

## CADAVRE EXQUIS OR THE VOLUPTUOUS DECAY OF THE SHIVERING VEIL

**Hans Bellmer, François Boucher, Ernst Yojhi Jaeger, Stanislava Kovalčíková, Linder Sterling, Soshiro Matsubara, Richard Oelze, Félicien Rops, Kazuna Taguchi, Miroslav Tichý**

When I think about the representation of the figure in painting and its identity, which is often resolved as a happy ending or spectacle, I often miss the mystery, the fantasy and, to be honest, the decay in the painting of my generation. Many works have a dark, surreal undertone, but in reality rarely achieves the cinematic atmosphere Instagram suggests. When I met Kazuna, Ernst and Soshiro and their work in Vienna, I felt a slight sense of relief because I suspected these artists are dealing with similar themes to mine represented a longing without the happy promises feeding the ubiquitous discursive agendas of the time.

We often played *Cadavre Exquis* on the evenings I was setting up my exhibition in Vienna. This early Surrealist game reminded me of the second current mass phenomenon in the contemporary art world - the artist collectives. Artist collectives are by no means a new phenomenon. But I believe that collaboration can trump competition in the art world, even though competition is an important part of art making. Playing *Cadavre Exquis* was so much fun. When *Braunfelder* approached me with the offer to do an exhibition, I was still processing these different topics, and curious to see respective contemporary phenomena from the dark side ("identity" as content of an image and dissolution of ownership of a work).

Later, while reading a book by Japanese criminal fiction author Edogawa Ranpo, I became familiar with the cultural phenomenon of erotic grotesque nonsense - ero guro for short. In this context, the sexually charged, unapologetically "bizarre" subject matter associated with erotic-grotesque cultural products is reconstituted as a transgressive gesture against state-sponsored notions of "constructive" morality, identity, and sexuality in pre-WWII Japan (Quote Jim Reichert). This reminded me of the photographs of Czechoslovak dissident Miroslav Tichý, whose decaying, voyeuristic prints of mostly female subjects always left a vivid impression on me, as did the collages of Linder Sterling. From there, Hans Bellmer entered our conversation, as did work by François Boucher and Richard Oelze. In a way, the exhibition began with these two threads of thought, and will certainly develop further until it is opened.

I assume the grotesque can liberate and sublimate the expression of beauty in contemporary art in much the same way as decomposition and death can do to the body. Oftentimes we think of death as a very concrete construct, sterile and singular. It was therefore interesting to consider death more as a notion, image, process, and game than as a fact and endpoint. Sadly, in recent weeks I need to think a lot about what a human shield is, what a life is worth, after all. It gives a bitter taste to my vision for this exhibition, but I think it is a very essential phenomenon that I am trying to trace and with the generous contribution of the invited artists as well as the collected historical work, we have put together an exhibition that speaks of a story as old as age and as imminent as pandemics and wars.

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