Surrealist artists Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy were part of the pre-World War II group gathered around the French poet André Breton, first in Paris, and then during the war in New York. Tanguy was one of the earliest visual artists to officially join the Surrealist movement, and today is considered to have been one of its most prominent—if still underappreciated—members. Breton considered him the most poetic of the Surrealist artists. Indeed, Tanguy's imagery was so esteemed by Breton that he devoted the only monograph he ever wrote to the artist, in 1946. Tanguy's dream-inspired landscapes are characterized by curious mineral and vegetal formations that germinate on hazy fields of desert-like expanse, where land and sky meld together in atmospheric mist.

Sage was one of the earliest American artists to encounter Surrealism on its native soil and one of the first to integrate it fully into her artistic practice; she remains one of the most important of the American Surrealists. She has been credited with contributing the most geometrically oriented imagery to Surrealism. Against a similar desert landscape she placed architectonic constructions of latticework, toppled walls, and scaffolding, often covered with drapery. Both artists shared, to an unusual degree, an obsession with their respective artistic visions.

Sage and Tanguy were married to each other for fifteen years, from 1940 until Tanguy's death in 1955. During this time they were inseparable, accompanying each other everywhere. They communicated only in French and for ten years shared the same

RIGHT: Yves Tanguy, A Little Later, 1940, o/c, 18 x 15, private collection, photograph © 2011 estate of Yves Tanguy/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
LEFT: Kay Sage, At the Appointed Time, 1942, o/c, 32 x 58 3/4, Newark Museum, bequest of the estate of Kay Sage Tanguy.

studio (divided by a partition). But in spite of, or perhaps as a result of, the intimacy of their relationship, they never wanted to be considered a “team of painters,” and during their lives refused to exhibit together. Only once, in 1954 at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, did they reluctantly permit their works to be shown together, on the condition that they be placed in separate galleries. Tanguy’s paintings were hung in the Avery Court and Sage’s in the adjacent print rooms. This neatly divided installation established a line of demarcation

that has persisted in examinations of their art ever since.

The title for this current exhibition, Double Solitaire, is appropriate on a number of levels. First of all, it’s the name of a game, and the Surrealists loved games. One of their favorites was the Cadavre Exquis (Exquisite Corpse), which they played to stimulate non-linear, unconventional thinking and imagery. Based on an old parlor game, it was played by several people, each of whom would write a phrase or make a drawing on a sheet of paper, fold the paper to conceal part of it, and pass it on to the next player for his contribution.


Secondly, it was used by James Thrall Soby, a curator at MoMA, as the title of an article about his friends Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy on the occasion of their joint exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum. He called it “Double Solitaire,” alluding to “a curious version of solitaire [that my grandparents played] in which, for purposes of companionship, they placed their cards on the same table but kept separate scores.” He went on to explain, “The two artists work in adjoining studios in the barn of their property at Woodbury, Connecticut. But their pictures make individual points. Their differences of vision and technique have never been more apparent than at Hartford.” But Double Solitaire is also a game in which opponents play off each other’s cards. In this sense and for this exhibition and catalogue, it suggests that the relationship between Sage and Tanguy was a gentle rivalry—one in which each artist drew upon the other’s strengths.

Beginning with paintings that tell the story of the artists’ meeting in Paris in 1938, *Double Solitaire: The Surreal Worlds of Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy* explores in depth their complex, intertwined artistic and personal relationship. It opens with a brief introduction to the style in which each artist was working when they met, and traces their move from France to America in 1939. Following this, carefully selected examples of each artist’s work from the early 1940s through the early 1950s explore the impact that each artist’s subject matter and compositional strategies had upon the other. Finally, Tanguy’s last major painting is shown with a selection of paintings that Sage created in response to Tanguy’s early death. Also included are photographs of the artists and of their house in Woodbury, catalogues, and other ephemera, which provide a window into their personal lives.