

Ghost Ships



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This is an exciting, different and adventurous book that combines the qualities of a Conrad novella, a fundamental piece of forensic art historical research, and a documentary. Essentially, it is the story of a well-known but hitherto unexplained 'disappearance' in 1924. Paul Eluard, the wealthy poet and co-founder with Andre Breton of the Surrealist movement, and his wife Gala (later to marry Salvador Dali) had taken Max Ernst, who had fled Germany, as a lodger and more of less full-time decorator of their house. All three fell mutually in love. Eluard disappeared; so did Ernst and Gala. A year later all three returned, separately, to Paris from the Far East. No one ever explained, discussed or recorded what happened. McNab has retraced their journey through New Zealand, Borneo, Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam and back, often on separate ships, often in pursuit of each other, sometimes together. Their journeys culminated at Angkor Wat during the last days of French Indo-chine rule. And then McNab demonstrates the never-before observed fact that much of Ernst's later work is directly and obviously inspired by the temples, carvings and jungle setting of the temple complex. He goes on to relate the journey to other surrealist voyages of (self-) discovery.

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