

March

Hokusai "The Great Wave"

Marcel Duchamp "Nude Descending the Staircase"

About the Artist:

See the following pages.

About the Artwork:

See the following pages.

Topics for Discussion:

1. How did each artist show movement in their paintings?
2. Even though each artist used different media do you think they showed movement using the same compositional element? (repeated shapes)
3. How does each artwork make you feel? Why?
4. Which artwork is the most representational? Why?
5. How would you show movement in your artwork?

Hands - on Art Activity: Printing to Show Movement

Materials

12 x 18 Sax tempera/acrylic paper

Tempera paint (two colors only)

Styrofoam plates for pallets for dipping objects

Gadgets from home (thread spools, chucks of Styrofoam, empty tp rolls, anything with "stamping" interest)

Newspapers/smocks/paper towels

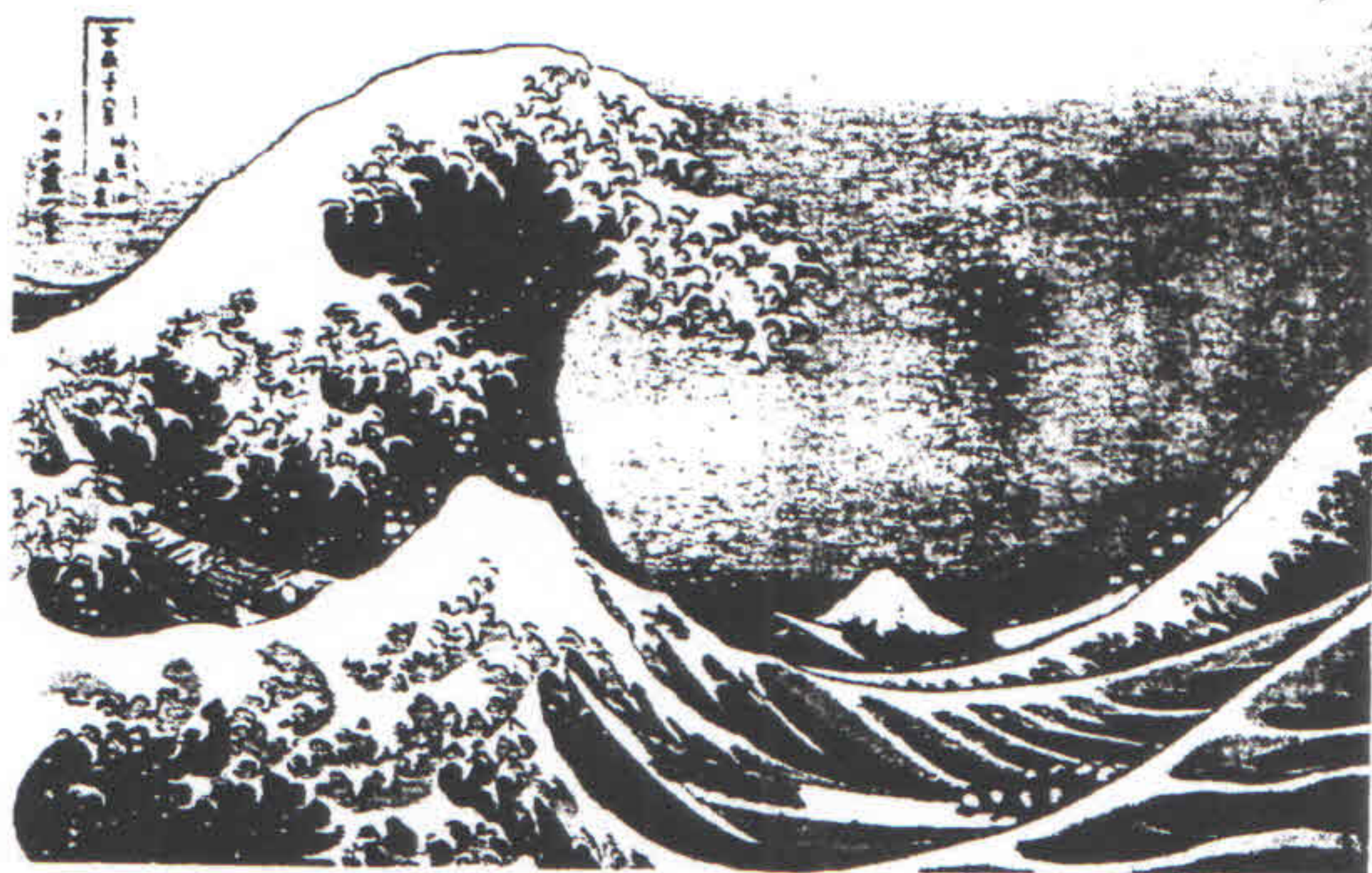
Teacher Preparation: Collect objects to be printed. Provide a variety of shapes and sizes. Divide students into groups of four with the paints in the center of the group. The paints and objects can be shared.

Directions:

1. Place about two tablespoons of paint on each tray. Keep colors separate in order to keep the colors clean and bright.
2. Dip the gadgets into the paint and then print on the paper. Use a dabbing motion for each application of color. Do not smear or rub the paint onto the paper.
3. Repeat the pattern in swirls or curving lines in order to show motion.
4. Fill the entire paper with repeated patterns that show motion.
5. Sign the front of the print when complete.

Printmaking

Katsushika Hokusai, *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa*



Katsushika Hokusai, *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa*
(from the series, *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*)
1820-31, woodcut, 9¹³/₁₆ x 12¹/₈-in.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
Gift of Frederick Weisman Company

The Art

Hokusai was in his sixties when he created his greatest woodcuts, a series of landscapes called *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. They tell the story of the countryside around Edo: people at work and play, weather in all its forms — and in each, somewhere, the sacred volcano, Mount Fuji. Can you find it in this turbulent scene? What other things do you notice upon closer inspection? Describe what you see. Two long fishing boats filled with fishermen cut through enormous waves, piercing them with their sharp hulls. Which direction are they going? How can you tell? The Japanese language is read from right to left. The great wave is all the more compelling to the viewer who scans the scene this way; it nearly swamps the narrow boat as it also seems to engulf the observer!

Mount Fuji stands resolute in the distance, ignoring the menacing wave that elegantly frames it. As small as it appears, it demands our equal or greater attention with its straight-sided, calm majesty. The triangle is a very strong form in architecture. It can support a great deal of weight. In this scene as well, it is powerful, especially against the fluid, curved, pliable forms of the waves.

Hokusai marveled at nature. The figures that populate his landscapes are most frequently only players in the story being told, but they are players who give us knowledge and a feeling of the place and times in which Hokusai lived. What can you tell about Hokusai's Japan from this woodcut?

In the upper left, there are two sets of Japanese writing, one inside a box, the other out. The title of the series, *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, and the title of this particular print, *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa*, hang like a banner in the box. The other calligraphy is Hokusai's signature.

The Artist

Katsushika Hokusai had an extraordinarily long and productive career, establishing himself not only as one of

Japan's artists but the world's as well. His innovations in painting and printmaking influenced many Western artists, including Degas, van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, Gauguin, and Mary Cassatt.

Hokusai was a restless, opinionated, unpredictable man who in his career turned his skilled eye and hand to nearly every subject. He produced paint-

ing and print masterpieces of every genre: landscapes, legends, theater scenes, great actors, figure studies, cartoons, and plants and animals.

Born in Edo (now Tokyo), he moved nearly 100 times in his life, and changed his name at least 45 times, as was the custom when an artist changed his style or position. On several occasions, he even sold his name to wealthy amateur artists! He learned drawing, painting, and engraving as an apprentice, and he sometimes experimented with European methods of perspective. His best-known works, however, are landscapes in the Japanese manner. The most celebrated of these are in the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. In each print we see the volcano, an ancient Japanese pilgrimage site, from a different perspective or under unusual weather conditions.

Hokusai was completely dedicated to his art — and he was a great show-off while doing it! He painted with his fingers, toothpicks, bottles, eggshells, or anything that was readily available. Once he painted a scene that was so large admirers had to stand on the rooftops to see it. Another time he painted two sparrows on a grain of rice!

Hokusai created over thirty thousand pictures in the course of his lifetime. When he was 75, he wrote:

From the age of six, I had a mania for drawing . . . at 73, I learned something of the structure of nature When I am 80, you will see real progress. At 90, I shall have cut into the mystery of life itself At 100, I shall be a marvelous artist. At 110, everything I create . . . will jump to life I promise to keep my word.

He signed his name "The Old Man Mad About Drawing." On the day he died in 1849 at the age of 89, he was happily at work on a drawing.

Guided Analysis

Elements and Principles of Design

The Great Wave is a symphony of line, movement, pattern, and repetition. Each individual line is beautiful in itself, aside from its descriptive function, yet each line is brought together with others to create a flow of rhythms. The lines range from vigorous and bold to exquisitely subtle.

Where is there repetition in this scene? *Boat shapes; curves within waves; the claw-like shapes of the whitecaps; alternating colors* Where are patterns formed by repetition? *The planks in the boats; the nearly identical heads and bodies of the fishermen; the stripes in the wave hollows*

Katsushika Hokusai, *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa*

The elegance of this scene is in its well-planned composition. The enormous wave circularly frames the mountain, and the wild line work is beautifully and skillfully balanced by the expansive blank sky. The symmetry of Mount Fuji is set asymmetrically within the rectangle of the block. The mountain is delicately and precisely balanced by the wave shape at the lower left that echoes it. Can you find it? Hokusai shows both the mountain and its echoing wave dwarfed by the awesome power of nature — *The Great Wave*. The print is a dexterous blending of moods: the placid and serene with the wild, dramatic, and spectacular.

Media and Technique

The Great Wave is a **woodcut**, preserved in the fragile medium of colored ink on soft, nearly transparent paper made from the fibers of mulberry tree bark.

Originally, woodcuts were printed in black, with any color painted on by hand afterwards. Around 1800, and with the Ukiyo-e school in Japan, colors were also printed from the carved wooden blocks.

Relief printing is a technique in which the design is drawn in reverse on an even surface, in this case, planed wood. Everything that is not to be printed is cut or carved away. The remaining surface is then inked and paper is pressed on, either by hand or with a printing press. Hokusai often



used a barren, a pad made of twisted cord covered with cloth, paper, or bamboo leaf, which he rubbed across the paper on the block. Each separate color in his scenes represents a different carved block, cut with great care to register, or line up, within the framework of the black one that creates the drawing, called the “key block.”

In different pulls of a print, there are certain minor differences: the colors vary; perhaps the registration will be slightly different. The surface on which the design is printed will also affect its outcome. Multiple copies of *The Great Wave* demonstrate this.

Style

Hokusai was a transitional figure in art, linking the 18th century to the 19th. He was working at roughly the same time as the younger landscape artists, Turner and Constable. Just as they were revolutionizing this genre in the West, Hokusai was doing in the East, though East and West had little contact at this time.

The brightly colored woodcuts Hokusai and other early 18th-century Japanese artists produced were called ukiyo-e, “pictures of the floating (fleeting) world.” Their subject matter was common life, and the traditionalists of the Kano and Tosa schools who preferred the birds, flowers, and scenes of legend and myth considered them vulgar and ephemeral, or “fleeting.”

Many say Hokusai was a precursor of Western Impressionism, citing his study of nature in all weather conditions and his knowledge that color does not exist alone but as a creation of light. Like Monet who studied and painted the cathedral at Rouen at different times of day, in different light and weather, Hokusai did the same of Mount Fuji. Comparisons between Hokusai’s *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* and Cézanne’s obsession with Mont Ste-Victoire can also be made.

Subject

Hokusai was not a realist in the truest sense of the word, though we can tell so much about Japanese life through his art. Instead, he reconstructed nature according to his imagination. In all his views of Mount Fuji, for example, the volcano is much higher, more pointed, and more symmetrical than the real mountain. His great wave is at the same time realistically powerful, dynamic in its design quality, and decorative.

The artist was a master of all subjects, but his greatest enjoyment came from representing daily life, the activity of the city and countryside, and the serenity of nature. Where he had once depicted high-ranking Kabuki actors, in his more mature works he chose to celebrate the working classes. This inspired print is a fine example of Hokusai’s respect for the forces of nature, Mount Fuji and the unceasing yet often jubilant struggles of humankind. It is nature and stylization, the momentary and the solid or deliberately organized, miraculously at one.

Expressive

Hokusai puts the vanity and ego of man in a very humbling context in *The Great Wave*. Even the postures of the fishermen are uniformly bowed, respectful of the power around them. Perhaps Hokusai is sharing a bit of his life in this print: the struggles he’d had with virtually every master with whom he had apprenticed; the debt he experienced as a result of his extravagant children and grandchildren, not to mention his own taste for fine things.

Judgment

How does this picture make you feel? Do you like it? Why or why not? Where has the artist placed the observer of the scene? Does this contribute to your feelings about the piece?

Comparison

Choose another print in this series with which you think *The Great Wave* compares. Explain your decision. With what experiences in your life can you compare this scene or the way it is presented? Have you been fishing in the ocean? Visited Hawaii or Japan? Have you spilled down the wave of a roller coaster? Share your recollections and tell how they relate.



COVER: Marcel Duchamp (1887-1985).

L.H.O.O.Q., 1919. Rectified ready-made: pencil on a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa*, 7 3/4" x 4 3/4". Philadelphia Museum of Art: Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.

**SCHOLASTIC
ART**

Maurice R. Robinson, founder of Scholastic Inc., 1895-1982

FOR THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Director EARL A. POWELL, III

Head of Education LINDA DOWNS

Head, Education Resources RUTH R. PERLIN

FOR SCHOLASTIC INC.

President, C.E.O.,
Chairman of the Board

RICHARD ROBINSON

Editor

MARGARET HOWLETT

Art Director

DEBORAH DINGER

Photo Editor

DIANA GONGORA

Contributing Editor

DENISE WILLI

Production Editor

SUZANNE McCABE

Copy Chief

RENEE GLASER

VP, Editor in Chief

DAVID GODDY

Director, Editorial Design

AUDREY SHACHNOW

Director of Photography

SUSAN VERMAZEN

Executive Production Director

RICHARD WALSH

Director, Manuf. & Distrib.

MIMI ESQUERRA

Assoc Director, Manuf. & Distrib.

GAY SICCARDI

Manufacturing Manager

LAURA DAVIDSON

Editorial Systems Manager

DAVID HENDRICKSON

VP, Circ. and Marketing

GREG WORRELL

Marketing Manager

NORA KOPLAS

SCHOLASTIC ART ADVISORY BOARD:

Lana Beverlin, Harrison R. IV School, Gilman City, Missouri • Carol Little, Charles F. Patton Middle School, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania • Lydia Narkiewicz, Pioneer High School, Whittier, California • Sue Rothermel, Wynford Middle School, Bucyrus, Ohio

POSTAL INFORMATION

Scholastic Art® (ISSN 1060-832X; in Canada, 2-c no. 9360) is published six times during the school year, Sept./Oct., Nov., Dec./Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr./May, by Scholastic Inc. Office of Publication: 2931 E. McCarty Street, P.O. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710. Periodical postage paid at Jefferson City, MO 65101 and at additional offices. Postmasters: Send notice of address changes to SCHOLASTIC ART, 2931 East McCarty St. P.O. Box 3710 Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710.

PUBLISHING INFORMATION

U.S. prices: \$8.45 each per school year, for 10 or more subscriptions to the same address. 1-9 subscriptions, each: \$19.00 student, \$34.00 Teacher's Edition, per school year. Single copy: \$5.50 student, \$6.50 Teacher's. (For Canadian pricing, write our Canadian office, address below.) Subscription communications should be addressed to SCHOLASTIC ART, Scholastic Inc., 2931 East McCarty Street, P.O. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710 or by calling 1-800-631-1586. Communications relating to editorial matter should be addressed to Margaret Howlett, SCHOLASTIC ART, 555 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012-3999. Art@Scholastic.com. Canadian address: Scholastic-TAB Publications, Ltd., 123 Newkirk Rd., Richmond Hill, Ontario L4C 3G5. Available on microfilm through Xerox University Microfilms, Inc. 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Also available on microfiche through Bell & Howell Micro Photo Division, Old Mansfield Rd., Wooster, OH 44691. Copyright © 1999 by Scholastic Inc. All Rights Reserved. Material in this issue may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form or format without special permission from the publisher.

Printed in U.S.A.

The Shock Art of Marcel Duchamp



"I am interested in ideas – not merely in visual products."

Duchamp

Recently, you received a Scholastic Art magazine featuring Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci. On the cover was Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, probably the

most famous work of art ever created. *Mona Lisa* appears again on this cover. But now she wears a mustache and beard. This month's featured artist's name appears upside down. What is going on?

This work was created by French artist Marcel Duchamp, one of the most important figures in 20th-century art. For 17 years, Duchamp produced one outrageous work after another. Then he virtually stopped making art, spending the last half of his life playing chess. Duchamp created art for a relatively short period of time. Yet his approach was so original that artists working today are still catching up to his radical ideas. Duchamp questioned the entire nature of art. In doing so, he changed its direction.

For such a controversial artist,

Duchamp's beginnings were very traditional. He was born in 1887, in northern France. His father was the mayor of his small town. At 17, the artist went to Paris where he took some art classes. During this time, new technological discoveries were changing the way artists saw the world. Photography was having a major effect on their art. Inspired by movies and motion photography, Duchamp tried adding action and movement to his paintings. He overlapped and repeated angular forms to create the effect of a moving figure (right). This painting doesn't look unusual now, but at the beginning of the century, it shocked people on both sides of the Atlantic.

Duchamp was in Paris when he first showed this work called *Nude Descending a Staircase*. He was asked to take it down at once. When it was shown a year later in New York City, it created a sensation. People were enraged that they couldn't find the figure. And even if they could, no human figure looks like that. Art, they said, must be beautiful, uplifting, and recognizable. Critics compared the painting to "an explosion in a shingle factory," and a "pile of golf clubs."

But a few people did appreciate the

ing hamp

new kind of art. Today, this work is considered a symbol of modern art. When Duchamp came to the U.S. in 1915, he was welcomed as a celebrity. The painter of the scandalous nude was invited everywhere. He was offered huge amounts of money for his next painting. But Duchamp never painted again. He had many new ideas he wanted to get started on.

This painting (right) created a sensation in 1913. The photo of Duchamp (below) reflects the painting's style.

RIGHT: *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912. 58" x 35". Philadelphia Museum of Art: Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.

BELOW: *Duchamp Descending a Staircase*, 1952. *Life* magazine. Photo, Elliot Elisofon.

