

*Prefatory Note:*

Shadowy figure in a low, modern doorway; marble white, precisely carved biomorphic eggs; light blue and white jig-saw puzzles, cleanly painted like fishermen's buoys or toy boats; full of satires ("man is a pot the handles of which fell out of his own holes"); loving "nature but not its substitute," representation; a modern man who hates for art or the world to wear the costumes of the past, a man who loathes the intrusion of the social world.

The "world of memory and dreams is the real world"; there Arp would live as a private citizen, but thought of the social world arouses his rage; his invective equalled only by that of his friend Max Ernst and of Picasso and Wyndham Lewis among modernist artists; his words explode at the workings of modern society, costumed fraud; he cannot bear that the "daily black joke" exists beside the "real world"; the Dadaist in him is aroused, and he writes true poetry, spontaneous and unforced, without desire to "be" a poet.

The emotion in his sculpture is prolonged; it is carved from hard stones; rage never enters his plastic work. Even the torn papers in his collages "arranged according to the laws of chance" which might, to the innocent, seem angry rebellion against traditional art are serene, an effort to find a natural order, like that of leaves fallen on the ground (an order like any other when perceived as such, and relaxed and uninsistent). He finds correspondences for the volumes and rhythms of the surface of the human body, quiet and living, in bed, in the studio, and on the bank of the river, wherever it moves slowly or rests stationary.

Imagine coming upon one of Arp's sculptures of "stone formed by human hand" in midst of a wood. Few artists in modern times enhance nature, perhaps only Arp. Brancusi's outdoor works are monumental stone tables and columns on the scale of the elements, settings for a modern Oedipus or Lear; Alberto Giacometti's recent figures are pervaded with anguish, the "I" seen from distance, untouched, a stranger in the world of nature and man. Arp is a true pastoral artist ("my reliefs and sculptures fit naturally in nature"); his scale derives from adjusting the human body to its surroundings, garden or field; his process is slow and even as nature's, carving that has the effect of water run over human stones ("the empty spaces in the marble nests . . . were fragrant as flowers"). No wonder predatory man nauseates him! His love is permanent.

The sky is August blue. Green skins dangle from the wild cherry trees. Its hair scorched, the ground drowns. If an Arp sculpture were present, it too would sleep in the sun ("I work until enough of my life has flowed into its body").

*Robert Motherwell, 24 August, 1948*