

Basic Detail Report

Title

Les chants de Maldoror

Artist

René Magritte, Éditions "La Boétie," Brussels, 1948, Éditions "La Boétie", Brussels, Lautréamont, comte de, Comte de Lautréamont (Isidore Ducasse)

Date

1948

Medium

Reproductions: 77 line block reproductions of ink drawings in black on ivory wove paper, incl. 12 full-page reproductions, and 1 vignette printed on the front wrapper. Text: letterpress in black with red.

Classifications

Books

Credit Line

Gift of Molly and Walter Bareiss

Object number

1984.696

Published References

cf. Hogben, Carol, Rowan Watson, editors, *From Manet to Hockney: Modern Artists' Illustrated Books*, London, 1985, no. 117, reprs.

Exhibition History

Toledo Museum of Art, *Splendid Pages: The Molly and Walter Bareiss Collection of Modern Illustrated Books*, Feb. 14--May 11, 2003.

Collections

Works on Paper

Label Text

Since Maldoror was first published in Belgium, it is fitting that the Belgian artist René Magritte was one of the book's interpreters. Magritte's illustrations include imagery known from his earlier work, such as his fish-headed human. Salvador Dalí, *Les chants de Maldoror* (The Songs of the Maldoror). Text by comte de Lautréamont (1934) René Magritte, *Les chants de Maldoror* (The Songs of Maldoror). Text by comte de Lautréamont (1948) Georg Baselitz, *Die Gesänge des Maldoror* (The Songs of Maldoror). Text by comte de Lautréamont (1976) Lautréamont's Maldoror doesn't fall into any neat category. It is neither a novel nor a prose-poem, nor is the story traditionally linear. The book is filled with violence and sexuality. It was censored by the French government during Lautréamont's lifetime, but was published in Belgium. Writer André Breton rediscovered the text in the 1920s and it became a favorite with the Surrealists. When Albert Skira decided to publish the book, Salvador Dalí was honored to be chosen to illustrate it. Skira had already produced books illustrated by Picasso and Matisse. His choice of the young Surrealist for his third publication helped to increase Dalí's prominence. Dalí's drawings for the book were filled with an irrational, dream-like imagery. He called this style his "paranoic critical method." Since Maldoror was first published

in Belgium, it is fitting that the Belgian artist René Magritte was one of the book's interpreters. As Riva Castleman writes in the *Splendid Pages* catalogue, “[Magritte’s] full-page illustrations combine his well-developed double entendre imagery of unexpected forms with a new infusion of Expressionist sketches for initials and inserted vignettes.” Magritte's illustrations include imagery known from his earlier work, such as his fish-headed human. The illustrations that Georg Baselitz produced for his *Maldoror* do not specifically apply to the text. The image of an eagle, which the artist used in his work during the 1970s, was chosen for the cover. It relates to a passage in Chant 3 where Maldoror turns himself into an eagle, kills a dragon, and emerges from the battle “redder than a lake of blood”.

Not On View