


ART-LAND

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Dreams
come true

I'm attracted
to the
psychedelic
/surreal

What path to the emancipation
and empowerment of the In-
dividual will save us now that
democracy won't?



I believe in the future resolution of two states (in appearance so contradictory), dream and reality, into a sort of absolute reality, "surréalitée."

André Breton¹

Distortions of Reality in Past and Contemporary Culture

PEDER JANSSON

man's inner hidden world of ideas. He was a spokesman for a denial of the sovereignty of the mind that particularly concerned the rational reason. His revolutionary idea of how the subconscious sense would crush capitalism was based on the outlying situation of the subconscious, both regarding outer oppressions as well as inner suppressions/censorings. The strength of this was present in that the subconscious' hitherto unused quality was unknown to the "enemy".

The interpretation methods to verify dreams and artworks have a similar core since their iconologies often are composed of several images and incidents that have been brought together to one unique expression. To reach the underlying meaning of a dream or an art-work one could dismantle their entireties and with the components one could define an implication in combination with personal experiences. With the help of these the aesthetics of art and dreams could be dissolved and appear as any guise, which has been the case with contemporary art. And it is particularly the complete freedom the Surrealists of the 20s aimed at, why the dream was one of their most important main themes. They were inevitably affected by **Freud's Interpretation of Dreams** (1899), but not entirely satisfied with that he had taken out a patent for the dream analytical processes' completion. Above all, it was the clinical aspect of the dream theories and metaphysical deformations in

Freud's work that annoyed Breton, why he decided to supplement Freud's works with his own dream theories with **The Communicating Vessels**, 1932 together with a dream anthology that was published as a special edition of **Cahiers GLM**, 1938². At heart it was the genuine confrontation that Breton desired; the immediate and thoughtless language that visually would bring about an art that no one ever had done before.

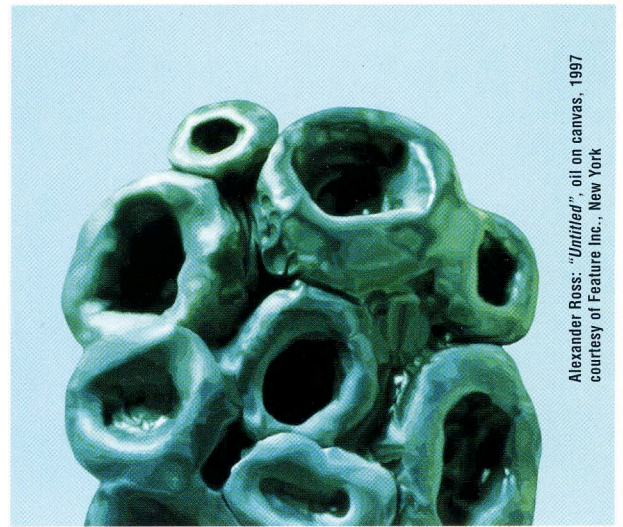
From an art historical perspective **Hieronymus Bosch** (1450-1516) has above all other artists been a prominent figure to the origin of the French Surrealist movement. Bosch's scrutinization of the *Théodicée*, his circumstantial imagining of what it would be like to live in hell was at the time exceptionally full of eccentric metaphors that were close to the Surrealists' conception (and Breton's reconditional process of his war memories) of how the subconscious should be visualized. Breton's ideas were owing to his war memories strongly fortified in



Hans Bellmer, *Doll*, 1936

The Surrealist group got themselves a nutrient input with **Dali's** membership in 1929, in which he together with **Buñuel** could accomplish several affected provocations, which gave the group an excellent publicity. Dali was since a long time a devoted Freudian (until he met him in person in London in 1938) and with that experience he had the door open to the dream world, something that gave rise to many fresh suggestions to new painting motifs. In the legendary group exhibition, **Internationale Exhibition du Surréalisme** at Galerie de Beaux Arts in Paris in 1938, a couple of window dummies were the central point in the bound between the real and the imaginary. Dali was already fascinated by the wax's

materialistic humanizing qualities and he admired the waxworks' figures that were in a border country of doubt between the real and imaginary. Each of the exhibiting artists had designed and clothed his window dummy, where **André Masson's Mannequin with Bird Cage** and **Kurt Seligmann's Ultra-Furniture** affected the most attention owing to their works' fetishistic and misogynic content. Seligmann's piece, a stool with four female prop legs with



Alexander Ross: "Untitled", oil on canvas, 1997
courtesy of Feature Inc., New York



Andrés Kertész, Distortions no.91, 1933

real pumps hinted at **Hans Bellmer's** anatomy distorted doll bodies, and in particular to what the English Pop artist, **Allen Jones** relied his entire oeuvre on; the fusion of living room furniture and female doll bodies.

During the 60s and 70s, the sculptural Superrealism in the USA came to resemble the perfect human copy even better. It became nearly perfect, and with 'nearly perfect' the doubt in the border country between the real and the imaginative remained. **Duane Hanson's** realistic human sculptures, for instance, **Bowery Delicts**, 1969-70 were made of polyester and fiberglass. They stood balancing on this particular threshold more than with any artist's work. Since then, Superrealism has certainly progressed, but not directly on a material level, but on a political, as in the case with **Charles Ray**, whose work with human sculptures during the 80s strived to attain a Superrealism for starters, but which later turned into a kind of anthropomorphical "human displays" with pointers at the

Do you inhale?

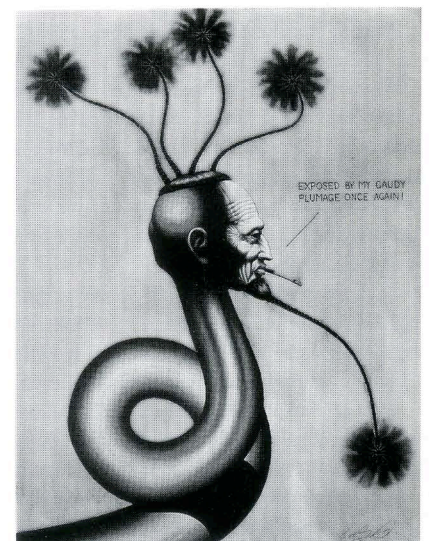
A 24-year-old previously healthy nonsmoker ended up attending the University hospital of Wales with "crackling under the skin". The highly unusual phenomena had been haunting him for several days. Examining physician Stuart Elborn, found pockets of air trapped under the skin on the man's shoulders, chest, neck, abdomen, back, arms, and legs. It turned out that the patient had inflated some 20 balloons in about an hour. "We were pretty sure what was going on when we heard that", says Elborn. "To develop subcutaneous air collections, you need to have a leak from your lung for some reason". And that reason was the Valsalva.

Valsalva is a medical maneuver in which a subject takes in a deep breath, then tries to exhale forcefully without first opening the glottis. An interesting thing about the Valsalva is that it is quite commonly performed. Blowing up balloons happens to be an excellent way to do it. And careless Valsalving can burst some of the lung's alveoli, the tiny little air sacs where gas

exchange actually occurs. "It seems that most seem to stop after four or five", says Elborn, "whereas he blew up 20. He probably started leaking air maybe after three or four and then by continuing to inflate balloons managed to push out large volume of air into the skin."

Other activities can cause this inflated sense of self. Air trapped under the skin is well documented among saxophone players, whose aggressive style probably makes them more susceptible than other wind musicians, according to Elborn. Marijuana smokers attempting to hold in the fumes unwittingly do the Valsalva. Those at greatest risk for the kind of bloat the balloon blower experienced would thus be pot-smoking sax players.

Back in Wales, 10 days after visiting the hospital, the intrepid balloonist had completely deflated, the trapped air having diffused into capillaries with no lasting ill effects. His experience, however, is a warning for us all. "Clearly, if you have any pain or discomfort when you're blowing up balloons, you should use a pump."



Ashley Bickerton: Self Portrait, # God Knows What



fashion models' ideal figure - the inhuman body enslavement. For many years the human resembling qualities of wax is nothing but a memory, but nowadays the doubt is about human genuineness, if man is solely of flesh and blood or partly consists of silicone.

During the early 80s in New York the so-called "Art of the East Village" was in vogue. The genre had especially a lot in common with the current music culture at the time; break dance, hip hop and soul that aesthetically were on a level of pink champagne mixed with milk. **Kenny Scharf** was one artist of the genre that seized this and mixed it with adoptions of the Surrealists, psychedelica and animated cartoons. His kitsch-like painting with gaudy colors, often aestheticized to a jungle of metaphors were not connected with the superreality Breton favoured. Instead, the genre was maybe the most visually superficial hitherto in art history in consideration of the environmental commitment that was of frequent occurrence.

The Ambient movement (which grew out of House music, which by turns was inspired by the Disco culture that affected Scharf's painting) was also committed in the environment and to some extent influenced by Surrealism when it turned up in the mid 80s. Its visual sound source comprised everything that proceeded in nature, why it became one of a few genres of modern dance music that da-red

to experiment without losing the audience. Even if the Surrealists of the 20s were not as keen on experimenting with sounds as their precursors, the Futurists, **Luigi Russolo** and **Ugo Piatti**, there was a prospect of a free improvisatory "toneless" creating in Breton's concept, the **Automatic Writing**. Someone who adopted this in a sound perspective was the Englishman, **Steven Stapleton**, who formed **Nurse With Wound** in 1979 - a free group of non-musicians that uses any sound sources possible to achieve an artistic means of expression that is free of everything that goes by the name of counterpoint. NWW's sound is sometimes quite close to the "commercial" Ambient music, but they have by fair means or foul been categorized as domiciled within the Industrial genre on account of that they have released their own albums in limited editions just as the Punk movement did together with their esoteric aura. Their first album's title, **Chance Meeting On A Dissecting**

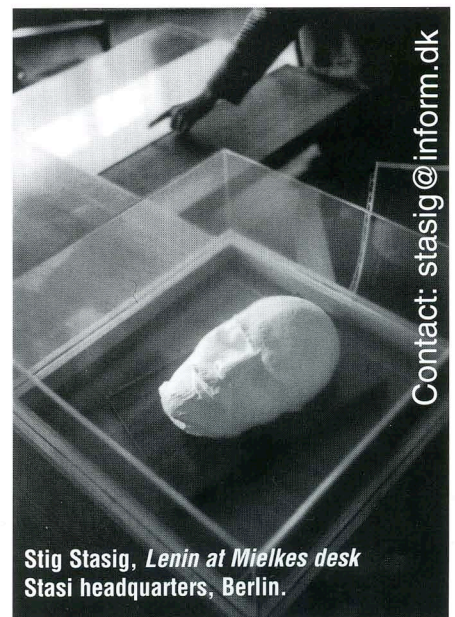
Table Of A Sewing Machine And Umbrella, 1979 was an excerpt from **Lautréamont's Les Chants de Maldoror**, 1868, which also was a kind of slogan to Breton & Co. Later, NWW fortified the reference to the importance of Automatic Writing to the sound creating process with the concept albums, **Automatic Vol. 1**, 1986 and **Vol. 2**, 1989. However, the sound scape is not the only

attribute of NWW. With **Babs Santini's** (a.k.a. Steven Stapleton) fabulous record covers they also have an involvement in the visual arts.

Also in the visual arts of the 90s, features of Surrealism have appeared in places, especially in the woman portraits of **Lisa Yuskavage**. Their Bellmer-look-a-like anatomy also are "fairy" in character, which gives them a similar sense of doubt as the earlier mentioned window dummies received on their way from the boutique to the art gallery. Yuskavage shares the anthropomorphic ideal's definite sexual character with her precursors; Dali and in particular with **Andrés Kertész** and his **Distortion** series, 1933. In Yuskavage's case the border between the lifelike connection and the invented is as sophisticated in its configuration as the border itself. Her preference for manipulating the woman's features and figure is tremendously up to date body stard and voyeuristic, but beyond the current beauty patterns.

It is not especially long ago since the -isms became extinct in the art world. Today, we can only see fragments of the bygone grupings that collectively wanted to achieve radical changes in society with their art. Surrealism is probably one of the most widespread movements that apart from contemporary art subconsciously has affected film (David Lynch), literature (Douglas Adams) and music (Am-bient/Techno) as the subconscious no longer is considered as impalpable. On the contrary, the subconscious has received an obvious space in our culture, often without ourselves questioning its origin and purpose.

- 1 "Surrealisme", exhibition cat., Julien Levy Gallery, New York, 1932.
- 2 Rosemont, Franklin (ed.): André Breton: What is Surrealism?, Selected Writings, Monad Press, Plymouth, 1978, p. 172.



Stig Stasig, Lenin at Mielkes desk
Stasi headquarters, Berlin.