

## POSTWAR PRIMITIVES:

### Anti-Culture? Dubuffet, graffiti, and art of the insane

“...make the surface speak its own surface-language...” Dubuffet, 1945

- I. Post-Traumatic Stress
  - A. Surrealism and the “unconscious” of the city (Brassai’s 1930 graffiti photos), newly interesting after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War
  - B. Wols (Alfred Otto Wolfgang Schulze) and Bataille’s *Informe*
    - 1) b. Berlin, 1913; student of Leger in Paris, ‘31-32
    - 2) Joined surrealists in ‘35, took pseudonym, fame as photographer
    - 3) Nazis capture him in Paris ‘39, 3 mos. internment until he weds French woman
    - 4) During the war, alcoholism;
    - 5) Paintings made after he escaped Vichy govt. (‘43) and ret. Paris ‘46, d. 1951
  - C. Crucial precedent of Paul Klee (another outsider: Swiss, Bauhausler, fled Nazis), from 1920s to 1940s a quiet persistence of childlike complexity
    - 1) Caricature and cartoon
    - 2) material and form: impasto, *sgraffito*, primitivism
    - 3) under all, the Cubist grid
  - D. Jean Fautrier – from “Call to Order,” to Surrealist deliquescence, to the abject
- II. Dubuffet’s *l’art brut* (crude art) and Anti-Cultural Positions
  - A. Formal recipes
    - 1) Fautrier’s *haut p\_té* and graffiti line
    - 2) Abject materials: dirt, asphalt, pebbles, leaves
    - 3) biaxial symmetry (a psychotic tendency)
  - B. Theory of no-theory (Dubuffet’s reading of Hans Prinzhorn’s Bildneri der Geisteskranken (Painting of the Insane), 1922
  - C. *Corps de dame* series
- III. Other artists of the abject
  - A. Alberto Burri’s “*Sacci*” (sad Sacks)
  - B. Lucio Fontana’s “spatial concepts”
  - C. Antoni Tapies’ scarred walls

Slide List (selected) for **10:1** (o/c = oil on canvas)

Brassai (G. Halasz), Graffiti series, late '20s - early 1930s photographs, most published in '59-61  
Paul Klee, Magic Garden 1926, mixed media (usually paint over plaster on paper on canvas)  
Wols (Wolfgang Schulze), Painting 1944-45 o/c  
Wols, The Blue Phantom, 1951 o/c  
Jean Fautrier, Open Man, 1928 conté crayon on paper  
Fautrier, The Massacre ( also known as Sarah ), 1944 o/paper on canvas  
Fautrier, Tete d'Otage, no. 8 (Head of a Hostage, 8) "1943" [actually 1945?] o/cardboard (usually with plaster also)  
Fautrier, Depouille (Remains), 1945 mixed medium on paper  
Jean Dubuffet , View of Paris: The Life of Pleasure, 1944 o/c  
Dubuffet, The Smoker by a Wall, 1945 o/c  
Dubuffet, Archetypes, 1945 o/c  
Dubuffet, Fautrier from the Front, 1947 o/c  
Adolf Wolfli, Laboratory of Long Island, 1915, pencil and collage  
Dubuffet, Corps de Dame... l'Oursonne (Body of Woman, little bear), 1950 o/c  
Dubuffet, The Very Rich Earth 1956, collage with leaves and other materials  
Dubuffet, Cup of Tea, 1966 painted cast bronze?  
Alberto Burri , Sack 1952, sewn burlap and sack cloth, acrylic paint  
Burri, Red Plastic Piece, 1964, plastic and acrylic  
Lucio Fontana, Spatial Concept 1949-50, punctured painted canvas  
Antoni Tapies, Grey with Black Cross, 1955, mixed media on canvas