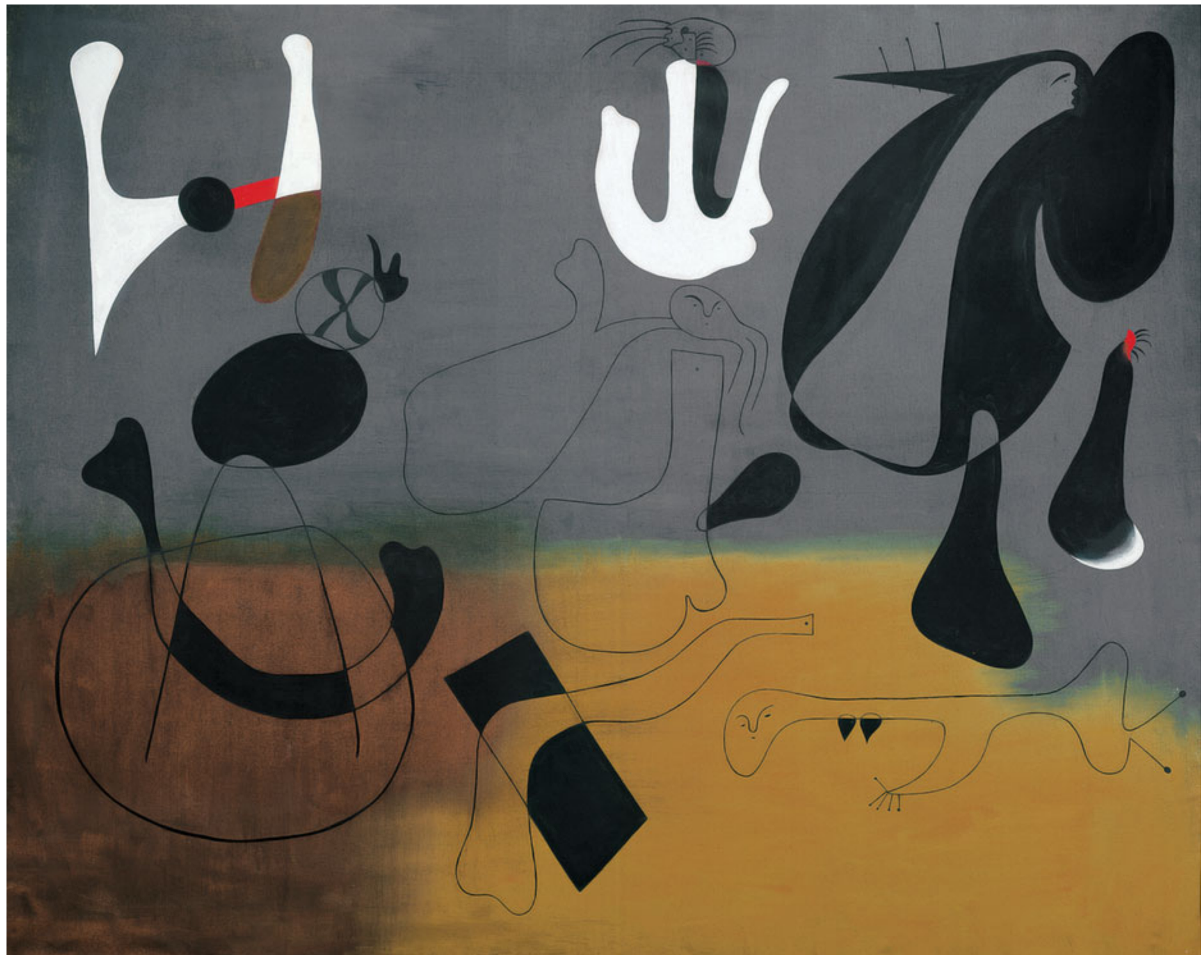

Fig. 21-12 Joan Miró, *Painting*, 1933.
Oil on canvas, 51 3/8 × 64 1/8 in. Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford. The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund.
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art/Art Resource, NY. © 2012 Successio Miro/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP.

The other type of Surrealist painting was virtually abstract, presenting us with a world of indecipherable visual riddles. The painting of the Spanish artist Joan Miró and many of the early mobiles of Alexander Calder (see **Fig. 7-1**) fall into this category. In Miró's *Painting* (**Fig. 21-12**), biomorphic, amoeba-like forms float in a space that suggests a darkened landscape. If we look closely, however, faces, hair, and hands begin to appear. Everything in this composition appears fluid, susceptible to continuing and ongoing mutation, back and forth between representation and abstraction.

Politics and Painting

The era between World War I and World War II marks the period in Western history when, in Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Soviet Union, totalitarian and nationalistic regimes—fascist dictatorships—rose to power. It was also a time of political upheaval in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, where guerilla groups led by Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa demanded "land, liberty, and justice" for Mexico's peasant population. Their primary purpose was to give back to the people land that the government had deeded to foreign investors in the hope that they might modernize the country. In light of such events, politics impinged mightily on the arts.