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21F.031 Response Paper 4/10

In the wood reading there's a question about Dali's *Phenomenon of Ecstasy*, *The Exquisite Corpse*, and Brassai and Dali's *Involuntary Sculptures* on pages 249-50. How would you answer this question? Do you agree or disagree with the discussion that Wood develops on page 250?

The main question Wood puts forth is how these pieces criticize traditional conceptions of artists and works of art. The use of multiple artists, the various techniques, and the subject matter of the works all challenge traditional conceptions of art and the artist.

Each separate work was composed by multiple artists. In *Sculptures* and *Corpse* there are explicitly two and three artists that created the actual piece, respectively. In *Ecstasy*, although Dali is the sole artist on the title of the work, the composition consists of photographs that he has appropriated, which were taken by other people. In the art world at that time, a work of art was done by a single artist, not a group; this challenge of traditional roles in art production marked a significant departure from the art world's definition of the artist.

In a nod back to Cubist work, these pieces are put together in a collage style. This manifests in the multiple authors working on the same piece, and the photomontage collage that Dali used in both his works. These alone do not criticize traditional art, but the content of the works do. In *Sculptures*, ridiculous objects like pocket lint are built up as sculptures, using close up photographs that make them seem larger than life. This is a direct criticism of the self importance, and more importantly, the autonomy of modern sculpture. Also the mimicry of the children's drawing game used in the creation of *Corpse*, as well as using crayons, marginalizes formal artistic method so heralded by the art world. In *Ecstasy*, Dali juxtaposes images of sexual ecstasy with classic sculptures and other objects that do not take on sexual roles in an artistic context. However, the placement charges these non-sexual objects with as much sexual energy as the pornography in the other photos.