Tearing Up: Artists' Radical Uses of Paper

> What remains of the 'remain(s)' when
> it is pulled to pieces, torn into morsels?
> Jacques Derrida

Situating torn paper

What does it mean to make art out of torn-up paper? To use such an inexpensive material and inflict damage on it is to reject fine art values and embrace the throwaway and the ephemeral. In its sheer frugality and destructiveness, torn paper is art's degree zero, but in the hands of some artists and in the eyes of some beholders, it can attain high aesthetic and cultural value. Compared to canvas, wood and other materials, paper is readily available, affordable and easily torn by hand. Unlike the cutting of papers with scissors or a paper cutter, tearing brings the hand into direct contact with the paper; it diminishes the artist's control and ushers chance into the creative process.

Torn paper occupies a curiously ambivalent place in the history of art: it is surprisingly prevalent in Western art produced since the early twentieth century, but it remains largely under-researched as a distinct practice and as an art form. It has a long and distinguished history: the *Heian* period in Japan, which spanned the late eighth to the twelfth century AD, saw the emergence of a practice known as *chigiri-e*, which entailed tearing hand-made papers of different colours to create layered works of art, sometimes in conjunction with calligraphic writing.[1] The end result is often subtle and harmonious rather than disruptive.

The history of cutting and that of tearing are unsurprisingly close but intriguingly divergent in some key respects. The incorporation of gold and silver leaf makes the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance a form of collage *avant la lettre*, at least in their combination of different materials if not in their intent, which is largely devotional and not disruptive. Practices of cutting and pasting were widespread in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Britain: Adam Smyth has documented the extensive cutting and pasting of pages in the 'commonplace books' of Early Modern England, and as he remarks of Renaissance reading practices: 'Since a text was often imagined as an assemblage of pieces, which might be crumbled, or shredded, into its constituent parts, the act of cutting was always at least implicit'.[2] Whitney Trettien notes that the precisely cut and pasted 'harmonies' made by the Ferrar and Collett families at the Little Gidding workshop in the early seventeenth century relied heavily on women's labour.[3]

The wide popularity of scrapbooks in the nineteenth century brought practices of assembling and pasting into the popular imaginary and these creations, too, were predominantly the domain of women. That century also saw a massive rise in advertising posters that took over the streets of Europe's cities; Eugène Atget's photographs of turn-of-the-century Paris bear witness to this. In *The Arcades Project*, a monumental study of nineteenth-century Paris, Walter Benjamin writes of 'the advent of new velocities, which gave life an altered rhythm'. [4] As a key instance of this, he cites the advertising posters that had sprung up all over the capital in the nineteenth century. As he notes, the absence of laws regulating bill posting meant that 'one could wake up some morning to find one's window placarded'.[5] This modern urban phenomenon first made its way into fine art in the *papiers collés* (collages; literally 'glued papers') that Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso made in autumn 1912. By gluing cut-out pieces of newspaper, wallpaper, sheet music, faux wood-grain printed cloth and other mass-printed fragments into their artworks, they knowingly borrowed from vernacular practices and blurred traditional distinctions between 'high' and 'low' forms of art.

In the same decade, the use of torn rather than cut paper emerged as a distinct art practice, yet the place that tearing occupies in the history of art remains insufficiently researched. Starting in the 1910s and again from the early 1930s until the end of his life in 1966, Hans (also known as Jean) Arp produced numerous works to which he gave the overarching descriptor *papiers déchirés* (torn papers), as if to hint at a kinship with the *papiers collés* of Braque and Picasso. Indeed, his *papiers déchirés* are collages too, but their name emphasises the destructive act of tearing rather than the remedial one of gluing. Like the Cubists' collages, the *papiers déchirés* owe much to the scrapbook and the traditional popular practice of assembling fragments. Arp often worked in close collaboration with his partner Sophie Taeuber, and her background in applied arts fed into his own understanding of how craft can inform fine art. From then until today, torn papers have figured in the work of many high-profile artists, including Robert Motherwell, Lee Krasner, Sol LeWitt, Frank Auerbach, Jean-Michel Basquiat and others. In their hands, torn paper has acquired myriad significations that vary widely according to the circumstances of its production and reception. It undermines art's exchange value and embodies the idea of recyclability, yet despite its lo-fi aesthetic, the artistic practice of tearing paper can elicit profoundly emotional reactions.

Ki no Tsurayuki, Page from the *Ishiyama-gire* (dispersed volumes of the Anthology of the Thirty-Six Poets). Calligraphy attributed to Fujiwara no Sadanobu. (*Heian* Period, c. early-twelfth century), album leaf; ink on assembled dyed paper decorated with silver and gold. 131.8 × 44 cm. Charles Land Freer Endowment, Smithsonian Institution (F1969.4)

The impulse to destroy, which manifested itself in many guises throughout the twentieth century, is a key element of torn papers. In *Experimental Painting* (1970), Stephen Bann proposes destruction as one of four main tendencies in modern and contemporary art alongside construction, abstraction and reduction; while he associates destruction with Dada and Surrealism, he locates its roots in the Romantic movement.[6] He analyses Giacometti's drawings and Gustav Metzger's use of acid to burn holes in nylon sheets, but does not discuss the tearing of papers.[7] In a comprehensive study of iconoclasm in art, Dario Gamboni does, however, acknowledge the tearing of commercial and political posters by Raymond Hains, Mimmo Rotella and others in the 1950s and 1960s alongside other destructive techniques inflicted in the name of art.[8] Without doubt, tearing deserves its place on the roster of acts of artistic vandalism alongside erasure (Rauschenberg's *Erased De Kooning Drawing*), setting canvases on fire (Yves Klein, Joan Miró), slicing canvases with a knife (Lucio Fontana), urinating on them (Andy Warhol), shooting them in ways planned (Niki de Saint Phalle) and unsolicited (Dorothy Podber firing a gun at Warhol's *Marilyn* paintings), and the host of provocations conducted by the Fluxus group in the 1960s and 70s. As early as the mid-1950s, the Gutai group in Japan had staged an array of radical performances and happenings. Saburo Murakami, one of its members, produced *kami-yaburi* (paper breakthrough) artworks in which he used his entire body to burst through large sheets of kraft paper held taut by frames.[9] This explosive practice has nothing in common with the carefully composed *chigiri-e* paper artworks of *Heian*-era Japan – nothing, that is, apart from the tearing of paper. In the art of the past century, torn paper frequently connotes damage, yet it remains to be seen whether iconoclasm is the most fitting lens through which to consider this practice.

Material Considerations

To dismiss torn paper art as a merely destructive act would be to neglect the fact that its uses are multiple and its significance transcends its humble materials. Arp wrote that his adoption of tearing paper was his way of coming to terms with 'the decomposition, the decay of all human creation'.[10] It seems appropriate to consider the essential conditions governing art made by tearing paper, and this begins with the paper itself. Seen alongside other artistic materials such as the painter's canvas or the sculptor's stone, paper may seem ephemeral and provisional, imbued with the impermanence of a sketch or a scribble, always at risk of degenerating and sustaining damage. Certain kinds of paper are particularly susceptible to tearing, whereas others are much more resistant. One method of manufacturing artists' paper with uncut 'deckle' edges is to tear large sheets apart; paper of this sort foregrounds the capacity to be torn as an intrinsic quality of the material.[11]

Deckle edge of a sheet of 320 gsm cotton rag paper.

Most artworks made from torn papers share some defining characteristics: unlike painting or drawing, which both usually require a utensil, the tear engages the hand directly, making the torn paper a palpably physical vestige of the manual contact that gave rise to it. We can therefore think of the shreds of paper as indexical traces or remnants of that act. Like sculpting, tearing can be subtractive or additive: tearing carves smaller forms from a larger mass, and every scrap of torn paper contains a vestige of the larger sheet from which it was torn. Yet, by combining torn fragments into a new composition, the artist allows a new work to take shape by a process of accretion, like a sculptor adding clay onto an armature. The lack of control implicit in tearing a piece of paper makes every torn paper a collaboration between the artist's conscious will and the forces of chance that dictate the specific form the tear will take. The tear is also always double, or multiple: whenever we tear a paper, we create two or more pieces from a single sheet. Whether we retain just one shred, or both, or all, an essential condition of the tear resides in these relations of addition and subtraction, singularity and plurality.

1. See, for example, Ki no Tsurayuki, *Ishiyama-gire*, created in 1150 AD. A page of this work incorporating collaged torn paper and calligraphic writing is reproduced in Freya Gowrley, *Fragmentary Forms: A New History of Collage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024), p. 48.

2. Adam Smyth, '"Shreds of holinesse": George Herbert, Little Gidding, and Cutting Up Texts in Early Modern England', *English Literary Renaissance*, 42.3 (2012), 452–81 (p. 461).

3. Whitney Trettien, *Cut/Copy/Paste: Fragments from the History of Bookwork* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2021), especially chapter 1, 'Cut: Little Gidding's Feminist Printing'.

4. Walter Benjamin, 'B [Fashion]', in *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 62–81 (p. 65).

5. Ibid., p. 65.

6. Stephen Bann, *Experimental Painting: Construction, Abstraction, Destruction, Reduction* (London: Studio Vista, 1970), p. 53.

7. Ibid., pp. 59–62.

8. Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997, repr. 2018), p. 326.

9. See Shimabuku, 'Unlimited World / Murakami Saburo', Institute of Contemporary Art Kyoto, 29.01.2022, <https://icakyoto.art/en/realkyoto/reviews/86216/> [accessed 5 January 2026].

10. Jean Arp, 'Collages', in *Collected French Writings: Poems, Essays, Memoirs*, ed. by Marcel Jean, trans. by Joachim Neugroschel (London: Calder & Boyars, 1974; repr. John Calder, London and Riverrun Press: New Jersey, 2001), pp. 328–29 (p. 329).

11. Historical hand-made paper is not torn, but deckled by virtue of the imperfectly sealing frame; since this was seen as an imperfection, it invited the subsequent cut of trimming. My thanks to one of the anonymous external readers for this insight. The paper manufactured today at St. Cuthberts Mill in Somerset, England, acquires two natural deckle edges on the paper machine as the paper dries and shrinks away from the taped edges of the cylinder mould cover. The other two sides of 4-deckle paper sheets are torn by hand. See 'Beauty of Deckle Edges', <https://www.stcuthbertsmill.com/advice-centre/?id=1008> [accessed 22 December 2025].

To achieve a clearer idea of how torn papers operate and what they might mean, it is worth exploring some salient case studies of this technique and considering how they have shaped artistic practice as well as the role of the spectator.

Elysium, Radium and a Piece of Pork: Cuts and Tears in Dada Poetry and Collage

The very choice of paper as a support brings artworks closer to the domain of writing; the tearing of paper as opposed to other materials calls to mind textual practices that also rely on cutting and tearing. In France and elsewhere in Europe, it used to be common – and is still not unheard of – for books to be sold with unopened (i.e. uncut) pages that require the reader to cut or tear them apart; the respected French publisher José Corti is still known for its books with uncut pages.[12] This proximity to the realms of both art and writing is a distinguishing feature of art made with torn paper. On a figurative level, words denoting the act of tearing are richly evocative; indeed, references to tearing abound in modern philosophical, art critical and theoretical writings. For Georges Bataille, our inner experience is governed by a series of ruptures; he writes that '[e]xperience itself had torn me to shreds, and my powerlessness to respond finished tearing them'.[13] Maurice Blanchot, for his part, undoes the traditional understanding of the book as a continuous totality; instead, he posits the book as an absence, and writing as not only lacking in closure but also fragmented and torn; in *The Infinite Conversation*, deploying appropriately indeterminate syntax and punctuation, he writes:

> The absence of the book, always diverging, always without a relationship of presence with itself, and in such a way that it is never received in its fragmentary plurality by a single reader in the present of a reading – unless, at the limit, with the present torn apart, dissuaded – [14]

A prototype of this kind of fragmented, multi-voiced, disruptive text can be traced to Zurich in 1917. As the First World War raged in the distance, a motley group of artists, writers and dancers known collectively as Dada created angry, perplexing works of art and staged rowdy performances that reflected the insanity of those times. Arp, one of the group's founding members, made experimental poems by interspersing lines of his own creation with diverse textual fragments from ready-made sources such as newspaper headlines and advertisements. He made no attempt to blend these disparate shreds into a coherent whole, as if his intention were to discomfit the reader. The opening lines of his poem 'World Wonder' read:

> send cards immediately here is a piece of the pig all
> 12 pieces put together pasted down flat should give
> the distinct lateral form of a cutting sheet amazingly
> cheap buys everything no. 2 the robber effective safety
> apparatus useful and funny made of hardwood with
> banging device no. 2 the dwarfs are tied from their
> stakes they open the dovecotes and thunder claps the
> daughters of elysium and radium fasten the rhinewhirls
> into bouquets [...] no. 4 astonished everything is
> astonished from the herbarium rises the colour-coloured
> crocodarium that we assembled[15]

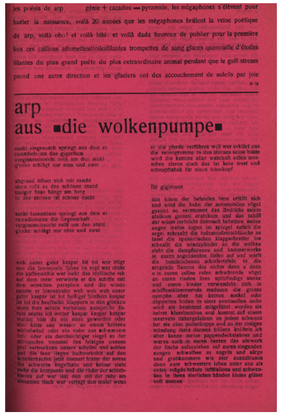
The references to pasting, assembling and to an explosive 'banging device' call to mind the activities of the Zurich Dadaists, who made primitive masks out of cardboard and paper, and whose performances at the Cabaret Voltaire were often boisterous, but they also point towards Arp's own subversive strategies in creating this poem. He has made no obvious distinction between the borrowed elements and those of his own creation, but simply allows them to coexist in the same textual space. The reference to 'the daughters of elysium' derives from Schiller's poem 'An die Freude' (Ode to Joy), which served as the basis for the choral finale of the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The opening reference to the 'piece of the pig' deflates this Romantic reference with Dadaist irreverence, while the pairing of 'elysium' and 'radium' is a characteristic Arpian touch: the orthographic similarity of these two disparate words creates a superficial sense of familial resemblance that Arp exploits with humour.[16]

In a broader, figurative sense too, cutting and tearing often inhabit Arp's poetic practice: he frequently excised portions of his longer poems and redeployed them with modifications that transform their lineation, typography, title, and sometimes even their language of expression. The visual and verbal are never far apart in his work: in Dada journals and independently published volumes, his poems often appeared alongside his own woodcuts whose edges, alternately smooth and ragged, flaunt the imperfections of working with a chisel. A notable example is the *Anthologie Dada* (1919), for which he made the cover image and contributed poems from his as yet unpublished volume *Die Wolkenpumpe* (The Cloud Pump). The cover woodcut is an

Dada 4/5: Anthologie Dada (Zurich, 1919), with cover image and poems by Hans Arp.

early example of what Arp termed his 'definitive forms', abstract distillations whose potential he had discovered by chance after gazing at broken-off branches, roots and stones on the shore of Lake Maggiore. [17] The pronounced striations of the woodgrain and the irregular density of ink give some of the printed edges a distinctly ragged appearance that Arp's irregular forms accentuate.

The idea of cutting or tearing applies to his poetic strategies too, albeit in ways that are less immediately obvious. The *Cloud Pump* poems that appeared in the *Anthologie Dada* are printed in dense, serried blocks in two columns with squared-off margins that echo the physical appearance of Early Modern printed



books. But beneath this orderly presentation, they are full of disjuncture: Arp tears words and sentences from their conventional order and context and reforms them haphazardly into unexpected conflations. The total absence of punctuation or upper-case letters may make the text appear cohesive on the page, but it incurs a reading process that is full of fits and starts as the reader is repeatedly forced to stop and re-read the words in search for coherent meaning. Unlike his peers Hugo Ball, Kurt Schwitters and Raoul Hausmann, Arp did not break language down beyond the unit of the word, which retains its wholeness even in his most experimental poems; but he actively welcomed misprints, errors of transcription and other accidents. Referring to *The Cloud Pump*, he remarks: 'I wrote these poems in hardly legible handwriting, so that the printer would be forced to bring his imagination into play and participate poetically in deciphering my text.'[18] At times like this, his poetic practice anticipates the relinquishing of control that we find in his torn paper artworks. Indeed, his poetic experiments with chance emboldened him to apply the aleatory to an equal or even greater extent in his visual art. He later acknowledged how instrumental his experimental poems had been, specifically for his torn papers:

> The collection *Die Wolkenpumpe* contains a good number of poems that have affinities with the automatic poems of surrealism; like the latter, they were directly transcribed with no reflection or revision. [...] But these 'cloud pumps' are not just automatic writings, they actually anticipate my *papiers déchirés*, in which I gave free rein to 'reality' and 'chance'.[19]

The embracing of chance underpinned Arp's most defining artworks, and tearing played a key part in that. Prior to his adoption of tearing, his visual art was characterised predominantly by its precision. In isolation and with his partner, Sophie Taeuber, he made rigorously geometric paper and cardboard collages in a horizontal-vertical grid format that eschew figuration and the techniques of fine art. In making these works, the artists strove for anonymity and sought to eliminate all traces of the artist's individuality; for this reason, they used a paper cutter to produce meticulously precise edges. As Arp stated, 'even scissors [...] were rejected, because they betrayed too easily the presence of the hand'.[20] A strict ethical stance underpinned this uncompromising approach to materials and methods: they believed that the artist should avoid ostentation. These works employed mostly low-cost materials such as paper, and they were not signed, since the artists wished to hark back to the medieval artists' guilds that emphasised collective creation over individual brilliance. Precision and simplified, clean-edged forms also characterised Arp's 'object-language' reliefs of the 1920s. At the end of that decade, however, the workings of chance prompted a radical change of direction.

The Laws of Chance and the death of the picture

Arp's adoption – around 1930 – of tearing papers as a distinct artistic practice went hand in hand with his acceptance of what he called 'the laws of chance'. This highly original form of output emerged at a time when other artists too were questioning the viability of art made by traditional means. In the late 1920s, Joan Miró proclaimed his intention to 'assassinate painting', and the violence implicit in this view resonated with the group of dissident artists and writers on the fringes of Surrealism who created the journal *Documents* in 1929. One of its founders, Georges Bataille, wrote short but hugely influential texts on

12. A 1983 article in *Le Monde* celebrated Corti's books with unopened pages as a sign of its 'veneration of reading, understood as a joy that has to be earned'. Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, '"Souvenirs désordonnés", de José Corti au temps des coupe-papier', Le Monde, 1 July 1983 <https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1983/07/01/souvenirs-desordonnes-de-jose-corti-au-temps-des-coupe-papier_3078541_1819218.html> [accessed 6 March 2026]. Many of its books now have cut pages, whereas the lesser-known edition Du Lérot (dulerot.fr) still publishes almost exclusively uncut pages.

13. Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. and intro by Leslie Anne Boldt (New York: SUNY Press, 1988), p. 7.

14. Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. and foreword by Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 427.

15. Hans Arp, 'Weltwunder', in *Gesammelte Gedichte: Band 1: Gedichte 1903–1939*, ed. by Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach and Peter Schifferli (Zürich: Die Arche; Wiesbaden: Limes, 1963) p. 47; my translation.

16. Coincidentally, in 1917 when Arp wrote this poem, radium was beginning to kill female factory workers who painted luminous watch dials in Orange, New Jersey. It was some years, however, before the scandal of the 'Radium Girls' made the fatal toxicity of radium known to a wider public. See Claudia Clark, *Radium Girls: Women and Industrial Health Reform, 1910–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

17. Hans Arp, 'Sophie Taeuber', in *Unsern täglichen Traum: Erinnerungen, Dichtungen und Betrachtungen aus den Jahren 1914–1954* (Zurich: Die Arche, 1955, 1995), pp. 9–19 (p. 12).

18. Hans Arp, 'Wegweiser', in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Hans Arp: Zweiklang*, ed. by Ernst Scheidegger (Zürich: Arche, 1960), pp. 78–82 (p. 80). My translation.

19. Hans Arp, untitled text, in *Collected French Writings*, ed. by Jean, p. 342.

20. Ibid., p. 244.

formless and base materialism that saw art as symptomatic of an active, disruptive force in matter.[21] His fellow editors Michel Leiris and Carl Einstein devoted articles to Arp that identify a destructive drive in his work.[22] Personal and artistic crises at the end of the 1920s drove Arp to embrace the accidental: he began more systematically to tear paper rather than cutting it, producing works in which chance played a significant part. The terms in which he later described his abstract *papiers déchirés* of the early 1930s speak to a deep philosophical and ethical commitment to an ascetic art practice that not only rejected figuration but explored the liminal area where form blends into formlessness. This was no mere stylistic exercise but a means of expressing visually the transitoriness of life. As he put it, 'the death of the picture no longer made me despair. In creating the picture I began to try to incorporate its disappearance and its death, and included them in the composition.'[23]

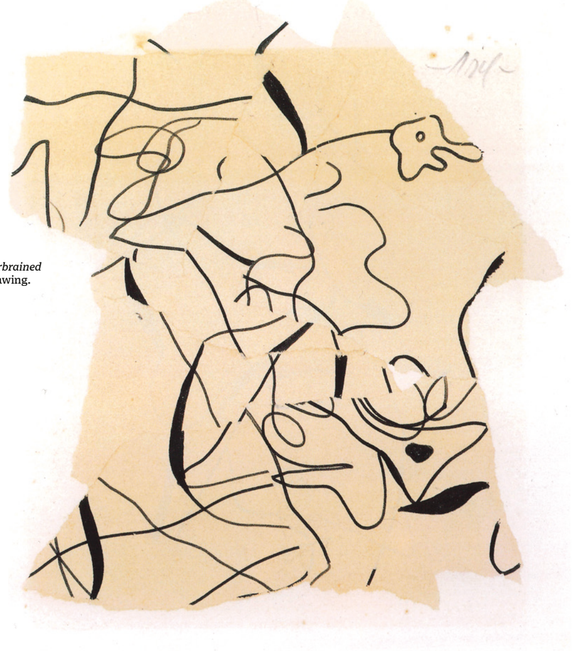
Hans Arp (Jean Arp), *According to the Laws of Chance*, 1933. Sugar paper on plyboard. 15.9 × 17.3 cm.

Drawing a link between Arp's abstract *papiers déchirés* and Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Briony Fer suggests that the stains and blemishes that mark the paper as it ages could be interpreted either as beauty spots or as the markings of death. As Fer puts it, the *papiers déchirés* 'mark out, in visual terms, the terrain of the death drive'.[24] Freud intuited that the pleasure principle must be accompanied by an instinct whose aim is a return to a state of inorganic non-existence. The *Documents* group, for their part, identified a primal impulse in Arp's work: Carl Einstein depicted Arp compulsively repeating 'the rites of prehistoric childhood' and noted how his works 'decompose psychically outside form'.[25] Indeed, on close inspection, the frayed edges of Arp's torn papers suggest a process of dissolution, a descent into base matter, the inexorable disintegration of forms returning to dust.

A prematurely blemished support is a feature of many of these *papiers déchirés*: Arp used thick paper that, when torn, released its fibres. He made no attempt to brush these off but instead incorporated them into the fabric of the artwork. In some cases, he applied glue liberally to the support and moved the torn pieces around before allowing them to rest in their definitive place. As they moved across the support, the torn papers would shed their fibres, creating a stained surface of grainy smudges. With their profusions of similar but unique forms and their indeterminate scale, these *papiers déchirés* depict nothing, but suggest simultaneously the infinitely small and the immeasurably large. The clouds of fibres surrounding the torn pieces of paper might equally well evoke motes of dust falling to the floor or the nebula of dying stars in the night sky.

The Joy of Destroying: Arp's *dessins déchirés (torn drawings)*

If tearing pieces of blank paper implies wilful damage, then ripping up a complete artwork in order to make a new one from its shreds may seem to be the ultimate act of vandalism. Yet philosophers from Hegel to Žižek have reflected on the nature of the remainder and its place within systems of thought. In *Glas* (1974; translated as *Clang*, 2021), Jacques Derrida picks up the leftover scraps of Hegel's philosophical theory and interrogates their value.[26] These marginal, non-conceptual scraps have the potential to disrupt the apparent unity and coherence of texts



Hans Arp, *L'Ecervelé (The Scatterbrained One)* (1934). Collage and torn drawing. 45.7 × 37.2 cm.

and in turn reveal the instability of meaning itself. Derrida's own text assembles fragments incorporating extensive citations from Hegel and a highly experimental text by the French writer Jean Genet. In turn, Genet's text is itself an assemblage of two fragments salvaged from destruction; one of them speculates on the implications of tearing up a work by Rembrandt and flushing it down the toilet. As Genet suggests, even after the destruction of the physical object, an essence of the image would endure as a remnant of the non-demonstrable truth that the work once embodied, a truth that transcends market value.[27]

Arp's tearing of his own earlier drawings constitutes one of his most radically destructive practices, and it relates to a broader tendency in his work to which he himself referred repeatedly as 'the joy of destroying'.[28] There are photographs of him in the garden of his home in Locarno burning his own drawings, and on one occasion, he stole into Tristan Tzara's room to retrieve one of his own collages that he had given his friend, and tore it in two.[29] In *L'Ecervelé* (1934), the forces of damage and destruction become the basis of a new artwork that arises from the torn fragments.

The adjective *écervelé*, meaning scatterbrained, has its etymological roots in having one's brain (cerveau) removed. Both of these associations are meaningful upon inspecting the work: the torn pieces of the original drawing have been strewn across the support, and the process that Arp has enacted on the work calls to mind a surgical operation that has fundamentally affected the patient's character. The original line drawing has been reduced to fragments, but the reordering of the salvaged pieces has established new connections: in the upper portion of the torn drawing, four torn fragments have been relocated to create a new continuous line that ends in a bird-like head in profile. The damage inflicted on the original work is at least partially redeemed by the reconfiguration of the shreds: a new network of lines replaces the original one, and the torn pieces have clearly been repositioned with some care. In this example, then, the tearing process holds the forces of creation and destruction in a fragile balance, in that the original drawing has been altered and damaged but not destroyed. Yet questions remain: to what extent does the careful reshaping of the earlier work allow the laws of chance to co-exist alongside the artist's conscious intervention? And what are the respective exchange values of the damaged original and the reconfigured one that has replaced it?[30]

Scraps of Meaning: *affiches lacérées* and French Politics

A different set of considerations comes into play when contemplating art made with torn paper deriving from a range of ephemeral, low-cost, mass-printed textual sources. In 1961, under the title 'La France déchirée' (France torn), artists Raymond Hains and Jacques Villeglé exhibited works that they had made individually and collectively since 1949 by tearing layers of posters from hoardings on the streets of Paris and reassembling the shreds in unaltered form onto canvases. The posters in question ranged widely in nature, encompassing advertisements for products, concerts and attractions as well as political and election posters. Villeglé claimed that dislocating the torn poster fragments from their original context rendered them anonymous; from this came the label *le lacéré anonyme* (Anonymous Lacerate) that he, Hains and the other practitioners of torn poster art used for their work.[31] According to Villeglé, ripping the fragments from the setting in which they conveyed meaning voided them of their expressive content. Similarly, Tom McDonough warns us not to be misled by the ostensible similarity of form between the torn posters and gestural forms of abstract art:

> [t]heir lacerations and tatters, through which one superimposed image intruded upon another, resembled nothing so much as the postwar French abstraction of *art informel* with its emphasis on expressive brushwork; now however that expressionism was emptied of all intention, rendered absurd through parody.[32]

Some scholars have argued to the contrary that, for all its putative detachment and anonymity, art made by tearing papers does indeed reveal the artist's affective and political investment. Indeed, many of Villeglé's and Hains' works have an unmistakable energy that calls to mind a form of gestural abstraction made without the intervention of brushes or paints. In a similar vein, discussing Jasper Johns' deployment of tearing and folding alongside painting in some of his works on paper from the 1950s, Catherine Craft finds parallels between his torn papers and the physicality of Abstract Expressionism. Noting the rhythmic quality of the rips in the paper, similar yet not identical to one another, she observes that 'tearing becomes in Johns' hands the "paperly" surrogate for a brushstroke'.[33]

A distinguishing feature of Hains' and Villeglé's torn posters is their inclusion of words, or more typically, fragments of words. Villeglé acknowledged the importance that the printed word had for him, even when its meaning is unclear. Here, he speaks of his discovery of Cubist collages, not in the museums of Paris but reproduced in books he found in the city's bookshops during the Second World War:

> Typography is something that speaks, even if you don't understand it, and the signs spoke to me because I recognised them as letters, as signs, as having a meaning. I don't try to read the words as one would read a text; I see them as part of the construction of the painting. There is the sense of volume even if you don't completely understand the space.[34]

21. Georges Bataille, 'Joan Miró: Peintures récentes', *Documents*, 7 (1930), 398–403. Reprinted in *Documents, vol. 2: année 1930*, 398–403 (p. 399).

22. Michel Leiris, 'Exposition Hans Arp (Galerie Goemans)', *Documents*, 6 (1929), 340–42. Carl Einstein, 'L'Enfance néolithique', in *Documents*, 2ème année, 8 (1931), 35–43.

23. Arp, 'And So the Circle Closed', in *Collected French Writings*, ed. by Jean, pp. 245–7 (p. 246). I have slightly amended Joachim Neugroschel's translation.

24. Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 73.

25. Carl Einstein, 'L'Enfance néolithique', in *Documents vol. 2: année 1930*, p. 475.

26. Jacques Derrida, *Clang*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and David Wills (University of Minnesota Press, 1021).

27. Jean Genet, *What Remains of a Rembrandt Torn into Four Equal Pieces and Flushed Down the Toilet*, trans. by Randolph Hough (Madras: Hanuman Books, 1988).

28. See Emmanuel Guigon, 'Le Grand sadique à tout casser', in *Art is Arp: Dessins, Collages, Reliefs, Sculptures, Poésie* (Exh. Cat. Strasbourg: Les Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg / Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, 2008), pp. 256–60.

29. The magazine *du* reproduced a photograph of Arp with the caption 'Hans Arp burns worthless drawings' In *du. Kulturelle Monatsschrift*, 270, (August 1963), p. 8.

30. The inflationary potential of deliberate damage on the exchange value of art resurfaced in recent years in the high-profile case of Banksy's painting *Girl with Balloon*, which was mechanically shredded just seconds after it was sold at auction in 2018. Subsequently renamed *Love is in the Bin*, it was resold in 2021 for over eighteen times its original auction value. See Nadeem Badshah, 'Banksy sets auction record with £18.5m sale of shredded painting', *The Guardian*, 14 October 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/oct/14/banksy-auction-record-shredded-painting-love-is-in-the-bin> [accessed 6 January 2026].

31. Jacques Villeglé, 'L'Affiche lacérée: ses successives immixtions dans les arts', *Leonardo*, 2.1 (1969), 33–44 (p. 33).

32. Tom McDonough, 'Raymond Hains' "France in Shreds" and the Politics of *Décollage*', *Representations*, 90.1 (Spring 2005), 75–97 (p. 77).

33. Catherine Craft, '"Cut, Tear, Scrape, Erase": Notes on Paper in Twentieth-Century Drawing', *Master Drawings*, 50.2, *Modern & Contemporary Drawings* (Summer 2012), 161–86 (p. 176).

34. 'The Artist Project: Jacques Villeglé', The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmhVj__-cfH0> [accessed 23 November 2025].

Jacques Villeglé, *'Oui' – Rue Notre-Dame-des-champs* (22 October 1958). Lacerated posters mounted on canvas, 68 × 100 cm.

This is a curious and seemingly paradoxical understanding of the lexical fragments: on the one hand, Villeglé acknowledges them as conveyors of meaning, yet he sees them as elements of the spatial organisation of the canvas rather than as semantically charged words. He claims that the words' displacement from their original context into the setting of the torn paper artwork enacts a transformation and an annulling of their political content. For him, this process turns the letters into 'an antidote to propaganda because [they] have been made happily unintelligible'.[35] True though this may be, the shredded words and fragmented images of Villeglé's and Hains' posters still participate in political discourses in France after the Second World War and during the wars in Indochina and Algeria that led to their decolonisation.

Poster in support of the French constitutional referendum (1958). Designed by Le Flaguais-Hess. Printed by Imprimerie Havas.

'Oui' – Rue Notre-Dame-des-champs, made on 22 October 1958, provides an instance of Villeglé's dislocation of both words and images torn from sources that were unmistakably political in nature. The artwork's blue, white and red colour scheme hints knowingly at the French tricolore, and the artist's precise dating of the work, combined with the identifiable parts of its torn source material, allows us to trace it to an important moment in French political history during the Algerian War of Independence, then in its fourth year. A military coup in Algiers by right-wing French dissidents in May 1958 had brought 67-year-old Charles de Gaulle out of retirement, and in a bid to resolve the tensions in Algeria and appease his critics in France, he called a referendum to propose a new French constitution. In the run-up to the referendum, posters had sprung up around Paris alternately advocating a 'yes' and a 'no' vote. The right wing saw the referendum as an opportunity to resolve the 'Algerian problem', whereas the French Communist Party called for an immediate end to the war in Algeria and expressed strong opposition to what it saw as the imposition of a military dictatorship in France. The referendum was passed by a significant majority, marking the beginning of the Fifth Republic.

Villeglé's torn poster artwork makes effective use of its source materials: these are primarily posters related to the referendum whose visual power, far from being diminished, appears all the stronger by virtue of their torn, layered presentation. The eye is drawn to the large letter i in the central panel. Despite the extensive tearing adjacent to that letter, we can make out the titular word 'oui', since the outer edges of the letters o and u are just perceptible. There is one clearly identifiable visual sign, a black hand and forearm held aloft against a blue background close to the right edge. Its original source, a poster urging French people to vote in favour of the new constitution, depicted twelve white, brown and black arms raised aloft under the slogan 'Oui à la France'. Torn from that context, the hand is no longer a visual sign for solidarity and optimism, but one of isolation and desperation, a drowning person's plea for help. Villeglé's use of layers of posters also enacts a clever scrambling of the printed word: most of the letter o of the word 'oui' is obscured by scraps of different posters; on one of them, a black upper-case letter N is clearly visible. For Jean-Marc Huitorel, this negates the affirmation of the original poster: 'Villeglé [...] gives its rightful place to this anonymous collective that expresses itself on the walls of the city, one that, by slashing the YES, produces a NO.'[36]

Hannah Feldman discusses Hains' and Villeglé's landmark 1961 exhibition in the context of changing trends in electoral advertising and newspaper journalism in France in the 1950s and early 1960s. She draws the conclusion that the critical potential of Hains' and Villeglé's *décollages* does not lie primarily in their capacity to critique specific historical events, but in the ways they question the capability of elected public institutions 'to reflect – rather than dictate – the experience of a nation and its people'. For Feldman, the *décollages* also highlight the potential of language – 'that specific variety of language that Sartre had denigrated as poetic or non-representational language' – to become a site of political action in its own right.[37]

35. Villeglé, 'L'Affiche lacérée', p. 33.

36. Jean-Marc Huitorel, 'Jacques Villeglé', in *Documents d'artistes Bretagne*. <https://ddabretagne.org/en/artists/jacques-villegle/oeuvres/page13> [accessed 22 July 2025]. My translation.

37. Hannah Feldman, *From a Nation Torn: Decolonizing Art and Representation in France, 1945–1962* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 140.

Drawings without Drawing: Sol LeWitt's Minimalism

Yet even when they are entirely devoid of lettering, colour or graphic markings, torn paper artworks can still be a powerfully expressive medium. In the 1970s, American Minimalist Sol LeWitt produced a series of artworks entitled '$100 works', thus named because they were intended to be accessible to a wider range of possible buyers. This sum was the maximum price at which they were to be sold; after his death, commercial galleries and auction houses were quick to lift this restriction. For the works in question, LeWitt employed a rigorously minimalist approach, almost always using a single sheet of paper for each work and engaging in minimal interventions that consisted solely of folding, cutting or tearing paper. In 1966, he began creating art out of folding and then flattening out sheets of paper to reveal horizontal-vertical grids made entirely without drawing.

From 1971 to 1975, he made his *Rip Drawings*, which will be the focus of our attention. The decision to tear is all the more remarkable given LeWitt's previous adherence to making art with cubes and straight lines. In stylistic terms, the *Rip Drawings* are diametrically opposed to the marked, layered, damaged and colourful surfaces of Hains' and Villeglé's torn posters. Whereas the latter engage directly with the socio-cultural sphere and political debates, LeWitt's creations appear to inhabit a much more intimate and self-enclosed realm. Yet, in a deeper sense, they are all connected by their criticism of art's commodification. Hains and Villeglé do this by recuperating found materials of low quality that had a previous existence and were always intended to be disposable; their alchemy consists in transporting these ephemeral, damaged shreds into the realm of fine art, where they become not only works of art but original ones at that. LeWitt's drawings reflect what Jason Rulnick terms LeWitt's 'own economic model, inspired by democracy and an anti-capitalist spirit of the 1960s'.[38] In their different ways, LeWitt on the one hand and Hains and Villeglé on the other focus more or less explicitly on the relationship between the fine art market and what it excludes: Hains and Villeglé do this by turning to the advertising billboard as the site of a kind of social and economic contestation, and letting it invade the domain of 'high art'; LeWitt carries out his sabotage on the values of the art market by evacuating that domain almost entirely.

Sol LeWitt, *Fold Drawing* (1974). Folded paper, 69.9 × 49.5 cm.

LeWitt's drawings are a provocation, and not only in the challenge they pose to the institutions of art; they also test the limits of what can legitimately be called a drawing. His *Rip Drawings* are devoid of any graphic marks, apart from his signature and a number preceded by an upper-case R, standing for rip, written in pencil along the lower edge. On the verso, also in pencil, some bear the instruction 'Not to be sold for more than $100', which also serves as a manifesto of sorts and an umbrella term for this category of art. His choice of the term 'drawing' for such a minimal form calls to mind the etymological source of the word, derived from the Old English term *dragan*, with its more physical meaning of pulling or dragging something.

Working within such limited parameters, LeWitt explored a remarkably wide range of variations: the drawings deploy single sheets of paper of different textures and thicknesses in various colours; they experiment with diverse kinds of tear, from the ragged-edged to the straight and precise, depending on whether he tore free-hand or used a ruler to guide the tear. Unlike the other torn papers discussed here, most of LeWitt's are not collages, as they dispense with the support and instead consist of a single layer of paper.[39] In rare instances, he departed from the practice of using a single sheet; for *R179* (1974), he arranged fifteen sheets of black paper, each of which had been torn on one, two, three or four sides and mounted them in rows on white paper.[40] This principle of variations on a theme extends to some of the simpler Rip Drawings made using a single square sheet of paper: R89, from 1973, consists of three vertical rips that divide the sheet into four strips of approximately equal dimensions. These strips were then torn horizontally: four times, then three, two and one. The grain of the paper allows the vertical rips a greater degree of precision than the horizontals, some of which are joyfully off-kilter.

Those *Rip Drawings* like R89 that consist of a single sheet with intersecting tears are inscribed with a particular kind of temporality, since they invite us to reconstruct the order in which the pieces were torn. *R78*, for instance, must have begun with its vertical tear that splits the square in two. Then LeWitt must have torn each half across the middle, creating four approximate squares. He now made two vertical rips in the upper half, and two roughly horizontal rips in the lower half. Curiously, these last two rise towards the centre, causing a slight disturbance to the otherwise strong horizontal-vertical emphasis throughout the piece. They also make us wonder if they were torn in tandem, such is the similarity of their upward curve. With art as minimal as this, the finest nuances and narrowest margins become significant. LeWitt stated that tearing paper represented 'another way of making grids without drawing lines'. [41] But as this work

38. Jason Rulnick, 'Introduction', in *Sol Lewitt: Not to be Sold for More than $100: Folds, Rips + Maps* (New York: Radius Books, 2020), pp. 9–10 (p. 9).

39. For the purposes of gallery and museum exhibitions, the *Rip Drawings* are typically mounted and framed.

40. The work is reproduced in in *Sol Lewitt: Not to be Sold for More than $100*, p. 113.

41. LeWitt's words are cited by Dieter Schwarz in conversation with James Barron, 'Sol LeWitt R Series: The Truth is Funny / Zoom with Dieter Schwarz', online video recording, YouTube, 8 February 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCrnjW-m_OM&t=1958s> [accessed 6 March 2026].

Sol LeWitt, *Rip Drawing (R78)* (1972). Ripped white paper, 60 × 60 cm.

shows, the decision to tear rather than fold the paper introduces subtle deviations that generate a heightened visual interest. The drama really starts when tearing takes him 'off-grid'.

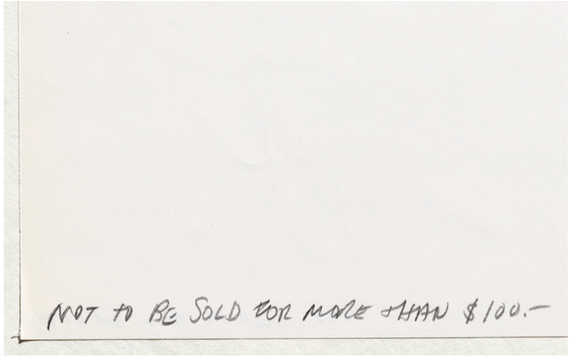
Besides illustrating myriad methods of tearing paper, the *Rip Drawings* also engage with different permutations of display, and as a result they engage the spectator in contrasting ways. On most occasions, LeWitt gave or sold the drawings to their recipients in an envelope, inviting them to work out how to reassemble the pieces into the original order. It was then left to the owner, or the framer, to decide how to mount them, making them participants in the creation and display of the work.[42]

Sol LeWitt, *Rip Drawing (R89)* (1973).
Ripped paper, 34.3 × 34.3 cm.

Of course, the owner also had the option of leaving the shreds where they were, in the envelope, out of sight.[43] To this extent, of all the exponents of torn paper art, LeWitt's approach is the most closely aligned with the values of Conceptual Art, in that the underlying idea rather than the finished artwork was the defining statement. Indeed, the artwork need not even have a material existence at all, but could remain as nothing more than a set of instructions. As he put it: 'Ideas may also be stated with numbers, photographs, or words or any way the artist chooses, the form being unimportant'.[44]

In some instances, the *Rip Drawings* were clearly intended to function in serial form: R371, R370 and R374 all use the same shade of blue paper in roughly similar dimensions.[45] All three have the approximate shape of a trapezium, with sloping sides, a short top edge and a long lower one. Each of the works has a combination of straight and torn sides, but the number of torn sides differs in each case. Individually and collectively, these works create an intriguing counterpoint rhythm of precision and disorder, control and chance, the torn edges upsetting the order of their geometry. In other cases, LeWitt tore two or more entire shapes out of a single large sheet of paper, allowing the resultant pieces to be considered as individual artworks or as a series of related works.

From 1974 to 1979, LeWitt began cutting portions out of paper maps and aerial photographs of cityscapes. Curiously, he continued to refer to these as *Rip Drawings*, even though they were neither ripped nor drawn on.[46] In retrospect, they invite us to reconsider the earlier *Rip Drawings* that he made by tearing paper; from the perspective of his cut maps, we can look differently at the torn sheets, shift their axis from the vertical to the horizontal plane and see them as maps of a sort that present aerial views of terrain with highways and byways, rivers and streams. It seems that even such a resolutely minimalist practice as his is not immune to the spectator's urge to interpret and give meaning to works of art.



Detail of verso of Sol LeWitt's *Rip Drawing* (R78), made on 6 October 1972.

42. Dylan Everett, Gallery Director at James Barron Art, confirms that 'LeWitt would generally […] leave it up to the buyer to assemble the pieces. This means the buyer and their framer get to play a role in the art'. Dylan Everett, email to the author, 11 August 2025.

43. As instances of the different modes of display (and non-display) of *Rip Drawings* in art collections, Chelsea Weathers cites *R8* and *R88*. See *Sol Lewitt: Not to be Sold for More than $100*, pp. 30–33 and 177.

44. Sol LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', in *ArtForum* 5.10 (1967), 7–83. Reprinted in *Art in Theory 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 846–49 (p. 847).

45. *Sol Lewitt: Not to be Sold for More than $100*, pp. 101–03.

46. Ibid., p. 191.

47. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), p. 146.

48. Veronica Roberts, 'Sol LeWitt's Radical Rips', in *Sol Lewitt: Not to be Sold for More than $100*, pp. 11–27 (p. 22).

Hans Arp, *Untitled* (1947). Collage with print of a torn 1939 Duo-Drawing by Arp and Taeuber-Arp, 30 × 23.7 cm.

Hans Arp, *Poupée portant Schwitters (Doll carrying Schwitters)* (1959). 59.7 × 16.5 cm.

Situating himself at the 'end' of art history, Georges Didi-Huberman defines the spectator's experience of visual images in terms of loss, uncertainty, and 'a constitutive and central rend' (*déchirure* in the original French) that characterises both the image and its effect on the viewer. This rend is both an assertion of presence and a refusal of ideas, 'an outside-subject image, an image that is all dream-image [...] simultaneously a sovereign remainder and the trace of an erasure. A visual agent of disappearance.'[47] Didi-Huberman posits that some artworks in their sheer materiality exceed straightforward categorisations and interpretations. The 'sovereign remainder' is not knowable and escapes our efforts to control it, yet this figure of excess is also associated with processes of erasure and disappearance. This paradoxical state of affairs prompts us to reflect on a final type of torn paper artwork, one that is materially complex and embodies death, loss and mourning, yet also offers the hope of redemption.

After the death of his friend and fellow artist Eva Hesse in 1970, LeWitt introduced 'not-straight lines' into his *Wall Drawings* for the first time in tribute to her. The irregular lines not only approximate the organic forms that frequently appear in Hesse's art, but also express a degree of human imperfection and emotional investment that straight lines and pure geometric forms would struggle to convey. Veronica Roberts notes the similarity between these and the *Rip Drawings*, which date to the same period. [48] Bereavement also had a profound effect on Arp: after the accidental death of his partner and longstanding artistic collaborator Sophie Taeuber in 1943, he struggled to make art. When he resumed after a lengthy hiatus, he sought ways of prolonging their collaborations. Tearing paper provided the means for him to do this, resulting in posthumous 'collaborations' that are some of his most poignant works. In 1947, he tore prints of some *Duo-dessins* (Duo-Drawings) that they had made together in 1939 and reconfigured them into new works, adding to some of them a layer of paint that gives the support a prematurely aged appearance. More than any of his other torn papers, these works articulate the tension between damage and renewal and the forlorn desire to prolong the collaboration that had been such a vital aspect of their life together.

Arp continued to make torn papers throughout the last decade of his life. Two examples merit particular attention, as they incorporate torn fragments of works by other artists. Both *papiers déchirés* belong to the extensive series of *Poupées* (dolls), elongated symmetrical forms that spanned from the 1950s to his death in 1966. As early as the 1910s, he had experimented with symmetrical forms around a vertical axis, so the *Poupées* mark a return to that practice.[49] In the first of our examples, *Poupée portant Schwitters* (1959), Arp made an affecting homage to his late friend and erstwhile artistic collaborator by pasting a torn fragment of a collage by his friend and fellow artist Kurt Schwitters onto the 'doll', itself a painted, collaged cut-out piece of kraft paper glued onto a paper support.[50] With its flat upper edge, the form resembles an elongated vase, but may also be read as a simplified outline of a standing human form that has been topped and tailed. The Schwitters fragment, which adorns the left side of the doll's 'chest', is itself multi-layered, consisting of overlapping quadrilaterals in primary colours and black and white glued on top of two larger layers of paper support. With its roughly torn edges, this fragment alone has 'Arpified' Schwitters and created a balance between cut and torn pieces of paper. Seen as a whole, the work strikes a delicate balance between symmetry and chance. The base of the 'doll', not cut

Hans Arp, *Le Petit Prince / Der kleine Prinz (The Little Prince)* (1963). Collage on painted cardboard (with a fragment of a watercolour drawing by Sophie Taeuber-Arp), 68.5 × 23 cm.

but torn at an angle, accentuates a feeling of instability that is only just held in check.

In 1963, Arp incorporated a torn fragment of an abstract geometric watercolour by Taeuber into another *poupée* collage, which he entitled *Le Petit Prince*. As Walburga Krupp observes, this collage combines the respective styles of both artists, Taeuber's linear geometry glued onto Arp's organic forms visible on the doll's 'body'. For Krupp, this work 'symbolizes the Arp who has "internalized" Taeuber-Arp'.[51] Other possible readings merit consideration: the fragment of Taeuber's watercolour sits in the middle section of the 'doll' just above two white forms that might be read as simplified hands; from this perspective, the Taeuber fragment resembles a book that the doll is holding. Crucially, the fragment is not enclosed within the contours of the 'doll', but extends beyond its right edge, disrupting its clean lines and jutting out into the surrounding space. Both of these torn paper collages can be understood as posthumous collaborations; throughout his career, Arp had had fruitful exchanges with other artists, and he had shared a home and a life with Taeuber. In these mature works, as at earlier points in his life, tearing paper and reshaping the pieces into new artworks seems to have offered him a means to cope with loss, and this redemptive quality holds in check the violence implicit in the act of ripping.

At the outset of this essay, the tearing of paper in the name of art was seen predominantly against the background of vandalism and iconoclasm, but the practice is ultimately more complex than that. The preceding examples show how the act of tearing can take many forms and is often accompanied by a compensatory gesture of reshaping. LeWitt's torn drawings are almost always displayed as reconstituted squares: the rips are displayed prominently, but so too is the original shape of the sheet of paper before it was torn. Villeglé's recycled torn posters are lasting memorials to transience; their ephemeral scraps invite us to reflect anew on the throwaway nature of our consumer culture. And Arp's *papiers déchirés* create new forms out of their torn fragments, reconfiguring and rejuvenating the original image even as they rend it. These various approaches preserve the tension between the vandalistic, counter-cultural gesture of tearing something *up* and the housekeeper's instinct to tear something *off* and then to discard or reuse it. Even Arp's works incorporating torn fragments from Schwitters and Taeuber capture these conflicting impulses; in attempting to relive the spirit of artistic collaboration in the absence of the other party, he found in torn papers a means to express both the precarity and the preciousness of life. His words sum this up perfectly: 'By tearing up a piece of paper or a drawing, we bring into it the very essence of life and death'. [52]

49. See Rainer Hüben and Roland Scotti, *Jean Arp: Poupées* (Fondazione Marguerite Arp, Locarno / Göttingen: Steidl, 2008). Arp's earlier symmetrical forms included the seven woodcut illustrations for Richard Huelsenbeck's volume of poetry, *Phantastische Gebete* (Zürich: Arche, 1916).

50. The title of this work has been given the English title, *Doll Wearing Schwitters* (see *The Nature of Arp*, ed. by Catherine Craft (Dallas: Nasher Sculpture Centre, 2018) plate 89), but an equally viable translation would be *Doll Carrying Schwitters*. This would not only conjure a possibly amusing reversal of the normal relationship between carrier and carried, but would also bring more sober funerary associations of carrying a loved one in mourning.

51. Walburga Krupp, 'The Artistic Partnership of Jean (Hans) Arp and Sophie Taeuber', in *The Nature of Arp* ed. by Craft, pp. 93–104 (p. 102).

52. Hans Arp, untitled text, in *Collected French Writings*, ed. by Jean, p. 342. I have modified Joachim Neugroschel's translation.