



ARSENAL

SURREALIST SUBVERSION

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Dear Edouard,

Having once again a few "free" moments -- free by virtue of seizing them from the multitude of chores awaiting their accomplishment -- I write again to you....

I did not tell you how very sad we were to learn of the death of the wonderful Toyen. We regarded her not only as one of the greatest painters of surrealism, but also as a great comrade. On our sojourns in Paris, she was particularly warm in her relations with us, and she was one of the very few to whom we felt especially close. It was that hypocrite Ivsic alone who kept her work out of our exhibition in 1976, as you know -- an unforgiveable crime not only against us, but against her. You must know that here, in the "critical studies" of surrealism by the Professors and "leading authorities," she is rarely even mentioned -- especially is this true of the large tomes regarded as "definitive." Of course you are right that it is entirely up to us, in this country, to make her work known, & we shall certainly do our best. We shall certainly reprint Specters of the Desert, and hope to include a section devoted to her in the forthcoming ARSENAL. Is it possible to obtain some reproductions of her work from you?

By the way, knowing of the absolute control over her "external relations" exerted by Radovan the Hypocrite, who had decided to make himself our enemy, I wrote to Guy Flandre, some two years ago, asking him about the possibility of our obtaining -- by purchase, if necessary -- some original work by Toyen. This letter was never answered.... I assume that by now, knowing what happens in the insidious & vile "Art Market" at an artist's death, that it is ~~now~~ practically out of the question for us to even think of purchasing a work by her, & may I add that we cannot but hold Guy Flandre responsible for this deprivation. I also asked him about how we might secure a copy of the reprint of Le Tir, and any of her works that may have been published subsequently (she sent to us her earlier publications). Again, not a word from Flandre, whose refusal to respond to this simple request of a friend seems doubly objectionable since it is we, Penelope & I, who gave to him a copy of the Arcanes edition of Les Spectres..., which we found at a bookshop in Paris entirely unknown to any of the surrealists, and which Flandre & others had assured us was "completely unobtainable."

In any case, I hope that you might be able to help us locate the works by Toyen that we do not have -- Le Tir and anything published thereafter....

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Clarence John Laughlin sent us a kind of "prospectus" of your book on surrealist photography -- an "ambitious" project, indeed. But it contained what

might be a serious error: it lists David Hare as part of the "English Domain." If this is the same David Hare who, in the '40s, edited VVV (one of his photographs is reproduced in Breton's album on myths in the Breton Pluto Press book), then he is very much an American: b. March 10, 1917 in New York; studied in New York, Arizona, Colorado; see the Dictionary of American Artists, by Paul Cummings. To my knowledge, he may never even have set foot in England. As you probably know, he is one of the most despicable renegades from surrealism -- one of the most strenuous in insisting that surrealism exerted no influence whatsoever on the "abstract-expressionism" of the "New York School." (As Kamrowski remarked in this regard -- & he is a veritable fountain of knowledge on the "inner workings" of those dark days -- Hare's anti-surrealism leaves him in the particularly unfortunate position of having to explain how it is that his only interesting & significant work was done when he was part of the surrealist group in New York!)

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The most important new development here -- & there have been several! -- is the preparation of a surrealist annual to be titled FREE SPIRITS, to be published by Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights in San Francisco, and to be edited by Paul Buhle, Philip Lamantia, Nancy Joyce Peters, Penelope & me. It will be in large format -- 250/300 pages, 8½" x 11", like the Surrealism & Its Popular Accomplices of which the new annual will be, in fact, a kind of continuation.... I shall have more to tell you of this major new project in future communications. It signifies an immense breakthrough for us here, in many ways (not the least of which is indicated by the fact that the first printing will be an edition of 10,000 copies; by comparison, we have never done much over 3000 of ARSENAL).

FREE SPIRITS is of course not at all intended to replace, but rather to supplement ARSENAL; and we are determined, moreover, to see to it that ARSENAL, too, will at last be made to appear at least once a year.

I have suggested that your essay on Jean-Pierre Duprey, as well as Breton's text on him from the Anthology of Black Humor, as well as reproductions of works by Duprey, & some of his poems, be included in FREE SPIRITS....

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I would like to propose to a publisher here a compilation of scattered writings by Kurt Seligmann; I have about fifteen texts translated into English, and a few others in French. If you could suggest other texts in French -- I mean in reviews that I might not likely have seen: less known publications, in other words -- I would appreciate it. I have an excerpt from something titled "Soleil Terrestre" -- can you tell me where to find this or, better yet, send me a photocopy of it? Also, if you have any idea of how I might be able to locate Seligmann's widow, or his estate -- to consult with them about this project, copyrights, etc. -- I would also be grateful....

Do you know of Paul-Emile Borduas: Ecrits/Writings 1942-1958, bilingual, published jointly by The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design and New York University Press?

You did not acknowledge the book on Louis Eilshemius, the catalogue of Catlin, the photocopy of Robert Bruce Tague's Continuity: Did you receive these?

On other matters, still bibliographical: Can you tell me what it is in print by Pierre Vendryès? His work seems to me exceptionally important. I am curious to know if anyone in the French surrealist world has kept up with him since the publication of "Surréalisme et probabilité" in MEDIUM....

You did not mention if you went ahead and sent to Alain Pillet in Switzerland the publications of ours that he requested. A few days after your letter arrived we received a note from him, acknowledging receipt of our parcel which, in fact, had been mailed some two months previously.

What do you make of their activity in Switzerland? Their publications convey the impression that they want very much to be loved by everyone, to offend no one, and to have themselves a little fun like good little boys.... Is this correct?

On the international front, we have received yesterday (on the eve of that day known to some as St. Patrick's) a long letter from Basil (Zil) Miller, from Ireland, declaring his firm intention of commencing a surrealist activity there. He is particularly eager to organize an exhibition which he thinks will be the first surrealist exhibition in Ireland.... He had hoped, in fact, to arrange an exhibition including most of the material we sent for the Conroy Maddox exhibition in 1978; but by the time he had made the necessary arrangements, Conroy had returned our crate. (Incidentally, our understanding had been that we were to pay the shipping expenses for sending our crate over to London; and the return exoenses were to be covered by the English. Alas! our crate was returned collect. Moreover, as far as we can tell, only about a quarter -- at the most, a third -- of the works we sent were exhibited. We do not think any of the pieces by Tristan Meinecke were exhibited, for example; or a large canvas by Robert Green; etc. etc.)

We have received a long and splendid review of the Breton books by E.F. Granell; it will appear in English in the forthcoming final issue of the journal CULTURAL CORRESPONDENCE, which will feature (as I have explained to you long ago) a lengthy symposium on "The Future of Surrealism," focusing on the publication of What Is Surrealism? The review is in Spanish. But I am wondering if a place might not be found for it in French translation? Or perhaps you might also know of a Spanish-language publication that might be interested in it?

I am sure you have heard something, from Abdul if not from elsewhere, of David Gascoyne's return to surrealism. Have you had any direct communication with him? Nancy Joyce Peters sent him a copy of Surrealism & Its Popular Accomplices and received in reply an enormous rambling letter expressing total solidarity and delirious enthusiasm. You know he was confined in a mental institution for decades, and evidently was freed thanks to a young woman who fell in love with him through reading his early poetry: An exemplary episode! He is supposed to be visiting San Francisco soon....

Have you ever had any contact with Carlos Franqui? Is he in Paris? Do you have any idea how we can get in touch with him?

I enclose a photocopy of clippings from the New York Times regarding the most recent performance of Alice Farley.

Looking forward to all the news from you, & to some answers to my hundreds of questions,

with warmest surrealist greetings,

Franklin Rosemont

