

Endnotes

1 Jennifer Shaw. *Exist Otherwise: The Life and Works of Claude Cahun*. Reaktion Books, Ltd: London, 2017, p. 24

2 Claude Cahun with Marcel Moore. *Aveux non avenues* [Cancelled Confessions or Disavowals]. Siglio Press, South Egremont, Massachusetts, 2025. p. 207

3 Claude Cahun. *L'idée-maîtresse*, La Gerbe, 32, May 1921, p. 240

And I Saw New Heavens and a New Earth: The Partnership, Art, and Activism of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Dean Daderko, Ferring Foundation Chief Curator, and Svetlana Kitto, writer and oral historian, with support from Grace Early, Exhibitions Assistant.

This exhibition is generously supported in part by Teiger Foundation, Ferring Family Foundation, Penny Pennington and Michael Fidler, Ann Y. Sheehan, and Whitaker Foundation.

Teiger Foundation WHITAKER FOUNDATION

Related Programs

Free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. For a complete list of programs, please visit camstl.org

Play Date: My Many Selves

Saturday, June 13, 10:00–11:30 am

Behind this Mask: Celebrating Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore

Saturday, June 13, 2:00–5:00 pm

Learn More

Visit our website for more information about *And I Saw New Heavens and a New Earth*, including an audio guide from the curators.



Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis
3750 Washington Blvd
St. Louis, MO 63108
314.535.4660

Wed–Sun 10:00 am–5:00 pm
Open until 8:00 pm Fri

AO&Co at CAM
Wed–Sat 10:00 am–3:00 pm

Visit camstl.org
Facebook [contemporaryartmuseumstl](https://www.facebook.com/contemporaryartmuseumstl)
Instagram [camstl](https://www.instagram.com/camstl)



Gallery Guide

Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

March 6–August 9, 2026



And I Saw New Heavens and a New Earth

The Partnership, Art, and Activism of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore



Marcel Moore, Title unknown (detail), circa 1930. Exhibition copy of a photographic collage. Courtesy Jersey Heritage Collections.

Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore were artists, queer life-partners, and creative collaborators who lived and worked in France and on the island of Jersey. In Paris in the 1920s and 30s, they created illustrations and original photographs that played with portraiture, masquerade, and gender variance. During this period, the pair moved in Surrealist circles, advocated for numerous political and social causes, contributed to literary journals, and participated in experimental theater productions.

Challenged by life in Paris and the rising tides of fascism, they relocated to the island of Jersey in 1937, establishing a home called *La Rocquaise*. Cahun and

Moore's creative and political commitments informed brave resistance efforts during World War II, and nearly cost them their lives. The pair were arrested, tried, and convicted by Nazi courts for wartime resistance that included the distribution of what they referred to as "paper bullets." They distributed hundreds of small broadside messages intended to sow dissent among Nazi occupiers.

For Cahun and Moore, art and activism were inextricably linked. Their courageous promotion of justice and tolerance feels especially poignant in today's sociopolitical climate.



Title unknown (detail), 1928. Exhibition copy of silver gelatin print, 11.5 × 8.5 centimeters. Courtesy Jersey Heritage Collections.

Claude Cahun (1894–1954, formerly Lucy Renee Mathilde Schwob) and Marcel Moore (1892–1972, formerly Suzanne Malherbe) were both born in Nantes, France. They met in 1909 as teenagers and fell in love, describing their relationship as *une rencontre foudroyante*, or “a sudden encounter that struck like a thunderbolt.” Cahun’s father, Maurice, initially discouraged their relationship but the young women continued to meet in secret: on their bicycles in the countryside and at each other’s houses. They photographed each other as early as 1914, though a drawing from 1909 already includes a declaration of their love for one another. In it, the partners’s initials are linked—LS for Lucy Schwob (Cahun’s given name) and SM for Suzanne Malherbe (Moore’s given name). For these French speakers, when spoken aloud the letters LSM sounds like *elles s’aiment*, which translates to “they love each other.”

Following the unexpected death of Moore’s father and a divorce granted to Maurice due to his wife’s institutionalization, Maurice married Moore’s mother, Marie, in 1917. Now stepsisters, Cahun and Moore were able to live together as lovers for the rest of their lives without drawing unwelcome judgement. Cahun noted that “the strange coincidence that we were united through our family ties seemed to make everything work better.”¹

Cahun and Moore lived together in Paris from 1920–37. This is when they adopted their gender-neutral pseudonyms: Lucy became Claude Cahun and Suzanne became Marcel Moore, monikers they used in artistic and political circles. In addition to circulating within a milieu of lesbian Modernists, including Sylvia Beach, Adrienne



Title unknown (detail), 1928. Exhibition copy of silver gelatin print, 11.8 × 9.4 centimeters. Courtesy Jersey Heritage Collections.

Monnier, and Gertrude Stein, the couple also befriended Surrealists, associating with artists such as Man Ray and Salvador Dali. They also became lifelong friends with the writer and poet André Breton and his wife Jacqueline Lamba, a painter. As participants in a creative, politically-engaged community, Cahun and Moore made many photographs, illustrations, and collages. They participated in experimental theater, advocated for the decriminalization of homosexuality, and contributed to numerous leftist Surrealist magazines and publications. They understood art’s power to influence public opinion and narratives.

1930 saw the publication of *Aveux non avenues* [Cancelled Confessions, or Disavowals], in which writing by Cahun is illustrated with Moore’s photocollages. These images are inventive compositions that Moore pieced together from cutout black-and-white photographs the couple made, adding drawings and other imagery. In them, Cahun appears in many guises: feminine, masculine, androgynous, and as numerous characters. These performances for the camera suggest their ever-growing political, social, and artistic identities. A telling line by Cahun is included in one of Moore’s photocollages: “Beneath this mask, another mask. I will never be finished removing all these faces.”² This fluid, responsive approach to identity was evident throughout their pursuits for the rest of their lives.

1937 was a year of major changes for the couple: With fascism on the rise in France, Cahun and Moore moved to Jersey, a British island off of France’s northwest coast. They purchased a home called *La Rocquaise* that

overlooked the rocky beaches of St. Brelade’s Bay and were known to neighbors as “the sisters.” Though this decision to leave Paris marked a retreat from public life, it also marked a moment when these lovers begin to cultivate a more private, intimate world. As before, they documented much of it photographically. Little did they know, however, the extraordinary challenges that would soon befall them and their friends and neighbors: World War II was declared in 1937.

Jersey was invaded by the Nazis in 1940, but even as they were alerted to this danger, Cahun and Moore refused to leave the island. They resolved to resist the occupation in every way they could, even risking their personal safety. Intent on causing a mutiny within the German Army, they fought back with “paper bullets.” They handwrote and typed hundreds of antiwar messages on small sheets of paper, and surreptitiously distributed them all over the island. They wrote secret messages on discarded cigarette packets, slipped typed and handwritten notes between papers at newsstands, and dropped their missives into the jeeps, briefcases, and coat pockets of Nazi soldiers. Importantly, and inventively, Cahun and Moore signed these notes *Der Soldat ohne Namen*, or “the Soldier with No Name.” They hoped to foment rebellion within the Nazi ranks by suggesting that fellow soldiers were beginning to question official orders.

Jersey islanders were required to register with the Nazis and to turn over banned items that included radios, typewriters, and cameras, but Cahun and Moore secretly defied these orders. They listened to British reports on their illegal radio and passed along crucial news to their neighbors. They documented soldiers on the beach near their home and hid escaped prisoners of war. For a time in 1942, *La Rocquaise* was requisitioned by the Nazis, and the couple was forced to live with the occupiers.

After years of secret, underground resistance, Cahun and Moore were arrested on July 25, 1944, and imprisoned for distributing their “paper bullets.” In prison, the couple was separated and held in solitary confinement, but they sent messages to one another via a secret postal network established by other prisoners. Later in 1944, Cahun and Moore were tried and convicted by a Nazi War Tribunal. They were each sentenced to six years of hard labor, followed by execution. The severity of their punishment demonstrated the impact of their efforts to undermine the German Army. The pair were extremely proud of their accomplishments, and the Nazi regime found it hard to believe that these “little old ladies” were capable of such well-executed actions.

While Cahun and Moore were in prison, their home was raided, and most of their belongings—including papers, original artworks, books, and personal items—were confiscated and never seen again. The pair remained behind bars for nearly a year until May 8, 1945, when Jersey was liberated and they were freed. Thankfully, brighter days were ahead. Cahun and Moore returned to

La Rocquaise and continued photographing one another. As each other’s most trusted collaborator, they cultivated a singular sensibility that merged art and activism. Cahun wrote that Moore was her *idée maitresse*, or “guiding principle,” and the central inspiration in her life. “I am in her, she is in me, and I will follow her always, never losing sight of her. She will be the indestructible crown of all my acts.”³



Title unknown (detail), 1945. Exhibition copy of silver gelatin print, 13.3 × 8.3 centimeters. Courtesy Jersey Heritage Collections.

Still, the War took its toll on Cahun and Moore: After months of incarceration in a cold, damp prison cell, Cahun suffered repeated bouts of pneumonia that eventually took her life in 1954. Following her lover’s death, Moore vacated *La Rocquaise*, moving to a home across the island. She lived there in relative isolation until her death by suicide in 1972. The majority of the materials presented in this exhibition were discovered in a trove that Moore had hidden away in tea chests. Purchased by a Jersey local at Moore’s estate sale in 1972, these items were acquired by Jersey Heritage in 1995; the organization purchased a second, smaller collection in 2000.

Cahun and Moore began photographing each other as teenagers, and continued to do so for the entirety of their lives together. In their nearly 50 years as committed partners, lovers, and collaborators, they forged many paths: avant-garde artists, pioneers of gender exploration, and valiant war resisters. This exhibition seeks to share their inspiring lives and stories through archival collections of photographs, drawings, and the stories behind them. An extraordinary narrative with great relevance for the current moment, *And I Saw New Heavens and a New Earth* demonstrates how this pair of artists imagined new worlds forged by queer love and creative power.