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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/chara_kolokytha/3/
Visual Resources: An International Journal of Documentation

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gvir20

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Published online: 28 Aug 2013.


To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01973762.2013.814204

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The Art Press and Visual Culture in Paris during the Great Depression: *Cahiers d’art, Minotaure, and Verve*

Chara Kolokytha

This paper discusses several aspects of the “art des masses” concept that flourished in Paris during the Popular Front years (1936–1938) and the contribution of three of the most important Parisian art magazines to the establishment of a visual imagery: *Cahiers d’art, Minotaure, and Verve*. These magazines addressed in each case the ideological and formalist concerns of their editors in respect to the contemporary discussions on the place of the artist in society, the leftist anti-capitalist discourse against social inequality, and the Popular Front cultural policy as reflected in the 1937 *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*. Discussing the period of the 1930s, it is pertinent to consider the conditions of artistic production during the Great Depression along with the sociopolitical turmoil that the rise to power of Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) and Joseph Stalin’s (1878–1953) dominion in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics reinforced. Focusing on *Verve* magazine, this article seeks to identify the factors that led this publication to put into practice, as early as 1937, the idea of a “museum without walls” that André Malraux (1901–1976) would explore on a theoretical level during the following decades and the editorial lines that this luxurious art magazine adopted in reference to the developments in the artistic and intellectual spectrum only a few years before the outbreak of World War II.

**Keywords:** Art Publishing; French Art; Visual Culture; Mass Culture; Art Reproduction

The 1930s offer fertile ground for investigation and research regarding the sociopolitical effects on the artistic domain at an international level. In the Parisian context, the decade entailed a period of transition shaped by a range of factors, signaling the beginning of the French cultural crisis that culminated after the end of the World War II. The efforts, either political or formalist, to establish a visual culture in Paris, left their marks in the field of art publishing in the form of luxurious art reviews and illustrated anthologies, which progressively supplemented the function of the museum, perhaps the most powerful French cultural instrument. In line with the contemporary ideological debates over the Popular Front concept of “l’art des masses” and the populist “l’art pour les masses,” the idea of “democratization of art,”1 promoted by the short-lived Popular Front government (1936–1938), proposed to bring art to the masses by means of publicly displayed artworks and a massive concourse of French masterpieces from private collections and foreign museums. The 1937 *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* was an opportune occasion for the government to achieve its rayonnement culturel goals, with an *intra muros* projection of French...
cultural grandeur to the international audience of the exhibition. French cultural diffusion outside Paris was a task for the field of art publishing to undertake, advancing the techniques of color reproduction. This task served, on the one hand, the formalist concerns of contemporary art critics and historians for artistic education shaped either on the national or transnational pretensions of Parisian art, while on the other hand, it reinforced the fame of Paris as an omnipotent art industry and the center of Western civilization. This article examines the editorial policies, the rivalry, and the ideological directions of three of the most important Parisian art magazines—Cahiers d’art, Minotaure, and Verve—during a period of sociopolitical crisis, focusing on the position-takings [prises de positions] of their editors and contributors with the greatest part of the analysis aiming to situate Verve’s formalist concerns in the sociopolitical and ideological context of the 1930s.

Art Press: The Effects of the Depression

... but at the start Minotaure had a small circulation of 3,000 for the first issue, which I was forced to reduce to 2,000 for later issues. It was indeed difficult to sell a magazine in 1933, when a severe crisis prevailed in the art world as well as in publishing. In addition, Minotaure was very avant-garde, and the conceptions which guided it made it particularly difficult to find a public. 2
Albert Skira’s (1904–1973) recollections of the difficult conditions that he faced with the publication of the Parisian art review *Minotaure* (1933–1939) are consistent with the view that we preserve today of the economic conditions of the Great Depression. In fact, the practices that most editors adopted were mutable and sometimes unforeseen. In 1931, Christian Zervos (1889–1970), editor of *Cahiers d’art* (Figure 1), which had been published since 1926, wrote to Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) about the financial conditions of his editorial house and the oppressive position of his magazine whose deficit had reached 350,000. Zervos faced the dilemma of ceasing the publication of *Cahiers d’art* since the predicted deficit for the subsequent numbers was about to reach 100,000. The conditions were similar for other magazines as well; Zervos cited the default of two international publications, *Documents* (1929–1931) and *Formes* (1929–1933). The letter to Kandinsky relates to Zervos’s efforts to turn to those he called “les amis de la revue,” for help. “Give me sincerely your opinion . . . Do you believe that people in Germany and the States would be interested in the continuation of the review?” 3 The friends of the magazine were mostly painters, so the help that Zervos sought came two years later when works by many *Cahiers d’art* artists, including Kandinsky, Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Fernand Léger (1881–1955), Georges Rouault (1871–1958), Henri Laurens (1885–1954), Jean Lurçat (1892–1966), Alberto Giacometti (1901–1966), and Max Ernst (1891–1976), were sold at an auction held at Hôtel Drouot that raised 80,000 (Figure 2). 4 But at the moment when Zervos was about to see his efforts submerge, he mentioned to Kandinsky that the subscriptions of the magazine had reached

![Figure 2](image-url)
1,000, so that it would be “a shame” to remove the magazine from the market at this very moment of moral accomplishment.\textsuperscript{5} Cahiers d’art was initially published in a print run of 2,500, sold at a price of less than F4. Nonetheless, approaching the 1930s, Zervos not only increased the price, he tripled it to F12–13 and later again to F30 (1932) or F45 for ordinary and F75 to 100—or even F300 as was the case with the 1936 issue dedicated to Henri Matisse’s (1869–1954) drawings—for special issues (1935–1938). Consequently, the magazine became inaccessible to the majority of artists who lived and worked in Paris over the same period so that the question of artistic education gave ground to the struggle for survival.

Zervos’s colleague, Tériade (1897–1983), abandoned Cahiers d’art in 1931,\textsuperscript{6} renewing about a year earlier his 1928 contract with Léon Bailby (1967–1954) for the Parisian evening paper L’Intransigeant,\textsuperscript{7} a popular French newspaper of nationalist morale with a print run of 400,000. Together with Maurice Raynal (1884–1954), fervent defender of the idealistic tendency in contemporary art, as represented by cubism, and eminent representative of la bande à Picasso, they signed since 1928 as Les Deux Aveugles [Two Blind Men] the weekly artistic column of L’Intransigeant that usually contained timely comments of national interest, mainly discussing the fêtes et défaîtes de Paris and henceforth exalting cubism—that Bailby at the beginning of the century despised—as the most celebrated national attainment. This turn from the specialized art review to the wide circulation newspapers is, on one hand, indicative of Tériade’s ambition to spread his fame as an art critic, transcribing his views to the wider audience; while, on the other hand, it signals the fact that specialized art reviews had become inaccessible for the public, as well as for artists, so that this cheap means of communication was the most appropriate for propagation and diffusion of ideas during the recession years.\textsuperscript{8}

In 1933, Zervos turned to the same popular format with the improvised low-cost edition of a monthly supplement titled 14 rue du Dragon: Lettres, arts, philosophie, documents, spectacles, actualités, which published only five issues in its first and only year of existence (1933–1934), marking at the same time Zervos’s engagement with surrealism that he formerly regarded as “plaguesome” to painting developed under the plastic principles of cubism. Although the effects of the international recession discouraged massive production of luxurious art magazines, the competition became even stronger with Skira’s luxurious Minotaure, published in 1933, challenging Zervos’s subsistence. A key role in this was played by his ex-colleague, now rival. In May 1933, Tériade wrote a letter to Bettina Bedwell (d. 1947), the fashion correspondent in Paris for the Chicago Tribune and wife of Abraham Rattner (1893–1978), describing the daring effort to launch a luxurious magazine in the depths of the recession:

Je suis, quant à moi, en plein dans le drame de la parution de la revue. Mais je peux croire maintenant que toutes les difficultés seront aplanies et que nous pouvons faire paraître au plus tard dans dix jours... le premier numéro, et dans 20 jours... le second numéro de Minotaure. C’est sans doute une folie de lancer une revue en ce moment mais je crois vraiment qu’une très belle chose peut réussir, n’importe quand et j’espère que cette revue sera bien.\textsuperscript{9}
Minotaure was first sent to market at the price of F15–25 for special issues—doubled to F30 in 1937 so that despite the fact that it was more expensive to publish than Cahiers d’art, it was sold almost at half its price. Still, the interesting feature of these publications was that they were published in two forms, a regular and a deluxe edition, heightening the chasm of inequality among their readership. Minotaure’s sales, of course, were far from rewarding as well, but it counted on the stock issues and the financial support of its collaborators, mainly Paul Éluard (1895–1952):

At the time of the launching, the only one of our group who had access to money was Paul Éluard whose mother, Madame Grindel, was quite well-to-do. I recall that, many a time when the printer threatened to shut down his presses unless I produced some more money, we had to turn to Éluard to get another 1,000 francs from his mother.  

At the beginning of the period that Maurice Nadeau called “autonomie du surréalisme: 1930–1939,” leading surrealists had moved away from Marxist orthodoxy and the ideology of the Communist Party developing a polemic against the aesthetics of socialist realism. Minotaure magazine turned out to be the most effective surrealist effort to focus primarily on its visual aspects and escalate the surrealist influence in the artistic domain. It was published by the Société Albert Skira which was founded in April 1933 with Skira and Tériade holding respectively 170 (F17,000) and 80 (F8,000) parts. Zervos, on the other hand, registered the Société Les Cahiers d’art in 1935, about ten years after he launched the magazine, in collaboration with Robert Marion—his wife Yvonne’s relative—holding respectively 200 parts (F20,000 each). What both magazines shared in common during the same decade was their involvement with the surrealists and the editorial rivalry between the former collaborators, Tériade and Zervos, exemplified in their critical writings and their efforts to assimilate their views to the surrealist tenet. An equally interesting point for discussion concerns the practices adopted by each magazine in relation to contemporary artists since it becomes evident that the contributors to both publications rarely received any sort of remuneration other than displaying their work in the magazine’s content. For Zervos, the solution was found in the quasi-monograph editing format containing texts by him, his immediate circle, and the artists represented in the magazine and/or his newly established, since 1934, art gallery. Meanwhile Minotaure published contributions disinterestedly offered by Tériade and his formalist circle as well as by the surrealist author-poets and artists who sought to dominate its content.

Formalist art criticism as published in Cahiers d’art and Minotaure during the 1930s was evidently influenced by surrealist thinking to the extent that Zervos overtly accepted the involuntary technique of automatism in contemporary painting, and Tériade translated it in terms of spontaneity that heightened the aspects of individual painterly action. Following the surrealist reconsiderations of the concept of automatism as put forth in the first issues of Minotaure magazine by Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), and André Breton (1896–1966), and the efforts to reshape the revolutionary potential of the technique of automatism on the Hegelian concept of the subjective will of the individual, the surrealists attracted...
many formalist thinkers by means of rejecting all traditional aspects of realist representation. True revolution, according to the post-1933 surrealist directions, resides in the action of creation rather than representation even if Dali, for example, employed in his paranoiac-critical method the techniques of reduplication and transformation of mass and high culture images (e.g., L’Angélus by Jean-François Millet [1814–1875]) in his attempt to criticize spontaneously and react against both socialist and nationalist realism, a practice identified in leftist discourse as réalisme bourgeoís.

Throughout Tériade’s collaboration with Minotaure, Zervos regarded him as a rival, turning Cahiers d’art into a surrealist publication in order to compete with Minotaure, getting involved in the surrealist struggle for artistic freedom. Following the communist debates over socialist realism shaped under the Stalinist platform, Zervos put aside his formalist persuasion and his former concerns in favor of plasticity, adapting the surrealist involuntary technique of automatism to his formalist appreciations. The culmination of Zervos’s formalist polarisation (my emphasis) is evident in the 1936 issue of Cahiers d’art that published a series of Matisse’s ink drawings accompanied by Zervos’s text “Automatisme et espace illusoire,” in which he identified Matisse’s work as the result of automatic experience inscribed in the surrealist concept of revolutionary “action.” Apparently Zervos preserved more diplomatic relations with the surrealists than Tériade who remained faithful to his formalist views and faced disavowal by the surrealists. In 1936, when Minotaure’s financial position permitted the surrealist backing, Tériade was replaced on the magazine’s editorial board by a group of surrealists, selling “voluntarily” his share to Skira’s wife for 8,000 in 1937.15 Given the sociopolitical turmoil of the mid-1930s, the politicization of most artists and intellectuals, the realist revival, and the “art of the masses” concept that flourished under the aegis of the Popular Front, Tériade’s departure from Minotaure was not only the result of his aesthetic conflict with the surrealists but also a reaction against the movement’s elitist pretensions and radical views, at odds with Tériade’s ideological conformism. In fact a new magazine was in the making later the same year in collaboration with the American editors of Esquire-Coronet, Inc., that accomplished Tériade’s concerns in favor of formalist evolution and artistic education in modernist art—Verve (1937–1960).

In 1968, when Skira narrated the difficult conditions of his publication in the preface of the magazine’s reprint, Minotaure was already a legendary journal marking the most fertile and crucial decade in France before World War II. The magazine’s trademark was none other than surrealism of Breton and his friends, without whom Skira acknowledged, “Minotaure would never have become the magazine it turned out to be.” Nevertheless, it is hard to ignore the fact that Skira managed to publish from 1935 onwards many luxurious color illustrated books, the printing cost of which apparently was far higher than that of Minotaure. The most striking example was the renowned anthology Les Trésors de la peinture française, whose wealth of illustrations challenged contemporary printing techniques while its function was for Skira tantamount to what André Malraux (1901–1976) later called “le musée imaginaire,” a theoretical backup for the concept of democratization of art that Verve magazine attempted to exalt. Consequently, Skira’s editorial policies respected at the same time the surrealist elitist preferences for independent revolutionary art, the
formalist concerns of his collaborators Tériade and Raynal, and the “bringing art to the masses” concept that flourished under the populist concerns of the Popular Front and was apparently a safe publishing investment during the Depression years.

Verve’s editorial declaration as published in the first issue of December 1937 focused on the reproduction techniques that its publication employed. Tériade’s unpublished notes reveal the intrinsic nature of this magazine and its role in society. According to Tériade, the “objectif but général” was:


Verve was born out of the valued concept of “democratization of art” that was seminal in contemporary discussions in Europe and overseas while its content pictured the formalist origins and development of French painting from Jean Fouquet (1420–1481) to the painters of the École de Paris. Verve reflects Tériade’s disillusionment with contemporary painting and his turn to a refined group of Parisian painters who had dominated the international art scene since the first decades of the century, whose art maintained the concept of la jeunesse and the formalist preoccupation of la justesse between abstraction and figuration. The magazine’s explicit eclecticism and high quality together with Tériade’s earlier involvement with the surrealists provoked various reactions. In March 1938, the leftist review Europe published a commentary in which Verve was identified with Minotaure in reference to their eclectic and expensive character, which anticipated an aristocratic conception of culture. The commentator did not hesitate to exalt Malraux’s La Psychologie de l’art fragments which, as he suggested, could provide Verve with a plan for its future investigations. In fact, when Tériade founded Verve, his relations with the surrealists remained hostile. In April 1938, the surrealist sympathizer and poet André Rolland de Renéville (1903–1962) presented Verve in the pages of La Nouvelle Revue Française implying that there was nothing new in it given it was designed after Skira’s Tresors de la peinture française while he focused on the magazine’s contributors. What is interesting with this commentary is the author’s partiality as reflected in his unwillingness to mention Georges Bataille (1897–1962)—the internal enemy of surrealism, according to Breton—who contributed two texts to the first issue and of course Verve’s editor, Tériade. Surrealist attacks against Verve’s editorial lines continued to be published until the outbreak of the war, with Tériade pursuing collaborations with the most prominent Parisian cultural institutions in his attempt to establish some sort of “artistic elite” for French painting. In 1939,
Julien Cain (1887–1974), the general administrator of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, who was appointed Minister of Education and played a significant role in the cultural policies of the Popular Front—creating the Comité National du Livre Illustre, the Comité National de la Gravure Française, and the Service d’Achat des Livres pour les Bibliothèques Publiques—wrote a short introduction to a series of medieval miniatures published in the fourth issue of Verve, praising its contribution to the “bringing art to the masses” concept. The 1939 double issue of Minotaure, published an anonymous commentary that implicitly criticized Verve’s conformism and its aesthetic preoccupations, in tune with the government’s cultural agenda, distinguishing itself from any other publication “à tête de membre de l’Institut ou de conservateur de musée.”

Verve’s principal concern was high-quality color reproduction of artworks and the revival and perfection of lithography (Mourlot Frères). Lithography, as a technique, appeared to Tériade as the most suitable means for propagating the aesthetic values and painting techniques of French modern art to the new generation of painters, who vacillated between the concurrent realist revival bred by the contemporary political developments and the seemingly apolitical nonobjective abstraction. In terms of art publishing, lithography was certainly an advantageous choice, since it was a “cheap and durable printing process, it promised pictures for everyone.” The cheapness of lithographic prints “brings them within the reach of all classes of society, thereby serving as a principal means for developing a democratic art.” Lithography consequently was the most suitable means for serving Tériade’s formalist concerns, upholding claims of “democratization of art” since the early nineteenth century in Europe and the United States. Nonetheless during the 1930s, the same concept had much more complex repercussions since in France, the leftist aspirations for “cultural democracy” that flourished under the aegis of the Popular Front, although susceptible to criticism in terms of advancing the Stalinist model for cultural control through state patronage, appealed to most spheres of artistic endeavor, exclusive of the surrealists, while an effective formula of state patronage was evident overseas in Franklin Roosevelt’s (1882–1945) New Deal policies. Despite its elitist spirit, Verve not only attracted writers such as Malraux and André Gide (1869–1951), who were prominent figures of the antifascist leftist Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires (AEAR) since the early 1930s and published reports from the Spanish Civil War by José Bergamín Gutiérrez (1895–1983) and John dos Passos (1896–1970), but also reflected the influence of the cultural concerns of the Popular Front regarding its museum policies, published simultaneously with Le Musée vivant (1937–1969), a review of the Association Populaire des Amis des Musées (APAM), and Mouseion: Revue internationale de muséographie, an organ of the Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle in Paris from 1928 to 1947. What is important to understand about Verve is that it assimilated the contemporary politicized discourse (this is the case with both Gide and Malraux) to its formalist tenet, implicitly criticizing the pictorial aspects of both realism and pure abstraction. On the other hand, its richly illustrated content was in tune with the government’s cultural policies, but in fact proposed to highlight the stylistic evolution of French art concluding with the art of the...
contemporary French masters that was progressively presented by Tériade as the culmination of past artistic attainments.25

The cathedral, the museum, and the library: L’art et les masses

Verve publishes in this number some fragments of the Psychology of Art on which André Malraux has been engaged for several years. The various contemporary psychologies of art are based either on Platonic ideology or on one of various attitudes to life—such as possession, escape or representation; or else on a theory of expression. Expression may be of two kinds: the artist’s self-expression—in which case it is for us to ascertain why he chooses to express himself through one pattern of forms rather than another—or, alternatively, an expression of life; which brings us back to the category of an attitude to life. None of these systems takes directly into account the existence of a history of art. Theories of man’s conditioning by environment (e.g. those of Taine, Hegel, Marx), on the other hand, take history into account, but they ignore the specificity of works of art. The system of psychology excerpts from which follow, covers all the arts, though only passages dealing with plastic art are published here; it starts out not from art, the product, but from the artist at his creative task, and takes its stand on his initial axiom: that the raw material of art at any period whatsoever, and in any culture whatsoever, is never life.26

In 1937, the first issue of Verve published a short editorial note that prefaced an early extract from Malraux’s La Psychologie de l’art.27 “The prime mover of the artist is never life, but always another work of art,” Malraux asserted, underlining the concepts of both functionalism and eclecticism in art as well as the interdependency between modernism and the past. Soon after the publication of L’Espoir (1937), a novel that mirrored the author’s experience from the Spanish Civil War, explicitly reflecting his sympathy for communism and decrial of fascism, Malraux turned to the domain of the plastic arts theorizing revolution through an existentialist approach that placed artists at the center of political action, rendering them capable of defining their destiny and leaving their mark to the following generations. In fact Malraux’s remarks had strong formalist projections. The history of art, as Malraux later put it, is that of the formes inventées contre les formes héritées while “artists do not grow out of their childhood, but out of their conflict with the achievement of their predecessors; not out of their own shapeless world, but out of their struggle with the forms which others have imposed on art.”28 The task of the modern artist was not to shape the world, but to challenge its permanence, leaving a mark and directing the destiny of art, or even perhaps of humankind.

In line with contemporary leftist discourse, Malraux’s remarks apparently exercised considerable influence over the Popular Front cultural policies. Nonetheless, his observation anticipated in theory anarchist projections, which placed artistic production in an unflailing struggle of forms that pictured for Malraux the eternal conflict of man with his destiny; or in other words, revolution in its action: “Art lives from its
function, which is to permit men to escape their human condition, not through evasion, but domination, since art is a means of dominating destiny.” These words were in fact published almost a year before the La Psychologie de l’art fragments in a totally different context of politicized discourse, the Parisian Commune: Revue littéraire française pour la défense de la culture (1933–1939), directed by the novelist André Gide, the Nobel Prize winner Romain Rolland (1866–1944), and the ex-surrealist poet Louis Aragon (1897–1982). Given the contemporary sociopolitical upheaval, the Stalinist-Trotskyite debates, the ideological division of surrealism, the leftist coalition of the Popular Front, and the escalating influence of its policies in favor of the working class, Malraux’s 1937 remarks, as published in Verve, shape in theory a quasi-ideological superstructure for this art publication, which is to be combined with the concurrent disillusionment with formalist thinking, the admittance of art in the social sphere and the shaping of a new image for the twentieth century artist that would be either that of the worker or the rebel.

The concept that dominated leftist artistic discourse in the late 1930s was that of transforming art into an organ of the masses. And this transformation mostly dealt with monumental public art and realist revival. Malraux’s essays, as published in Commune and Verve, question the paramount passivity of cultural heritage, placing it in the sphere of contemporary political and intellectual action:

the art of the masses is always an art of truth. Little by little, the masses stopped going to art, seeing it in the cathedrals; but today, it happens that, if the masses do not go to art, the irrevocable drive of technology [la fatalité des techniques] makes art go to the masses…. The destiny of art moves from the unique irreplaceable masterpiece, sullied by its reproduction, to not only the reproduced masterpiece but also the work that is made for reproduction, to the extent that its original no longer exists: the film.

The formalist projections of Malraux’s remarks were certainly incontestable. Drawing upon Walter Benjamin’s (1892–1940) writings, Malraux underlined the importance of photography in the plastic arts with its black-and-white reproduction facilities, which favored the reproduction of linear forms—for example the essential drawing of Italian painting—while it destroyed or neglected the values of colored surfaces disdaining the reproduction of stained glass or Byzantine painting, both condemned to oblivion: “the cultural heritage of plastic arts is imperatively linked to its faculty of reproduction.” Although Malraux’s La Psychologie de l’art was completed and published later in three volumes by Skira, it was in fact Skira himself as a publisher who had put into practice since 1935 the same thoughts with his luxurious series of Les Trésors de la peinture française while Tériade “perfected” the same ideas with Verve in 1937.

Malraux’s aesthetic of the “art of the masses” was not a new concept in contemporary thinking. It originated in the beginning of the same decade reflecting the aftermath of the 1929 Wall Street crash in the United States and its effects on the sociopolitical spectrum. What Malraux described in 1936 as “l’art des masses” was just a politicized and philosophical amalgam of what most artists conceived as a necessity to reconnect with a wider audience or undertake large scale commissions under conventions of
social service or governmental patronage, demanding conditions of employability similar to the American platform of the New Deal Federal Art Project, but with a certain sort of eclecticism that would justify the Parisian claim as the world’s modernist capital. The most transparent demonstration of the contemporary sociopolitical and artistic turmoil was the Parisian Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne of 1937 (May 25–November 25, 1937), which opened its doors to more than thirty million visitors one month late, due to the technicians’ unwillingness to return to the conditions of unemployment that the end of work for the project apparently entailed. The central display was political crisis: the German and Soviet Pavilions facing one another with their contradictory political symbols raised on the background of the Eiffel Tower, and the celebrated Guernica by Picasso an antifascist symbol and the culmination of the antiwar outcry, displayed at the Spanish Pavilion. Nevertheless, in different terms, the fair raised issues of national radiance, industrial and cultural production, with art being the most explicit manifestation of the way France confronted the recession:

In the Paris Exposition the two themes, Arts and Techniques, are not treated as parallel but as convergent and inseparable developments. The manufacturers of Sevres china employed Zadkine to do two large ceramic panels for their building in the Fair. Gromaire they commissioned to execute a large mosaic panel for the exterior of their building. The railways of France sought out Delaunay to paint a series of abstract panels as a decoration for the Transportation Building at the Exposition. In the Palace of Electricity, the Pavillon de la Lumiére, is a tremendous panel by Dufy, measuring approximately two hundred feet in length and thirty five in height. The theme of the mural is the history of electricity from the earliest time to the present. In the Solidarity Building. The “Hall of Honor” is somewhat very special indeed. The work of Léger, Lurçat, Gromaire, Delaunay, Maurice Denis, Yves Allix, Raoul Dufy, Peurniez, Burkhalter, le Chevalier, and Souverbie, they depict various aspects of the French government’s work in the field. The Lurçat panel has as its theme the general subject of social service. The Gromaire panel, on the theme of savings. The subject of the Leger panel is Unionism. Allix’s Work for the Poor reveals an odd and humorously fantastic side.

Commenting on the Parisian Exposition for the pages of Parnassus, the American art critic and journalist, Emily Genauer (1911–2002), thought the most striking part of the fair was the international presentation in Paris, which sharpened the “blunted edges of jingoism.” The American Pavilion, the pavilion of the generator and leader of technical development, as presented in Raoul Dufy’s (1877–1953) monumental mural at the Pavillon de l’Electricité et de la Lumiére, is “no presentation to provoke loud and exuberant huzzahs.” While art in American industry, Genauer noticed, is identified with “industrial prettification,” the European industries and governments, especially in France, accept art as part of their national life, admitting the fact that the artist “must not function alone but in relation to the society.” This is why Ossip Zadkine (1890–1967) was not asked to “devise a new shape for cups,” or Marcel...
Gromaire (1892–1971) to “design a line of serving plates,” since artists “have been set to work creating pictures, not labels, and pictures which are bound to give definite pleasure to the masses.”

Monumental art was only one aspect of the “bringing art to the masses” idea that gained great esteem during the Popular Front years. The exhibition *Chef d’œuvres de l’art français* at the Palais du Tokyo apparently served as a retrospective introduction to the Petit Palais exhibition *Les Maîtres de l’art indépendant, 1895–1937*, being the most explicit demonstration of the French nation and the only official art show of the fair, which brought back to their place of origin French masterpieces from provincial and foreign private and public collections with a retrospective display of more than 1,300 artworks from Jean Fouquet to Gustave Courbet (1819–1877). The exhibition can be easily identified with the concept of “bringing art to the masses” as well as the realist imagery that served the ideological directions of the Communist Party, exemplified in Aragon’s famous “Réalisme socialiste et réalisme français” party-line proclamation. Although the show attracted little attention from visitors and commentators of the fair, it was complementary to the smaller—overshadowed by the fair as well—exhibition *Maîtres populaires de la réalité* organized by the Grenoble Museum in Paris (Galerie de la Renaissance, 11, rue Royale, Paris). The latter included the work of the Modern Primitives such as Henri Rousseau (1844–1910), René Rimbert (1896–1991), Dominique-Paul Peyronnet (1872–1943), Jean Eve

Figure 3  The Triumph of Love from the manuscript *Les Triomphes* by Petrarch, beginning of the sixteenth century. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Ms. fr. 594, ff. 7v–8. Illustrated in *Verve* 1, no. 1 (December 1937).

The problem with all the above exhibitions was that by bringing those masterpieces to the public sphere, they totally transformed their aura, their original function, since most of them—the medieval illuminated manuscripts and the work of the modern primitives—were either part of elitist commissions for private use or demonstrated amateurish involvement with painting on a level of domestic production. This was explicit in the celebrated royal prayer books of medieval France as well as in the works of the modern primitives at the Galerie de la Renaissance, who “never lived like artists” but “they have a right to be called artists of the people,” as Jean Cassou, a communist sympathizer and associate curator of the Musée du Luxembourg, wrote in the catalog preface. The links among those exhibitions were self-evident in terms of both realist representation and humanistic conception. “Thanks to our modest friends, a presence has again made its appearance in the history of art: the spirit of the people and of reality.” Cassou observed that “The art of the middle ages teaches us that this presence has always made itself felt. And, looking carefully, we can find it among the great princes of art: the spirit of the people exists in Rembrandt, and in Goya and in certain rough and lusty passages of Courbet” who “might as well be considered an artist of the people.” “These pictures,” Cassou asserted, “were not painted for the ignorant: they were painted for the wise.”

Maximilien Gauthier confirmed the opportune character of the same exhibition, in tune with the contemporary realist revival and its “humanization of art” projections:

> At present when we see that most young artists are no longer concerned with abstract design but fight instead for a return to subject matter, the human element, the eternal verities, it looks as though the Maîtres Populaires de la Réalité have, in the end, won the day... At the beginning of the century, after a hundred years of magnificent vitality comparable to the most fruitful periods of Greece, Italy and Holland; after David, Gericault, Delacroix, Ingres, Courbet, Cézanne, Seurat, Matisse and Bonnard, the French School was threatened by serious dangers. Art was on the verge of becoming a sort of super-algebra, no longer revealing reality, but revealing instead the artists’ increasingly passionate search for plastic ingenuity, continuous revolution, innovation, at any price. Before all else... a picture had to be a flat surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order. In every period and in every country artists had striven to make the abstract particular and concrete. Now, instead, it was a question of achieving the ultimate abstraction of the particular.

The overall concept of making those artworks accessible to the wide public was in tune with Malraux’s ideological pretensions and the content of the contemporary issue
of Verve magazine that reproduced both realist painting from the Chef d’oeuvres de l’art français exhibition and medieval illuminated manuscripts from the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale with commentaries by the French art historians Élie Faure (1873–1937), René Huyghe (1906–1997), and Emile A. Van Moé (1895–1944) (Figures 4–5). Verve combined both the “art of the masses” concept and the reproduction in colors of the most brightly colored masterpieces of the French past, calling at the same time on contemporary artists to undertake the task of creating masterpieces for reproduction in its content, as Malraux suggested, with a revival of the medieval technique of engraving. But while engraving traditionally advanced the linear aspects of the pictorial composition, the development of the technique of colored lithograph, that Verve extensively employed, served Tériade’s formalist views since it highlighted in practice the necessity for both abstraction and figuration in contemporary art, anticipating a formalist “juste milieu” that the medieval miniatures exalted. Consequently, the political, ideological, or even formalist regards applied to the practice of multiple reproductions, in theory discouraged any claims of vulgarization, since Malraux had put it clearly: “I do not defend here the old chimera of an art directed and submitted to the masses. Since this idea consists in vulgarising the art of an individualist and bourgeois civilization in order to create an art for the new civilization . . . The techniques that progressively lead Western art to the masses, do not lead it to hazard, but to the real ideology of these masses, whether it is precise or confusing.”
Verve: Art for the Elite vs. Art for the Masses

The interesting part in the case of Verve was its aesthetic consent to an ideological platform that was in practice contradicted by the magazine’s elitist spirit in its luxurious form and contributors. While the “art des masses” watchword was born and bred by the international recession and the rayonnement culturel policies of the Popular Front, the “art pour les masses” concept was employed in the communist revolutionary propaganda in favor of proletarian struggle usually identified with the readable for the proletariat pictorial vocabulary of socialist realism. Nonetheless, the reception of both concepts in the artistic discourse of the same era was in all respects controversial. For Verve and its contributors, the Popular Front “art of the masses” concept entailed issues strictly related to the public display of French masterpieces that belonged to museums and private collections. This type of “bringing art to the masses” was part of the government’s socialist agenda that advanced public leisure, education, and cultural radiance. Nevertheless, the multiple reproductions of these artworks in practice belonged to the “art for the masses” concept bringing about issues of popularization, replication, and vulgarization, without being strictly related to the propaganda for the proletariat established by both the communist party and the fascist regimes.

In terms of artistic production, the main issue that most artists had to face was that of inequality that resuscitated social discomfort. Already since the beginning of the 1930s, the current debates included discussions on the elitist character of a restricted group of artists who held the scepters of Parisian modernism since the first decades
of the century, acting under the patronage of certain networks of critics, dealers, and collectors who deepened the effects of economic crisis. Under the pretense of social equality and ideological injunction, the leftist sermons had been developing under two concepts: the reprobation of the commercial artists that formed with certain limitations the renowned group of the École de Paris and the rejection of the surrealist eccentric revolutionary efforts identified with blameworthy elitism, which stressed the limits between capitalism and social upheaval. The key figure in both cases was Picasso, not only because of his commercial success, individual style, and elitist affairs, but also because of his adhesion to surrealism, which had, by that time, been removed from the Communist Party, overtly declining the aesthetic directions of socialist realism shaped under the Stalinist platform.

In 1932, the French communist artist Jean Lurçat underlined the points of his disagreement, denouncing the conformism of the majority of the Fauves while he condemned cubist painting as a “dowager that burnished its diadems,” blind and audacious, lying in the middle of the post-1914 imprecations:

This refusal to collaborate with the wide public . . . this alliance with only one class based on taste . . . . One did not have the intention to identify in his ancestors anything but servility in their ambition to illustrate the fixed ideas of the epoch. His resistance to the subject soon turned into a resistance to the Object: and the disdain for the Object threw him in this abstraction which at any time and in any domain is about to erupt . . . . The compromise under which live and act Matisse, Léger, Picasso, Brancusi and many others, is no other than this: “the painting does not move us because it is a painting; and it is a painting only in the measure that pictorial motives predominate, excluding all the rest in its conception and creation.” . . . [W]e no longer fall into the trap of these revolutions which are nothing more than the dead-end [voie de garage] of authentic revolutions; the Fascist, the Hitlerian, or even the Surrealist revolution have nothing to do with Revolution. The actual revolution is not prescribed for us just until the day when black turns into white and white into black.43

Lurçat’s argument mirrors the conditions of the international art market, the exaltation of individual artists whose work addressed the admiration of a rare clientele, and the private sales that turned art into mere merchandise. These problems were aggravated by the regulation of December 29, 1929, when the French government reduced taxes from 12 percent to 6 percent for objects classified as deluxe in reference to their price and not their nature (painting, sculpture). Although this regulation did not affect the famous Parisian artists, who sold their works on their own, enriching the stocks of famous dealers who had a fixed clientele of collectors and an age-long experience in private sales, it was apparently devastating to young artists trying to sell their work to art galleries. Tériade and Raynal parodied the situation in 1930: “Ainsi faudra-t-il que nos galeries vendent en deux articles séparés: 1) une peinture de X . . . (artiste célèbre), la somme de 100 francs soumise à la taxe de 12%, et, 2) le cadre ancien dont l’amateur aura licence de l’entourer, au prix de 100.000 francs soumis à la taxe maintenant ramenée de 12 à 6 %?44 Things became even more
complex when the international market had to face the consequences of the recession on a national level: “The German and the Italian government disclaimed all credits for purchases of artworks of foreign living painters and sculptors by National Museums. To avoid unemployment, England voted ... on a 10% ad valorem regulation for artworks of foreign provenance.”

Aesthetics fight on national grounds, Lurçat concluded in 1934. In his paper read at the annual meeting of the College Art Association the same year, he suggested: “The American painter, if he can get them, demands high taxes for foreign works sold in the United States; the Parisian painter taxes on the foreign artist living in Paris and selling his work there: Painting has become mere merchandise. A stupid situation! We must radically transform the law of exchange for works of art, and transform, as well, the social situation of the artist.” The culmination of the “art des masses” idea appears in the same text with Lurçat’s appreciation that “A true work of art must, like the cathedral, be the property of all. It should express the feeling of a whole people, and from it should be eliminated all national spirit.” Clearly, the commercialization of art was anathema to contemporary artistic production throughout the 1930s, while the State intervention in museum policies was incontestable. The commentary that L’Intransigeant published in November 1929 reveals a grotesque situation: “A conservator of a Parisian museum of modern art that recently received an offer of a work by Picasso ... —But Picasso is a foreigner ... —Yes, Spanish, answered the donor ... —Diable! It is impossible to accept it if he is a foreigner. Finally, what is his first name?—Pablo. But ... you have works by Van Gogh in your museum.—Of course, concludes the official, but the canvas is signed Vincent!”

The apparent turmoil of the interwar years was a forerunner for what was about to follow after the war. The commentary published in La Bête Noire (1935–1936), an improvised low-cost satirical journal published and distributed by Raynal and Tériaude, prefigured the upshot of contemporary decadence:

Paris devenu un immense marché aux puces avec, bien entendu, plus de puces que de marché ... plus de collectionneurs, plus de mécènes, plus de mécènes-marchands, plus de marchands-mécènes, et même plus de marchands, tout court. Paris, qui passait pour la capitale des arts, se retire du monde ; il renonce à cette gloire .... Paris est devenue une ville comme les autres, un peu plus chère, un peu plus triste, et c’est tout .... New York, Londres, d’autres villes deviennent gaies, vivantes; habitables par cette clientèle unique qui a fui notre médiocrité .... Paris ... restera obscur parce qu’il a tué en lui l’esprit de la jeunesse au profit de la plus basse vulgarité. A Paris actuellement, il n’y a rien à éclairer.

The economic discomfort not only challenged the position of Paris as the greatest artistic metropolis of the century, but had also been aggravated by the ideological and aesthetic split among Parisian intellectual and artistic circles, since those involved with left-oriented intellectuals and artists, in respect to their ideological fights against fascism and capitalism, had apparently two recourses: socialist realism or surrealism; or in different terms: populism or elitism. And although “populism,” in aesthetic terms, was almost tantamount to the revival of realism and the readable pictorial
vocabulary for public display, “elitism” was not only associated with surrealism, but also with the abstract tendencies originating in cubist painting, even if the oversimplification of the cubist point of departure, the object, and its transformation into nonobjective geometrical shapes, reduced to decorative treatment, also carried implications of popularization.

The disdain against cubism became in fact even stronger in 1936, with the debates on realism (Querelle du réalisme) organized by the Maison de la Culture, run by the French Communist Party, and Aragon’s denunciation of Fernand Léger’s ideological collusion with contemporary dealers and collectors, and it was intensified with the New York Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition Cubist and Abstract Art and Alfred Barr’s (1902–1981) renowned evolutionary diagram that placed cubism and fauvism at the origins of modern abstract painting. Given that many of the politicized Parisian painters were cubist and fauvist exponents who tried to assimilate the realist imagery to their modernist compositions, Barr’s diagram was perhaps the culmination of the concurrent upheaval since it anticipated a totally different formalist direction. The confusion was perpetuated with the 1937 Jeu de Paume exhibition Origines et développement de l’art international indépendant—organized by the conservator of the Musée des Écoles étrangeres, André Dézarrois, with the support of a committee that included notably, Zervos, Cassou, Éluard, Raynal, and several artists—displaying the work of sixty-three international post-cubist abstract painters. Its opposite was Les Maîtres de l’art indépendant at the Petit Palais that questioned the concept of -isms in the contemporary artistic discourse stressing the limits of independency in the work of an extended group of artists belonging to both the École française and the École de Paris. Despite the apparent controversy in terms of their aesthetic directions, both shows incorporated into their—either conservative or avant-garde—group of painters, the renowned elite of Parisian artists: Matisse, Picasso, Georges Braque (1882–1963), Marc Chagall (1887–1985), Rouault, Othon Friesz (1879–1949), André Derain (1880–1954), Léger, Laurens, and Juan Gris (1887–1927), whose art came to be regarded as the trademark of French modernism on an international level, latently anticipating the idea of a formalist juste milieu that Tériade apparently favored.

Despite the objection of André Breton and his friends to the choice of the artists for the show,49 the Jeu de Paume exhibition espoused—in theory—the post-1933 surrealist directions towards a free revolutionary art, encouraging at the same time certain aspects of abstraction with emphasis on the post-cubist concept of plasticity—this direction was evident in the aesthetic persuasion of the organizational committee members—while the Petit Palais show displayed figurative art under the formalist platform of cubism and fauvism. In line with its editorial directions, the 1937 issue of the luxurious art magazine Le Point, edited by Pierre Betz (1899–1969), published several commentaries on the theme of the Petit Palais exhibition revealing the conservative formalist attitudes incorporated in the artistic discourse of this era. Élie Faure’s critical commentary that introduced the issue’s content demonstrates the aesthetic turmoil perpetuated since the previous decade:

What really happened to theories and systems? Impressionism, pointillism, fauvism, cubism, where are you? The European invasion of Montparnasse
is drowning in a spiritual anarchy that only a reversal of social values can free us from. Gromaire certainly brings to the community the true lessons of Nordic painting... Italian Futurism only gave us a voluntary émigré, Modigliani... The contributions of Chagall and Pascin, Orientals of Semitic descent, like Modigliani and Soutine, tend to generate a confusion between illustration and painting, that the latter already suffers from. ...Will the new painting emerge from this, or from a future synthesis of this quivering form with the line of Derain, somewhat academic in parts?

The newly established Verve magazine, although conservative in its content, could not afford any transparent polemic, demonstrating an eclectic attitude towards the concurrent artistic and sociopolitical turmoil. The first issue managed to obtain contributions from several of the most prominent French authors and artists who nevertheless provided a pluralism of viewpoints on similar issues. The most interesting part in the 1937 issue of Verve was its first article, published by Gide under the title “A Few Reflections on the Disappearance of the Subject in Sculpture and Painting” accompanied by two color lithographs by Léger and Joan Miró (1893–1983), which in formalist terms intensified the content of Gide’s text with adroitness. In comparison to Malraux’s essay and the commentaries on realist art on display in contemporary Paris, Gide condemned narratives in painting, denouncing the concept of readable subject matter that was a cardinal issue in contemporary artistic discussions led by communist sympathizers. Gide queried:

What subjects can there be for modern painting? ... [T]he greater number of contemporary artists are turned aside from fiction—by the exigencies of realism. I have no doubt that even the episodes of Stalin’s eternal life, which are either suggested to the artists of the U.R.S.S. or imposed upon them may also furnish occasion for a masterpiece—though there may be some who will fail to find in it any particularly exciting motives. There remains symbolism which has given Picasso’s genius scope for play in his Guernica; and so long as the work is beautiful, it matters little that it may be difficult to grasp. What matters is that it should have a centre of inspiration, failing which all its elements scatter and the work must necessarily lack composition.

The two lithographs depicting the abstract subjects of Water (by Léger) and Air (by Miró) complement Gide’s observations on subject matter in painting and sculpture as well as his assertion that it is useless to speak of art without taking into account the individual spirit of each artist or that the concurrent need for art and culture only satisfies a small number of privileged persons while “every attempt to vulgarise art has so far met only with disastrous results.”

Intention has never made the value of a work of art, and it is no business of the painter or the sculptor to inform his canvas or marble with significations. I consider any confusion, any trespassing of one art on the domain of another as disastrous, and I protest equally against “ut pictura poesis” as against “ut poesis pictura.” Each of the arts has at its disposal its proper means of expression, its special eloquence, its own particular processes... I refuse to
consider the subject of a picture or of a piece of sculpture as simply the pretext for composition, although even so much is not allowed nowadays.\textsuperscript{53}

These remarks need to be understood in more than a purely aesthetic context. Having published only a year earlier a critique of communism in \textit{Retour de l’U.R.S.S.}, Gide was obviously expressing in \textit{Verve} specific ideological directions enforced by his anti-Stalinist sentiments. Tériade, on the other hand, apparently took advantage of Gide’s new directions which in combination with the influence that the author exerted over contemporary thinking, would vindicate the aesthetic positions of \textit{Verve}. Of course, Gide’s text did not suffice to demonstrate explicitly such aesthetic directions. Tériade invited his intimate colleague Ambroise Vollard (1866–1939), perhaps the most influential personality of the Parisian art networks, in order to criticize pictorial narratives, subject matter, and realist imagery in defense of modernist art. Using his authority as a dealer, \textit{Verve} contained in the same issue Vollard’s ironic anecdote, which addressed the interests of contemporary collectors in the subject matter, published under the title “Reflections on the Subject of Painting.”

I was preparing a Cézanne exhibition which included an open-air picture representing some nude women with a person who, from his costume, might be taken for a herdsman. The picture had been put in a frame from which I had forgotten to remove the inscription \textit{Diana and Actaeon}. In the press criticisms the painting was described as though the subject were really the bath of Diana. One critic even extolled the nobleness of the goddess’ attitude and the chaste appearance of the virgins who were standing about her. . . . Some time later I was asked for a \textit{Temptation of St. Anthony} by Cézanne to hang in an exhibition. I promised it but it was unable to send this particular canvas, as it has been sold in the meantime. In its place I sent the
so-called Diana and Actaeon, on the frame of which there was no title this time. As a Temptation of St. Anthony was expected, however, it was under this title that the picture promised by me had been entered in the catalogue. The result was that a magazine described the work as though it really were a Temptation of St. Anthony. . . . Where Diana’s noble attitude had previously been praised, the present critic found the bewitching as well as perfidious smile of a daughter of Satan. The waiting-maid’s gesture of indignation was transformed into a seductive invitation. The pseudo-Actaeon had become the pathetic figure of St. Anthony.\(^{54}\)

Vollard’s remarks, as published almost two years before his death, were complementary to the artists’ texts that the first five prewar issues of Verve contained together with photographs that presented the portraits of the artists who elaborated lithographs for Verve’s covers. The second issue of March 1938—its cover composed by Braque (Figure 6)—was accordingly introduced by Braque’s “Reflections” in which the painter clarified the initiatives of his art:

To paint is not to depict. To write is not to describe. To define a thing is to substitute the definition for the thing. . . . What resembles the truth is but a deception [La vraisemblance n’est qu’une trompe d’œil]. . . . There is an art of the people and an art for the people [l’art pour le peuple], the latter invented by the intellectuals. . . . The art for the people is the chromo. The art for the bourgeois [l’art pour le bourgeois] is the drawing on the mantel-piece. . . . It isn’t that the artist is unappreciated but that he is ignored [L’artiste n’est pas incompris, mais méconnu]. . . . Build opposed to construct. . . . To construct is to assemble homogenous elements. . . . Cézanne built.\(^{55}\)

In line with contemporary discussions, Braque implicitly criticized the contemporary realist revival and its political projections, highlighting the ambiguity between l’art pour le peuple and l’art pour le bourgeois. The divergence between the art for the bourgeois and the art for the masses is crucial in Braque’s remarks considering his preferential position in the contemporary art market while the “bringing art to the masses” concept in terms of multiple reproductions, as was the case with Verve, contradicted in practice the critical attitude of his reflections against replication and trompe d’œil.\(^{56}\) In fact Braque, the same with Gide, explicitly criticized realist representation; consequently his article is to be combined with Vollard’s ironic comments on the preferences of the contemporary bourgeois collectors for pictorial narratives. “L’artiste n’est pas incompris, mais méconnu,” Braque concluded, defending the quasi-abstract pictorial elements of his art.

In relation to both Cahiers d’art and Minotaure, which published since the mid-1930s international independent art influenced by cubism and surrealism, Verve primarily focused on French art throughout the centuries raising issues of tradition, evolution, and artistic education, taking the modern side in the anciens et modernes opposition. The case of Tériade is of considerable importance to the understanding of the way the concurrent aesthetic, political, and economic crisis was adapted to formalist discourse given the apparent sociopolitical conformism that describes the course
of his career. Tériade adhered to the dominant ideology, espousing the ideological concerns of the Popular Front in his attempt to create a conformist magazine regarding its content, and a masterpiece publication in terms of typography. The American investment in Verve was an opportune occasion for Tériade to serve the cultural policies of the Popular Front and the interests of the American editors to create a mass-circulation art magazine that presented French masterpieces from public and private collections alongside commentaries by the most influential French intellectuals. Although Verve took advantage of the ideological directions of the Popular Front, its editorial orientation in fact reflected the concerns of the American editors and Tériade’s formalist persuasion. In practice, Tériade espoused the “art des masses” concept that dominated leftist discourse by means of reproducing French masterpieces in Verve’s content, nonetheless his elitist concerns in favor of a restricted group of contemporary Parisian painters (Matisse, Pierre Bonnard [1867–1947], Braque, Miró, Kandinsky, Rouault, Aristide Maillol [1861–1944], André Masson [1896–1987], and Léger) reinforced the sentiment of inequality among artists.

Conclusion

Verve was printed in 25,000 copies—only 5,000 in French—publishing four issues with financing from the American corporation Esquire-Coronet, Inc., from 1937 to 1939. The print run was apparently extraordinary but reflected the editors’ ambitions. David Smart (1892–1952), the American director of the corporation, fulfilled in part his vision to create a mass circulation Paris-based magazine that advanced color reproduction, publishing museum masterpieces, and mainstream Parisian modern art. His principal preoccupation was releasing Verve to the American market during a period when the New Deal practices, and especially the Federal Art Project, had created a new audience for art (Figure 7). For each one of the four issues which were printed and distributed in Europe and the United States from 1937 to 1939, the cover was a double-page lithograph by Matisse, Braque, Bonnard, or Rouault, containing texts of diverse interest as well as short commentaries and reproductions of medieval miniatures from the Bibliothèque nationale de France. However, Verve’s sales did not vindicate its editors’ efforts with Tériade publishing the fifth double issue of 1939 (on the theme La Figure humaine) without Smart’s funding. The perception of the concept of “democratization of art” for the two editors—Smart and Tériade—was certainly different given Smart was a former representative of the fashion industries who turned into a well-to-do publisher after the important success in 1933 of his magazine for men, Esquire, which commenced the same year. Smart’s first effort to extend his publishing affairs to the domain of arts is evident in the 1936 publication of Coronet magazine (1936–1971) which proposed to combine color art reproductions with commentaries that addressed the interests of contemporary American collectors. Coronet’s subtitle revealed its content, using the famous quotation from Christopher Marlowe’s The Jew of Malta (1590): “Infinite Riches in a Little Room.” But while Coronet was published as a guide to European masterpieces, Verve was a masterpiece in itself including original lithographs and high-quality reproductions whose price rendered it inaccessible to lower middle-class art lovers.
In all respects, speaking of the “democratization of art,” or the socialist concept of “l’art des masses,” during the period of the Great Depression is crucial since, apart from any political projections, this idea entailed in most cases the speculative, ideological, and aesthetic concerns of specific networks and individual factors. In the Parisian context it is evident that during the 1930s, the efforts that took place to establish a visual culture in the field of art publishing were pioneered by three of the most important Parisian art magazines, *Cahiers d’art*, *Minotaure*, and *Verve*. The formalist concerns of their editors were certainly incontestable with Tériade and Skira laying the foundations for the development of figurative art based on naturalistic color values, and Zervos seeking to highlight the linear aspects of cubist-influenced painting that led nonobjective geometrical abstraction to flourish, with black-and-white art reproductions published systematically in *Cahiers d’art*. The contribution of these magazines to the creation of a visual imagery—or more precisely a museum without walls—for the young generation of painters on an international level is uncontested and in fact the repercussions of their formalist efforts are reflected in the remarks of the American art critic Clement Greenberg (1909–1994) as put forth in 1957, which reflect in reality the contribution of the art press to the formalist appreciation of French modern art in the United States as well as the unfortunate downfall of Paris as *le centre de tous les arts* during the postwar years:

> The art publications from Paris, and the *Cahiers d’Art* above all . . . posted you on the latest developments abroad, and Parisian art exerted perhaps a more decisive influence for a while through reproductions in monochrome.
than at first hand. This might have been a blessing in disguise, since it per-
mitt ed certain American painters to develop a more independent sense of 
color if only by virtue of ignorance or misunderstanding. In any case . . . as 
long as it was only a question of learning . . . you could learn more about 
Matisse’s color from Hofmann than from Matisse himself.60

Acknowledgments
I am indebted to Malcolm Gee by whom the entire draft of the manuscript was read and 
commented. My research was facilitated with the Premier Prix Marc de Montalembert— 
INHA (Paris) and was greatly aided by Manuela and Marc René de Montalembert, 
Antoinette Le Normand Romain (INHA), Dominique Szymusiak (Musée Matisse-
Herbin), Catherine Charalampidis, Zahia Rahmani (INHA), Evgenios Matathipoulos 
(University of Crete / IMS FORTH), and Ysanne Holt (Northumbria University). 
Finally, I would like to thank Christine Sundt and the anonymous peer reviewers for 
their valuable remarks.

CHARA KOLOKYTHA was awarded the Premier Prix Marc de Montalembert— INHA in 
Paris by the French Minister of Culture, M. Frédéric Mitterrand, for her research project 
“La revue artistique et littéraire française Verve (1937–1960): L’activité d’éditeur et de cri-
tique d’art de son fondateur, Tériade.” She is currently working on a research project at the 
School of Arts and Social Sciences, Northumbria University, UK, on the field of art pub-
lishing in twentieth-century France, which brings to light issues of artistic diffusion, cultur-
al production, State patronage, and propaganda.

1 The overall discussion encouraged the use of the term “democratization of art,” 
usually identified with Malraux’s cultural concerns, since it is related, albeit ambigu-
ously, to both the “art des masses” and the “art pour les masses” concept. It is used to 
indicate the socialist idea that art should be the property of all people and has little to 
do with “democracy” as a political term.
2 Albert Skira, “Introduction” to the authorized reprint edition of Minotaure (originally 
issued 1933–1939) in four volumes with an English and French introduction, vol. 1, 
3 (Letter 54) May 28, 1931: “Vous ne pouvez pas vous imaginer la crise catastrophale 
que subit l’art cette année ici. Pas une galerie n’a rien vendu depuis le début de 
l’année. . . . Le Parisien préfère dépenser tout en voitures, en plaisirs de ventre, etc., 
que de dépenser même 15 fr. pour acheter 1 Cahier de ma revue.” (Letter 60) July 
12, 1931: “Je prévois pour cette année un déficit de cent mille francs, dont 60 mille 
pour les 6 numéros paru[s] et 40 mille pour les 4 numéros à paraıˆtre. Je me trouve 
donc devant le dilemme ou arrêter la revue avec le n° paru ou faire partager à tous 
les amis de la revue de tous pays le déficit. . . . Ma première idée était d’arrêter pure-
ment et simplement la parution de la revue. Mais tout le monde me supplie de ne pas 
le faire. . . .” Christian Derouet, ed., Vassili Kandinsky, Correspondance avec Zervos et 
Kojève (Paris: Cahiers du Musée national d’art moderne Centre Georges Pompidou, 
1992), 78, 82. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
4 The Parisian paper Le Figaro published the following commentary: “Les Cahiers d’art, 
désireux de préserver, malgré la crise, dans leurs réalisations de plus en plus larges et 
vivantes, se sont décidés à vendre leur collection de tableaux et de sculptures et ceci
en plein accord avec les artistes qui la composèrent. C’est du moins la préface du catalogue qui fait part de cette décision, et qui de plus ajoute que cette vente sera sensationnelle encore non seulement par sa qualité, mais par sa rareté même, car il y a longtemps que l’on ne vit au feu de enchères, un ensemble de valeurs nouvelles. ... Le prix le plus élevé fut obtenu par une nature morte, de Georges Braque: Nature morte à la pipe, dit le catalogue, qui fut adjugée 13.500 francs, sur départ à 6.000 francs. Citons parmi les adjudications principales: Les Mésanges, par A. Bauchart [actually Bauchant], 2.200 francs; Figure par Georges Braque, 4.500 francs; Malgré les mains, sculpture (?) par Giacometti, 2.100 francs; Composition, peinture par Fernand Léger, 7.000 francs; Marine, par Jean Lurçat, 2.750 francs; Le Vase, par Ozenfant, 5.000 francs; Tête de Christ, par George Rouault, 11.000 francs; et une sculpture (?) en terre polychromée par Henri Laurens, 1.200 francs. Les cinquante et un numéros du catalogue produisirent environ 80.000 fr.” Maurice Monda, Le Figaro 103, April 13, 1933.

6 The reasons for Tériade’s departure from Cahiers d’art remain obscure. The examination of Tériade’s papers reveals that Zervos interrupted all contacts after the former’s departure from the magazine. Considering that the remunerations received by Tériade for his contributions to other magazines reached F100 per article, one might assume that in 1931 Zervos faced certain difficulties in remunerating his friend and compatriot considering that in 1927 Tériade published seventeen articles in Cahiers d’art, probably raising about F1,700. Of course, this evidence applies to his contributions to L’Art d’aujourd’hui and Arts de la Maison in 1927. Monsieur Tériade, 40, rue Denfert Rochereau. 17 March 1927, “Vos droits d’auteur sur: 1. Quelques considérations sur les arts décoratifs, Arts de la Maison, Aut. 1926. 100 frs. 2. Kisling, Art d’aujourd’hui, Aut. 1926, 100 frs. M/ cheque no 85526, sur la Banque de France à Paris.” Payment receipt. Editions Albert Morancé, Paris, 30 et 32, rue de Fleurs. Tériade Papers, Musée Matisse, Le Cateau Cambrésis, France.
8 Besides, L’Intransigeant not only offered a secure income to its contributors, but also had a long tradition in the field of arts collaborating with illustrious art commentators such as Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918) and André Salmon (1881–1969), becoming since the beginning of the century popular to dealers and collectors of modern French art. For further discussion on Bailby’s editorial policies, see Malcolm Gee, Dealers, Critics, and Collectors or Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Market between 1910 and 1930 (London: Garland, 1981), 103–4.
9 Letter from Tériade to Bettina Bedwell (Madison Avenue at 45th Street, New York City), May 10, 1933. Tériade Papers, Musée Matisse, Le Cateau Cambrésis, France.
In 1937, the Paris-based international review Europe, founded by Romain Rolland, published a note on Minotaure. The commentator, René Bertele, implicitly criticized the contemporary surrealist isolation and Breton’s ideological directions revealing the polemic that communists and fellow travelers developed against surrealism since the mid-1930s: “La personnalité de Breton, une des plus curieuses et des plus riches de notre époque, et le mouvement qu’il a suscité avec ses amis, domine le début du XXe siècle: il a apporté partout un grand vent de libération, de découverte, de nouveauté. Pourquoi faut-il que cet air qui nous semblait si pur soit devenu peu à peu irréspirable?—Breton, séparé de tous ses premiers amis (on ne saurait le lui reprocher), s’efforce de maintenir, actif et vivant, le Surréalisme sur un plan international. Mais le Surréalisme a-t-il en 1937 d’aussi authentiques raisons d’être qu’il y a dix ans? Ne s’efforce-t-il pas de prolonger un état d’attente et de provisoire, de confusion et de secret dont les hommes d’aujourd’hui souhaitent avant tout de sortir? Il y avait chez Breton un sens merveilleux du mystère, un don de le découvrir partout, un talent étonnant de l’exprimer. Mais ce goût du mystère est devenu chez lui un système—un système d’idéaliste qui se refuse à ouvrir les yeux au jour, qui préfère la nuit, insolite et ténébreuse, à la lumière du soleil. Que le Surréalisme continue à explorer la nuit tout en se refusant à l’illuminer, voilà qui ne peut satisfaire ceux qui souhaitent de voir les hommes vivants vaincre les fantômes.” René Bertele, “A travers les revues,” Europe, March 15, 1937, 415.

Archives commerciales de la France, April 26, 1933, 2084.

Archives commerciales de la France, April 15, 1935, 1639–41.

“Je vous confirme que je suis d’accord d’acheter vos parts dans la Société Albert Skira, Éditeur, à savoir 80 parts, pour la somme de frs. 8.000. Cette somme vous sera payée par la dite Société dans laquelle j’ai un compte créancier.” Letter from Madame A. Skira (17, rue de Sèvres, Paris) to Tériade (5, rue Delambre, Paris). Tériade Papers, Musée Matisse, Le Cateau Cambrésis, France.

“VERVE proposes to present art as intimately mingled with the life of each period and to furnish testimony of the participation by artists in the essential events of their time. It is devoted to artistic creation in all fields and in all forms. VERVE has adopted a traditional form. It will present documents as they are, without any arrangement which might detract from their naturalness. The value of its elements will depend on their character, the selection of them that has been made and the significance they assume through their disposition in the magazine. That the illustrations may retain the import of the originals, VERVE will utilize the technical methods best suited to each reproduction. It will call on the best specialists of heliogravure in colors and in black and white, as well as of typography, and will not disdain to employ the forgotten process of lithography. The luxuriousness of VERVE will consist in the publication of documents as fully and as perfectly as possible.” The processes used were further described: “This the first number of VERVE was printed in Paris. Typography and process color work: Imprimerie des Beaux-Arts. Heliogravure in colors: Draeger Frères. Heliogravure in black and white: Néogravure. Lithography: Mourlot Frères.” Verve 1, no.1 (December 1937).

Tériade, unpublished notes. Tériade Papers, Musée Matisse, Le Cateau Cambrésis, France.

The concept of la jeunesse, as appears in Tériade’s art criticism, owes much to the Bergsonian conception of creative evolution and had little to do with age but anticipated the ability of certain Parisian painters to regenerate their stylistic attainments.
by returning to point zero and invent new pictorial forms by transforming, rather than rejecting, nature. The point zero for abstract painting, according to both Zervos and Tériade, is naturalistic representation whose descriptive elements have been progressively removed so that natural form becomes identifiable or alluded rather than described/copied in full detail.

19 “La formule éclectique qui est celle que se propose Verve: des primitifs aux surréalistes, en passant par Delacroix, Matisse et Maillol est une formule facile ... et en même temps difficile ... C'est ce choix qui assure au plus libre éclecticisme un certain jeu de rapports intimes indispensable à toute revue d'art qui veut refléter le visage authentique d'une époque ... Reconnaissons que Verve, qui à la louable prétention d'être la grande revue d'art internationale qui manque encore, ne répond pas toujours à ces exigences ... Minotaure. — Devient l'organe officiel du Surréalisme ... Ainsi donc Verve et Minotaure ne font que continuer, sous une formule déjà connue, celle des grandes revues d'art luxueuses et coûteuses, une conception aristocratique de la culture. D'autre part, il est aisé de constater qu'aucun esprit nouveau ne s'en dégage. Elles ne sauraient donc en rien servir le destin actuel de l'art qui est de s'intégrer à la vie des masses, d'être pour elles et par elles, s'il ne veut mourir d'asphyxie.” René Bertele, “Revues d'art,” Europe, March 15, 1938, 427–28.

20 “La revue Verve est élaborée dans l'esprit qui nous a valu les albums du « Trésors de la Peinture Française » et qui consiste à mettre en valeur des œuvres oubliées ou peu connues, et d'une qualité égale, sinon supérieure, à celle des œuvres les plus célèbres de la peinture. La collaboration littéraire de son second numéro est des plus brillantes, puisqu'on y trouve les noms de Gide, Valéry, James Joyce, Pierre Reverdy, Henri Michaux, Malraux, etc.” A. Rolland de Renéville, “Verve,” Nouvelle revue Française, April 1, 1938, 688.

21 “Mais ces publications ne peuvent atteindre qu'un public restreint, il en est d'autres qui ne s'adressent qu'à des spécialistes. Pour les artistes, pour la masse considérable des amateurs, il convenait de faire davantage. Il faut donc se féliciter qu'une revue comme Verve, où les plus récents progrès de la technique sont connus et utilisés, s'y emploie activement ... Elle poursuit aujourd'hui ce programme, en mettant sous les yeux du public des enluminures extraites des Heures de Rohan, des Triomphes de Pétrarque et de l'étonnant Livre de chasse de Gaston Phébus. ... [L]es peintures de nos manuscrits doivent être au centre de toute étude bien conduite sur l'art du moyen âge français.” Julien Cain, “De la reproduction des enluminures,” Verve 4, no. 1 (1939): 18.

22 The comment apparently refers to Verve’s collaboration with members of the Collège de France, the Académie française, administrators of the French National Library, and museum conservators. “L'événement artistique ... ne peut aucunement consister dans la résurrection, à grand renfort de dorures, des vieilles miniatures et des livres d'heures ... Minotaure, la revue à tête de bête, se distingue foncièrement de toute autre publication à tête de membre de l'Institut ou de conservateur de musée. ... Minotaure veut être une revue constamment actuelle.” Editorial, Minotaure 12–13 (1939): n.p.


25 According to Bourdieu, the editor is a personnage double who ought to know how to reconcile l’art et l’argent, the love of art and research for profit. “Homme de commerce plongé, comme le marchand de tableaux,” the editor, in the anti-economic economy of pure art, will turn to the one or the other pole by releasing a more or less successful combination of these two sentiments, so irreconcilable sociologically as the fire and the water, the pure love of art and the mercenary love for money.” (Pierre Bourdieu, “Un révolution conservatrice dans l’édition,” Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales 126–27 [March 1999]: 16.) It is pertinent to consider that Tériade invested into “rare editorial sources” (nombre d’écrivains consacrés et classiques), publishing texts by the most prominent French writers namely Paul Claudel, Paul Valéry (Académie française), André Siegfried, Louis Massignon (Collège de France) Pierre Reverdy, Jean Paul Sartre, André Gide, André Malraux (Prix Goncourt), as well as Rabindranath Tagore (Nobel Prize), Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, John dos Passos, etc., in order to amplify both the symbolic and economic capital of his publication. This was clearly an editorial practice that anticipated the quality of Verve’s content since most of its contributors (both writers and artists) were part of the French establishment and enjoyed worldwide reputation.


29 “L’art vit de sa fonction qui est de permettre aux hommes d’échapper à leur condition d’hommes, non par une évasion, mais par une possession. Tout art est un moyen de possession du destin. . . . Les hommes sont bien moins à la mesure de leur héritage que l’héritage n’est à la mesure des hommes. L’ordre de tout héritage repose sur la volonté est-elle limitée par une certaine futilité.” André Malraux, “Sur l’héritage culturel,” Commune 37 (September 1936): 1–2.

30 “L’homme n’est pas soumis à son héritage, c’est son héritage qui lui est soumis: ce n’est pas l’antiquité qui a fait la Renaissance, c’est la Renaissance qui a fait l’antiquité . . . [c’est de jour en jour et de pensée en pensée que les hommes recréent le monde à l’image de leur plus grand destin . . . Car toute haute pensée, toute œuvre d’art est une possibilité infinie de réincarnations. Et le monde séculaire ne peut prendre son sens que dans la volonté présente des hommes.” Malraux, “Sur l’héritage culturel,” 8–9.

31 “…l’art des masses est toujours un art de vérité. Peu à peu, les masses ont cessé d’aller à l’art, de le rencontrer au flanc des cathédrales; mais aujourd’hui, il se trouve que, si les masses ne vont pas à l’art, la fatalité des techniques fait que l’art va aux masses . . . Le destin de l’art va du chef-d’œuvre unique, irremplaçable, souillé par sa reproduction, non seulement au chef-d’œuvre reproduit, mais à l’œuvre faite pour sa reproduction, à tel point que son original n’existe plus: le film.” Malraux, “Sur l’héritage culturel,” 3–4 (emphasis in original).

32 Walter Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, first published in German in 1936. A French edition appeared in 1939, but Malraux had access to the text earlier as his references to Benjamin reveal.

“Il était d’un intérêt actuel de réunir dans un même lieu les chefs-d’œuvre de la Peinture française. On pourrait penser qu’il n’était guère possible de le faire que dans un musée idéal ou dans une exposition. Nous l’avons réalisé dans un livre, un livre qui ne se contente pas de donner par des reproductions en noir la valeur symbolique des peintures, mais qui restitue ces dernières dans leur élément essentiel: Leur COULEUR. Quelles sont donc les couleurs de nos plus beaux tableaux? Ce sont ces deux préoccupations capitales: la réunion de chefs-d’œuvre et leur reproduction en couleurs, qui présideront à l’établissement de la série d’ouvrages que nous publions sous ce titre: LES TRESORS DE LA PEINTURE FRANCAISE. Les illustrations sont choisies et groupées de manière à laisser dans l’esprit des lecteurs un souvenir durable, une vision synoptique, essentielle de tout ce qui compte dans l’art d’une époque et qui reflète intensément son esprit.” Advertisement for the publication of the luxurious anthology Les Trésors de la peinture française by Skira. Minotaure 5 (1935): n.p.

38 This exhibition was transferred to Zurich (Kunsthaus) the same year and was shown in 1938 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York under the title Masters of Popular Painting: Modern Primitives of Europe and America.
“Ce refus de collaboration avec le grand public . . . , cette alliance avec une seule classe et basée sur le goût . . . Il n’a voulu reconnaître dans ses ancêtres que servilité dans leur ambition d’illustrer les hantises de l’époque. Sa résistance au sujet s’est muée bientôt en résistance à l’Objet: et son mépris de l’Objet l’a culbuté dans cette abstraction dont toute l’époque et dans tous les domaines ne va pas tarder à crever. . . . Le compromis sur lequel vivent et se déplacent Matisse, Léger, Picasso, Brancusi et tant d’autres qu’est-il sinon ceci: «le tableau n’éméut que parce qu’il est tableau; et il n’est tableau que dans la mesure où seuls les mobiles picturaux ont présidé, à l’exclusion de tous autres, à sa conception et sa fabrication.» . . . Ce qui fait que la peinture est rentrée sous sa tente et qu’elle n’en sortait, comme chez les dadaïstes par exemple . . . plus aptes à porter le feu chez l’adversaire, qu’à réveiller le feu en elle-même. Chez les autres, chez la majorité des Fauves elle est irrémédiablement demeurée conformiste. Chez les Cubistes, c’était une douairière fourbissant ses diadèmes, aveugle, étourdie au milieu des imprécations de «1914 et la suite.» . . . nous ne nous prenons plus aux pièges de ces révolutions qui ne sont que les voies de garage des authentiques révolutions; révolutions Fasciste, Hitlérienne, voire même Surréaliste n’ont rien à voir avec la Révolution. L’évidence révolutionnaire ne s’impose pour nous que dès le jour où le noir pourra être considéré comme blanc et le blanc devenu noir.” Jean Lurçat, “Lettre sur la peinture d’aujourd’hui,” Esprit, November 1932, 266, 267, 272–73.

Les Deux Aveugles, “Provisoire,” L’Intransigeant, April 7, 1930, 5, accessible online at http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k7928858/f5.image.r=L%E2%80%99Intransigeant..langEN.


Les Deux Aveugles, “Provisoire,” L’Intransigeant, November 18, 1929, 6, accessible online at http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k792745k/f6.image.r=L%E2%80%99Intransigeant..langEN.


André Gide, “A Few Reflections on the Disappearance of the Subject in Sculpture and Painting,” trans. Robert Sage for the English edition, Verve 1, no.1 (1937): 9. Tériade did not hesitate to paraphrase Gide’s remarks, correcting a phrase that the author borrowed from Oscar Wilde in order to enforce his own aesthetic views. Regardless of Gide’s intentions, Tériade’s intervention reveals his concern about the confusion in formalist thinking that Gide’s observation was capable of provoking. In his diary Gide recounted: “The Imagination imitates, it is the critical spirit that creates said Wilde in Intentions (1891). Of all Wilde’s aphorisms there is none that seems more paradoxical at first and less worthy of being taken into consideration . . . . What was my astonishment, my joy, to find, most unexpectedly, this same profound and fecund truth when thumbing at random through Diderot’s Oeuvres complètes—and set forth by him almost in the same terms: Imagination creates nothing, it imitates (Salon de 1767). I took pleasure in quoting this sentence opposite Wilde’s paradox in an article on the forsaking of the subject in the plastic arts. This morning, opening the first number of the sumptuous review Verve, in which that article appears, my eyes fall at once on the sentence: Imagination creates nothing, it invents. A zealous proofreader, too zealous, thought he was doing right to correct a text that was obviously faulty in his eyes.” Journal of December 15, 1937 in Justin O’Brien, The Journals of André Gide: 1928–1939, vol. 3 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 365.


Of course, considering Braque’s anti-realist regards, the reproductions of his works, as published in the same issue, were in practice part of the trompe d’œil technique, of the procedure of copying precisely—replicating realistically the original. Verve’s publication employed the complex technique of color héliogravure (Draiger Frères) that advanced the impression of the simulacrum while the great number of photographs that each issue contained—in respect to the American editors’ demands—heightened the inconsistency between text and image since leafing through Verve one got the wrong impression that it respected in practice all aspects of realist representation.

It is worth noting that both Picasso and Chagall are absent in the issues of Verve published before the outbreak of the war, although Tériade exalted their artistic production in the postwar issues of the magazine. For the external cultural policies of the Popular Front and Zervos’s reaction to the choice of the artists for the 1937 Ausstellung französischer Kunst der Gegenwart exhibition held in Berlin in collaboration with the Association française d’expansion et d’échanges artistiques, see Michèle C. Cone, “French Art of the Present in Hitler’s Berlin,” Art Bulletin 80, no.3 (September 1998): 555–67.

“On a vendu seulement 3.500 nos 4, c’est ce qui explique toute leur panique. Smart pense qu’à la mauvaise saison des printemps ils ne vendraient pas 2.000 nos 5. Résumé: vendu 14.000 nos 1, 5.000 nos 2, 5.000 nos 3, 3.500 nos 4 . . . .” Letter from Angèle Lamotte (Chicago, The Drake) to Tériade (Paris, 4 rue Férou), Tériade Papers, Musée Matisse, Le Cateau Cambrésis, France. “Une pièce officielle indiquant la volonté d’Esquire de se dégager de Verve a été officiellement signée et je l’ai fait aussi
légaliser. . . . Reste à trouver un ange nouveau.” Angèle Lamotte (Chicago, The Drake) to Tériade (Paris, 4 rue Férou), Tériade Papers, Musée Matisse, Le Cateau Cambrésis, France.

59 In fact, it is pertinent to observe that Greenberg intentionally refers to Cahiers d’art since Verve’s contribution to the color development of American modernism was in all respects uncontested. In fact, the American art critic published two commentaries on the postwar issues of Verve magazine discussing Picasso’s weakness as a colorist (issue “Couleur de Picasso,” Verve 5, no. 19/20, 1948) and Chagall’s illustrations for the bible with an explicit critical attitude towards their ability to contribute to modernism.