



Black Swan Press

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Dear Edouard,

It was a great joy to receive your most recent letter, as well as the delightful & impressive parcel of books & other materials brought back here by Robert & Debra. They are among our very closest comrades, as you know, & I am happy that your meeting with them was agreeable, in spite of the notorious "language barrier." For their part, they have been excited & pleased by their evening with you & Anne & Philippe Collage, & it has been interesting to hear their chronicle of their Parisian adventures.... I had hoped, however, that they might be able at least to set foot in the door at 42 rue Fontaine, but alas! it seems to have proved impossible. Unfortunately, also, they were unable to get to Lisbon to visit with Cesariny & Cruzeiro Seixas, on account of the railroad/airline strike in Spain....

We are eager to hear all the news of recent & forthcoming developments to which you allude in your letter. I also hope that we shall yet receive the extended commentary on the Cultural Correspondence promised in the splendid letter from Anne Ethuin in mid-December.

Much is happening here; many new developments in the last few weeks -- all of them encouraging: Great Things are "in the works"! The issue of Cultural Correspondence has opened up a number of possibilities (I should mention that the first printing of 3500 copies is now nearly sold out, & it will very likely go into a second printing soon. And speaking of reprinting: the Breton book from Monad Press is also now going into a second printing, the original press run of the paperback -- 3000 copies -- having dwindled to less than 100 copies.)

I shall cover the ground of these new developments in another letter soon. The principal reason for my writing at this moment, & in great haste, is to ask a favor of you; it is URGENT, & I am hoping with all that there is of hope that you will agree to this.

The next issue of Cultural Correspondence (as you may have noted from the brief reference on the inside front cover of the current issue) will feature a lengthy & important Symposium on "The Future of Surrealism." It is intended, at the editors' insistence (& partly because of necessary limitations of space), to focus primarily on surrealism in the U.S., although we have secured the editors' okay to translate a very few documents pertinent to the subject written in other languages, and also to solicit one or two brief texts on particular aspects of surrealism today from European comrades. What I hope very much that you will be able to contribute to this important Symposium are two texts, of perhaps 400 to 1500 words: 1) the most important, on the subject of "The Most Recent Tendencies of Surrealism in the Plastic Arts," in which, hopefully, you could say at least a few words about Penelope's paintings, Green's sculpture, & some other works by our friends here,* as well as noting the various exhibitions of recent years, in the U.S. & other countries, where these "most recent tendencies" have been manifest; 2) a second text, which could perhaps be some-

* with perhaps a "backward glance" at the contributions of Komrowski et al. in the 1940s....

what shorter than the preceding, on surrealist photography in the U.S., from the Rayograms of Man Ray to the obsessive images of Clarence John Laughlin & Frederick Sommer to the O.O.P.'s of Penelope to the Photomorphs of J. Karl Bogartte. It seems possible that, with your book on surrealist photography near completion, you might be able to excerpt a few appropriate paragraphs for this article.

If, in the first text -- on recent developments in the plastic arts -- you could also say something "general" about the importance of our group in the situation of surrealism today, it would also be very valuable in the context of this Symposium (& of course appreciated by us)....

We can arrange to have these texts translated here (unless you could arrange easily for, say, Guy Ducornet or Phillipe Collage to make translations there). The important thing is that we must have them as soon as possible -- preferably by mid-March, though I am sure we could delay things a bit -- in fact, delays are almost inevitable in the production of these publications, as I am sure you know very well, but we are trying to proceed as rapidly as possible. If you could have the texts to us any time in the month of March, it would be fine -- but the sooner the better!

I wish I could emphasize more how important all this is for us! I know you must be extremely busy with a hundred thousand other things, but I hope you will be able to seize a few odd moments in which to write these things! URGENT!!!

* * *

On other matters -- quickly: Clarence John Laughlin has just written to me that he will be visiting Paris in the month of April; he has asked me for your address. I am urging that he bring as many as possible of his unpublished photographs, so that you may be able to make a selection for the book. I hope this visit is not too late, as far as your book is concerned! But in any case, I am sure you will enjoy this meeting.... Only a minute fraction of his photographs has ever appeared in book form, or in magazines, & much of his best work has been seen only by a very few of Laughlin's close friends. He has done a number of one-of-a-kind color photographs utilizing collage which are among his most admirable works, & which have never even ^{been} exhibited anywhere (some of them seem to me to share the same "atmosphere" as Arshile Gorky's works of the mid-'40s).

I do not think I mentioned to you earlier how much we all enjoyed your very important text on the COBRA movement in The Moment. I am giving a copy of this to Tristan Meinecke, whose life & work, as I have mentioned to you earlier, was (& remains) very much "in the line" of this movement, still so little known here.

I have also meant to speak to you sometime of Meinecke's partner, in the field of architecture: Robert Bruce Tague. He descends from the Bauhaus tradition, & was in fact close to the principal Bauhaus figures, & has many letters & original works by them; altogether, not very close to surrealism -- but he also does some paintings & especially collages which are "interesting" in a way different from his architectural work. He visited with Nellie van Doesburg in 1945, & together they went to Arp's studio, & that same year he collaborated on (& was in fact secretary of) an ephemeral publication, produced in Paris, called CONTINUITY, which included Arp, Brancusi & Gertrude Stein among its contributors. I am sending you a photocopy of this review, & eventually would like to get some photographs of some of Tague's more interesting works to send to you. Ah, there is so much to do!!!

Many thanks for the recent volume by Gérard Legrand. Is it possible still to get a copy of his study of the Pre-Socratic philosophers? And perhaps he might be

interested in a copy of The Philosophy of Spinoza and Brunner, mentioned by Breton in his essay on Magritte in Surrealism & Painting? We have been in touch with its author, Dr. Walter Bernard (as you know, because we included his translation of Brunner's letter on Jonathan Swift in the last issue of ARSENAL), & he has a few extra copies of this old book....

What is the status of that "Dictionary" on surrealism, from Switzerland??? Could we see the texts that concern the U.S.? Or could you at least signal to me who Matthews included (I had sent him a letter with some recommendations in this regard, noting the individuals I thought absolutely necessary to be included, & am curious to see what resulted). In regard to his reference to the "split" of '77: I think I mentioned to you earlier that the "Burns/Johnson" "group" (?) has completely disbanded, its handful of adherents having mostly returned to the homes of their parents, & no longer carries on even a pretense of activity. Philip Lamantia & Nancy Joyce Peters remain confident that we shall soon be hearing from Alice Farley -- but we shall see....

I enclose a flyer for a conference in Seattle by our new collaborator, Paul Buhle. There is a small group of "surrealist sympathizers" there, who may be initiating some activity; they are forming a "Surrealist Study Circle" at the University; perhaps something will come of it. We are also in touch with a considerable number of new people around the country, many of whom learned of us through Cultural Correspondence.

The advertisement for Cultural Correspondence enclosed herein is intended for the forthcoming issue of Elleboire, if possible. Robert Green mentions that some things by us will be included in the next issue -- reproductions? Or texts? Or both???

One more word on the next issue of Cultural Correspondence: Thus far there is nothing planned for the Symposium regarding surrealism in Czechoslovakia (we do have some brief texts regarding surrealism in Portugal, England, the Arab countries, & the document from Pakistan excerpted in The Moment, plus a few texts on the general theme of "the future of surrealism" by Georges Henein, Suzanne Césaire (from Tropiques 1943, but still very pertinent!), & some others. But perhaps Petr Kral could write something concerning Czech surrealism today -- with an eye to its evolution in the years ahead -- of approximately 300 to 600 words? It would be necessary, from the standpoint of the editors of Cultural Correspondence, that he in some way relate surrealism in Czechoslovakia to our activity in the U.S., but I do not think this would be difficult; we have always felt especially close to the Czech comrades, in spite of Bounoure/Bedouin's stupid maneuvers against us; I am convinced, moreover, that we here share with the Czech surrealists a spirit of combativeness, aggressiveness, & humor altogether lacking in the insufferable cloisters of the pathetic B.L.ex-S.*

Along with the issue of CONTINUITY, I am sending you a large, book-length exhibition catalog devoted to Louis Eilshemius; a smaller catalog of works by the admirable George Catlin, so admired by Baudelaire; & some other things which I think you will find of interest. We are also sending you a number of copies of the MARVELOUS FREEDOM / VIGILANCE OF DESIRE catalog, hopefully to be sold at various Paris bookstores.

We have not heard from Granell in many months. And you? Have you seen the reprint, by City Lights in San Francisco, of the Juan Brea / Mary Low book, Red Spanish Notebook, with Granell's interesting & important preface???

We have not seen MELMOTH. We do not have any correspondent in England who could be called, by any stretch of the imagination, reliable....

* Also the Czech surrealists' emphasis on games, which we share (as in Time-Travelers' Potlatch)....

In a recent Ripley's Believe It Or Not! we noted a picture of an elderly man standing by a fence which, it explained, he had made by putting together many thousands of objects of all sorts. It seemed interesting, & I sent a letter to this man, Omehaw Kessinger, addressed simply to his name & the town in West Virginia that was mentioned in Ripley's text. It proved to be, as I suspected, a small enough town for the local post office to be able to forward my letter to him easily. And we have received, from Mr. Kessinger, a truly marvelous letter, responding in detail to my query about his motives in constructing this unusual fence, & enclosing many pictures. An interesting discovery on the "art brut" terrain -- I shall have more to say on this later.

We are in full agreement with your reservations regarding the recent irresponsible pronouncements by Jimmy Gladiator; all of us very much disliked his stupid statement in The Moment in which we did not fail to detect, as you did as well, the fascist/Stalinist tone. When we first received Melog we thought that it might be capable of some development, in spite of its many obvious & extreme deficiencies; but now it appears that we were mistaken....

Finally, as to Wolak. We have not seen his review, that you mention; in fact, we have not had one word from him since our brief meeting in New York two years ago. I must say that I did not then, & do not now, expect much -- if anything -- from him; he did not seem of any interest. We would not collaborate on any project under his direction; his refusal to concern himself with anything even faintly touching on politics, theory, morality, is no accident, but an accurate reflection of what seemed to us his complete inability to come to grips with what is at stake in the surrealist adventure....

We are gratified to learn that all is proceeding well in connection with the exhibition in Lyon; we hope you are pleased by the works that we sent. It turned out to be impossible to send work by Penelope as large as you suggested, so we had to send a substantially smaller one. Her paintings cannot, alas! be rolled, for they are done with an oil-and-water technique that simply cannot withstand being rolled. But she is doing some works on paper & on paneling that will, at least, be easier to ship across the sea....

Hoping that all is well with you, & with Anne Ethuin, & with all the good friends of Phases, & hoping too that you will write soon & let us know that you will write the things requested for Cultural Correspondence,

with warmest surrealist salutations,

Franklin Rosemont