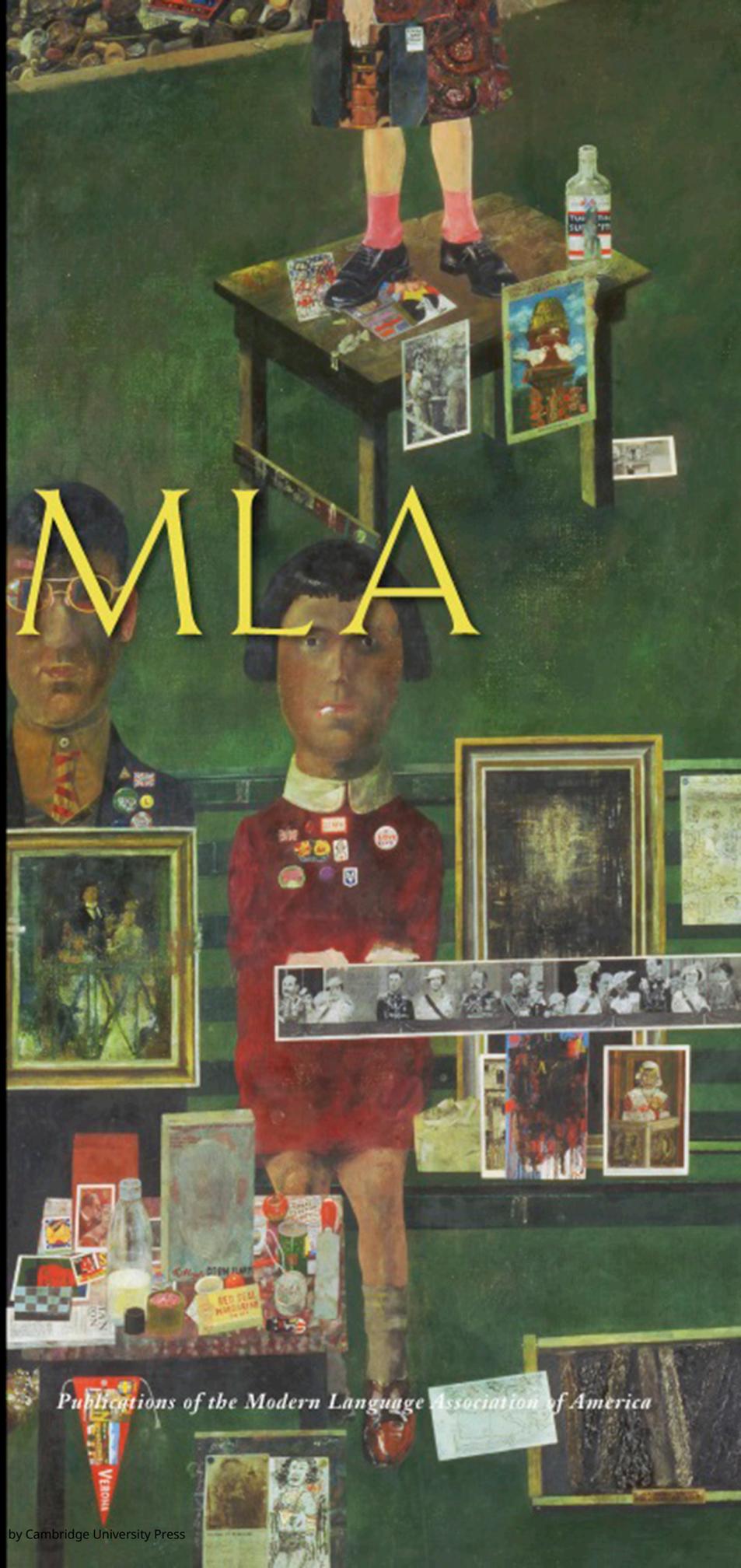


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JANUARY 2010



Cover: Peter Blake, detail of *On the Balcony*, 1955–57 (full image is at left). Oil on canvas, 121 × 91 cm. Tate Gallery, London. © 2010 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London. Photo: Tate / Art Resource, NY.

Peter Blake (1932–) is an English painter, printmaker, sculptor, and designer whose best-known work is the cover of the Beatles' album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Klaus Honnef writes, "Long before contemporary art legitimated the collecting of curios under the name of 'clue-finding' or 'forensic art,' Peter Blake showed himself to be a collector, or at least a painstaking registrar." In *On the Balcony*, "[t]he character of the things depicted might best be described by the term 'miscellaneous.' Two-dimensional objects like paintings and drawings of diverse origin—but none over one hundred years old—are in the majority. These are accompanied by covers from the illustrated magazines *Life* and *Weekly Illustrated*, a photograph of Sir Winston Churchill complete with waving royal family, an earlier panorama picture of the royal family with European relatives, a packet of cigarettes, an open book, a third photograph, and a pennant. On the table at the left sit ordinary consumer goods such as a package of margarine, a half-full bottle of pop, a tin of sardines, a newspaper. . . . Every motif is painstakingly rendered, down to the tiniest detail, with photographic fidelity. Their plasticity contrasts strangely with the schematically depicted, relatively childish faces and figures of the young people. Nothing in the collection seems extraordinary—were it not for the masterpiece by Edouard Manet that crops up almost unnoticed at the left edge and that gave Blake's picture its title: *The Balcony*, 1868. The artist has placed this superb work of art on the same level as the trivia of mass culture. In fact, in this context it becomes an integral part of this culture. For as its small dimensions indicate, the Manet is merely a copy or reproduction in a gilded frame. Although the relationships among the diverse objects remain enigmatic, Blake's painting subliminally raises the issue of the status of the work of art in the age of its technical reproducibility. . . ." (*Pop Art* [ed. Uta Grosenick; Köln: Taschen, 2004; print; 28]).