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*Alice Rahon: Poetic Invocations*

organized by the

Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami
and curated by Tere Arcq.

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cover:

*detail: The Next Morning (The City ofYs), 1958*  
Oil on canvas  
54½ x 86⅞ in. (138 x 220 cm)  
Collection of Frances and Dr. Donald Baxter
Alice Rahon: Poetic Invocations offers a testament to the French-Mexican surrealist artist’s extraordinary talent as a painter and a writer. The story of Rahon’s work hinges on her intercultural references and dual nationality, and it is fitting that her work should find a home at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in North Miami, where so many art viewers have migration stories of their own. This presentation, the first solo exhibition dedicated to Rahon in the United States in 55 years, aims to contribute to the scholarship and recognition of under-explored women artists, and to acknowledge the intercultural influences on European artists in exile in the Americas, whose work was often deeply marked by indigenous and archaic cultures.

I would like to thank guest curator and art historian Tere Arcq, whose insightful contributions support our appreciation and understanding of Alice Rahon’s work through this extraordinary exhibition. I also want to acknowledge the support of MOCA staff and installation team, who greatly contributed to making this exhibition a success.

The exhibition is made possible with generous loans from private collections, galleries and museums for this presentation: Arvil Gallery; Frances and Dr. Donald Baxter; Fundación BBVA México; Rogelio Cuéllar; FEMSA Collection; Parra Gironella Foundation; Francisco Magaña Moheno and Carlos Santos Maldonado; Fanghanel Morales Family; Oscar Roman Gallery; Dr. Enrique Sánchez Palomera; and additional private collections. I also want to acknowledge the support of Secretaría de Cultura de México, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, Museo de Arte Moderno and Amigos del Museo de Arte Moderno.

Alice Rahon: Poetic Invocations is made possible with the generous support of Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States and the France Florida Foundation for the Arts. Additional support from Frances and Dr. Donald Baxter is gratefully acknowledged. Thank you to MOCA North Miami Chairman, William Lehman, Jr., and Shirley Lehman for supporting this publication.

I would like to extend my deep appreciation for the continued support of MOCA North Miami’s Board of Trustees, the North Miami Mayor and Council and the City of North Miami, North Miami City Manager Larry Spring, and Chief of Staff, Natasha Colebrook-Williams.

Finally, thank you to Alice Rahon, whose works and talent continue to inspire through the strokes of her paintbrush and the words from her pen.

Chana Budgazad Sheldon
Executive Director, Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami
Alice Rahon’s work is a revelation to the eye. Her vehicle and foundation were a constant search for “the marvelous,” for the surrealist ideal of achieving the perfect union of the visual image and the poetic image. Shortly after the publication of Les Champs magnétiques in 1920, André Breton, the founder of surrealism, was already envisioning the association of the new poetry — particularly that of writers he admired such as Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Lautréamont — with a new painting style that would “translate it without betraying it.” He imagined that any painting conceived of in this manner would be transformed into a window onto the poetic experience.

Rahon got her start in the surrealist movement in Paris in 1934, the same year that she married the Austrian painter Wolfgang Paalen, who immortalized her in a splendid portrait (p. 19). During that period, she wrote poems in free verse that were praised by Breton, who recognized her creative talents and wrote her a letter upon the publication of Sablier couché, which he considered to be more of a talisman than a book. Her encounters with Breton and with surrealism were fundamental for Rahon, and would influence not only the transition from poetic to visual imagery that occurred with her arrival in Mexico, but also the concepts behind her entire artistic production.

Alice Rahon circa 1940 by Walter Reuter, Private Collection

The marvelous is always beautiful.
Anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful.
André Breton, First Manifesto of Surrealism
At first glance, Rahon’s art seems surprising for its diversity and the eclecticism in terms of her techniques and themes. She used gouache, oils, pastels, colored wax crayons, and India ink, on a variety of supports: linen, silk, cardboard, Japanese washi paper, gold paper, or boards. She incorporated unusual materials such as sand, dried leaves, butterfly wings, feathers, and other found objects. As with Ariadne’s thread, she pulled her own thread through a labyrinth of enchanted cities, subterranean worlds inhabited by mythic beings and fantastic animals, a thread that interwove with Breton’s ideas. Rahon followed his path throughout her journeys — Alaska, British Columbia, and Mexico all occupied a predominant position on the surrealist map — and through her constant search for the marvelous, for an inner reality whose revelation would only occur with the harmonious fusion of poetry and painting.

In 1933, Rahon and Wolfgang Paalen traveled to Spain and, on Joan Miró’s recommendation, visited the Caves of Altamira. The prehistoric art they saw there had such an impact on the couple that it was fundamental in their decision to travel through British Columbia and Alaska five years later, along with the Swiss photographer Eva Sulzer. They were in search of ancient cultures that preserved the spiritual and original energy found in their ritual objects. During the trip, Rahon made sketches of totem poles carved from the trunks of ancestral cedar trees. She also wrote a diary where she quoted fragments of L’Amour fou (published in English as Mad Love), demonstrating the strong impact that Breton’s book had had on her. Rahon’s canvases captured the discovery, surprise, and marvelous encounters that revealed what Breton called extraordinary powers of concealment. In L’Amour fou, he wrote that one had to look for a new beauty in the nature and art of different cultures. Rahon traced a line from prehistory and the primitive art of some of these cultures to the works of her contemporaries, through the labyrinth of objective chance, as Breton stated in his fundamental text, Surrealism and Painting.

A fascination for prehistoric art is a constant in Rahon’s oeuvre. In her artistic statement she wrote: “In earliest times painting was magical; it was the key to the invisible. In those days the value of a work lay in its power of conjuration, a power that talent alone could not achieve. Like the shaman, the sybil, and the wizard, the painter had to make himself humble, so that he could share in the manifestation of spirits and forms.” This theme appeared throughout her poems and paintings, as seen in her ‘poèmes-tableaux’ La Sourire de la mort (Death’s Smile, p. 26) and Le Shamane (The Shaman, p. 26), which she created shortly after arriving in Mexico. These pieces denote a linear simplicity that evokes cave art, both in technique and content. In other pieces such as In the Night of the Commencement (p. 33), Thunderbird (p. 34), and The Guardians, colors, textures, signs, sgraffito and symbolic figures reveal a unique cosmogony rooted in surrealist ideas. Her interest in evoking ritual pieces led Rahon to create assemblages using found objects, such as the interior of a snail shell, seashells, carved wood, lapis lazuli, onyx, and bird feathers, which appear in works such as Encounter of Two Rivers (p. 9) and Untitled (p. 39).
The Paalens and Eva Sulzer arrived in Mexico on September 7, 1939. They were received by Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and Juan O’Gorman. They soon reencountered some surrealist friends living in exile: César Moro, Remedios Varo, Benjamin Péret, Leonora Carrington, Esteban Francés, Gordon Onslow-Ford, and his wife, the writer Jacqueline Johnson. Joining the group were Mexicans with a shared interest in pre-Hispanic cultures, such as Miguel Covarrubias and his wife Rosa Rolanda. The Paalens added to their already extensive collection of primitive art from Oceania, Alaska, and British Columbia with archaeological and folk-art pieces that they acquired on their many travels through Veracruz, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Yucatán, Michoacán, and other regions.

Within this context of encounters and expeditions, of creative and intellectual collaborations, Paalen founded DYNN magazine. At the time, this publication was the only avant-garde journal focusing on modern art, surrealism, and primitive art. Alice Rahon was one of the most frequent contributors, with her poems, drawings, and paintings appearing from the very first issue. DYNN’s sixth installment reproduced her series Crystals in Space (pp. 41, 44), which evidenced her interest in automatic drawing. Rahon described these designs in white gouache on black paper as “a kind of enchantment, like developing photographs in a tray — the forms appear little by little. They become more and more aerial, tenuous, complicated, like the secret work of an insect.”

Alice Rahon arrived in Mexico during a time when the Mexican School style of figurative painting predominated. Like Paalen, Onslow-Ford, Gunther Gerzso, and Carlos Mérida, Rahon ventured into abstract painting, creating works that took the form of apparitions, representations of an inner model which, according to Breton, reflected “that which, while not existing, is yet as intense as that which does exist, and which has once more to consist of real visual images.” In Self-Portrait and Autobiography (p. 11), the artist used symbols and geometric figures to intensify the relationship between light and color, applying sand mixed with pigments. In an ascending zigzag, she narrated her life path through history, culminating in her self-portrait, holding a brush and palette. With her masterful use of color, she painted stories with magical figures and animals flying kites, as in Painting for a Little Ghost Who Couldn’t Learn to Read (p. 60). In A Happy Day (p. 56), multicolored forms compose a sort of symphony wherein the world of music is transposed into pictorial language and participates in “a sonorous and rhythmical sequence” in which “musical notation must ultimately reveal what had heretofore remained hidden and contained.”
In the mid-1940s, Rahon started a series of works evocative of her travels to real and imaginary cities, at times inspired by Paul Klee. She admired the work of the Swiss painter, who she knew through Paalen, particularly his Book of Cities series, made up of paintings with inscriptions that demonstrated his appreciation of Asian cultures. The Islamic world gave Klee a synthetic, abstract perception, consisting of the inclusion of pictograms suggestive of mythical and eternal spaces, which Rahon would incorporate into paintings such as City Lights (p. 50), where the city, illuminated by fireworks, seems to rise up among mountains. The Morning After (The City of Ys) (p. 36) represents the legendary city submerged in Douarnenez Bay in Brittany. With its storied Celtic past, this region in northwestern France fascinated the surrealists, and Rahon took it as her chosen mythical place of birth. Anaïs Nin wrote that her paintings were “completely drawn from subterranean worlds, while her descriptions of Mexico are violent with color, drama, and joy.” Night in Tepoztlán (p. 46) recalls Rahon’s trip to the “place of the enchanted” along with Paalen. A full moon radiates its light over the Tepozteco mountain, painted in various shades of blue. Inner City (p. 13) was inspired by her frequent trips to Erongarícuaro, Michoacán, which she described as an “island suspended in light.”

Mexico’s color and art forms had a strong impact on the artist, who began wearing huipil tunics from Oaxaca, silver jewelry from Taxco, and sumptuous obsidian and jadeite necklaces. In her paintings, “there appear figures that remit to Indian carvings […] as well as silhouettes of the pyramids, the profiles of underlying volcanos.” One of her first poems published in DYV is dedicated to L’Ixtaccihuatl: “Forever a young giant, white lover of snow and ancient dawns, magical mirror on the scale of the grandest dreams where man has seen himself.”

The presence of nature and the four elements was a constant in Alice Rahon’s artistic production. Her poems, which evoke the images and sensations of wind, water, earth, and fire, would gradually be captured in a series of magnificent large-format paintings, such as The Wind (p. 13) and Byblos (p. 30), or more intimate canvases, like Papaloapan River (p. 48), executed in oil and sand with delicately incised geometric figures. Her paintings evoke an...
imaginary map, an enchanted territory that at times rests gently on water, and at others is blown by the wind or destroyed by fire. César Moro wrote that in her canvases, “the voice of color rises and descends to refer us to the indescribable.”

During her travels through Mexico, the artist depicted myths, legends, and traditional feast days. She acquired an awareness of the forms, colors, and visual innocence of indigenous art, manifested in a close communion with nature, as seen in an exquisite canvas titled *April Feast* (p. 53). In her magnificent paintings *Mercy for the Judas Effigies* (p. 14) and *Judas and the Chimera* (p. 55), she demonstrated her technical virtuosity in the use of oils and brush. Created in 1952, both were responses to a call for submissions from the literary supplement “México en la Cultura,” inviting artists to take their inspiration from the theme of Carnaval and the giant papier-mâché Judas figures. In the second one, against a background of intense blues, an immense Judas figure rises into the air, surrounded by different animals that appear amid rich textures and hues. To one side, a mysterious chimera prepares to launch the flame and begin the burning of the Judas effigy, a cathartic ritual celebrated every year during the Good Friday religious ceremony.

Within the surrealist movement, the idealization of primitive art and the rejection of anthropocentrism led to a reconsideration of animals as beings endowed with symbolic significance. Breton considered animals to be a fundamental aspect of human beings, connected to their unconscious, like a link between humans and the forces of the cosmos. In Rahon’s paintings, animals took on a leading role and were in constant metamorphosis. Her canvases were inhabited by many species of birds and insects, bulls, buffalo, horses, and of course, cats, her favorite animal. Rather than a realistic representation, these fantastic beings evoked the artist’s emotions and desires. *Ballad for Frida* (p. 16), dedicated to “Frida in a swallow’s eyes,” is inhabited by memories of shared moments: visits to pyramids, town fairs, and parades, as well as some of the animals they liked, such as giraffes (Kahlo nicknamed Rahon *jirafa* for her large hazel eyes), cats, owls, birds, and two galloping horses, that represent the two of them moving freely.

Alice Rahon’s artistic creations transcended poetry and painting. In Paris, she embarked on fashion design, first with the surrealist designer Elsa Schiaparelli and later with her own boutique of avant-garde hats. In Mexico, inspired by her memories of a trip to India that she made in 1936 in the company of the poet Valentine Penrose, Rahon wrote a libretto and designed a series of articulated marionettes to represent the characters in a
The design of the ballet’s characters was done in white gouache on black paper, a technique that the artist also used in her series Crystals in Space (pp. 41, 45). These pieces were made up of dots and lines that lent them dynamism and volatility. For each character, Rahon created an articulated marionette out of wire (pp. 42, 43), reminiscent of Alexander Calder’s designs for mobiles and sculptures, particularly his famed Circus which he created in Paris around 1926. Rahon’s wonderful marionettes — a marvelous discovery, found dismantled in small rusted boxes — synthesize the connection between the biomorphic figures and a three-dimensional space, revealing the artist’s deep-seated interest in humanity’s relationship with the cosmos.

Her desire to explore different creative possibilities led her to embark on filmmaking. Together with her second husband Edward Fitzgerald, the Canadian film maker and set designer for Los olvidados and other movies by Luis Buñuel, she produced an experimental film entitled Le Magicien: “The film was set in the aftermath of a nuclear war which had almost eradicated the human race. The only survivor was a magician, who lived in a cavern at the bottom of the sea.” For this project, Rahon designed the costumes, the marionettes, and wrote the screenplay, while Fitzgerald was the set designer and director. The film was never distributed due to lack of budget, and the only copy, presented among groups of friends and artists at the Willard Gallery in New York, disappeared. All that remain are a few photographs of the film shoot.

Over the years, Rahon created a series of works dedicated to friends, painters, poets, and writers whose work she admired. Each piece evokes one of the aspects that Rahon considered to be fundamental to these creators’ work — as did Breton — and which had a strong influence on her. For example, she dedicated Celestial Shadow to Giorgio de Chirico, an artist of vital importance to the surrealist movement, given that he represented the ideal example of the harmonious union between poetry and painting. For Wolfgang Paalen, she painted The Toucan and the Rainbow (p. 28) a few years after his tragic suicide. The canvas memorializes a rainbow-billed toucan that they acquired together in their early years in Mexico. She dedicated Ballad for Frida to her deat friend and fellow artist, in which she narrated a series of memorable encounters between the two women. The magnificent painting Madame Dimanche (p. 58), which remained in Rahon’s studio until shortly before her death, was a symbolic self-portrait inspired by Miró’s paintings.

Out of all these tributes, among the most significant is Man Crossed by a River: Homage to...
**André Breton** (p. 29). The father of surrealism was often the light illuminating Rahon’s creations. Her relationship with Breton continued throughout her life, and his influence is clear in her prolific artistic production. The piece is a magnificent collage on a background of raw silk, upon which she placed a fragment of Japanese paper. A schematic figure sketched in black representing a prehistoric hunter occupies the center of the composition, done in blues, ochers, and reds, with gold dust. The man, who seems to be floating in the pictorial space, is crossed through by a river, while his feet appear to be walking upon another river. Gold dust scattered on either side lends him an almost magical aura. This painting synthesized Breton’s thinking, and examined humanity’s lineage since prehistory, humankind’s connection to nature, the incorporation of discovery, and the encounter with the marvelous.

Alice Rahon was a true surrealist. In surrealism, she found a perfect synthesis that did not recognize any separation between artistic expression and poetry, between poetry and life.

*By Tere Arcq, translated by Michelle Suderman.*

This essay is a revised version of the homonymous essay published in the catalogue of the exhibition *Alice Rahon: Una surrealista en México*, curated by the author for the Museo de Arte Moderno de México in 2009.
FOOTNOTES

2 During their marriage, which lasted from 1934 to 1947, she signed most of her poems and paintings as Alice Paalen. Following their divorce, she adopted her mother’s surname, Rahon.
3 André Breton to Alice Rahon, January 16, 1939, Paris, Alice Rahon Archive, private collection, Mexico City.
4 Alice Rahon, Diario de viaje: Alert Bay, August 1 1939, Alice Rahon Archive, private collection, Mexico City.
6 Letter from Alice Rahon to Jacqueline Johnson, Mexico, January 26, 1942. Alice Rahon Archive, Private collection, Mexico City.
7 André Breton, Surrealism and Painting, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts Publications, 2002), 1.
8 Renée Reise Hubert, Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, and Partnership (Lincoln and London; University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 251.
10 Letter from Alice Rahon to Jacqueline Johnson, op. cit.
11 “Van apareciendo figuras que remiten a las tallas de los indios […] así como las siluetas de las pirámides, los perfiles de los volcanes subyacentes.” Lourdes Andrade, Alice Rahon: La magia de la mirada (Mexico City: CONACULTA, 1998), 23.
12 Toujours jeune géante, amante blanche de neiges et d’aubes millénaires, miroir magique à l’échelle des plus grands rêves où l’homme s’est mère.” Alice Paalen, “L’Ixtaccihuatl,” DYN no. 1 (April–May 1942), 44.
13 “[…] la voz del color se eleva y desciende para referirnos a lo indescriptible.” César Moro, “Sobre Alice Paalen,” Letras de México (June 1, 1944), n.p.
15 “Frida aux yeux d’hirondelle.”
16 In 1937, Rahon also posed as a model for Man Ray’s photographs for the show La Mode au Congo at the Charles Ratton Gallery. The photographs were published in the September issue of Harper’s Bazaar, accompanied by a text by Paul Éluard. I would like to thank Wayne Siewert for providing me with a copy of the pages from the exhibition catalog.
17 Alice Rahon, “Ballet d’Orion,” original manuscript, Alice Rahon Archive, private collection, Mexico City.
18 Ibid.
19 The ballet was never produced during Rahon’s lifetime. The recovery of the manuscript and typescript of the ballet’s libretto and gouache designs for each of the characters allowed for its production as a stage collage about Alice Rahon, presented at the Museum of Modern Art for the opening of the exhibition Alice Rahon: A Surrealist in Mexico in April 2009. The idea was devised by Georgina Legorreta and performed by the Shakti dance troupe under the direction of Alicia Martinez Álvarez.
21 The Paalens knew Calder, who contributed to DYN on two occasions with reproductions of his mobiles and sculptures. Several of his shows in New York coincided with those of Rahon or Paalen.
22 The three marionettes presented in the exhibition — two versions of the Juggler and one of the Androgyn — were restored and reassembled based on Rahon’s designs.
24 In 1972, Breton sent her a postcard from Lisbon. Little is known of the relationship between the two after arriving in Mexico, and it seems inexplicable that Breton never wrote about Rahon’s painting.
1904 — Alice Marie Yvonne Philippot is born on June 8th in Chenecey-Buillon, in eastern France. Her parents, Jean-Louis Philippot and Alphonsine Rahon, work as valet and cook at a Paris residence.

— The artist spends most of her childhood and teenage years in Paris. Each summer she visits her grandparents in Recouvrance, a neighborhood in the city of Brest, in Brittany.

— At the age of three, Alice suffers an accident and breaks her right hip. She is forced to wear a cast for almost three years. At the age of 12, a second accident results in a broken leg. These physical injuries have a long-term effect on the artist’s life.

1931 — Alice meets the Austrian painter Wolfgang Paalen in Paris.

1933 — At the recommendation of Joan Miró, Alice and Wolfgang visit the Altamira Caves in Spain.

1934 — Alice marries Wolfgang Paalen. The couple visits the Altamira Caves again and travels to Greece that fall.

1935 — The couple meets Paul Eluard and Max Ernst through Roland Penrose. The Paalens visit Roland and Valentine Penrose in Pouy, southern France. Alice spends the summer with the Penroses in Le Brusc, where she develops a very close friendship with Valentine, who is a poet.

— Alice has a brief love affair with Pablo Picasso, which ends when Paalen threatens to kill himself. In December of that year, André Breton invites the Paalens to formally join the Surrealist group.

1936 — Alice travels to India, where she reunites with Valentine Penrose. After landing in Bombay, she visits Goa and Pondicherry, and continues north, where she spends a season at an ashram in Mirtola, at the foot of the Himalayas. While in India, Alice writes Muttra and other poems influenced by Hindu culture. With the support of André Breton and Éditions Surréalistes, she publishes her first book of poems, A même la terre (On Bare Ground): a limited edition of 235 copies, each one numbered and signed, with an engraving by Yves Tanguy.


1938 — She publishes her second poetry collection, Sablier couché (Lying Hourglass), accompanied by an engraving by Joan Miró, in Éditions Sagesse.

1939 — Alice travels to America alongside her husband Wolfgang Paalen and the Swiss photographer Eva Sulzer. In May, they arrive in New York and remain until summer. Soon after, they travel to Canada and British Columbia in search of Indigenous art. During the trip, Alice makes sketches of totems. In September they arrive in Mexico City, invited by Frida Kahlo, and eventually settle in San Angel.

1940 — Alice exhibits her art for the first time at the International Exhibition of Surrealism, organized by Paalen and César Moro at the Galería de Arte Mexicano (GAM) in Mexico City. She presents three watercolors; The Queen with No Eyes, Du jour au lendemain (Overnight), and Rendez-vous des rivières (Encounter of Two Rivers).

1941 — She publishes her third and last poetry collection, Noir Animal (Animal Black), illustrated with a portrait of the artist, painted by her husband. Thereafter, she dedicates herself solely to painting.

1942-1944 — She contributes poems, drawings and illustrations to DYN, an art magazine founded and edited by Paalen.
1944 — Alice has her first solo show at the Galería de Arte Mexicano (GAM) in Mexico City. More solo exhibitions follow, at Pasadena Art Museum in California, The Art of this Century Gallery in New York, the Caressed Crosby Gallery in Washington D.C., the Stendhal Art Gallery in Los Angeles and the Nierendorf Gallery in New York.

1945 — The artist meets Anaïs Nin at the opening night of the Art of This Century exhibition in New York and builds a very close friendship with her.

1946 — Alice becomes a Mexican citizen, and writes the screenplay for the Orion Ballet, creating sketches and puppets for the characters as well.

1947 — The artist has a solo exhibition at the Barbara Byrnes American Contemporary Gallery in Los Angeles. Alice divorces Paalen and marries Edward Fitzgerald, a Canadian director and scenographer for Luis Buñuel. Together they produce an experimental film titled Le Magicien. Anaïs Nin travels to Mexico upon Alice’s invitation and buys a House in Acapulco, where Alice visits her frequently.

1948 — The artist has a solo exhibition at the Willard Gallery in New York.

1951 — Alice has three more solo shows, at the Galería de Arte Mexicano (GAM) in Mexico City, the Willard Gallery in New York and Arquitac Gallery in Guadalajara, Mexico.

1952 — Alice participates in a contest for the publication México en la Cultura (Mexico in Culture). Her painting titled Mercy for the Judas, submitted for this contest, is acquired and included in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City.

1953 — The artist has a solo exhibition at the Art Institute in San Francisco.

1954 — The artist has a solo exhibition in the Paul Kantor Gallery in Los Angeles.

1955 — Alice has her first and only solo exhibition in Paris at the Galerie La Cour d’Ingres, owned by Geo Dupin. She collaborates with Salón de la Plástica Mexicana, an institution dedicated to the promotion of Mexican contemporary art.

1956 — The artist has a solo exhibition at El Eco Gallery in Mexico City.

1957 — The artist has a solo exhibition at the Antonio Souza Gallery in Mexico City.

1958 — The artist has a solo exhibition at the Gallery of the French Institute of Latin America (IFAL) in Mexico City.

1959 — Paalen commits suicide at the Hacienda de San Francisco de Cuadra, on the outskirts of Taxco, on September 24th.

1960 — Alice divorces Edward Fitzgerald.

1961 — The artist has a solo exhibition at Worth Avenue Gallery in Palm Beach, Florida.

1962 — The artist has solo exhibitions at the Juliana Lerson Gallery in Beruit, Lebanon, and at the Louisiana Gallery in Houston, Texas.

1965 — The artist has solo exhibitions at the Turok Wasserman Gallery in Mexico City, and at the Gallery of the French Institute of Latin America (IFAL) in Mexico City.

— Rahon participates in the group exhibition 20 Mexican Painters at Salón de la Plástica Mexicana in Mexico City.

1967 — The artist has a solo exhibition at the Misrachi Gallery in Mexico City.

1969 — On the opening night of her exhibition at the Pecanins Gallery in Mexico City, Alice falls down and fractures her hip again, and retires to her house in Las Flores.

1975 — The artist has a solo exhibition at the Galería de Arte Mexicano (GAM) in Mexico City. She creates one of her last paintings, Una giganta llamada soledad (A Giant Named Solitude).

1986 — Rahon’s final solo exhibition is held at the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City.

1987 — Alice Rahon dies in a nursing home in Mexico City.
Art as Poetic Invocation  André Breton believed in the harmonious union of poetry and painting, and the search for “the marvelous,” as founding principles of the Surrealist movement and mandatory pursuits of modern art. Breton’s precept, underscored in his book L’Amour Fou, was meaningful for Rahon’s creative path and, above all, for her construction of reality as a woman and artist. That idea inspired Rahon to not only travel the world seeking traces of ancestral cultures, but also to seek them out in Mexico, in order to merge the immemorial past with the power of rituals and magic. Her first paintings, described by her as “Pôème-Tableau” (Poem-Painting), were small watercolors accompanied by verse. Throughout her works, she challenges the limits of the material world in order to build a new reality based on the perfect union of poetry and painting.
Tuca and Rainbow.
(Tribute to Wolfgang Paalen), 1967
Oil on canvas
31 1/2 x 39 3/8 in. (80 x 100 cm)
Private collection

Man Crosse by a River
(Tribute to André Breton), 1967
Mixed media on silk and Masonite
22 x 17 in. (56 x 43 cm)
Private collection, Courtesy of Oscar Roman Gallery, Mexico
Byblos, 1963
Oil on canvas
27 1/2 x 67 in. (70 x 170 cm)
Private collection, Courtesy of Arvil Gallery, Mexico
Myths and Ancient Cultures  In 1933, while still living in Europe, Rahon and Paalen traveled to Spain and visited the Caves of Altamira. Their encounter with prehistoric art at this site had a great impact on the couple, and propelled Rahon’s search for ancestral cultures and the spiritual energy of their historic art objects. A reverence for Indigenous art is a constant in the artist’s work; aligning with Breton’s ideas published in L’art Magique, Rahon considered it to be closely linked to magic and the domain of the invisible. Both in terms of technique and content, her paintings refer to ancestral and mythical timescapes. Colors, textures, signs, sgraffito markings and symbolic figures characterize her personal cosmogony. Her pursuit in poetry and painting was to evoke the power of art as a primal gesture of invocation.
**Thunderbird, 1946**

Oil on canvas

12 5⁄8 x 39 3⁄8 in. (32 x 100 cm)

Private collection
The Next Morning (The City of Ys), 1958
Oil on canvas
54 1/2 x 86 3/4 in. (138 x 220 cm)
Collection of Frances and Dr. Donald Baxter
Untitled, circa 1945
Assemblage with wood, feathers, snails and oil
22 x 4 x 11 1/2 in. (56 x 10 x 29 cm)
Private collection
Beyond Painting  Once reunited in Mexico, Rahon’s multicultural community of artists successfully developed intellectual projects and artistic collaborations. Mexico became the hotbed of a new art style that would have a major influence on the development of abstract painting, both locally and in the United States. The journal DYN emerged in this context, beginning publication in 1942. At the time, DYN was the only avant-garde magazine centered on discussions of modern art, Surrealism, Indigenous art and the interaction between art and science. Rahon was a constant collaborator on DYN, publishing poems, paintings and drawings. In 1946 she authored the script for Ballet d’Orion, a cosmic ballet that was never staged during her lifetime. The piece was a direct response to the nuclear bomb and a reflection on the possible destruction of human life. On the same subject, she collaborated on an experimental film with her second husband Edward Fitzgerald, cinematographer for the Mexican Surrealist filmmaker Luis Buñuel. Together, Rahon and Fitzgerald conceived of Le Magicien (now disappeared), a short film set underwater, about the destruction of the human race and the hope for a new beginning by an act of alchemy performed by a magician.
Juggler, 1946
Wire marionette inside an acrylic box
23 x 15 x 4 3/4 in. (58 x 38 x 12 cm)
Collection of Francisco Magaña Moheno and Carlos Santos Maldonado

Androgynne, 1946
Wire marionette inside an acrylic box
33 x 23 x 5 in. (84.1 x 58.1 x 12.4 cm)
Collection of Rogelio Curllar
From the series *Crystals in Space*, 1943
Ink on paper
9 3/4 x 6 1/4 in. (33 x 25 cm)
Private collection, Courtesy of
Oscar Roman Gallery, Mexico
The Mexican Landscape  The Surrealists strongly believed in the spiritual power of nature. The magnificent topography and fantastic volcanoes that they beheld in Mexico inspired many of their creations. Rahon was perhaps the Surrealist who most frequently depicted the Mexican natural landscape. In numerous paintings, her poetic images reference her travels to different corners of the country; they depict mountains, volcanoes, lakes, rivers, oceans, deserts and starlit skies. Mexico was not only the place where the artist found a home, but also the space where she was finally able to unite poetry and painting in an authentic style. Her canvases portray a dynamism of ancient energies, colorful images, powerful myths and magical places. Rahon was moved by her environment to develop an eclectic art, always combining diverse elements: pigments and sand, calligraphy and organic forms, and random found objects and traditional pictoric materials. Rahon developed these otherworldly landscapes based on her very personal way of understanding artistry through ritual gesture.
Poetic Invocations

Papaloapan River, 1947
Oil and sand on canvas
14 1/8 x 49 1/4 in. (36 x 125 cm)
Private collection

Feu d’herbes (Herbs on Fire), 1945
Oil on canvas
9 3/4 x 38 3/4 in. (25 x 98.5 cm)
Private collection, Courtesy of Oscar Roman Gallery, Mexico
City Lights, 1949
Oil on canvas
29½ x 81½ in. (75.5 x 206.4 cm)
Private collection
Fiestas and Popular Art in Mexico  Ancient
pre-Hispanic objects and the folk art of Mexico fascinated the Surrealists since André
Breton’s legendary visit in 1938. Rahon and Paalen arrived to Mexico with a substantial
art collection from Oceania, Alaska and British Columbia. During trips and expeditions
with Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and other Mexican friends, they acquired Jaina figurines,
stone idols, and masks from diverse cultures, as well as textiles from Jalisco and Chicon-
cuac, ceramic objects from Patambam, and papier-mâché Judas effigies. The designs and
colors of Mexican art and traditions inspired Rahon to create splendid works such as
Fiesta de Abril or Judas and the Chimera, where she commemorates the “Quema de
Judas” a traditional festival held every year during Holy Friday, wherein papier-mâché
statues that depict devils, politicians and any figures that represent treason or corruption,
are burned in public plazas as cathartic ceremony. Rahon’s art is a poetic collection of the
impressions that a mysterious and magical land strongly imprinted on her sensitive soul.

April’s Feast, 1945
13 3/4 X 9 3/4 in. (35.5 X 24 cm)
Oil on canvas
Private collection
A Flower for Angela
(Tribute to Angela Davis), circa 1971–1972
Mixed media on board
21⅛ x 13⅞ in. (55 x 35 cm)
Private collection

right: Judas and the Chimera, 1952
Oil on canvas
71 x 47¼ in. (180 x 120 cm)
Colección BBVA México
A Happy Day, 1947
Oil on canvas
11 1/4 x 33 1/2 in. (28.5 x 85 cm)
Private collection
Madame Dimanche, circa 1955
Oil on canvas
45 5⁄8 x 69 1⁄4 in. (116 x 166 cm)
Private collection
Painting for a Little Ghost Who Couldn't Read, 1947
Oil on canvas
35 3⁄4 x 28 3⁄4 in. (91 x 73 cm)
Private collection
**EXHIBITION CHECKLIST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Collection/Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thunderbird, 1946</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>12 3/8 x 39 3/4 in. (32 x 100 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Happy Day, 1947</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>11 1/4 x 33 1/2 in. (28.5 x 85 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Painting for a Little Ghost Who Couldn't Read, 1947</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>35 3/4 x 28 3/4 in. (91 x 73 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papaloapan River, 1947</td>
<td>Oil and sand on canvas</td>
<td>14 1/8 x 49 1/4 in. (36 x 125 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Portrait and Autobiography, 1948</td>
<td>Oil and sand on canvas</td>
<td>29 1/4 x 8 1 1/4 in. (75.5 x 206.4 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Guardians, 1959</td>
<td>Oil on metallic paper mounted on wood</td>
<td>20 3/4 x 29 1/4 in. (52.4 x 74.6 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection, Courtesy of Arvil Gallery, Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Night at Tepoztlán, 1964</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>27 1/4 x 67 in. (70 x 170 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection, Courtesy of Arvil Gallery, Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man Crossed by a River (Tribute to Andre Breton), 1967</td>
<td>Mixed media on silk and Masonite</td>
<td>22 x 17 in. (56 x 43 cm)</td>
<td>Private Collection, Courtesy of Oscar Roman Gallery, Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuican and Rainbow (Tribute to Wolfgang Paalen), 1967</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>27 1/4 x 67 in. (70 x 170 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection, Courtesy of Arvil Gallery, Mexico</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PORTRAIT OF ALICE PAALEN, CIRCA 1933-1934**

Oil on canvas
35 1/2 x 28 1/2 in. (91 x 73 cm)
Collection of Frances and Dr. Donald Baxter

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<tr>
<td>Portrait of Alice Paalen, circa 1933-1934</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>35 1/2 x 28 1/2 in. (91 x 73 cm)</td>
<td>Collection of Frances and Dr. Donald Baxter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death’s Smile, 1939</td>
<td>Watercolor on paper</td>
<td>7 1/4 x 10 in. (20 x 25.5 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaman, 1939</td>
<td>Watercolor on paper</td>
<td>7 1/4 x 9 1/4 in. (20 x 23.5 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rendez-vous des Rivières (Encounter of Two Rivers), 1942</td>
<td>Assemblage with snails, stones and feathers</td>
<td>7 1/4 x 6 1/4 in. (20 x 15.4 cm)</td>
<td>Collection of Francisco Magaña Moheno and Carlos Santos Maldonado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the series Crystals in Space, 1943</td>
<td>Ink on paper</td>
<td>6 x 8 3/4 in. (15.2 x 22 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection, Courtesy of Oscar Roman Gallery, Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the series Crystals in Space, 1943</td>
<td>Ink on paper</td>
<td>9 1/2 x 6 3/4 in. (23.5 x 16.5 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection, Courtesy of Oscar Roman Gallery, Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>From the series Crystals in Space, 1943</td>
<td>Ink on paper</td>
<td>6 1/4 x 9 1/4 in. (16.2 x 23 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>From the series Crystals in Space, 1943</td>
<td>Ink on paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dans la nuit du commencement (In the Night of Commencement), 1944</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>26 x 22 in. (66 x 56 cm)</td>
<td>Collection of Parra Girrull Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peau de soleil no. 1, 1944</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>28 3/4 x 36 in. (73 x 91.4 cm)</td>
<td>Collection of Family Fanghanel Morales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April’s Feast, 1945</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>13 1/2 X 9 9/16 in. (33.5 X 24 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feu d’herbes (Herbs on Fire), 1945</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>9 1/2 x 38 3/4 in. (25 x 98.5 cm)</td>
<td>Private Collection, Courtesy of Oscar Roman Gallery, Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled, circa 1945</td>
<td>Assemblage with wood, feathers, snails and oil</td>
<td>22 x 4 x 11 1/2 in. (56 x 10 x 29 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Androgynne, 1946</td>
<td>Wire marionette inside an acrylic box</td>
<td>33 x 23 1/4 in. (86.1 x 58.1 x 12.4 cm)</td>
<td>Collection of Rogelio Cuellar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juggler, 1946</td>
<td>Wire marionette inside an acrylic box</td>
<td>23 1/2 x 15 x 4 1/2 in. (58 x 38 x 12 cm)</td>
<td>Collection of Francisco Magaña Moheno and Carlos Santos Maldonado</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>The Wind, 1954</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>46 1/2 x 71 in. (118.5 x 180.5 cm)</td>
<td>FEMSA Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madame Dimanche, circa 1955</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>45 1/2 x 69 1/4 in. (116 x 166 cm)</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Next Morning (The City of Ys), 1958</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>54 1/4 x 86 3/4 in. (38 x 220 cm)</td>
<td>Collection of Frances and Dr. Donald Baxter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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