

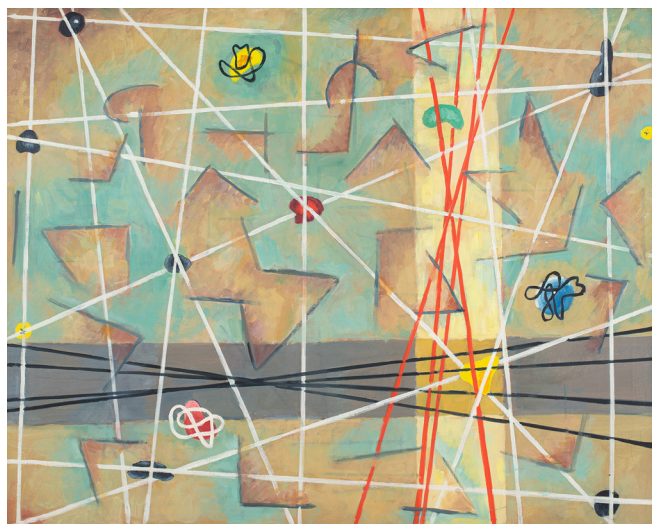
# GORDON ONSLOW FORD & ROBERTO MATTA

## *The inner dynamic, the sincere friendship*

OPENING: THURSDAY OCTOBER 16 - 7-9 PM

EXHIBITION: OCTOBER 16 - NOVEMBER 29, 2025

DIANE DE POLIGNAC GALLERY - 2BIS RUE DE GRIBEAUVAL - 75007 PARIS



GORDON ONSLOW FORD (1912-2003)  
*STREET SCENE PARIS*, 1938  
Oil on canvas  
72,5 x 91 cm - 28 5/8 x 36 in.  
© Lucid Art Foundation



ROBERTO MATTA (1911-2002)  
*FOOL'S EYE*, 1938  
Pencil and pastel on paper  
18,5 x 12,5 cm - 7 1/4 x 4 15/16 in.  
© Ramuntcho Matta

The artists Gordon Onslow Ford (1912-2003) and Roberto Matta (1911-2002) met in Paris in 1937. It was the beginning of a deep friendship that lasted 65 years. Throughout this relationship, the two friends exchanged letters illustrated with many drawings. In October 2025, a selection of these exclusive documents will be published by Diane de Polignac Gallery.

The exhibition, organized to accompany this publication, explores this friendship of a lifetime through seven works by Gordon Onslow Ford and seven works by Roberto Matta, dating from 1937 to the 1990s.

For this exhibition and publication project, Diane de Polignac Gallery is working with Fariba Bogzaran, close friend and collaborator of Gordon Onslow Ford; Ramuntcho Matta, son of Roberto Matta; and the Lucid Art Foundation.



Roberto Matta & Gordon Onslow Ford  
Chemillieu, France, summer 1939  
Photo: Elisabeth Onslow Ford-Rouslin

In 1937, the British landscape painter Gordon Onslow Ford settled in Paris to devote himself entirely to painting. Soon after his arrival, he met the Chilean architect Roberto Matta, who was already an experienced illustrator. Matta and Onslow Ford quickly became good friends. Onslow Ford admired Matta's drawings, which he considered "the most exciting images" he had seen in Paris. Onslow Ford encouraged Matta to pursue a career as an artist and urged him to explore painting.

In 1938, the two artists spent the summer in Trévignon, Brittany, the ancestral home of their favorite surrealist painter, Yves Tanguy. There they experimented with painting and studied esoteric philosophies. The summer transformed their artistic practice as they shifted their focus to exploring surrealist automatism and the unconscious. Matta joined the surrealists first in 1937 and then introduced Onslow Ford to André Breton, who invited him to join the surrealist group in 1938. Onslow Ford was the youngest painter of the group and the last to take part in the surrealist movement.

In the summer of 1939, on the advice of Gertrude Stein, Onslow Ford rented a château in Chemillieu, France, in the region of Rhône-Alpes, where he invited his artist friends Roberto Matta, Estéban Frances, André Breton, Jacqueline Lamba, Yves Tanguy, and Kay Sage. The group spent the summer painting, exchanging ideas, and reading poetry. The château was a veritable refuge on the eve of the Second World War.

When war broke out, Onslow Ford was drafted into the British Navy and left Paris for London. In 1941, Matta and Kay Sage were instrumental in bringing Onslow Ford to New York through their connections to the American Society for the Preservation of European Culture. As part of his visa, Onslow Ford was asked to give a series of four lectures on surrealism at the New School for Social Research in New York. These lectures, along with the accompanying surrealist exhibitions, had a significant influence on American artists. Roberto Matta held gatherings for New York painters in his studio to illustrate the technique of automatism. Matta shared this fundamental lesson with them: "You paint on an easel; you are still painting what you see. You need to put the canvas on the ground and paint what you feel."

Soon after his series of lectures, Gordon Onslow Ford and his wife Jacqueline Johnson left New York for Mexico. Their home became a refuge for many artists, and they visited many artists such as: Wolfgang Paalen, Alice Rahon, Esteban Francés, César Moro, Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and others. Roberto Matta also visited them in Mexico during the war. After the war, Onslow Ford moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1947.

In 1949, Onslow Ford acquired the ferryboat Vallejo and docked it in Sausalito, California, where he converted it into art studios. For many years, the ferryboat was a haven for artists, becoming a small cultural center on

the waterfront. The Greek painter Jean Varda used part of the ferryboat Vallejo as his living quarters and studio.

At the same time, Matta left New York and returned to Paris. From the 1950s, Matta lived mainly between France and Italy. For almost six months in 1955-56, Matta visited Onslow Ford and shared a studio with him on the Vallejo. Matta obtained French citizenship in 1979.

In 1989, Gordon Onslow Ford met Fariba Bogzaran, an artist, lucid dream researcher, and a professor. Together, they embarked on a series of dialogues exploring art and consciousness and worked on several collaborative projects. In 1998, they cofounded the nonprofit organization Lucid Art Foundation to explore the inner worlds and deep levels of consciousness through the visual arts with an awareness of the natural world.

Matta continued to engage in dialogues with scientists and astrophysicists. He collaborated with his son, artist and musician Ramuntcho Matta.

In 1993, Matta attended Onslow Ford's solo art exhibition in Munich, Germany, and then they reunited again a month later in Paris. The last time they saw each other was in 1997, when Matta visited Onslow Ford at his home and studios in Inverness, California.

Roberto Matta died on November 23, 2002, in Civitavecchia, Italy, and Gordon Onslow Ford died the following year in Inverness, California, on November 9, 2003.



Gordon Onslow Ford & Roberto Matta  
Ferryboat Vallejo, Sausalito, CA, USA, 1956