

18th January 1977

Dear Edouard Jaguer,

It is difficult to believe how much time has passed since I last wrote to you! I am sure that Thom Burns (who has returned to Chicago) explained to you that the aftermath of the exhibition was, for us here, as hectic as the preparations. Moreover, in my own case, I have had to do an immense amount of work on the anthology of writings by André Breton that I have edited and that is to be published later this year. We were also engaged in discussions with the proprietor of a small gallery here regarding the possibility of an exhibition of surrealist drawings --- a proposition suggested by Gerome Kamrowski; this project came to nothing, but the discussions took up much time. All of this has, needless to say, severely hindered the tasks of correspondence, and even now I am afraid that this will be only a part of the "long letter" promised so long ago....

Meanwhile, we have mailed to you several parcels: one, sent a few days ago by air mail --- & which you should already have received by now --- containing several photographs of the domains in the World Surrealist Exhibition, as well as some supplementary photographs which convey something of the overall character of the exhibition. Also enclosed were the Kamrowski/Baziotes/Pollock photograph, which you requested, ~~and~~ a photograph of Alice Farley, a photograph of one of Penelope's paintings, and a group photograph of the "Sun Song" ensemble, who performed at the exhibition, during its last two days. (Please note: the name of the drummer is incorrectly noted on the reverse of this picture: it is not Kahil --- his correct name is Hank Drake.) The other parcels include 5 extra copies of the exhibition catalogue, and an almost complete collection of our various tracts, pamphlets, etc.

We are grateful that you intend to document this exhibition in the forthcoming PHASES --- especially since such documentation has been so noticeably lacking elsewhere (we are experts in the art of making enemies, as you know). Did I send you copies of the newspaper articles that did appear? (Some time after the show there also came a copy of the Japanese art review MIZUE, which contained a two-page illustrated review.)

It is also gratifying that you want to reproduce a photograph of Alice Farley, whose performances at the exhibition we all found so deeply moving, and who is making one of the most important contributions to surrealism today. I think it would be appropriate to accompany her picture with a translation of her "Notes Toward a Surrealist Dance" from the surrealist dance program, as well as perhaps one of the texts of appreciation printed therein.

Concerning other aspects of our collaboration on Phases: As you probably know, our relationship with the "BLS" has practically ceased to exist. Thom tells us that they are currently preparing a review; they have "neglected" to inform us of this development --- moreover, even if they did invite our participation, it is almost certain, in the present circumstances, that we would refuse it. I should add that we are in agreement with your comments on the "expurgated" edition of J-L Bedouin's anthology, as well as your polemic (in earlier issues of Phases shown to me by Thom Burns) against the effort, by José Pierre & others, to make a surrealist out of everyone.

Thus, no obstacle exists to our collaboration on your review. There is, however, one point which is essential for us, and that is that our collaboration should consist not only of poems & reproductions, but also of what could be called our "programmatic positions." That is, what specifically characterizes the surrealist movement in the United States, here & now, is not that we are writers and painters, but that we have come together in a coherent collectivity to defend surrealist perspectives with an aggressiveness, combativeness, and extremism that, in this period, distinguish ~~us~~ us from so many other groups & individuals who call themselves "surrealist."

It would give us great pleasure to see translations, in Phases, of two of our statements: the text "1976: End of the 'American Way of Life'" and the preface, "Freedom of the Marvelous" from the exhibition catalogue. I am sure that Guy Ducornet or Guy Flandre would be willing to do the translating.

For a later issue of Phases, I would like to prepare a historical "survey" of surrealism & painting in the U.S., focusing primarily on less-known artists --- such as our good friend Tristan Meinecke, now in his 60s, & whose work of the early 1940s through the mid-1950s is vastly superior to practically everything produced by the "New York School"; and Robert Bruce Tague, the architect who drew up the blueprint in the exhibition catalogue, who also does wonderful collages, very much "in the spirit of" Schwitters; Gertrude Abercrombie, an incredible "eccentric," once a very close friend of Charlie Parker & other bebop musicians; & many others. There are many "unknown chapters" in the history of art in this country --- many are perhaps not so much "unknown" as they are suppressed. I have sent you --- in one of the parcels sent by surface-mail --- the catalogue of an exhibition of two little-known U.S. adherents of the "Abstraction-Creation" tendency (an exhibition organized, incidentally, at the instigation of Gerome Kamrowski, although he insists he himself is not very interested in this tendency, and was concerned only with "documenting" it). I will be getting some other catalogues of relatively little-known artists here in the near future, which I am sure you will find of interest.

The parcel containing Arsenal & the exhibition catalogue that we sent to V. Effenberger (which was sent air mail & registered, because of difficulties we have had in the past in getting our publications through to him) was "refused" by the Czech postal authorities & returned to us. A recent postcard from A. Marencin indicates that he, too, has not received anything from us, & there is no reason to assume that these publications have reached Karol Baron. We are sending you a number of additional copies of Arsenal; do you think it might be possible for you to send these items to friends in Czechoslovakia? Perhaps Petr Kral may know of a way; otherwise, Thom mentions that Ahouva Toche is planning soon to drive to Prague: perhaps it could be arranged for her to deliver copies personally. I also have the three collages by Marencin, which are to be returned to him; but I hesitate to mail them, under the circumstances. What would you suggest in this case?

It is delicious to learn that we shall ---hopefully soon--- see a new photograph of our very great friend Jacques Vaché. Perhaps this could be reproduced accompanied by the fine poem "Elegy for Jacques Vaché" written by Joseph Jablonski, in Arsenal #3?

Has anything new turned up on Hélène Vanel? Is she mentioned in any of the histories of dance in France? Was her performance at the 1938 exposition reviewed in the art journals of that time --- or in the reviews devoted to dance, and theater?

Many of the Phases materials that Thom has brought home with him are new to us, & I would appreciate it greatly if you could send copies to me. Most especially, I would like the first two issues of the new series (are any copies at all of the earlier series still available?), and the catalogues of expositions by Anne Ethuin, Suzanne Besson, Juan-Carlos Langlois. Thom has mentioned that he also has a very great number of small one-page or folder-type Phases catalogues; I would also appreciate it if you could send these.

There are so many things I would like to discuss with you! In my next letter I hope to outline some of our immediate & long-range projects; Penelope, meanwhile, has several questions, which you might be able to assist with, regarding her book concerning surrealism & women --- which will be, in large part, an anthology of surrealist women.

Thank you for sending the address of Arpad Mezei; we shall send him a selection of our publications and see what happens. In return, here are addresses of two Japanese friends, participants in the World Surrealist Exhibition, who are living in

Paris:

Aki KURODA  
11 Place Adolphe Cherioux  
Paris 15

Yoshiko HIRASAWA  
90 rue d'Assas  
75006 PARIS

Finally, here is the list of Phases works that we still have: G. Vulliamy (two pastel paintings); J. Perahim (three collages); S. Besson (one oil on canvas); J-C Charbonel (two oils on canvas); G. Roussille (one painting on paper). I should add that Claude Feraud very kindly wrote that we should keep the works he sent for ourselves (we shall of course send him some of our own in trade), but that we send one or two along to Toronto in case of an exposition there: we did send one, or perhaps two, of his collages to the Zellers. Let us know, whenever it is convenient, on the possibilities of our trading works for the above-mentioned works by Phases friends.

I enclose a photocopy of some clippings pertaining to a recent "scandal" perpetrated here by the surrealists, which is having many & far-reaching repercussions. I do not know if Robert Bly has any reputation in France; but he is one of the two or three best-known "poets" in this country, a winner of the National Book Award for poetry, and widely acclaimed ~~for~~ as the translator & popularizer of Pablo Neruda; he is also the author of stupid & highly tendentious remarks on surrealism (he has stated that "Spanish" surrealism --- which for him is Neruda & Vallejo --- is much more important than the "French" surrealism of Andre Breton!). In any case our "intervention" against him has had more than the immediately desired effect: it is continuing to resound long after the fact....

A small but not unimportant point: Guy Ducornet mentioned to me, long ago, that although you agreed with the content of our tract against John Lyle, that you thought we "exaggerated" Lyle's significance. I can readily understand how insignificant such an irredeemable canaille as Lyle can appear in France; but the fact is that he was at that time, in the English-speaking world, able to pass himself off as a surrealist at the same time that he boasted, in print, of his dealings with the police, etc. Thus, his "significance" is directly related to the abysmal ignorance of surrealism that still prevails where English is spoken. Paul Garon, who visited in England some time ago, was able to confirm that Lyle was an even worse character than we had imagined, that perhaps no one quite as thoroughly swinish has ever had anything to do with surrealism. Meanwhile, you know that Conroy Maddox, and above all John Welson --- who is soon moving from the Midlands to London --- are starting an authentic surrealist group in England, which will put an end to a great deal of confusion. Two comrades visited us here, over the holidays, from Dublin, Ireland, where they intend to initiate a surrealist activity. I shall discuss these developments --- and the situation in Australia, Canada, etc. --- in another letter.

I will add only that we have not yet received the additional copies of Phases #5. If you could send another 10 or 15, we could still place a few copies at a few bookstores here. The possibility for a considerable distribution of Phases in the U.S. definitely exists, which I hope we can begin with the 6th issue. If you have, in turn, suggestions on the possibilities of increasing the distribution of Arsenal in France (or elsewhere in Europe: what about Belgium, for example, where we do not have now a single "depositaire"???) please let us know.

Hoping that you are flourishing in Paris --- in spite of all the difficulties noted in your last letter --- with best regards to you & the other Phases friends,

surrealist greetings,