

# 'Patastrophe!





# An International Enquiry on Surrealism and Architecture

The La Sirena group set itself five questions from an international enquiry from the surrealist group in Madrid, which plans to publish collated responses from around the world in its journal *Salamandra*.

**1** Which houses, buildings, constructions, parks or public works do you consider to be possible examples of surrealist architecture, either real (actually built) or imaginary (taken from literary or philosophical texts), both inside and outside? Describe them briefly and provide drawings, photographs, plans or images if available.

This question led to a lengthy and productive discussion between members of La Sirena. In terms of actually existing structures, well known surrealist landmarks like Cheval's Ideal Palace and Rodia's Watts Towers were mentioned, along with the architecture of Gaudi and the edible beauty of the Art Nouveau movement. The tradition of cabinets of curiosities was also discussed, in particular Sir John Soane's Museum, where architectural and other curiosities cram every cubic metre of Soane's 19th Century terraced house.

In fiction, the group explored the castles of the Gothic novel, from the original Castle of Otranto through the Château de Silling of Sade's 120 Days of Sodom and

the trackless halls of Eblis in Beckford's *Vathek*. (Reflected in that writer's absurdly over-ambitious project, Fonthill Abbey, repeatedly ruined by the collapse of its monstrous tower.) The castle continues in gothic fiction to this day, notably in Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast*, a ruinous structure the size of a city.

Moving on from the gothic, the group considered the experience of architecture in Carroll's *Alice* books, as the heroine survives a lengthy fall down the rabbit hole without injury, changes size and passes through the looking glass. We shared tales of tiny doors encountered and dreams of growing to fill rooms and extend limbs through windows.

The visual arts provide a rich variety of potentially surrealist architecture, from (arguable) proto-surrealists, actual

Above:  
Doug Campbell  
*Tango for Jean Rollin*



François de Nomé  
*Explosion in a Cathedral*

surrealists, ex-surrealists, fellow travellers and definitely-not-surrealists.

We started with Piranesi and his imaginary prisons, and hallucinatory representations of real Roman ruins. Before Piranesi, there were the architectural fantasies of Monsù Desiderio, now thought to be three different artists, at least one of whom, François de Nomé was responsible for the marvellous *Explosion in a Cathedral*.

We went on to discuss the fascination of the early surrealists for de Chirico's architectural fantasies of enigmatic figures in sun-blasted plazas. These are strongly echoed in Paul Delvaux's vanishing point perspectives of skeletons and distracted nudes wandering through Belgian cityscapes and classical ruins, all with regular trains. The distinction between inside and outside is blurred, a process taken even further by Magritte, who played all his games with scale, lighting, reality and representation on Belgian architecture.

M.C. Escher, famous for the paradoxical architecture of his engravings, also plays



Penny Slinger  
*An Exorcism*

Magritte  
*La Poitrine*



with scale in *Still Life and Street*.

The Exposition Internationale du Surrealisme in 1938 created an elaborate environment work for display of surrealist works, notably Dalí's *Rainy Taxi*. Dalí went on to create his *Dream of Venus* funhouse sideshow for the New York World's Fair in 1939. Elsewhere in New York, Joseph Cornell was creating microcosmic worlds in his boxes, including series of hotels and observatories. In the present day, the photographer Tim Walker creates elaborate sets for his bizarre characters to inhabit.

Others have explored dreamlike spaces in existing environments. Starting from access to a derelict English stately home, Penny Slinger's 1977 book of photographic collages *An Exorcism* creates a truly disturbing haunted house from the mysterious atmosphere of the place, peopled with unquiet spirits from her past.

There is perhaps an analogy with the photos of Francesca Woodman, in which she creates ghostly apparitions of herself in mysterious domestic interiors.

Many architectural forms with surrealist potential are to be found in the worlds of film and television. In our discussion, mention of Doctor Who and his craft the Tardis created delighted recognition from all. The Tardis is famously 'bigger on the inside', an antiquated British police phone box concealing a huge alien ship for traversing time and space. This is a marvellous, childlike conception of space, very much like something from Alice's Wonderland.

Other examples from cinema were discussed. The distorted, expressionist sets of *Caligari*, responding to and emphasising the moods of the characters. Dario Argento's *Suspiria* (1977) and *Inferno* (1980) disorient the viewer with exaggerated set designs, vividly designed interiors that seem too



Left: 22 and 23 Leinster Gardens, London. The left-hand 1850s-built property is inhabited. The right-hand one is only a façade.

Right: An ariel view of the rear of the façade – a tunnel opening, spanning girders and railway tracks

large for their exteriors, or for the terrorised characters trapped within.

Fritz Lang's 1948 *Secret Beyond the Door* features a mansion with concealed 'chamber of horrors' reconstructions of rooms in which famous murders took place. Harry Kumel's 1971 *Malpertuis* fits an entire world of ancient myth within a labyrinthine town house in Belgium.

Going back beyond film we spoke for a while about the stage and its architecture, the reconstructed Shakespeare's Globe, and how Frances Yates suggested a relationship between the structure of Elizabethan theatre, occult theory and the 'memory palace', perhaps the most surrealist of all possible buildings.

**Doug Campbell**

## 2 What characteristics should a surrealist architecture have in your opinion?

Surrealist architecture should have the quality of real dreams, evoking mystery, magic and surprise, in the manner of a de Chirico street or the veristic 'dream paintings' of Dalí, Magritte et al and the wonderland of *Alice*, of course, wherein being lost is also a form of being found. The labyrinth and the maze serve the same purpose – all roads lead back to the dreaming self, confronted with the twin mirrors of inner and exterior reality. We repeat: these are not places to lose ourselves or to escape reality, but rather to see reality anew. These are the 'dreams in broad daylight' that Éluard mentions in *The Beloved* – the self is the locus where dreams interpenetrate reality in the manner of Breton's 'communicating vessels'. We also extol the virtues of the palace of dreams, recognising Le Facteur

Cheval's Ideal Palace and Edward James' La Posaz as exemplars. We would also add the following: temples, towers, churches, museums, theatres, cinemas, classical Greek gardens. We particularly favour ruined buildings, ghostly and haunted, where past and present cross over and merge as uncanny and marvellous palimpsests. Old buildings can be cracked open to reveal the sedimentary layers of their past lives and those who have haunted them. They are both living and dead, convulsive. Surrealist architecture is that which shall be.

**Darren Thomas**

## 3 What ideas or contributions can surrealism make to urban planning and city design, in your opinion?

'Pet Architecture' is an ingenious direction for urban planning. It's basically habitable spaces in tight places such as between existing structures or on narrow corners. The architectural firm Atelier Bow-Wow in Japan mastered this art form. I envision these tiny houses to be used in spaces such as 23 and 24 Leinster Gardens in London. The houses there are facades designed to cover up a long vent for locomotives of the mid-1800s. Pet Architecture could be used to inhabit such a narrow home. One can use mirrors, colors, murals, and optical illusions, such as *trompe l'oeil*, to create the illusion that these are larger than they are. It would be a Tardis in reverse...smaller on the inside.

**Daina Kopp**

## 4 Have you ever dreamed of a surrealist city? Provide drawings, photographs, plans or images if you wish.

I have dreamed of surrealist cities in which the architecture is that of Paris, for example,

but walking around, I feel like I am in New York. The people, however, look like they are from the Caribbean with colorful costumes and frilly dresses. This city feels like three locations rolled into one. In other dreams of mine, I was walking around a busy city that looked like a town square in South America with churches and traditional Spanish architecture along the square and a municipal building in the center of the square. This building has a very wide water fountain surrounding it. There is no visible way of entering the building without going through the fountain. Yet, on a hot day like today, no one is seen entering the basin of the fountain. When I ask why no one goes in the water, I'm told that it's because 'there are some creatures that bite.' Nothing scary like piranhas, just little things that like to bite.

**Daina Kopp**

**5** Describe a house, building, construction, park or public work (or more than one) of your own invention or that you have dreamed of and that may fit your idea of surreal architecture. Provide drawings, photographs, plans or images if you wish.

I envision a building designed specifically for ghosts. No human would inhabit it, it would look like a regular modern construction on the outside, square and unassuming, but be Escher-like on the inside with stairs that go in circles and can be climbed upside down (because ghosts don't believe in gravity) and doors that go nowhere, and windows that show brick walls. Something like the Winchester Mystery House built by the heiress to the Winchester gun company. Her mansion is inspirational to me. I often have dreams in which doors appear out of nowhere and

lead me to a previously hidden wing of a house. These dreams are of houses that I've lived in within reality. The building I would design would attract ghosts from the surrounding city and confuse them so they can't leave and cause trouble in the outside world.

The Winchester Mystery House is a mansion in San Jose, California, that was once the personal residence of Sarah Winchester. She inherited the small home on the property and, believing that the ghosts of those killed by the Winchester rifles would haunt her, she continuously constructed the mansion from 1884 to 1922, the year of her death. She designed stairs and doors that lead nowhere in order to confuse the spirits.

**Daina Kopp**



The Winchester Mystery House



See also "Surrealist Architecture – An Impossible Dream?" in 'Patastrophe! #5

# House of Butterflies

The concept for the House of Butterflies project was conceived by Taya King and Darren Thomas, with contributions from Doug Campbell and Daina Kopp.

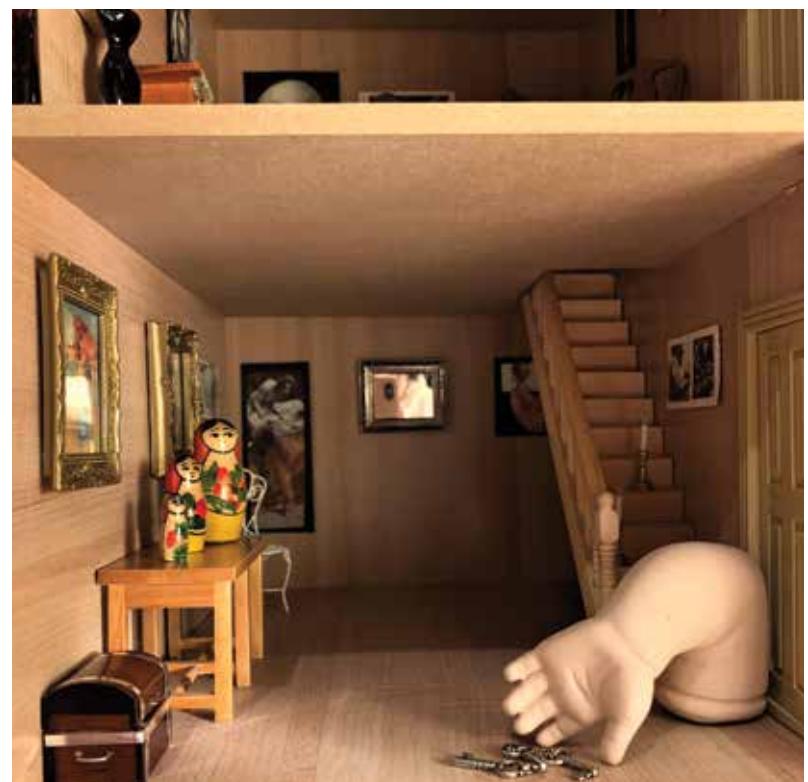


## The Looking Glass Room

The scattered keys escape baby's grasp  
Watched over by the three wise dolls and  
the sting of childhood  
Curious candlesticks recklessly obstruct  
the staircase  
As midnight buries her face in the prison  
between her legs  
And the wooden chest waits to be unlocked  
by the mistress of the house  
In The Looking Glass Room of perpetual  
secrets

## The Dream Ballroom

The rocking-horse confronts the camera  
that gave her motion, swallowing its  
seductive gaze  
And captures seashell dreams on celluloid  
Their secrets multiplying in triplicate:  
teardrop, wave, then feather  
Parisian ladies dance the tango behind the  
Eiffel tower  
Their glass revolution ruptures the civilised  
veneer of The Dream Ballroom  
The self-mastery of the mannequin mirrors  
that of the man with the movie camera





### The Winter Nursery

The giant baby foot leapt out of the floor  
 In search of the butterfly in the mirror  
 The icy stare of the phrenological lady  
 petrifies the objects into submission  
 Until the fair sunlight strangles her shadow  
 with warm kisses  
 Her ghost sits endlessly at the sewing  
 machine  
 Haunted by the daggers of eyes that swallow  
 their whispers like the Winter Nursery



### The Phantom Music Room

The silver owls take flight in search of The  
 Others  
 Whose hybrid forms are personified in the  
 strange antiquities:  
 The cone of plenty, the seashell gramophone  
 and the champagne rose  
 Three headless women regularly roam the  
 Phantom Music Room  
 To do battle with the fossilised laws of  
 reproduction (as decreed by the man-  
 machine)  
 Reclaiming their lost bodies from the  
 master of the house



### The Abandoned Loft

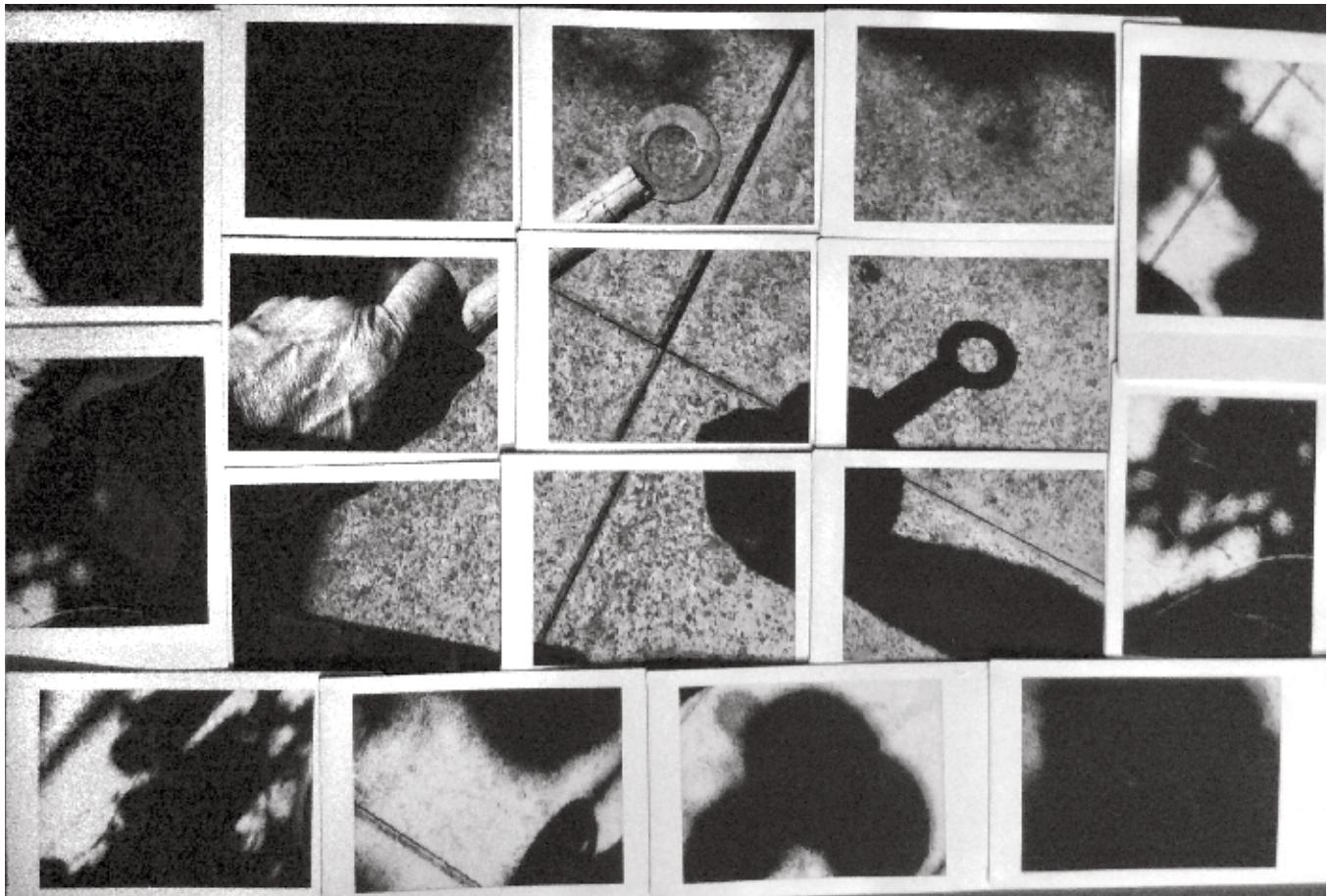
Everyday the baby feet play chess while the  
 rocking horse observes the game  
 One giant leap into the space between the  
 rocking horse and the cradle  
 Monstrous apes and Cheshire cats alike  
 silently seek out seashells  
 'Beware the mask' she said as she climbed  
 out of the wardrobe into the Abandoned  
 Loft  
 The toy soldiers would rather take up  
 knitting than guard the queen  
 Yet her solemnity echoed through the  
 scream emanating from the howling  
 woman in the painting

Taya King and Darren Thomas

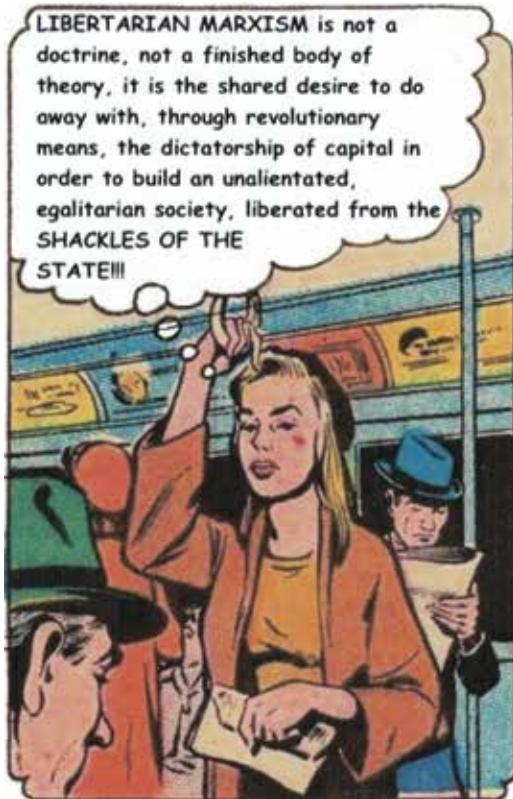




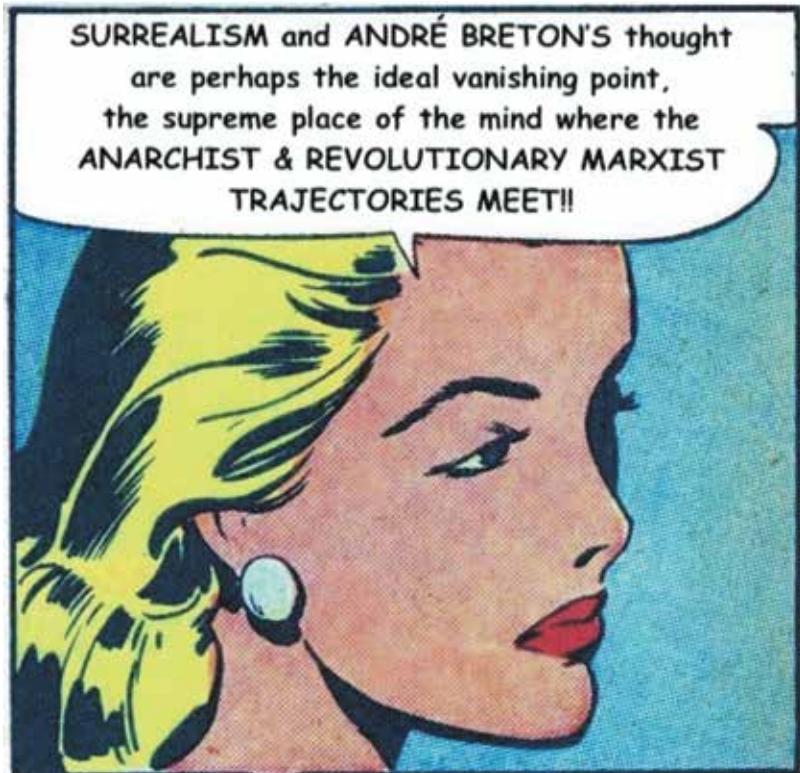
Chris Furby  
*Oblivion Alley*. Still from film of the same name



Wedgwood Steventon  
*Device for forming Shadows*, from a series, *Spontaneous Combustion*



John Richardson  
*Through Revolutionary Means*



John Richardson  
*The Ideal Vanishing Point*



John Richardson  
*Emancipatory Praxis*

# Was the first Surrealist painting by Klee or Chirico?

The 1961 Paul Klee exhibition catalogue from the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm was an unusual piece of printed matter. Tucked behind the stiff flaps of a riveted cardboard cover was a fold-out poster, as well as a booklet edited by Carlo Derkert of the Moderna Museet, as its name is in Swedish. Of course, these compartments could hold other things as well. In his copy of the catalogue, surrealist painter Stellan Mörner inserted three pages of handwritten notes about Klee, pages that his youngest son Hans has now rediscovered.

Stellan Mörner was an artist who wrote. He published two books of lyrical prose (see 'Patastrophe! #5) and kept a diary for much of his life. Mörner himself selected material from it for two autobiographical volumes, published in Swedish. The notes on Klee are somewhat different in character from

the diary leaves, and were probably made soon after Mörner had seen the exhibition. (Both Klee paintings mentioned by name are depicted in the catalogue.)

In these notes, Mörner is beautifully generous with memories from an already long life as an artist. He thinks back forty years, he remembers his studies, and gives a fascinating insight into discussions that took place during the International Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936, when he and his friend Erik Olson from the Halmstad group represented Nordic surrealism (works by Danish artist Wilhelm Freddie were withheld by British customs as being offensive to propriety). These notes are, with Hans Mörner's kind permission, printed here for the first time.

Jonas Ellerström



Någon gång arbetade i brygga av 30-talet  
Hon var en del med en svensk ingenjör,  
som varit ett år i Hannover för studier.  
Hon hade hon - givit förmödning av  
G.A.N. - storit bekant med hem. Nelly  
Walden och införd i deras hem, där mög-  
ligheten för färtare musiker av  
varierat prägel upptäcktes. I den brevbox  
hundrader Klee, han var själv alltid med,  
Klee boende en i Helsingborg. Det är inte  
viktigt vem i en avläggen svenska hus-  
-et det var han som berättade med  
egna ord om Klee. Det var först  
gången jag hörde Klees namn, det är  
nu 30 år sedan.

Under mina studier i Paris 1923-25  
jag inte minnes att det talades om Klee.  
Det var andra gudar som dyrkades,  
Dager, Picasso, Rousseau le Dävarin, min  
främst Leger.

Si gick 30-talets mest intressant  
1930 Rom, då Carlsberg arrangerade 1930  
-concreto. Det i Stockholm. där  
Kandinsky, Klee, Kandinsky, Leger, Kandinsky

The Concert of the Parties  
(Paul Klee 1907)



Some time in the very beginning of the 20s, I happened upon a Swedish engineer, who had been studying in Hanover for a year. There he had – through the mediation of GAN [Swedish modernist artist Gösta Adrian-Nilsson] – become acquainted with Herwarth and Nell Walden [gallery owner and his Swedish artist wife] and introduced into their home, where artists, writers, and musicians of a radical nature mingled. Klee was admired in that circle, but he himself was never a part of it, Klee lived in Weimar then. There we sat in a poorly furnished room in a remote Swedish small town and this engineer spoke in glowing terms about Klee. It was the first time I heard Klee's name, it is now 40 years ago.

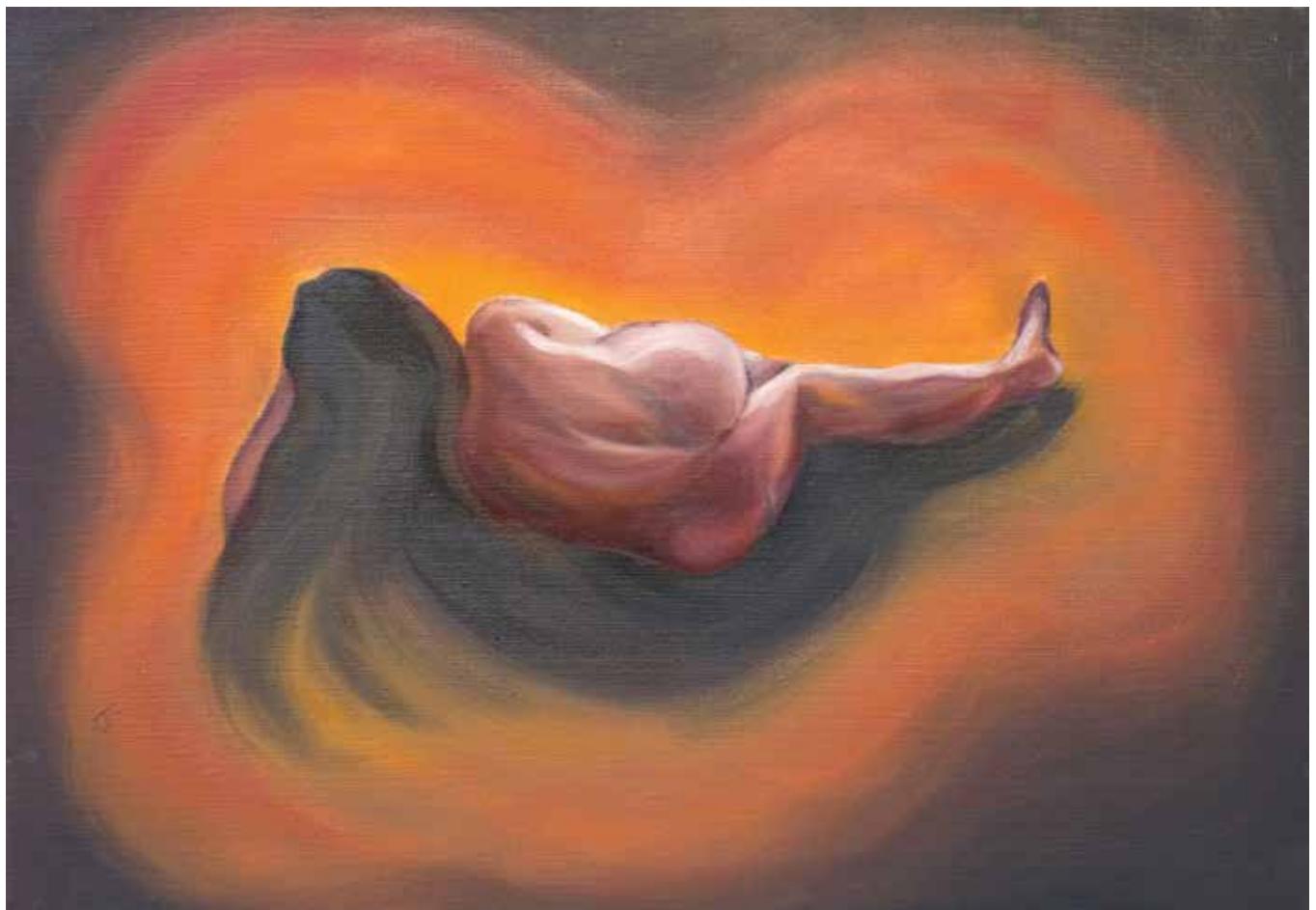
During my years of study in Paris in 1923–25, I do not recall any mention of Klee. Other gods were worshipped there, Léger, Picasso, Rousseau le douanier, but mainly Léger.

So the 20s came to an end and 1930 arrived, when [artist Otto G] Carlsund arranged the Art Concret exhibition here in Stockholm. There were works by Arp, Hélion, Mondrian, Léger, Ozenfant, but none by Klee. Imagine if Carlsund had had access to Necropolis, this wonderful painting (from 1929) or Mask (from 1922). Carlsund and GAN once sat in our house and looked at a little booklet about Klee, which I had bought, I don't remember where or when. GAN laughed so hard he squealed at a picture, which Klee had given the title *Frau P. im Süden* (it is from the same year as Mask here in the exhibition). GAN spoke admiringly of Klee's sense of humor. C. did not appreciate this touch of humor, it

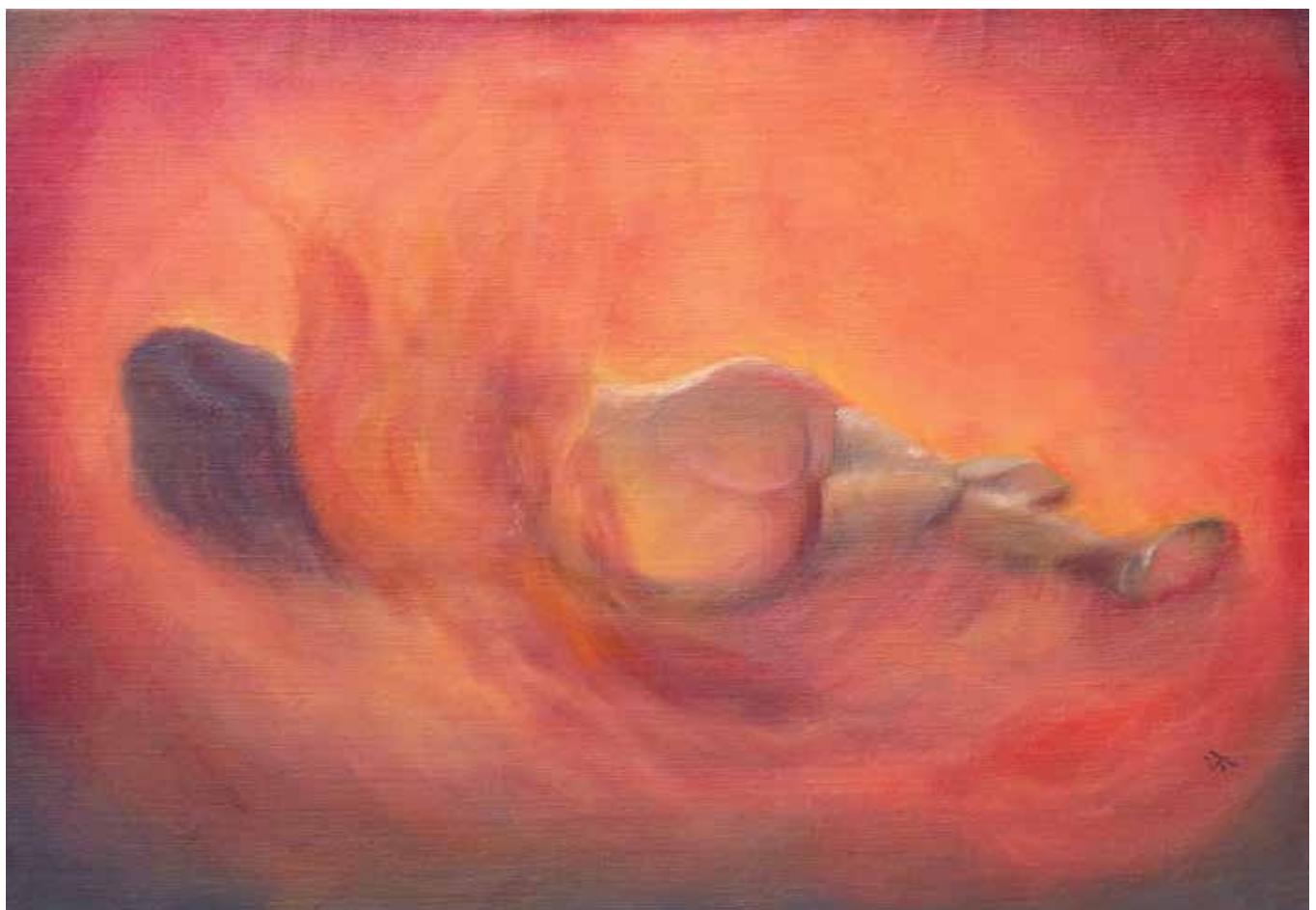
somehow did not fit into the context of Art Concret. Nor the literary in Klee, nor the so to speak poetic flute tone from the chamber of intimate romance, which is so clearly audible in Klee.

The surrealists, on the other hand, did. As early as 1925, Klee was among them, and when the 30s brought the big surrealist manifestations and exhibitions, Klee was made a standard-bearer. His name acquired a pioneer's glory. I remember once in London, it was in the middle of the 30s, when it was discussed who was actually the first surrealist visual artist, the one that had in our century made the first surrealist painting. Most claimed Chirico, that was how it was generally assumed then. But some insisted it was Klee. Already in 1907, he had painted a party of musicians at a dinner table (a small oil painting on glass), which was considered to have the right surrealistic radiance. The eaters are more animals than people, almost like deformed monsters. Their mouths are shaped into something resembling both suction tubes for food and wind instruments. This was what was so remarkable. 1907. Chirico's famous paintings all belong to the 1910s. There was a terrible screaming and shouting. Klee was first, no, Chirico. No, Klee, yes, Chirico, Chirico. No, Klee. At last there was silence on the horizon, and Klee rose to his importance. It was no longer a question of first or second first or of surrealism at all. All that was without weight. He became Klee, the great artist Klee, whom we have around us here.

**Stellan Mörner**



Tracy Thursfield  
*Nigredo*



Tracy Thursfield  
*Rubedo*



Sarah Johns  
*Cone of power*

# Dominique Aury

## Woman of Masks



In autumn 1941, Jean Paulhan, leading commissioning editor at Éditions Gallimard, the most prestigious publishing house in Paris, was approached by a woman named Dominique Aury who was compiling an anthology of French religious and mystical verse. It is likely that he recognised her. In the mid 1930s Paulhan, already a major

figure in the Paris cultural scene, chief editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (NRF), the most influential literary journal in Europe, had liaised with the Office of French Universities and Schools, where he worked with one Auguste Desclos, a man of around his own age (Paulhan was just turning fifty). It is almost certain that Desclos



Left: Anne Desclos

Right: Dominique Aury



introduced Paulhan to his daughter, then in her late twenties. In those days she had been Anne Desclos, but later, in 1937, she adopted her first mask – that of Dominique Aury – when she began to write articles for literary journals in Paris, specialising in Shakespeare, but also John Donne and artists like Turner and the Impressionists.<sup>1</sup> The proprietor of the publishing house, Gaston Gallimard, was not much interested in Aury's proposal, but Paulhan was; he agreed to edit, and he and Aury set to work. This was of course during the Second World War and the Occupation, and what Paulhan did not know was that Aury was a member of the French Resistance – realising only in early 1942 when she decided he was sufficiently sympathetic to slip him a copy of an underground paper she was distributing. What Dominique Aury in her turn did not know was that Jean Paulhan was the founder and editor of that paper. The literary and cultural front was an important zone of struggle during the Occupation. General de Gaulle had made it clear that printing and publishing *résistant* writers was crucial to maintaining morale and undermining Nazi control, and here Paulhan played a central role. He was involved in setting up clandestine papers and publishing house (Éditions de Minuit), and the underground National Committee of Writers<sup>2</sup>. He had resigned from the *NRF* when the Nazis commandeered it, but kept his role at Gallimard, smuggling dissident writers (including Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus) into print to show that even the 'official' publishing houses could be colonised by *résistants*. His activities did not involve the gunplay or sabotage we normally associate with the Resistance, but it was dangerous work – he was arrested at one point, and comrades of his were shot.

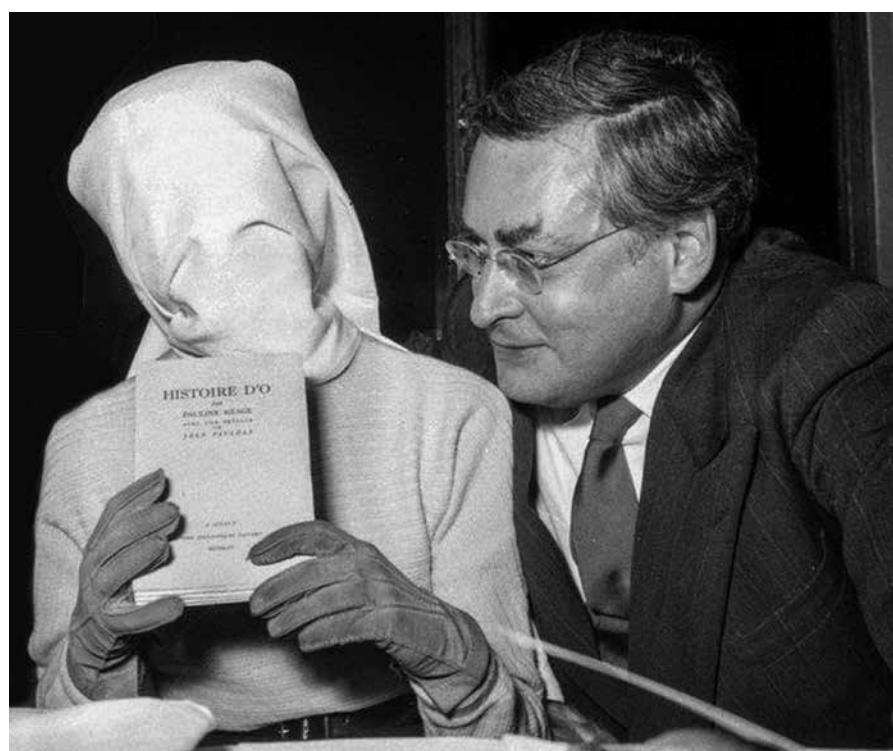
Dominique Aury's *Anthology of French Religious Poetry* was published by Gallimard in 1943, and she and Paulhan continued with their Resistance work. When Paris was liberated in 1944, they both took part in the literary renaissance that followed, as editors and writers, Paulhan as publisher, Aury as an English translator. They both took full advantage of the personal licence those heady days afforded as well – Paulhan had long been a serial seducer, and Aury made hay with both sexes, her conquests including Jean Amroche and Édith Thomas amongst others, and very probably Albert Camus, Maurice Blanchot and Arthur Koestler. Aury resisted Paulhan's overtures to begin with, but by autumn 1947 they were beginning their long affair, an affair best known for providing the stimulus for



Dominique Aury to write her remarkable novel *Histoire d'O* (*Story of O*). Probably started in 1950, it was mostly composed in 1951 and recounts the subjection of a young female fashion photographer, referred to only as 'O', to a regime of carnal use, enslavement and erotically sadistic practices by members of a sexual cult based at a private mansion in Roissy. This subjection O submits to and comes to adore, the last we see her being at a soirée where she is paraded in front of stunned on-lookers in an elaborate, predatory owl-mask of her choosing (and not a lot else). Paulhan recommended the manuscript to Gallimard, Aury choosing to conceal her identity as author another mask – 'Pauline Réage'. [All of her masks stayed (officially) in place for decades. Aury was only publicly unveiled as the writer of *O* in 1994, and in her original identity as Anne Desclos in 1998, the year she died, aged 90].

*Au Rendezvous des Amis*  
(Max Ernst 1922)  
Jean Paulhan is in the  
grey suit on the front row,  
next to the statue of  
Dostoevsky that Ernst is  
sitting on; back row from  
the right: Gala, de Chirico,  
Breton, Aragon and Éluard

'Pauline Réage' and  
Raymond Queneau (founder  
of Oulipo)





As it happened, this time Gallimard didn't want to play. Not at all averse to putting out challenging, even scandalous literature (Jean Genet for example), they cavilled at *Story of O* – in part for its content, but even more that the author was apparently a woman. That was simply too much. The novel was eventually published in 1954, accompanied by a long preface by Paulhan, by a daring young publisher named Jean-Jacques Pauvert (who spent most of his life in court fighting off the censors), and, after a slow start, went on to become one of the most influential and controversial books of recent decades. In the Anglophone world, most of the reaction to it has been to do with gender politics. It has been hailed as a liberation – the first erotic novel written by a woman in modern times, celebrating sexual freedom outside of the reproductive imperative; and it has been condemned (by American 'radical' feminists and their allies) as 'pornography' of the worst kind, misogynistic propaganda justifying the oppression and mistreatment of women.

In *Story of O: Eros, Paris and Surrealism* (due out in time for O's 70th anniversary)<sup>3</sup>, the focus is more on the novel in the context of the intellectual explosion in Paris in the years after Liberation. A movement loosely known as 'Humanism' flourished in those years, searching, as the Cold War plunged world temperature well below zero, for a 'Third Way' between U.S. capitalism and Soviet communism. Prominent voices along the Humanist spectrum included those of Existentialism (Sartre, Beauvoir, Camus), 'Feminine Humanism'<sup>4</sup> (Beauvoir again, Édith Thomas, psychoanalyst Marie

Bonaparte), and Surrealism (revived by André Breton, with some old and many new faces). All were responsive to the renewed interest in the writings of the Marquis de Sade<sup>5</sup> – Paulhan, Beauvoir, Camus and dissident surrealist Georges Bataille all wrote about him – and it is in this context that we find *Story of O* as a touchstone of the ideas of the day. A text of Sadean érotisme noir, it can be read in Existentialist terms, and as a contribution to Feminine Humanism – in dialogue with psychoanalysis and Beauvoir's magisterial *The Second Sex* (1949). Most strikingly, it can be seen as a Surrealist work.

Paulhan had a long history with the surrealists, dating back to their beginnings. He introduced Breton to Paul Éluard in 1918, contributed to the launching of Breton's first literary journal the following year, and in 1922 helped Breton split his nascent Surrealism away from Tristan Tzara's Dadaism. He arranged dodgy identity papers for German painter (and illegal immigrant) Max Ernst to live and work in Paris – his reward being given central place in Ernst's painting *Au Rendezvous des Amis*



Above: *Histoire d'O*

Left: Jean Paulhan

An inspiration for 'O'? Lee Miller au Collier (c. 1930)





Leonor Fini wearing an owl mask

(1922) along with Breton, Louis Aragon, Paul and Gala Éluard, Giorgio de Chirico, Ernst himself and a number of others. This group, depicted as a secret society (complete with arcane hand gestures), was to provide the core membership of the early Surrealist movement. At the launch of Surrealism in 1924, Paulhan distributed Breton's review, *La Révolution Surrealiste* – leading some to suggest that without Paulhan and the NRF, Surrealism would never have taken flight. Paulhan went on to foster Antonin Artaud's career, which caused some tension with Breton in the 1930s, but after the war Paulhan was one of Breton's closest correspondents, and they collaborated on various projects, in some of which Dominique Aury was involved.

Aury certainly learned much about the surrealists from Paulhan, but she was well aware of them in her own right, and this can be seen in *Story of O*. Influence from Breton's 'Manifesto of Surrealism' (1924) and *L'Amour Fou* (1937) are evident. Also significant is a trio of novels, all published in 1928, the year Aury/ Anne Desclos turned 21 – Breton's *Nadja*, Bataille's *L'Histoire d'Oeil*

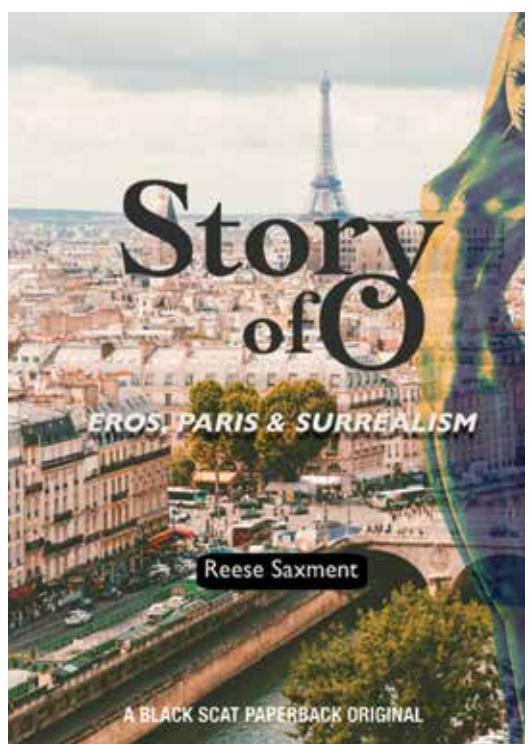
*Story of O: Eros, Paris and Surrealism*

(*The Story of the Eye*), and Joseph Kessel's *Belle de Jour* – this last being filmed by the great surrealist director Luis Buñuel in 1967, two years before the publication of the mysterious and highly controversial 'sequel' to *O, Retour à Roissy* (*Return to the Château*). Influence from Leonor Fini and her owl-masks is clear (and admitted to by Aury), but Aury also seems to have been picking up inspiration from Lee Miller and Max Ernst, and perhaps Artaud and Raymond Queneau. On publication, *Story of O* was hailed with particular enthusiasm by surrealist reviewers, most significantly Georges Bataille, and it can be fruitfully discussed in terms of surrealist views on the novel and the mystical, and Bataille's work on the spiritual and the carnal.

The direction Surrealism took under Breton's leadership after the war has been described by Alyce Mahon as 'The Politics of Eros'<sup>6</sup>, and it is precisely here, we would suggest, that *Story of O* deserves its place – pride of place in fact – as an exemplary erotic/mystical novel fully in keeping with this Politics of Eros, the revolutionary and liberating dynamic of André Breton's post-war vision of Surrealism.

**Reese Saxment**

1. See David, Angie: *Dominique Aury* Éditions Léo Scheer 2006
2. Comité national des écrivains (CNE)
3. Saxment, Reese: *Story of O: Eros, Paris and Surrealism* Black Scat Books 2024
4. Kaufmann, Dorothy: 'The Story of Two Women' *Signs*, Vol 23, No. 4 (Summer 1998)
5. Mahon, Alyce: *The Marquis de Sade and the Avant Garde* Princeton U.P. 2020
6. Mahon, Alyce: *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros* 1938-1968 Thames and Hudson 2005





HMM? THEN WHERE WOULD WE BE?

Jane MacNeil  
Hmm? The where would we be?



Doug Campbell  
Postcards from Major Weir



Jen Allanson  
*Dad and Daughter*



JOHN KNOX'S HOUSE, EDINBURGH.



## Reflections on the night-time banks of the river Lot near Andre Breton's House

Even the slightest of brushes  
Creates circles in still rivers  
Like the endless  
Spinning of a child's mind  
Within its own alchemical revolutions  
At least until  
The final regret of daybreak

Underneath the surface  
We are upside down  
Foreign elements  
Through distorted glass

Possibly it is indeed us  
Who are upside down  
Torn towards our arrogance  
Enveloped within our deluded supremacy

Sometimes the darkness  
Oily Dylan-tar dark  
Beckons us  
With invisible movements

To join in unity  
With some form  
Of purified  
Liquid eternity

I am separate and the same  
The two-headed beast  
Embodying everything  
In a dance of awareness

The candles splutter  
Over their wine-glass table  
Flickering condescendingly  
Over their limited expensive jokes  
And earnest introspections

Rich people's problems  
On rich people's boats  
Will not distract me  
From the unity  
That is sucking me  
Towards its almost  
But only almost  
Unbroken surface

We are one

**Jean Bonnin**

The South Wales Surrealists – Jean Bonnin, Brian Beamish, and Anne-Paule Mousnier  
*The Five Stages of Transformation [Part IV]*

## Fireworks in the Asylum (Leonora's Leanings)

At the imperial court of dominion  
She flung her debutantes tiara  
She sought with no fear  
A Strident shimmy, a flamboyant frontier

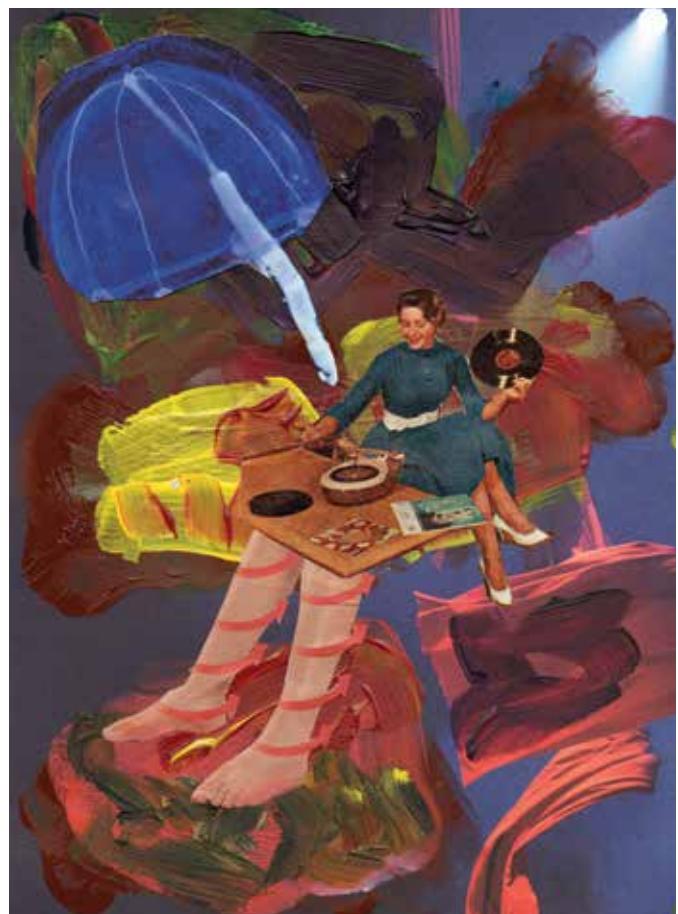
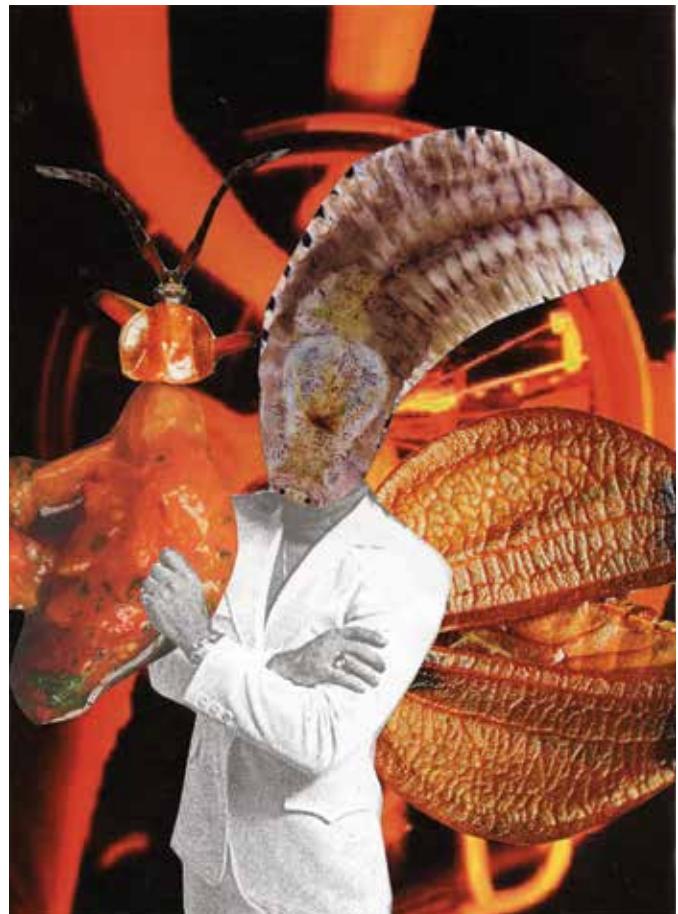
Groans of isolation  
Sigils of shock  
Manacled therapy  
Fondles her frock

Bedazzled in husky heretical heaving  
in a foundry of fabric  
wilfully weaving

and rendering whole  
the Marchioness of the Minotaurs  
hosting a congregation  
in an iridescent villa  
as apparitions salsa  
to a canine audience  
at the midnight dinner  
where black smocks,  
magnolia pallors  
and red cowls witness  
sanguine spheres

that lead to obsidian obelisks  
where spider web hammocks  
dangle over a monolith in twilight  
alongside Aztec murals and marigold wreaths  
coalescing beside statues of Egyptian familiars  
and Mexican frescoes of feline figures

**Adam Hassan**



## The Hooting Hour

Angling on the banks of a boundless ravine  
the raven clutches a canoe  
Moonlight scuds across basswood oars  
electric wanderers start anew  
under frenetic strobes  
a sonic orchestra rolls  
under the reef and shoals  
and shows us in the hooting hours  
a compass of bronze to hold  
as the world of order is  
pegged out on the washing line  
fertilising flora concealed in sodden soil  
ironing the ridges of an evergreen coil

**Adam Hassan**

John Welson and Slim Smith  
Collaborative collages



Nelly Sanchez  
Allégresse

# 'Patastrophe!

'Patastrophe! #8 published by Surrealerpool  
– December 2023  
ISBN 9781910467268  
Email: surrealerpool@gmail.com  
Twitter: @surrealerpool  
Instagram: @surrealerpool\_convocation  
Front cover: Nelly Sanches *Apex sidéral*  
Back cover: Slim Smith *Julie brings a friend*

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