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| Dubuffet, Jean (1901-1985) |
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| Jean Dubuffet was an experimental artist who embraced unconventional materials and investigated different media; his style and the content of his work varied greatly throughout his career. While he tried his hand at art as a younger man, it was not until 1942, at the age of forty-one, in German-occupied France, that Dubuffet committed himself to producing art full-time. In the fall of 1944, Dubuffet held his first solo exhibition at Galerie René Drouin in Paris. Exhibiting garishly colored paintings featuring mundane subjects ­­­­— including cows and suburban street façades —rendered in a crude, graffiti-like manner, Dubuffet agitated many critics with his perceived adoption of an anti-establishment aesthetic and philosophy. Nonetheless, he quickly ascended in the Paris and American art scenes upon developing a technique — influenced by the thickly impastoed works of Jean Fautrier — in which he incised compositional forms into thick layers of paint that had been mixed with materials such as grit, gravel, and glass. The resulting highly complex textured surfaces were a feature of Dubuffet’s best known works of the 1940s, including his series of caricatured and unflattering portraits of intellectuals in the circle of Jean Paulhan, the writer and editor who is often considered Dubuffet’s most important early champion. Dubuffet was a co-founder of the Compagnie de l’Art Brut in the late 1940s. |
| Jean Dubuffet was an experimental artist who embraced unconventional materials and investigated different media; his style and the content of his work varied greatly throughout his career. While he tried his hand at art as a younger man, it was not until 1942, at the age of forty-one, in German-occupied France, that Dubuffet committed himself to producing art full-time. In the fall of 1944, Dubuffet held his first solo exhibition at Galerie René Drouin in Paris. Exhibiting garishly colored paintings featuring mundane subjects ­­­­— including cows and suburban street façades —rendered in a crude, graffiti-like manner, Dubuffet agitated many critics with his perceived adoption of an anti-establishment aesthetic and philosophy. Nonetheless, he quickly ascended in the Paris and American art scenes upon developing a technique — influenced by the thickly impastoed works of Jean Fautrier — in which he incised compositional forms into thick layers of paint that had been mixed with materials such as grit, gravel, and glass. The resulting highly complex textured surfaces were a feature of Dubuffet’s best known works of the 1940s, including his series of caricatured and unflattering portraits of intellectuals in the circle of Jean Paulhan, the writer and editor who is often considered Dubuffet’s most important early champion. Dubuffet was a co-founder of the Compagnie de l’Art Brut in the late 1940s.  [File: Vue de Paris.jpg]  Figure 1 Jean Dubuffet, *Vue de Paris, la vie de plaisir*, February 1944, Private collection.  After introducing his complex paint mixtures in the 1940s, Dubuffet began to incorporate butterfly wings, tree bark, and cut up fragments of his own works on paper into his two dimensional works. He also began creating three-dimensional assemblages of found, but manipulated materials while correspondingly experimenting in different genres, including bookmaking, lithography, writing, and music. In the 1960s, Dubuffet moved away from his treatment of themes inspired by everyday subjects in order to pursue his so-called *Hourloupe* cycle. Instigated by doodles made in pen while he was on the telephone, these works explored interior, mental constructs and featured cellular, organic shapes in red, blue, black, and white. This style dominated Dubuffet’s later artistic production and transferred into his forays in performance and monumental sculpture.  Dubuffet was highly productive during his four-decade career. In addition to his artistic output, he also played a critical role in shaping his legacy by overseeing the production of his own 38-volume catalogue raisonné, establishing his own foundation, writing extensively about his artistic philosophy, and penning an autobiography shortly before his death in 1985. Additionally, Dubuffet forged a name for himself in relation to his investigations of *art brut* [raw art] and his status as co-founder of the Compagnie de l’Art Brut. A slippery concept, art brut can generally be defined as work produced by untrained art world outsiders. Often rough and schematic, the examples of art brut that Dubuffet collected featured formal characteristics that often resonated with the type of work that he himself fervently produced. |
| Further reading:  (Abadie)  (Damisch)  (Dubuffet Foundation)  (Dubuffet)  (Loreau) |