

potlatch #1

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

22 June 1954

Translated by Gerardo Denís and Reuben Keehan

Potlatch

All the Water in the Sea Couldn't . . . - Debord

A New Myth - Conord

Make them Swallow Their Chewing-Gum - Conord, Dahou, Debord, Fillon, Straram, Wolman

Psychogeographical Game of the Week

The Dark Passage

A New Assignment - Dahou

Potlatch:

You receive it often. In *Potlatch*, the Lettrist International deals with the problems of the week. *Potlatch* is the most engaged publication in the world: we are working toward the conscious and collective establishment of a new civilization.

THE EDITOR

All the Water in the Sea Couldn't . . .

On 1 December, Marcelle M., aged sixteen years, attempts suicide with his lover. After they have been saved, this individual — married, and old enough to look after himself — insists that he was driven to it against his will. Marcelle is referred to a children's court so he can "learn to appreciate his moral responsibility." In France, minors are sent to religious prisons and forced to spend their youth there.

On 5 February, eighteen anarchists who had attempted to reconstitute the CNT are condemned to death for military rebellion. Franco's firing squads keep the sinister "western civilization" safe from harm.

In April, the news weeklies publish a few picturesque photos of Kenya: the rebellious "General Chine" listening as he is sentenced to death; the cockpit of a Royal Air Force plane decorated with thirty-four silhouettes representing the number of natives strafed; a dead black, known as a Mau Mau.

On 1 June, in the ridiculous *La Figaro*, Mauriac reprimands Françoise Sagan for not preaching any of the great French values which bind the Moroccan people to us, for example — and this at a time when the Empire is going down the toilet. (Naturally, we wouldn't waste a second reading the novels and novelists of this little year, 1954, but when you look like Mauriac, talking about an eighteen-year-old girl is obscene).

The latest issue of the neo-surrealist — and previously innocuous — journal *Medium* tries its hand at provocation: the fascist Georges Soulès suddenly appears under the pseudonym, Abellio, while Gérard Legrand attacks North African workers in Paris.

Fear of the real questions and complacency toward outdated intellectual fashions unites literary professionals in such a way that they either fancy themselves as edifying or, like Camus, as rebellious.

What these gentlemen lack is the Terror.

GUY-ERNEST DEBORD

A New Myth

The last of the llamas is dead, but Ivich has slanting eyes. Who will be his children now? Ivich waits . . . it doesn't matter where in the world.

ANDRÉ-FRANK CONORD

Make Them Swallow their Chewing-Gum

Once more, Foster Rockett Dules calls you to arms: Guatemala has expropriated the United Fruit Company, the trust that since 1944 has exploited the people of that country and their gum to produce its indispensable chewing gum.

The God of Anti-communist Armies expressed himself in the following terms: "For these forces of evil to be eradicated, we have to resort to peaceful and collective action." This action is under way: weapons "made in the USA" have already been delivered to reactionaries in Honduras and Nicaragua; plots have surfaced with the support of massive sums of dollars; America is setting off on its crusade.

The methods that destroyed the Spanish Republic are being reproduced to the finest detail.

The students demonstrating under tank fire in Bogota and the revolutionary movement in Guatemala appear to be the only chance for freedom on the continent.

The government of J. Arbenz Guzman must arm the workers.

To economic sanctions, to imperialist military attacks, it must respond with a civil war waged in the oppressed countries of Central America, and with appeals for volunteers from Europe.

Paris, 16 June 1954

for the Lettrist International:

ANDRÉ-FRANK CONORD, MOHAMED DAHOU, GUY-ERNEST DEBORD, JACQUES FILLON,
PATRICK STRARAM, GIL J. WOLMAN

Psychogeographical Game of the Week

Depending on what you are after, choose an area, a more or less populous city, a more or less lively street. Build a house. Furnish it. Make the most of its decoration and surroundings. Choose the season and the time. Gather together the right people, the best records and drinks. Lighting and conversation must, of course, be appropriate, along with the weather and your memories.

If your calculations are correct, you should find the outcome satisfying. (Please inform the editors of the results.)

The Dark Passage

At the Galerie du Double Doute, passage Molière (82 rue Quincampoix), the exhibition of influential metographies went fruitfully. The continuation of lettrism now has a critical flak-jacket to protect it from any kind of roasting.

A New Assignment

Mohamed Dahou requests that the lettrist group in Orleansville designate five resolute people to place themselves at his disposal in Paris as soon as possible.

MOHAMED DAHOU

potlatch #2

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

29 June 1954

Translated by Gerardo Denís, Greil Marcus, Donald Nicholson-Smith and Reuben Keehan

Potlatch: Directions for Use

No Common Measure - de Béarn, Conord, Dahou, Debord, Fillon, Straram, Wolman

They Write to Us from Vancouver - Straram

Two Détourned Phrases for Ivich

Second Anniversary

Exercise in Psychogeography - Debord

Out the Door - Wolman

Worth Keeping in Mind - Dahou, Debord & Wolman

Potlatch: Directions for Use

We're not interested in a fond place in your memories. But concrete powers are at stake. A few hundred people haphazardly determine the thought of an era. Whether they know it or not, they are at our disposal. By sending *Potlatch* to effectively positioned people, we can interrupt the circuit when and where we please. Some readers have been chosen arbitrarily. You have a chance to be one of them.

THE EDITOR

No Common Measure

The most dazzling displays of intelligence mean nothing to us. Political economy, love and urban planning are means that we must master in order to solve a problem that is first and foremost of an ethical kind. Nothing can release life from its obligation to be absolutely passionate. We know how to proceed. The world's hostility and trickery notwithstanding, the participants in an adventure that is altogether daunting are gathering, and making no concessions. We consider generally that there is no other honorable way of living apart from this participation.

for the Lettrist International:

HENRY DE BÉARN, ANDRÉ-FRANK CONORD, MOHAMED DAHOU, GUY-ERNEST
DEBORD, JACQUES FILLON, PATRICK STRARAM, GIL J. WOLMAN

They Write to Us from Vancouver

We still haven't been to Canada! . . . Perhaps in the not too distant future? My behaviour is no longer just enigmatic, it terrorizes, and I cannot be reproached a single gesture, an illicit word. On the contrary, my conduct is exemplary, completely disorienting . . .

PATRICK STRARAM

Two Détourned Phrases for Ivich

Ivich is winning! Ivich is winning! Love will as good as smile upon him.

He has found it. What? Eternity. Ivich is one with the sun.

For any urgent communication, contact TUR 42-39.

Second Anniversary

On the evening of 30 June 1952, *Howlings in Favor of Sade* was first shown at the self-described Avant-garde Film Club. After twenty minutes of confusion, the projection of the film was cut short by an utterly indignant audience.

Exercise in Psychogeography

Piranesi is psychogeographical in the stairway.

Claude Lorrain is psychogeographical in the juxtaposition of a palace neighborhood and the sea.

The postman Cheval is psychogeographical in architecture.

Arthur Cravan is psychogeographical in hurried drifting.

Jacques Vaché is psychogeographical in dress.

Louis II of Bavaria is psychogeographical in royalty.

Jack the Ripper is probably psychogeographical in love.

Saint-Just is a bit psychogeographical in politics. (Terror is disorienting.)

André Breton is naively psycho-geographical in encounters.

Madeleine Reineri is psycho-geographical in suicide. (See *Howlings in Favor of Sade*.)

Along with Pierre Mabille in gathering together marvels, Évariste Gaulois in mathematics, Edgar Allan Poe in landscape, and Villiers de l'Isle Adam in agony.

GUY-ERNEST DEBORD

Out the Door

Since November 1952, the Lettrist International has pursued the elimination of the Old Guard:

<i>a few exclusions</i>	<i>a few reasons</i>
ISIDORE GOLDSTEIN aka ISIDORE ISOU	Morally retrograde individual, limited ambition
MOÏSE BISMUTH aka MAURICE LEMAÎTRE	Prolonged infantilism, early senility, a good apostle
POMERANS aka GABRIEL POMERAND	Falsifier, nonentity
SERGE BERNA	Lack of intellectual rigor
MENSION	Merely decorative
JEAN-LOUIS BRAU	Militarist deviations
LANGLAIS	Foolishness
IVAN CHTCHEGLOFF aka GILLES IVAIN	Mythomania, interpretative delirium, lack of revolutionary consciousness

Harking back to the dead is pointless — a new generation has taken charge.

GIL J WOLMAN

Worth Keeping in Mind

"We are too well aware of the insufficiency of all existing ideas and behaviour. Holding onto any of these only assists the police with their inquiries. The present society can therefore be divided into just two groups: lettrists and informants."

(Declaration of 19 February 1953, signed by Dahou, Debord and Wolman; published in issue 2 of *Internationale lettriste*.)

Editor in Chief: André-Frank Conord, 15 rue Duguay-Trouin, Paris 6.

potlatch #3

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

6 July 1954

Translated by WNLÀ and Gerardo Denís

Guatemala is Lost - Bernstein, Conord, Dahou, Debord, Fillon, Wolman
All is Revealed - Bernstein
Slum Construction - Conord
Best News of the Week
Pin Yin Against Vaché - Debord

Guatemala is Lost

On 30th June the Guatemalan government, taken over the previous day by Colonel Monzon, capitulated to the aggression mounted by the U.S.A. and its local puppet, C. Armas. In the same vein, it will already be too late when even the most ignorant leaders of the European bourgeoisie understand the point at which the success of their 'infallible ally' has menaced them, locking them into an irrevocable contract as badly paid gladiators for the American Way; condemning them to march blithely and patriotically into the blows of history simply to earn their flag its 48 gold stars.

Every June, since the assassination of Rosenberg, the United States government appears to have chosen to mount a bloody challenge to all those in the world who want and know how to live freely. The Guatemalan cause was lost because the men in power did not dare to fight in the arena which was truly theirs. A declaration by the Lettrist International (*Make Them Swallow Their Chewing Gum*) dated 16th June — three days before the surrender — warned that Arbenz had to arm the unions and rally all the workers of Central America for whom he represented the only hope for freedom. Instead of calling for spontaneous popular organisation and insurrection, he sacrificed everything to the demands of the army; as if, as in any country, the army wasn't essentially fascist and always geared towards repression.

Such men were judged in advance by the words of Saint-Just: "Those who make revolution by halves only dig their own graves." This tomb has also been opened for our comrades in Guatemala — dockers, lorry drivers, plantation workers — who were abandoned without a fight and who are being executed at this very moment.

After Spain and Greece, Guatemala now finds itself amongst those regions which attract a very particular form of tourism. We look forward to making this trip ourselves one day.

for the Lettrist International:

M.-I. BERNSTEIN, ANDRÉ-FRANK CONORD, MOHAMED DAHOU, GUY-ERNEST
DEBORD, JACQUES FILLON, GIL J. WOLMAN

All is Revealed

These are the people who are known as "Lettrists," as others were known as "Jacobins" or "Franciscans" . . .

MICHÈLE-IVICH BERNSTEIN

Slum Construction

Within the framework of the social policy program of the past few years, the construction of slums as a means of dealing with the housing crisis is continuing at a fever pitch. One cannot help but admire the ingenuity shown by our Ministers and our town-planning architects. In the interest of maintaining harmony, they have developed a few standard slum types that can be used anywhere in the country. Their preferred building material is reinforced concrete. With this material, which lends itself to the supplest of forms, they construct only square buildings. The best example of the genre seems to be the genius Corbusier's *Cité Radieuse* although the projects of the brilliant Perret run a close second.

In their work, a style develops that sets the standard of thought and civilization for the mid-twentieth century. It is the "barracks" style. The 1950s house is a box.

Decor determines gesture: we will build passionate houses.

A.-F. CONORD

Best News of the Week

Perpignan, 30th June (France-Soir) — A car accident, which occurred this morning at 4.30am near the village of Saises, took the lives of the Reverend Father Emmanuel Suarez, Leader of the Dominicans, and Father Aureliano Martinez Centarino, secretary general of the same order. The two priests were returning from Rome by car and were on their way to Spain. It appears that Father Centarino, who was driving, had been overcome by fatigue and fallen asleep at the wheel. The car, which was travelling at high speed, crashed into a tree killing both occupants outright.

Pin Yin versus Vaché

The great vogue for war and for "war letters" forces us to be made aware of the most disgusting acts of heroism as well as the most beautiful testimonies of desertion.

But this apology for fleeing back home, which generates the essentially symbolic symbols of Jaques Vaché, ("I will never win so much from war") is no longer satisfying. We prefer the mutineer who wins.

We know how these great names build themselves up. Don't forget that Jaques Vaché was entirely conditioned by the military system of the moment. (On the other hand Arthur Cravan appears to have made a daredevil voyage from one extreme to the other, without even a single necessary visa.)

We do not wish to question the grandeur of Vaché's individual act of resistance, but, as we wrote in October 1952 concerning the hapless Chaplin-in-the-limelight : "We believe that the most urgent expression of freedom is the destruction of idols, especially when they claim to represent freedom." (*Internationale lettriste* #1 [Position of the Lettrist International]).

We acknowledge judgement only of that literature which functions as an imperative of our propaganda: the distribution of Vaché's "Letters" amongst French high school children carries only certain elegant formulations to various flat negations which are in fashion.

However, in a small book which remains relatively unknown; the *Journal of a Young Chinese Revolutionary* (Librairie Valois, 1931), Pin Yin, a young sixteen year old student who followed the Peoples Army on its march to Shanghai, gives us his two descriptions of red youth: "As regards my parents, I naturally did not want to leave them. But we must no longer think in this way, because the Revolution will have to sacrifice a small number of men for the happiness and well being of the majority..."

We know the end of this story; and of the twenty years of power of the General who still survives in Formosa; and of the executioners of the Kumintang: "...but we will never feel suffering, we believe that tomorrow will be calm and beautiful; a sun as red as blood, and in front of us a great path bathed in light. A beautiful garden."

The voice of Pin Yin reminds us of the repercussions of the day when our friends and most stout accomplices — at what speed in kilometres per second is the earth's rotation — have left or disappeared. At least the best reasons for a civil war will not be in short supply.

G.-E. DEBORD

Potlatch is sent to various addresses supplied to the editor.

Editor in Chief: André-Frank Conord, 15 rue Duguay-Trouin, Paris 6.

potlatch #4

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

13 July 1954

Translated by Gerardo Denís and Reuben Keehan

The Minimum Life - Bernstein, Conord, Dahou, Debord, Fillon, Wolman

The Best News of the Week

A Lettrist International Survey - Dahou

Next Planet

Valid Everywhere

The Right to Respond

The Minimum Life

One can never tire of saying that unionism's current concessions are condemned to failure; less by their division and their dependence on official organizations than by the poverty of their programs.

One can never tire of telling the exploited workers their lives are at stake, lives that are irreplaceable and boundless in potential; that their most beautiful years are at stake, passing slowly but surely by, without any worthwhile enjoyment, without their ever having taken up arms.

We don't need to demand greater security or a raise in the 'minimum wage,' but that the masses are no longer kept at a minimum life. We don't just need to demand bread, we need to demand fun.

In the "Economic statute on light labour," defined last year by the Commission of Collective Conventions, a statute that is an unbearable injury to all that can still be expected from humans, the role of leisure — not to mention culture — was set at the level of serialized detective novels.

There's no other way out.

And what's more, with its detective novels, as with its Press and its trans-Atlantic Cinema, this regime extends its prisons in which nothing is left to gain — but where there is nothing to lose but our chains.

It is not the question of increase to salaries that should be posed, but that of the conditions forced on people in the West.

It is necessary to refuse to struggle inside the system to obtain concessions to details immediately called into question or regained elsewhere by capitalism. The problem of the survival or destruction of the system must be posed radically.

It is not necessary to talk of possible compromises, but of unacceptable realities: just ask the Algerian workers at the Regié Renault plant where their free time is, or their country, their dignity, their wives. Ask them they have to hope for. The social struggle must not be bureaucratic, it must be passionate. To judge the disastrous effects of professional unionism, it is enough to analyze the spontaneous strike of August 1953; its basic resolution; its sabotage by scabs; its abandonment by the CGT, who had neither brought about the strike nor used it to extend itself victoriously. It is necessary, on the contrary, to become aware of a few facts that can make the debate passionate: for example, the fact that our friends exist all over the world, and that in their struggles, we see ourselves; the fact also that we do not expect any compensation outside of what we must invent and build ourselves.

This is a matter of courage.

for the Lettrist International:

MICHÈLE I. BERNSTEIN, ANDRÉ-FRANK CONORD, MOHAMED DAHOU, G.-E. DEBORD, JACQUES FILLON, GIL J. WOLMAN

The Best News of the Week

General Franco received US Senator Byrd in his Prado palace yesterday for a lengthy discussion on France, which according to Franco is "in dire straits." He indicated to the senator that, for his part, he had almost given up hope for its future as a great power.

An exhibition of influential metagraphs opened on 11 June at the Galerie du Double Doute and made it to 7 July without serious incident.

A Lettrist International Survey

- What necessity do you see in COLLECTIVE PLAY in modern society?
- What attitude should be taken toward reactionary Tour de France style détournements of this need?

Send your responses to Mohamed Dahou, Editor-in-chief, Internationale Lettriste, 32 rue de la Montagne-Geneviève, Paris 5e.

Next Planet

Although their builders are gone, a few disturbing pyramids resist the efforts of travel agencies to render them banal.

The postman Cheval, working every night of his life, built his inexplicable Ideal Palace in his garden in Hauterive, the first example of an architecture of disorientation.

In this baroque palace, which *détourne*s the forms of certain exotic monuments and stone vegetation, one can only lose oneself. Its influence will soon be immense. The life-work of a single incredibly obstinate man cannot, of course, be appreciated in itself, as most visitors think, but instead reveals a strange and unarticulated passion.

Struck by the same desire, Louis II of Bavaria built, at great expense in the mountain forests of his kingdom, hallucinatory artificial castles, before disappearing in shallow waters.

The underground river that was his theater and the plaster statues in his gardens intimate a project as *absolute* as it was tragic.

There are plenty of reasons for riffraff psychiatrists to intervene and for paternalistic intellectuals to launch a new-found "naïveté" with page upon page of nonsense.

But the naïveté is theirs. Ferdinand Cheval and Louis of Bavaria built the castles that they wanted to build, in accordance with a new human condition.

Valid Everywhere

"The strange outcome of the national election has not gone unnoticed. When the tally was announced, one could have easily have asked oneself if 'the people' isn't a group composed completely of millionaires, whose only opposition is an elite minority of workers."

Extract from Les Lèvres Nues #1, Brussels, Belgium.

The Right to Respond

Everyone knows that the extreme Right in France are preparing a show of strength. The provocations of 14 July 1953, as well as the riots following General Castries' surrender at Dien Bien Phu, are particular examples of this. These riots were organized by shock groups ostensibly supported by the police, and formed by Indochina veterans (cf. France-Observateur of 25 June) and marginally more intelligent young student elements. Each week, left wing newspaper vendors are attacked by thugs who seem determined to make a habit of it.

To all violence, it is necessary to respond with even greater violence: fortunately, a combative minority with an advanced revolutionary consciousness has existed in France for several years among the North African workers, who are particularly numerous in Paris and cities in the North and the East. A serious effort at propaganda among them would be extremely "profitable." The advantages of this alliance are as numerous as they appear: their street fighting techniques

are equal or superior to those of highly trained paramilitary groups, and their bases are many in the districts where the Algerian cafés are full of unemployed workers.

In short, the North Africans in Paris are agreed on a number of subjects: they are more than ready to take on fascists of every stripe, no matter what they call themselves.

Despite their assistance by the police, ridding the public highways of these rogues should be a rather simple matter.

THE EDITORS

Editor in Chief: André-Frank Conord, 15 rue Duguay-Trouin, Paris 6e.

potlatch #5

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

20 July 1954

Translated by Gerardo Denís, Greil Marcus and Reuben Keehan

The Cathars Were Right!

Skyscraper by the Roots - Lettrist International

Best News of the Week

An Exemplary Autocritique

Response to an Enquiry from the Belgian Surrealist Group - Lettrist International

The Cathars were Right!

Washington, 9 July — The entire American press today published photos of the physicist Marcel Schein, a professor at the University of Chicago, his blackboard and his "anti-proton," a mysterious particle of cosmic matter which was detected last winter with the help of a balloon suspended 30 kilometers above Texas. In doing so, he has made one of the greatest discoveries of modern science. The anti-proton, sought for years by physicists all over the world, is the opposite of the proton. The proton is the nucleus of the hydrogen atom, and, in consequence, constitutes the basic element of all terrestrial matter. A collision between a proton and an anti-proton will result in mutual destruction. Thus the anti-proton will be capable of destroying all matter composed of protons. In essence, this will be "anti-matter." Nevertheless, it appears impossible for them to combine with enough force to destroy the planet. (*Combat* - 10 July)

CONCLUSION

- The new government of Guatemala will disallow the voting rights of illiterates. (*Le Figaro* - 9/7)
- General Carlos Castillo Armas, head of the rebels who have gained victory in Guatemala, has been named president by the military junta. (*Paris-Presse* - 10/7)
- Castillo Armas defines his politics: "The justice of the firing squad. (*L'Humanité* - 14/7)

Skyscraper by the Roots

In these days where everything, every aspect of life, is becoming more and more repressive, there is one man who is particularly repulsive, one who is clearly more on the side of law and order than most. He builds individual living cells, he builds capital cities for the Nepalese, he builds vertical ghettos, he builds morgues for an era that well knows what to do with them, *he builds churches*.

This modular Protestant, Le Corbusier-Sing-Sing, this dauber of neo-cubist shells, sets in motion "*machines for living in*" to the greater glory of God, who created carrion and Corbusier in his own image and likeness.

It is understandable that while modern urban planning has not yet made itself worthy of the name art, let alone that of a *cadre de vie*, it has, on the other hand, always found inspiration in police detectives; after all, Haussmann only gave us these boulevards to make it easier to roll cannons through them.

But today, the prison is becoming the preferred housing type, and while Christian morality advances unopposed, Le Corbusier is trying to *do away with streets*. He even brags about it. His program? To divide life into closed, isolated units, into societies under perpetual surveillance; no more opportunities for uprisings or meaningful encounters; to enforce an automatic resignation. (We should mention in passing that the existence of the automobile benefits everyone, except, of course, for a few "economically disadvantaged" individuals. The recently deceased Chief of Police, the unforgettable Baylot, likewise remarked after the last end-of-term student parade that street demonstrations were no longer compatible with traffic requirements. And the point is brought home to us every 14th of July.)

With Le Corbusier, the interplay and insight that we have a right to expect from truly impressive architecture — disorientation on a daily basis — have been sacrificed in favor of the rubbish chute that will never be used to dispose of the required Bible, already ubiquitous in American hotels.

Only a fool could see this as modern architecture. It is nothing more than a regression en masse to the old, not properly interred world of Christianity. At the turn of the century, the mystic from Lyon Pierre-Simon Ballanche, in his "City of Atonement" had already framed this ideal of existence — with descriptions that prefigure the "cités radieuses."

The City of Atonement must be a living image of the sad, monotonous law of human vicissitudes, of the unbending law of social necessity: even the most innocent customs must be attached at the root, everything must be a constant reminder that nothing is stable and that man's life is a journey through a land of exile.

For us, however, the earthly voyage is neither sad nor monotonous; social laws are not fixed; questioned habits must give way to an incessant renewal of the marvelous. The first comfort we seek is the elimination of all such ideas as these, along with the flies that spread them.

What does Mr. Le Corbusier know about human *needs*?

Cathedrals are no longer white. And we are glad of the fact. "Brightness" and a place in the sun: we know how that tune goes, played on organs and MRP drums, and the fields of heaven where defunct architects are put out to pasture. "Enlevez le boeuf, c'est de la vache."

Lettrist International

Best News of the Week

Tokyo, July 14 — The employees of a silk merchant are currently engaged in a strike that has almost turned into a "war" between the employers and the population of the town of Fujinomiya, sixty-four kilometers from Tokyo.

The young employees of the "Omni Silk Spinning Company" factory, who live in dormitories under a strict set of rules and regulations, are protesting that the company does everything in its power to prevent them from marrying or having a normal love life, "because of the possibility of a decrease in production."

They complain that they are required to obtain permission from seven different officials in order to leave the factory or its environs, that they are forbidden to use lipstick or face powder, and that they must be in their beds by nine o'clock every night.

Mr Kakuji Natsukawa, the director of the firm, is a Buddhist, and the young women protest that every morning they are forced to march in file on the grounds of the factory while singing Buddhist hymns.

The hymns are followed by other songs, such as "Today I Will Not Make Inconsiderate Requests," and "Today I Will Not Complain." (Combat, July 15)

An Exemplary Autocritique

"... The complicity of a common climate does not prevent them from excluding one of their own, as soon as he shows the least sign of vulgarity, as soon as he is content with what he has done."

(Written in October 1953 by a member of the Lettrist International who was excluded in June 1954.)

Response to an inquiry from the Belgian Surrealist Group

"What does the word poetry mean to you?"

Poetry has exhausted the last of its formal prestiges. Beyond simple aesthetics, poetry consists entirely of human potential. It is written on the faces of adventures and in the form of cities. Nothing is more urgent than the creation of new faces and construction through upheaval. The new beauty will be SITUATIONAL, that is to say *fugitive* and lived. The latest artistic variations interest us only for the potential *influence* that might be found within them. To us, poetry means the elaboration of absolutely new conducts, and the means of making them passionate.

Lettrist International

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Editor in Chief: André-Frank Conord, 15 rue Duguay-Trouin, Paris 6e.

potlatch #6

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

27 July 1954

Translated by Reuben Keehan and WNLA

The Sound and the Fury - Berstein, Conord, Dahou, Debord, Fillon, Véra, Wolman

Notes for an Appeal to the East - Dahou

Best News of the Week

Soft Drugs

The Definition of Myth - Conord

Psychogeographical Classifieds

The Sound and the Fury

In 1947, onomatopoeic poetry marked the first scandalous appearance of a new current of ideas. In the years that followed, a group, gathered under the name "lettrists" after the poetry they proclaimed, extended its field of action to the novel, the painting (1950) and cinema (1951).

Positive dadaism, this phase of the movement undertook a critique of the formal evolution of aesthetic disciplines with an exclusive concern for the new; not the taste for originality at any cost — an objection raised all too readily — but the desire to submit to the *mechanisms* of invention. The predictable dialectical enlargement of Lettrism's objectives, marked by lively factional struggles and the exclusion of superannuated leaders, eventually posed the problem of the only possible use for these mechanisms: their direction toward passionate ends.

Founded in 1952, The Lettrist International united the movement's extremist tendency. In October of the same year, following the scandal provoked against Charlie Chaplin by the International's members — denounced by the lettrist Right — all solidarity with the retrograde tendency was repudiated and its members purged.

Every step we've taken since then has been precise in every way.

We have always acknowledged that for us, a certain type of architecture, for example, or social agitation, represents nothing less than the means of approaching the construction of a way of life.

Only the hostility of bad faith has driven a section of public opinion to confuse us with a phase of poetic expression — or its negation which matters little to us; as much as any other *historical* form which has been able to tackle literature.

It is as clumsy to pigeon-hole us as mere partisans of some aesthetic as it is to write us off — as some have done — as drug addicts and gangsters. We have said quite clearly that the set of demands defined not so long ago by surrealism — to cite this system — appear to us as a *minimum* whose urgency cannot be escaped.

As for our personal ambitions, they have little place in the causes to which we have fervently committed ourselves.

for the Lettrist International:

Michèle-I. Bernstein, André-Frank Conord, Mohamed Dahou, G.-E. Debord, Jacques Fillon, Véra, Gil J Wolman

Notes for an Appeal to the East

The Arab States are dying. Where does this leave their national political structures, founded on the misery of their populations?

There was no Egyptian revolution. It died in its infancy; it died with the textile workers gunned down in the name of 'communism.' In Egypt, they placate the masses by showing them the Suez canal. The English won't make it too far — only to Jordan, perhaps, or Libya.

Saudi Arabia bases its social existence on the Koran and sells its petrol to the Americans. The entire Middle East is in the hands of the military. Capitalist powers encourage rival nationalisms and play them off against each other.

We need to go beyond any idea of nationalism. North Africa must rid itself not only of foreign occupation, but of its feudal masters. We have to recognize our nation everywhere that our idea of liberty reigns, and nowhere else.

Our brothers are beyond questions of race and border. Certain oppositions, like the conflict with the state of Israel, can only be resolved by a revolution in both camps. The Arab countries have to know that we have a common cause. There is no West in front of you.

Mohamed Dahou

Best News of the Week

"Cease-fire signed throughout Indochina" (*France-Soir*, 22 July)

"Tunisia, 20 July, AFP – The Fellaghas movement is still a force to be reckoned with. During the last thirty-six hours, rebel gangs have been reported moving across the south western mountains in the direction of Kef. The authorities are ready for the actions of these outlaws and have taken every precaution to put down this menace. It has been reported elsewhere that 150 young men have left Sahel to join the Fellaghas." (*Le Parisien Libéré*, 21 July)

Soft Drugs

The futility of known distractions explains the consent that a majority is ready to give to the most distressing of enterprises deemed to be serious: continental wars or the bargains available in the department stores.

The "means of escape" which can be bought and sold are so pitiful that only the imbecile repression of our Christian heritage society can generate a difference between the traditional drunkenness of the sailor and a disposition to morphine.

Escape is never possible, but the changing of all of the conditions of our life certainly is. The remainder is not amusing, but vulgar. Those who choose the easy way only know how to lose themselves in promiscuities, in soft drugs, boredom, pettiness...

What is a King without distractions?

The possibilities for new types of behavior lie within play.

This is a game which can only be conducted with the utmost rigor.

The Definition of Myth

It is the women who have wasted their lives to be born twenty years too early. In this way it goes to Ivich, who has existed forever. She was already ageless when Oedipus landed at the gates of Thebes. Much later, her swift passage was recorded by others. Sometimes glimpsed, sometimes adored, never bound.

For some years it has looked as though she is preparing to return in force, which will be done until all things will at last have their influence. Her latest appearance dates from *The Roads to Freedom*. But they could have been mistaken: Sartre, myopic as he is, saw Ivich as a blonde, even though she's a brunette.

Rarely has her passage been spotted in our country, but she often takes refuge where she is expected. Oh, she ignores, or dares not even acknowledge. She espouses by waiting for approximations. Oh, cause and misfortune of the world, and the exhaustion of Ivich, who dares not even look up. Men are brutal, boisterous; they throw their weight around. But deep down they cannot escape an enormous silence. However, if in this universe there are a few smiles, it may soon happen. For they seek Ivich. She marches toward us. But life moves on without end, just like in novels. To be continued, therefore, next issue...

A.-F.C.

Psychogeographical Classifieds

The Lettrist International is looking for three apartments to rent in the rue Valette (5th Arrondissement).

Editor in Chief: André-Frank Conord, 15 rue Duguay-Trouin, Paris 6e.

potlatch #7

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

3 August 1954

Translated by Gerardo Denís, Greil Marcus and Reuben Keehan

". . . A New Idea in Europe" - Bernstein, Conord, Dahou, Debord, Fillon, Véra, Wolman

Best News of the Week

A Funny Life

The Great Victories of France

Bad Times for Ivich

The Destruction of the Rue Sauvage

". . . A New Idea in Europe"

Leisure is the real revolutionary question. In any case, economic prohibitions and their modern corollaries will soon be completely destroyed and superseded. The organization of leisure — the organization of the freedom of a multitude a *little less* driven to continuous work — is already a necessity for capitalist states just as it is for their Marxist successors. Everywhere, one is limited to the obligatory degradation of stadiums or television programs.

It is above all for this reason that we must denounce the immoral condition imposed upon us: this state of poverty.

Having spent a few years *doing nothing*, in the common sense of the term, we can speak of our social attitude as avant-garde — because in a society still provisionally based in production, we have sought to devote ourselves seriously only to leisure.

If this question is not openly posed before the collapse of current economic development, change will be no more than a bad joke. The new society which once again takes up the goals of the old society, without having recognized and imposed a new desire — that is the truly utopian tendency of socialism.

Only one task seems to us worth considering: the perfecting of a complete divertissement.

More than one to whom adventures happen, the adventurer is one who makes them happen.

The construction of situations will be the continuous realization of a great game, a game the players have chosen to play: a shifting of settings and conflicts to kill off the characters in a tragedy in twenty-four hours. But time to live will no longer be lacking.

Such a synthesis will have to bring together a critique of behavior, a compelling town planning, a mastery of ambiances and relationships. We know the first principles.

The supreme attraction that Charles Fourier found in the free play of passions must be reinvented for the rest of time.

for the Lettrist International:

M.-I. Bernstein, André-Frank Conord, Mohamed Dahou, Guy-Ernest Debord, Jacques Fillon, Véra, Gil J. Wolman

Best News of the Week

Washington, D.C., July 29 (A.P.) — In a speech delivered to a religious convention, Mr. Richard Nixon, the vice-president of the United States, declared that he believed those who imagined "a full bowl of rice" could prevent the people of Asia from turning toward communism were "*gravely deluding themselves*."

"*Economic well-being is important*," continued the vice-president, "*but to claim that we can win the people of Asia to our side simply by raising their standard of living is a lie and a slander. This is a proud people, with a great record behind them.*"

A Funny Life

With the title, "A funny exhibition," a regional paper named *Nice-Matin* revealed, regarding a metagraphic exhibition by the Lettrist International at Galerie du Double Doute, that "this new artistic form is not entirely free because it proposes the conditioning of feelings and actions of viewers."

Because we were reproached, we ought to admit that there is no real difference between a metagraphic picture and a daily newspaper. In both cases, one may well ask in whose service the "conditioning of feelings and actions" is undertaken.

The exhibition at the Galerie du Double Doute did not seem to us any more "unusual" or "bizarre" than the conditions of existence that certain people have to put up with. It so happens that some folk actually pay good money for a miserably reactionary regional paper called *Nice-Matin*. Others even work for it . . .

The Great Victories of France

Ms Geneviève de Galard has brilliantly endured what would without doubt have to be the second greatest ordeal of her life. She has seduced the Americans . . . After all, the worst had been feared . . . Ms Geneviève — "the angel" — has no need for "enlightenment" or preparation. She is more than capable of coming up with the right responses all by herself . . . When she declared that Dien Bien Phu has shown how "*France has a soul, and the French still fight for honor*," there were tears in the Americans' eyes . . . It was a triumph of simplicity and kindness. Geneviève can maintain the allure of a young woman from a good family and a good head with the greatest of ease. Her last ordeal involved shaking around two thousand hands . . . Quite certainly, Ms de Galard's trip has been of great service to the French cause. (From a particular *Le Monde* correspondent, Washington, 29 July).

Bad Times for Ivich

Even clandestine literature has its limits: the meaning of A.-F. Conord's article published in *Potlatch* #6, "The Definition of myth" was confused by unfortunate typographical errors. Nevertheless, our readers would naturally have rectified this for themselves.

The Destruction of the Rue Sauvage

One of the most beautiful spontaneously psychogeographical places in Paris is in the process of disappearing.

Rue Sauvage, in the 13th Arrondissement, the site of the most moving nocturnal view in the capital, located between the tracks of the Gare d'Austerlitz and an area of empty ground along the Seine (rue Fulton, rue Bellievre) has — since last winter — been enclosed with several of the kind of debilitating structures that line the suburbs and house unfortunate people.

We deplore the disappearance of a little-known street, little-known and therefore more *alive* than the Champs Elysees for all its bright lights.

We have no predilection for the charms of ruins. But the civilian barracks that we build in their place are so gratuitously ugly as to be an open invitation to dynamiters.

Potlatch is sent to various addresses supplied to the editor.

Editor in Chief: André-Frank Conord, 15 rue Duguay-Trouin, Paris 6e.

potlatch #8

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

10 August 1954

Translated by WNLA and Gerardo Denís

For Civil War in Morocco - Lettrist International

Daubers - Bernstein, Conord, Dahou, Debord, Fillon, Véra, Wolman

Best News of the Week

Plan for a Poster for the Walls of Algeria

36 rue des Morillons

For Civil War in Morocco

Despite the daily increase in violence in Morocco between the advanced section the urban population and the feudal tribes utilised by France, the action of an authentically revolutionary minority must not be postponed.

Pushing against the dynastic reverberations of nationalism, this minority can from now on organise the foundation of a movement towards serious insurrection without subordinating its intervention to a sudden development of class consciousness for the whole Moroccan proletariat.

This consciousness does not play a historical role in the crisis that is beginning. An attempt must be made to provoke it in the accomplishment of a struggle engaged by other tendencies, on other planes (anti-feudal tendencies, religious fanatics). The war of liberation comes from within disorder.

LETTRIST INTERNATIONAL

Daubers

Man's use of colors to decorate the exteriors of buildings has always marked the apogee or renaissance of civilisations. Nothing, or next to nothing, remains of Egyptian, Maya, Toltec or Babylonian achievements in this respect. But they are still discussed. We should not then be surprised that architects have been working with colours again for some time now. But their spiritual and creative poverty, their total lack of plain humanity is, at best, depressing. Today, colors serve only to disguise their incompetence. Two examples, chosen from a survey of one hundred and fifty Parisian architects, prove our point:

The first is a project by three young architects (22, 25 and 27 years of age), who are convinced of their own genius and originality and are, naturally, admirers of Le Corbusier: Located in Aubervilliers — a desolate place if ever there was one, being as it is already graced with the efforts of a young admirer of the Saint Sulpice ceramist, Léger — it consists of a rectangular, elongated cube. To give the façade, seen to be too flat, the proper "treatment," it will be faced with alternating yellow and violet panels measuring 1 m by 60 cm. Their placement will be left up to the workmen. Objective chance, in a manner of speaking. But when will we see the first completely "automatic" building?

The second is a project by a relatively well-known architect (45 years of age): Near Nantes, it consists of two school "blocks," elongated cubes separated by the inevitable sports field with charming dwarf orange trees in planters. The boys' block on the right will be covered in green and red panels measuring 2 m x 1 m, while the girls' block on the left will be covered in yellow and violet panels of the same size.

The architects will use thin cement panels for this adorable orgy of color. They are almost totally ignorant of how this material will react with the chemical substances in the pigments. The five-storey façade of the Aubervilliers building will be protected from the rain by one meagre gutter. The same offhand approach is to be followed in the Nantes buildings, in this case, however, with a façade of only two storeys.

It is well known just how disagreeably influential the colour violet is; one is well aware of the sort of ceremonies it is generally used for; and one can well imagine the combination of dirty yellow and faded violet that will soon result. No further comment is needed.

The poverty of current architectural efforts becomes apparent when one considers that the majority of the architects surveyed, when they show any interest at all in colors, only seems inclined to use yellow and violet, or green and red, rather "young" combinations for our time.

Nevertheless, one architect (aged between 45 and 50) from his studio in the rue de l'Université, and another (of the same age), from his studio in the rue Vaugirard, are working quietly on some rather more interesting projects. The first, recently returned from America — and it is interesting to note that, at present, the most civilised form of architecture is to be found in the U.S., with Frank Lloyd Wright and his "organic" architecture, or in Latin America, with Rivera and his cities — designs mostly villas for rich people, working in light colours and using reliable materials, from ceramic tiles to Dutch brick. The second works with the same tones, but in more or less subsidised housing. His efforts are therefore somewhat limited and he often finds himself reduced to using cement, or even Gibson blocks. What a shame.

This issue of Potlatch was edited by:

M.-I. BERNSTEIN, A.-F. CONORD, MOHAMED DAHOU, G.-E. DEBORD, JACQUES FILLON, VÉRA, WOLMAN.

Best News of the Week

West Germany, undergoing full industrial expansion, is being menaced by its first serious social troubles since the end of the war. The public services and transport strike in Hamburg, which has been underway for 48 hours, has now spread to Cologne. Little by little, the social agitation emerging from Hamburg is being seen to spread across the whole of West Germany, where over one million workers are already demanding wage increases in order to reduce the length of the working week. (*France Soir*, 7/8/54)

Plan for a Poster for the Walls of Algeria

GO SPEND YOUR HOLIDAYS IN MOROCCO!

edited by the Algerian section of the Lettrist International

36 Rue des Morillons

And it will be during that time that we shall start to see being engraved here and there on the streets, in letters that no-one will be able to erase: *And thus the adventures of those who will capture the mysterious lion begin.*

The curious destiny of 'found objects' interests us only in respect to the attitude of those who seek them. After having paid for so much of its history, the Grail has joined its hierarchical superior, God the principal commissioner, and the other cops in the Great House of the Father. Everyday it dies of old age. The profession has fallen into disrepute.

However, we like to think that those who sought the grail weren't dupes. Their *dérive* is worthy of us, we must look at their arbitrary promenades and their final endless passions. The religious make-up falls away. These cavaliers of mythic western lore were out for pleasure: a brilliant talent for losing themselves in play; the voyage into amazement; a love of speed; a geography of relativity.

The form of a table changes more quickly than reasons to drink. Our tables may not be round, but one day we will build *castles of adventure*. In many ways, the story of the Quest for the Grail foreshadows a very modern way of living.

DOES POTLATCH HAVE THE MOST INTELLIGENT READERSHIP IN THE WORLD?

Editor in Chief: André-Frank Conord, 15 rue Duguay-Trouin, Paris 6e.

potlatch #9-10-11

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

17 to 31 August 1954

special holiday issue

Translated by Reuben Keehan, Phil Edwards and Gerardo Denís

Artists' Day Out - Dahou, Debord, Fillon, Véra
Our Readers Would Have Rectified it for Themselves...
Destruction of a Lettrist Office
Dérive by the Mile - Bernstein
Take the First Street - Wolman
Best News of the Month
Announcement
Personals
Waiting for the Churches to Close
Psychogeography and Politics
The Sovereign People
Ariadne Unemployed
An Example to Follow in the Place de la Nation

Artists' Day Out

An item entitled '*When the line is crossed, it's no longer the limit*' was withdrawn from *Potlatch #8* at the last minute. It pronounced the poverty of a poem by Louis Aragon, published by *L'Humanité Dimanche* regarding the armistice in Indochina ('Cease fire everywhere / Everywhere, cease fire' was the last line, but not the most laughable). The item in question hailed Louis Aragon as an ardent disciple of 'the socialist realist Ponsard,' but we were led to remove it by other considerations.

Of course Louis Aragon is laughable, but we refuse to laugh in poor company.

The theory of socialist realism is obviously stupid. However, if some poster produced in the USSR — or somewhere near it — can cause a less than advanced section of the proletariat to become aware of some kind of struggle to live, then we think it is more worthwhile than such and such a study — abstract, non-figurative or 'signifying the informal' (IMBECILES!) — appearing for the hundred-thousandth time to the acclaim of the Parisian galleries and salons of the 'new look' bourgeoisie.

French poetry no longer interests us. We're leaving French poetry and Burgundy wine and the Eiffel Tower to the tourist bureau. We can't give anyone the impression that we defend this poetry, when the only thing we do support is one type of political slogan over another ('My party has returned to me the colors of France...'), which might be quite a good joke if the sabotage of the revolutionary spirit couldn't be seen within it.

on behalf of the editors:
M. DAHOU, G.-E. DEBORD, J. FILLON, VÉRA

Our readers would have rectified it themselves...

A.-F. Conord, whose clumsy phrasology could not disguise the mediocrity of his thought, was definitively excluded on 29 August, accused of neobuddhism, evangelism and spiritualism. We hereby advise our correspondents of the new address for *Potlatch*:

Mohamed Dahou, 32, rue de la Montagne-Geneviéve, Paris 5e.

Potlatch will be returning to its regular weekly publication at the end of the month.

Issue #12 will be appearing on Tuesday 28 September.

Destruction of a Lettrist Office

The avant-garde is a dangerous profession. — Gil J. Wolman

On Sunday 15 August at 2230 hours, an *empty* car crashed at great speed into the bar Tonneau d'Or, at 32 rue de la Montagne-Geneviève, a well-known haunt of the Lettrist International. Four customers were injured. By stroke of good fortune, none of the lettrists who would normally have been stationed there at the time of the accident were present.

Dérive by the Mile

In an article published in the August 19 issue of *France-Observateur*, Christian Hébert proposes a radical solution to the problem of parking in Paris: the prohibition of all private vehicles within the city limits and their replacement by a large fleet of moderately-priced taxis.

This proposal has our unqualified support. We all know how important taxis are for the recreational activity we call 'dérive,' from which we expect to draw educationally conclusive results.

Only taxis allow true freedom of movement. By traveling varying distances in a set time, they contribute to automatic disorientation. Since taxis are interchangeable, no connection is established with the "traveler" and they can be left anywhere and taken at random. A trip with no destination, diverted arbitrarily en route, is only possible with a taxi's essentially random itinerary.

Aside from providing an egalitarian solution to a particularly irritating problem, the measures proposed by Mr. Hébert would have the invaluable advantage of allowing large sectors of the population to break free from the routes imposed by the Metrobus, and enjoy a hitherto rather expensive means of dérive.

MICHÈLE BERNSTEIN

Take the First Street

I went walking and did not get lost. The Avenue was wrestling openly at Général Tripier (7th Arrondissement). Bonne-Nouvelle was a dead end, as well.

While waiting for the city to be rebuilt, starting in the Eastern Sector (Porte de Vanves), the order changed as drifting set in.

Rue 'Servant with jerrycans, extension' — formerly rue des Cascades — annexes a part of rue 'Where no-one seems to notice or get in the way, extension' — formerly rue Ménilmontant — and the whole of rue Oberkampf, which was awaiting just that opportunity to disappear, and finishes at rue 'All these charms Eugénie that nature has showered upon you all these attractions with which she has adorned you must now be sacrificed, extension' — formerly Boulevard des Filles du Calvaire.

It may be picked up again later around an episode of rue 'That which can start anywhere, extension' — formerly rue Racine.

(to be continued . . .)

GIL J. WOLMAN

Best News of the Month

Stockholm, 23 August — A brawl provoked, according to police, by thrill-seekers, broke out yesterday in Stockholm, near Berzelli Park. Almost 3000 people participated in this '*riot for fun.*' Several people were injured, including three police. One man severed an artery when he was thrown through a window, and a policeman had his jaw broken. There were thirty two arrests. (*Paris-Presse*, 24 August 1954)

Announcement

The silence with which the newspapers have greeted us is greatly compensated for by a kind of regrettable legend spread by Chinese whispers in certain circles.

The stories that reach us from time to time from various parts of the so-called intellectual world are wild accusations raised with the same conviction by the same people every time: the intolerable arbitrariness of a phoney "director of the board" who exercises dictatorial control over the conduct of the lettrists; the use of standover men and pressure by every

means; participation in all sorts of smuggling for which the pseudo-ideological movement is merely a front; being in the pay of Moscow or Tel Aviv, thank you very much . . .

As ridiculous as this enterprise might sound, it builds into a sort of 'lettrist cycle' somewhere between Breton novels, Fantomas and the rue Xavier-Privas.

Certain individuals excluded from the Parisian group have devoted their lives and their capacities for mythomania to the invention of these anecdotes, which could discredit us far more easily than the debate over ideas. All this is hardly any more serious than the famous formula (Mauriac's, it seems): 'The lettrists should be killed at birth.'

Another idiot (Pierre Emmanuel) spoke clearly, after the Easter 1950 assault on Notre Dame, of 'bashing the heads of the troublemakers against the steps of the alter.'

The foolishness of a provocation, however, will only be enough for it to be tolerated for so long.

A recent plenary meeting agreed on the necessity of cutting these rumors off at their source with all desirable energy: 'Events should be made to take a turn so serious that it inspires fear in even the most disbelieving' (Report by Jacques Fillon).

A special group has been charged with this undertaking.

L.I.

Personals

To the pope: The papers are in a safe place. The festival can wait.

To the "little French girl": Bring back some of that sweet grass.

To the night at Vauban's: We're making progress. You, cloud, pass overhead.

Waiting for the Churches to Close

In spite of the 1793 calendar which tried to impose a new dating system, the unpleasant word "saint" continues to sully the walls of a great many Paris streets, whose naming it governs.

For several months now, it has been our pleasure to campaign for the elimination of this term, both in correspondence and in our conversations.

Street names are transitory. What will remain of them in future, except perhaps L'Impasse de l'Enfant Jesus (15th Arrondissement), kept as a reminder?

Already the Post Office bows to the will of its public: letters are delivered to boulevard Germain and rue Honore.

We invite all right-thinking people to join in this public health effort.

Psychogeography and Politics

It has come to my attention that China and Spain are one and the same land, and that it is only out of ignorance that they are considered to be separate States.

- Nikolai Gogol

The Sovereign People

The magazines of our 'democracies' furnish widespread consumption of royal families.

Their circulation would suffer greatly in the event of an English republic – they cheered when the television gathered huge crowds of fervent idiots on the footpaths the day of the coronation. And even with the hearty main course that is the Queen of England, the meal of stupification must from time to time come up with a variation: a round of dethroned, exiled

or potential Kings, having themselves lauded all over the Mediterranean, from Marseille to Cyprus – via the mountains of Grammos perhaps?

But while tales of Princess Margaret's debauches (very minimal, very minimal. . .) are beginning to bore our gossip-mongers, and evidence is emerging that the public itself has never really had much of an interest in the complexities of the deplorable King Baudouin of Belgium, a royal family – or as good as – has turned up on our doorstep. An individual known as the Count of Paris, returned from abroad thanks to the ill-advised abrogation of the Law of Exile, poses for photographs in all his smug decadence. Fortunately, ugliness doesn't sell: of the eight or nine princesses available for the admiration of their loyal subjects, not one is pretty or even desirable. (A possible exception is the little one of eleven or twelve years; but who knows what she'll turn out like. . .)

All the same, a Count of Paris in the outer suburbs is a wonderful recreation of the golden age of fiefdom, tribute, servitude and the gibbet.

Look at his debonnaire suzerainty, it's so delicately attentive to the several million inhabitants of the same capital that brought the Convention and the Commune to power.

The debris of the condemned classes is gathering together. A whole current of opinion has been created in favor of this intelligent bourgeois king, of this king in Mendès France. . .

We know that wherever reaction has triumphed in the past forty years, it has done so by the détournement or parody of a revolutionary ideology, or by social means.

This constant process reinforces the certainty of seeing this ideology achieve at its real ends.

Ariadne Unemployed

At one sole glance, one can discern both the Cartesian layout of the so-called labyrinth at the Botanical Gardens and the following warning sign:

NO PLAYING IN THE LABYRINTH

There could be no more succinct summary of the spirit of this entire civilization. The very one whose collapse we will, in the end, bring about.

An Example to Follow in the Place de la Nation

Extracts from a letter from Bolivia published in Fourth International:

The second anniversary of the 9 April revolution was celebrated in very particular conditions: the masses were determined to advance along the road to revolution, while the government brought to power by these masses had already strayed a reasonable distance along the road to capitulation in the face of imperialism.

At the head of the throng are the miners with the tools of their labor, carrying rifles, small and medium machine guns and sticks of dynamite, firing their arms in the air: rat-a-tat-tat go the machine guns. It is a sign of joy, but also one of combat. . .

Next come the oil workers: trucks fitted out with heavy machine guns, jeeps with clusters of workers, rifle on shoulder, and a heavy machine gun mounted on the hood.

Following them is an endless mass of farmers of extraordinary poverty but incredible spirit. . .

The farmers are not carrying their rifles over their shoulders – as the workers generally do – but ready to fire with their fingers on the trigger...

Editor-in-Chief: M. Dahou, 32 rue de la Montagne-Geneviève, Paris 5.

potlatch #23

information bulletin of the lettrist international

13 October 1955

Translated by Reuben Keehan and Gerardo Denís

Lettrist Intervention
The Role of the Written Word
Project for Rational Improvements to the City of Paris
The Latest Opinion Poll

Lettrist Intervention

Letter to the Editor of the Times

Dear sir,

The Times has just announced the projected demolition of the Chinese quarter in London.

We protest against such moral ideas in town-planning, ideas which must obviously make England more boring than it has in recent years already become.

The only pageants left are a coronation from time to time, an occasional royal marriage which seldom bears fruit; nothing else. The disappearance of pretty girls, of good family especially, will become rarer and rarer after the razing of Limehouse. Do you honestly believe that a gentleman can amuse himself in Soho?

We hold that the so-called modern town-planning which you recommend is fatuously idealistic and reactionary. The sole end of architecture is to serve the passions of men.

Anyway, it is inconvenient that this Chinese quarter of London should be destroyed before we have the opportunity to visit and carry out certain psychogeographical experiments we are at present undertaking.

Finally, if modernization appears to you, as it does to us, to be historically necessary, we would counsel you to carry your enthusiasm into areas more urgently in need of it, that is to say, to you political and moral institutions.

Yours faithfully,

for l'Internationale lettriste:
MICHELE BERNSTEIN, G.-E. DEBORD, GIL J WOLMAN

Long Live Modern China

A few days after posting the above protest, we had news from Spain that town planning under the Franco regime, following the same moralising line, is in the process of demolishing Barcelona's Chinatown, where horrendous swathes have already been opened. Unlike London's Chinatown, Barcelona's 'Barrio Chino' was given the name for purely psychogeographical motives and no Chinese have ever lived there.

Across Europe

Jacques Fillon has taken over the editorship of Potlatch from Mohamed Dahou, who is preparing to leave Paris for an indeterminate period of time in a south south-easterly direction.

A Haunted House

At a Lettrist meeting held on September 20, it was decided to draw up plans and build models of a prototype 'haunted house.' The subject of this exercise makes it quite clear that it is not a question of producing just any ordinary visual harmony. It should be noted, however, that if this building is willingly studied on the basis of a simple feeling, its conception must take into account the emotional nuances appropriate to the numerous situations that could call for frightful surroundings.

In a Flash

Alezander Trocchi, former editor-in-chief of the Anglo-American avant-garde review Merlin, has resigned from this post in order to confirm his adherence to the program of the Lettrist International. Having immediately given all his friends notice that they too would have to make a choice, he has proceeded firmly with the numerous ruptures imposed on him.

The Inevitable Map

The collective drafting of a psychogeographical map of Paris and its surrounding areas has been actively pursued over the past month, on the basis of various observations and reconnaissance missions (Butte-aux-Cailles, Continent Contrescape, Morgue, Aubervilliers, the desert de Retz).

Extracts from a Letter to a Belgian Comrade, 14 September 1955

. . . In the same, decidedly literary week, we were sent a journal called Phantomas – which is idiotic – and the latest issue of Temps Mêlés also fell into our hands. That journal is worse than I could ever have imagined. André Blavier too, at the same time. It's almost unthinkable that people could write such things in the middle of the twentieth century. . . .

While Blavier wreaks his havoc in Phantomas, a certain Michel Laclos, already rampant in Temps Mêlés, is none other than the editor-in-chief of the widely circulated Bizarre, probably intended for our sub-prefectures in the South West. There must be some kind of International of gloomy rubbish, whose leaders are beginning to come out of the woodwork. Furthermore, anyone who claims to be a disciple of Queneau should be first up against the wall. The exploitation of Jarry by some pataphysician or other is as degrading as the attempts by the Catholics to claim him for themselves. In this display of insulting insignificance, of moral abjection, of moth-eaten thought, it should be said that Blavier is a real standout: he is easily the biggest prick of them all. Naturally, he will no longer receive Potlatch. Otherwise, people might think that we are giving some credit to the intelligence of a man capable of publishing such servility. I'm quite glad we didn't meet him until his last trip to Paris: he was unmasked within ten minutes of coversation. And it is always regrettable to be obliged to resort to slander, like anyone else, as these people are all the same. . . .

G-E. DEBORD

Telegram Sent to Mr Francis Ponge, 27 September 1955

Aah, Ponge, you write for Preuves. We despise you, you bastard.

Signed,

THE LETTRIST INTERNATIONAL

Letter to Mr André Chêneboit, editor of Le Monde

Dear Sir,

We have come across your reflections on the arrest of Robert Barrat in Le Monde of 28 September. The adventurous, indeed 'whodunnit' approach that you seem to have toward journalism leads us to think that you accept among 'the risks that constitute the greatness of this profession' that of a punishment that fits the crime, and which is 'no doubt temporary,' as you say.

Yours with all the disgust you have inspired in us today,

MICHÈLE BERNSTEIN, G.-E. DEBORD, JUAN FERNANDEZ, JACQUES FILLON

The Role of the Written Word

The Lettrists have held an initial information session for the purpose of deciding on phrases that, written in chalk or by any other means on walls in certain streets, add to the intrinsic significance of those streets — when they have one to start with.

These inscriptions are meant to make a whole range of impressions, from psychogeographical insinuation to plain and simple subversion. The following examples were the original choices.

For rue Sauvage (13th): "If we don't die here, will we go any further?" — for rue d'Aubervilliers (18th/19th): "Revolution by night" — for rue Benoit (6th): "The supposedly delightful auto-bazaar doesn't make it this far" — for rue Lhomond (5th): "Benefit from doubt" — for rue Séverin (5th): "Girls for the Kabyles."

It was also agreed that the following line from L. Scutenaire be written near Renault factories, in various suburbs and at several places in the 19th and 20th Arrondissements: "You are sleeping for the boss."

Project for Rational Improvements to the City of Paris

The Lettrists attending the September 26 meeting jointly put forward the following proposals for solutions to the town planning problems that happened to come up during debate. It is worth noting that no constructive action was decided, since all those present agreed that the most urgent task is to lay the groundwork.

The subways should be opened at night, after the trains have stopped running. The passageways and platforms should be poorly lit with dim, blinking lights.

The rooftops of Paris should be opened to pedestrian traffic by means of modifications to fire escape ladders and construction of catwalks where necessary.

Public gardens should remain open at night, unlit (in some cases, dim lighting might be justified on psychogeographical grounds).

All street-lamps should be equipped with switches; lighting should be for public use.

With regard to churches, four different proposals were put forward and all were judged tenable until the appropriate experiments demonstrate which of them is the best.

G.-E. Debord argued for the complete demolition of religious buildings of all denominations. (No trace should remain of them and their sites should be used for other purposes.)

Gil J. Wolman proposed that churches should be left standing but stripped of all religious content. They should be treated as ordinary buildings. Children should be allowed to play in them.

Michèle Bernstein suggested that churches should be partially demolished, so that the remaining ruins give no hint of their original function (tour Jacques, on Boulevard de Sébastopol, being an unintentional example). The ideal solution would be to raze churches to the ground and build ruins in their place. The first alternative was formulated exclusively for reasons of economy.

Lastly, Jacques Fillon is in favor of transforming churches into haunted houses (maintaining their current ambience and accentuating their unsettling effects).

All agreed that aesthetic objections should be over-ruled, that admirers of the great door of Chartes should be silenced. Beauty, when it does not hold the promise of happiness, must be destroyed. And what could better represent unhappiness than this sort of monument to everything in the world that remains to be overcome, to the immense inhuman side of life?

Train stations should be kept as they are. Their rather moving ugliness adds much to the feeling of transience that makes these buildings mildly attractive. Gil J. Wolman called for removal or scrambling of all information regarding departures (destinations, times, etc.). This would promote the *dérive*. After a lively debate, those opposing the motion retracted their argument and it was approved without reservation. The aural environment of stations should be enhanced by broadcasting recorded announcements from a large number of different stations – and certain ports.

Cemeteries should be eliminated. All corpses and memories of that sort should be totally destroyed: no ashes and no remains. (It is necessary to note the reactionary propaganda constituted by these hideous remnants of a past filled with alienation by the most automatic of associations. Is it possible to see a cemetery and not be reminded of Mauriac, Gide or Edgar Faure?)

Museums should be abolished and their masterpieces distributed to bars (Philippe de Champaigne's works in the Arab cafes of rue Xavier-Privas; David's *Sacre* in the *Tonneau* in Montagne-Geneviève).

Everyone should have free access to prisons. They should be available as tourist destinations, with no distinction between visitors and inmates (to make life more amusing, visitors would be eligible, in draws held twelve times a year, to win a real prison sentence. This would be especially aimed at cretins who cannot live without running interesting risks: today's speleologists, for example, and all those whose craving for games is satisfied by such pale imitations).

All monuments, the ugliness of which cannot be put to any use (such as the Petit or Grand Palais), should make way for other constructions.

All remaining statues whose significance has become outmoded – where any possible aesthetic renovations are condemned by history to failure beforehand – should be removed. Their usefulness could be extended during their final years by changing the inscriptions on their plinths, either in a political sense (The Tiger Called Clemenceau on the Champs Élysées) or in a puzzling sense (Dialectical Homage to Fever and Quinine at the intersection of boulevard Michel and rue Comte, or The Deep in the cathedral square on Île de la Cité).

The dulling influence of current street names on people's intelligence must be stopped. Names of town councilors, heroes of the Resistance, all Emiles and Edouards (55 Paris streets), all Bugeauds and Gallifets, and in general, all obscene names (rue de l'Evangile) should be removed.

In this regard, the appeal launched in Potlatch #9 for ignoring the word saint in place names is even more valid.

The Latest Opinion Poll

What would you do if extreme right wing military elements attempted a coup d'État, in which the increasing difficulties of French colonialism would create less than favorable conditions?

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potlatch #30

internal newsletter of the situationist international

15 July 1959

New series, no. 1

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The Role of Potlatch, Then and Now

Guy Debord

Potlatch #30 (15 July 1959)

Translated by Reuben Keehan

POTLATCH WAS THE NAME of the information bulletin of the Lettrist International, 29 issues of which were produced between June 1954 and November 1957. An instrument of propaganda during the transitional period from the insufficient and failed attempts of post-war avant-gardists to the organization of the cultural revolution now systematically initiated by the situationists, Potlatch was without doubt the most radical expression of its time, that is to say the most advanced search for a new culture and a new life.

Whatever fortunes our activity might have known, it was Potlatch alone that filled the void in the cultural ideas of an era — that gaping hole in the middle of the 1950's. It is already certain that history will see it not as a witness to the fidelity of the modern spirit during the reign of reactionary parody, but as a document of the experimental research that would be the central concern of the future. But this future is now — it is the game of every one of our lives. The real success that may be attributed to Potlatch is in its serving to unite the situationist movement on a new and greater field of operations.

Potlatch took its name from the North American Indian word for a pre-commercial form of circulation of goods, founded on the reciprocity of sumptuous gifts. The non-salable goods which such a free bulletin could distribute were desires and unedited problems; and it was their profundity for others that constituted a gift in return. This explains why the exchange of experience in Potlatch was often supplied as an exchange of insults, the sort of insults that we owe to those whose idea of life is inferior to our own.

Since the founding conference of the SI at Cosio d'Arroscio, Potlatch has belonged to the situationists, who broke off its publication almost immediately. However, on [Maurice] Wyckaert's suggestion, the Munich situationist conference adopted the principle of the publication of a new series of Potlatch, this time serving solely as an interior liaison among the sections of the SI. The editing and production of Potlatch has been placed under the control of the Dutch section.

The new task of Potlatch, in a different context, is as important as the old. We have moved on, and thus increased our difficulties, not to mention the chances of contributing to a completely different end than that intended. We live — as we must, the real innovators until the overthrow of all the dominant conditions of culture — with this central contradiction: we are at once a presence and a contestation in the so-called "modern" arts. We must preserve and surmount this negativity, superseding it on a superior cultural terrain. But our methods cannot be drawn from the given means of aesthetic "expression," nor from the tastes that feed on them. The SI might be a good instrument for the supersession of this laughably stagnant world; or it could congeal into an even greater obstacle: a "new style." We intend to push it as far as it will go. We intend Potlatch to work usefully toward this end.

The Third Conference of the Situationist International

Potlatch #30 (15 July 1959)

Translated by Reuben Keehan

THE SITUATIONISTS held their Third International Conference in Munich from 17 to 20 April 1959, fifteen months after the Second Conference (Paris, January 1958). Six sections of the SI (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands) were represented by Armando, Constant, Debord, Eisich, Gallizio, Höfl, Jorn, Melanotte, Oudejans, Prem, Stadler, Sturm, Wyckaert and Zimmer. The conference debated as many questions posed from a theoretical perspective as it did from the perspective of tactics for the survival of the situationist movement through its extension. An eleven-point declaration was adopted unanimously as a proclamation of the minimum requirements of situationist action: a project, which was hardly modified in a long discussion of each point, previously appearing in the second issue of our journal, Internationale Situationniste [The Amsterdam Declaration]. It was decided that the German version of this journal be launched in the Autumn. The closure of the conference was marked by the publication of a leaflet entitled "Ein kultureller Putsch während Ihr schlaft!" (A Cultural Putsch While You Sleep!).

Preliminary Models for a New Urbanism

Potlach #30 (15 July 1959)

Translated by Gerardo Denís

ON MAY 4, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam opened an exhibition of some thirty spatial constructions by Constant. These constructions sum up experimental developments over the course of several years. The most recent constructions in this chronological series are, in the fullest sense of the term, models for a unitary urbanism; the middle structures were models for separate monuments, while the initial structures led to an extreme form of sculpture.

These initial experiments by Constant do no more than state the problem of unitary urbanism. Nevertheless, this exhibition could mark the turning point, in the modern world of art production, between self-sufficient merchandise-objects, meant solely to be looked at, and project-objects, whose more complex appreciation calls for some sort of action, an action on a higher level having to do with the totality of life.

Taking Out the Intellectual Trash

Potlatch #30 (15 July 1959)

Translated by Reuben Keehan

Copy of our communication by telegram, at the beginning of February 1959, with Hans Platschek, signatory one year ago to the first German situationist manifesto, and since then a collaborator with a dadaist-royalist revue in Basel (Switzerland):

The SI to Platschek: "After your second offense in Panderma, the Situationist International considers you a definite cretin. Go off and court Hantaï."

Platschek to the SI: "We must eradicate the Parisian gossip mongers whose controlling spirit has infected the revolutionary intellectuals. Their royal we is detestable."

The SI to Platschek: "The individualist Platschek is too kind. One is a revolutionary intellectual if one does not control. But control has been far too easy. It's over. The 'I' without 'We' falls back into the prefabricated mass."

It should be pointed out that Platschek's passing is only the sixth case of exclusion since the formation of the SI.

The Great Game to Come

Constant

Potlatch #30 (15 July 1957)

Translated by Gerardo Denís

1

THE NEED TO build a large number of cities quickly, a need brought about as a result of the industrialization of underdeveloped countries and the acute housing shortage after the war, has made urbanism into one of today's key cultural problems. We would even go so far as to consider that no cultural development is possible without new conditions in our everyday surroundings. It must first be pointed out that the initial experiments undertaken by teams of architects and sociologists were thwarted by a lack of collective imagination, which accounts for the arbitrary and limited approach followed in those experiments. Urbanism, as it is understood by today's professional planners, is reduced to the practical study of housing and traffic as isolated problems. The total lack of

alternatives involving play in the organization of social life prevents urbanism from attaining the level of creation, and the gloomy and sterile appearance of most modern neighborhoods is a shameful reminder of this.

2

THE SITUATIONISTS, explorers specializing in play and recreation, understand that the appearance of cities is of importance only as regards the psychological effects that it can produce, which should be taken into account along with all of the other factors. Our conception of urbanism is not limited to construction and its functions, but rather takes in all of the uses that can be found, or even imagined, for it. It is obvious that these uses must change along with the underlying social conditions and that our conception of urbanism is therefore first and foremost a dynamic one. We also reject the placement of buildings in static surroundings — which passes at present for new architecture. On the contrary, we believe that all static, unchanging elements must be avoided and that the variable or changing character of architectural elements is the precondition for a flexible relationship with the events that will take place within them.

3

BEARING IN MIND the extent to which future recreational pursuits and the new situations that we are beginning to build must profoundly affect the basic idea of any urbanistic study, we can already expand our understanding of the problem through experimentation with certain phenomena linked to the urban environment: activity in a certain street, the psychological effect of different surfaces and constructions, the rapidly changing appearance of space produced by ephemeral elements, the speed with which ambiance changes and the potential variations in the overall ambiance of different neighborhoods. The derive, as practiced by the Situationists, is an effective means of studying this phenomena in existing cities and arriving at preliminary conclusions. The psychogeographical notions gathered in this way have already led to the creation of plans and models of a highly imaginative sort that could be called architectural science fiction.

4

THE TECHNICAL inventions that humanity has at its disposal today will play a major role in the construction of the ambiance-cities of the future. It is worth noting that significantly, to date, these inventions have in no way contributed to existing cultural activities and that creative artists have not known what to do with them. The potential offered by cinema, television, radio and high-speed travel and communication has not been exploited, and their effect on cultural life has been deplorable. The investigation of technology and its exploitation for recreational ends on a higher plane is one of the most pressing tasks required to facilitate creation of a unitary urbanism on the scale demanded by the society of the future.

Forthcoming Situationist Activity

Potlatch #30 (15 July 1959)

Translated by Reuben Keehan

THE FORTHCOMING number of the journal Internationale Situationniste, the SI's central bulletin, will be published this September [1959]. This will be a double issue (3-4) specially devoted to the debates and the decisions of the Munich conference, and other aspects of unitary urbanism.

A general demonstration by the situationist movement is to take place in Amsterdam at the end of May, 1960. The project will involve, simultaneously, the construction of a labyrinth and the arrangement of ludic atmospheric elements in its interior; an exhibition of objects and documents; a

permanent cycle of conferences; and a direct intervention into the urban planning and daily life of a major city through the organization of radio guided dérives.