

potlatch #1

information bulletin of the
french section of the
lettrist international

22 June 1954

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Fear of the real questions and complacency toward outdated intellectual fashions unites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 metagraphies 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

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

potlatch #2

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

29 June 1954

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 Mabilbe in gathering together marvels, Évariste Gaullois 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:

a few exclusions

a few reasons

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

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6 July 1954

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 simplest 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 Saïses, took the lives of the Reverend Father Emmanuel Suarez, Leader of the Dominicans, and Father Aureliano Marinez Cantarino, 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 (Libraire 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

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 détourns 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 ruffian 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

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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potlatch #6

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

27 July 1954

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 predicatable 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, petiness...

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

". . . 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 organiza-

tion 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 of 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, regard-

ing 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

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.

LETRIST 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

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-Geneviève, 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 *dériver*.

MICHÈLE BERNSTEIN

Take the First Street

I went walking and did not get lost. The Avenue was wrestling openly at Général Tripièr (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 altar.'

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 widescale 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 de-throned, 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 complexes 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 #12

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

28 September 1954

The most unshakeable of colonies

According to our sources, it was a tremor with a magnitude of 8, classified as destructive, or perhaps even 9, classified as disastrous. In this case, the most solid buildings are partially or totally destroyed.

The Press, September 10

Orleansville, home of the Algerian Division of the Lettrist International, the "most Lettrist city in the world" (according to the maxim that explains the support of an advanced sector of its Algerian population for our program) was wiped off the map by the September 9 [1954] earthquake and the tremors of the following days.

Among the thirteen hundred killed and the thousands of wounded, we regret to say, was the greater part of the Algerian Division. Mohammed Dahou, our on-the-spot correspondent has so far been unable to provide us with exact figures, owing to the scattering of the populace.

Actualites Francais, even more eloquent than usual, has marked the event with a short film showing only Europeans, with their coffins, crucifixes, priests, bishops -- a slanted burlesque trying to show Algeria as an area with a French Catholic population and a high standard of living

when the ground doesn't shake.

On the other hand, in its September 19 issue, Le Monde mentioned the actions of unnamed "agitators" among the natives still remaining in Orleansville, which is now under military control.

The issue of the reconstruction of Orleansville does in fact pose some serious problems.

Regardless of the opposition of the Algerian Lettrist group and the elements influenced by them to the construction of vaguely neo-Corbusier barracks-housing blocks, it is undeniable that, at the present stage of our program, we cannot maintain a serious criticism of that particularly disastrous form of architecture while forty thousand people are waiting for the Government to provide them with whatever sort of shelter they can.

We must, however, resolutely oppose the official project for reconstruction of native housing outside the town while the devastated site is reserved for the future construction of a new and exclusively European town.

The Algerian Division will untiringly denounce this discriminatory plan and will prompt unanimous opposition to this premeditated ghetto.

potlatch #14

information bulletin of the
french section of the
lettrist international

30 November 1954

Summary 1954

By G.-E. Debord and Jacques Fillon

Big cities favor the distraction we call derive. The derive is a technique for moving around without a goal. It is based on the influence that decor exerts.

All houses are beautiful. Architecture must become thrilling. We cannot take more restrained building ventures into consideration.

The new urbanism is inseparable from economic and social upheavals, which are, happily, inevitable. It is reasonable to think that the revolutionary demands of an epoch are a function of the idea that epoch has of happiness. The valorization of leisure is not, then, a mere pleasantry.

We remind you that this means inventing new games.

The General Line

By Michele Bernstein, Mohammed Dahou, Vera, Gil J Wolman

The Lettrist International intends to establish an exciting way of life. We experiment with behavior, decoration, architecture, urbanism and communication meant to create attractive situations.

This is the subject of an interminable dispute between ourselves and many others, who are, in the end, of no importance, because we are very familiar with how they work and with their decrepitude.

Our role as intellectual opposition is an inevitable product of historical conditions. We have only to take more or less lucid advantage of it and to be aware of the accompanying obligations and limitations at the present time.

In the final stages of their development, the collective structures that we approve of will only be feasible after the disappearance of bourgeois society with its distribution of products and its moral values.

We will contribute to the demise of this bourgeois society through criticism and the total subversion of its concept of pleasure, as well as by providing useful maxims for the revolutionary actions of the masses.

potlatch #15

information bulletin of the
french section of the
lettrist international

22 December 1954

Architecture for Life

Asger Jorn

We are publishing in this issue various excerpts from Asger Jorn's book "Image and Form," which concerns architecture and its future, an issue that we have repeatedly raised in these pages. (See particularly "Next Planet" in issue #4 and "Skyscrapers by the roots" in issue #5 of Potlatch).

We have translated the recent Italian edition sent to us by Asger Jorn, itself a translation from Danish.

Utility and function will always be the starting point for any formal criticism; it is simply a question of transforming Functionalism's program.

. . . Functionalists ignore the psychological function of surroundings . . . The appearances of the buildings and of the objects that we use and that form our environment have a function that is separate from their practical use.

. . . because of their concepts of standardization, Functionalist Rationalists believed that it was possible to attain ideal, definitive forms of the different objects useful to people. Developments to date have shown that this static conception was mistaken. We must arrive at a dynamic conception of forms, we must face the fact that all human forms are in a constant state of transformation; where the Rationalists went wrong was in not understanding that the only way of avoiding the anarchy of change is to become aware of the laws governing transformation and to put them to use.

. . . It is important to understand that this conservatism of forms is thoroughly illogical because it is not the result of not knowing what an object's definitive form is, but rather of the fact that people are upset when they do not find some element of *deja vu* in an unfamiliar phenomenon . . . The radicalism of forms is a result of the fact that people are saddened when they do not find some unexpected element in the known. One might find this radicalism illogical, as do the advocates of standardization, but we must not lose sight of the fact that discovery is only made possible by this need of man's.

Architecture is always the ultimate achievement of intellectual and artistic evolution, the materialization of an economic stage. Architecture is the final point in the achievement

of any artistic endeavor because the creation of architecture implies the construction of an environment and the establishment of a way of life.

potlatch #16

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

26 January 1955

Square des Missions Étrangères

On the border between the 6th and 7th Arrondissements, this small garden, squeezed in between the nearby rue de Babylone and boulevard Raspail, is not easily reached and is normally deserted. It is fairly extensive, as Parisian public gardens go. There is almost no vegetation. From inside, its forked shape becomes apparent.

Its shorter leg is enclosed between blackened walls over ten metres high and the backs of some large buildings. On this side, a private courtyard makes it difficult to make out the garden's edge.

The other leg is overhung on one side by the same stone walls and bordered on the other side by the attractive façade of rue Commaille, a very quiet street. The end of this leg abuts on rue Bac, a street with a great deal more activity.

Square des Missions Étrangères, however, is separated from this street by a strange, empty plot of ground, with a very dense hedge between it and the garden itself. In this totally enclosed empty garden, whose only purpose seems to be to keep a distance between the garden and the passers-by on rue Bac, there is a bust of Chateaubriand, two metres above the ground, in the form of the god Terminus, commanding a cinder covered surface.

The only access to the garden is through a gate situated at the point of the fork, giving onto rue Commaille.

The only monument in the neighbourhood serves to block the view even more and to prevent access to the empty garden. It is an exceptionally dignified kiosk, highly reminiscent of station platforms or medieval regalia.

Square des Missions Étrangères may be used for receiving visitors, for being stormed by night and for other psychogeographical purposes.

Les Lèvres Nues #6

September 1955

Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography **Guy Debord**

Of all the affairs we participate in, with or without interest, the groping search for a new way of life is the only thing that remains really exciting. Aesthetic and other disciplines have proved glaringly inadequate in this regard and merit the greatest indifference. We should therefore delineate some provisional terrains of observation, including the observation of certain processes of chance and predictability in the streets.

The word psychogeography, suggested by an illiterate Kabyle as a general term for the phenomena a few of us were investigating around the summer of 1953, is not too inappropriate. It does not contradict the materialist perspective of the conditioning of life and thought by objective nature. Geography, for example, deals with the determinant action of general natural forces, such as soil composition or climatic conditions, on the economic structures of a society, and thus on the corresponding conception that such a society can have of the world. Psychogeography could set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals. The charmingly vague adjective psychogeographical can be applied to the findings arrived at by this type of investigation, to their influence on human feelings, and more generally to any situation or conduct that seems to reflect the same spirit of discovery.

It has long been said that the desert is monotheistic. Is it illogical or devoid of interest to observe that the district in Paris between Place de la Contrescarpe and Rue de l'Arbalète conduces rather to atheism, to oblivion and to the disorientation of habitual reflexes?

Historical conditions determine what is considered "useful." Baron Haussmann's urban renewal of Paris under the Second Empire, for example, was motivated by the desire to open up broad thoroughfares allowing for the rapid circulation of troops and the use of artillery against insurrections. But from any standpoint other than that of facilitating police control, Haussmann's Paris is a city built by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Present-day urbanism's main problem is ensuring the smooth circulation of a rapidly increasing number of motor vehicles. A future urbanism will undoubtedly apply itself to no less utilitarian projects, but in the rather different context of psychogeographical possibilities.

The present abundance of private automobiles is one of the most astonishing successes of the constant propaganda by which capitalist production persuades the masses that car ownership is one of the privileges our society reserves for its most privileged members. But anarchical progress often ends up contradicting itself, as when we savor the spectacle of a police chief issuing a filmed appeal urging Parisian car owners to use public transportation.

We know with what blind fury so many unprivileged people are ready to defend their mediocre advantages. Such pathetic illusions of privilege are linked to a general idea of happiness prevalent among the bourgeoisie and maintained by a system of publicity that includes Malraux's aesthetics as well as ads for Coca-Cola — an idea of happiness whose crisis must be provoked on every occasion by every means.

The first of these means is undoubtedly the systematic provocative dissemination of a host of proposals tending to turn the whole of life into an exciting game, combined with the constant depreciation of all current diversions (to the extent, of course, that these latter cannot be detoured to serve in constructions of more interesting ambiances). The greatest difficulty in such an undertaking is to convey through these apparently extravagant proposals a sufficient degree of serious seduction. To accomplish this we can imagine an adroit use of currently popular means of communication. But a disruptive sort of abstention, or manifestations designed to radically frustrate the fans of these means of communication, can also promote at little expense an atmosphere of uneasiness extremely favorable for the introduction of a few new conceptions of pleasure.

The idea that the creation of a chosen emotional situation depends only on the thorough understanding and calculated application of a certain number of concrete techniques inspired this somewhat tongue-in-cheek "Psychogeographical Game of the Week," published in *Potlatch* #1:

In accordance with what you are seeking, choose a country, a large or small city, a busy or quiet street. Build a house. Furnish it. Use decorations and surroundings to the best advantage. Choose the season and the time of day. Bring together the most suitable people, with appropriate records and drinks. The lighting and the conversation should obviously be suited to the occasion, as should be the weather or your memories. If there has been no error in your calculations, the result should satisfy you.

We need to flood the market — even if for the moment merely the intellectual market — with a mass of desires whose fulfillment is not beyond the capacity of humanity's present means of action on the material world, but only beyond the capacity of the old social organization. It is thus not without political interest to publicly counterpose such desires to the elementary desires that are endlessly rehashed by the film industry and in psychological novels like those of that old hack Mauriac. (As Marx explained to poor Proudhon, "In a society based on poverty, the poorest products are inevitably consumed by the greatest number.")

The revolutionary transformation of the world, of all aspects of the world, will confirm all the dreams of abundance.

The sudden change of ambiance in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres; the path of least resistance which is automatically followed in aimless strolls (and which has no relation to the physical contour of the ground); the appealing or repelling character of certain places — these phenomena all seem to be neglected. In any case they are never envisaged as depending on causes that can be uncovered by careful analysis and turned to account. People are quite aware that some neighborhoods are gloomy and others pleasant. But they generally simply assume that elegant streets cause a feeling of sat-

isfaction and that poor streets are depressing, and let it go at that. In fact, the variety of possible combinations of ambiances, analogous to the blending of pure chemicals in an infinite number of mixtures, gives rise to feelings as differentiated and complex as any other form of spectacle can evoke. The slightest demystified investigation reveals that the qualitatively or quantitatively different influences of diverse urban decors cannot be determined solely on the basis of the historical period or architectural style, much less on the basis of housing conditions.

The research that we are thus led to undertake on the arrangement of the elements of the urban setting, in close relation with the sensations they provoke, entails bold hypotheses that must be constantly corrected in the light of experience, by critique and self-critique.

Certain of Chirico's paintings, which were clearly inspired by architecturally originated sensations, exert in turn an effect on their objective base to the point of transforming it: they tend themselves to become blueprints or models. Disquieting neighborhoods of arcades could one day carry on and fulfill the allure of these works.

I scarcely know of anything but those two harbors at dusk painted by Claude Lorrain — which are in the Louvre and which juxtapose extremely dissimilar urban ambiances — that can rival in beauty the Paris metro maps. I am not, of course, talking about mere physical beauty — the new beauty can only be a beauty of situation — but simply about the particularly moving presentation, in both cases, of a sum of possibilities.

Among various more difficult means of intervention, a renovated cartography seems appropriate for immediate utilization.

The production of psychogeographical maps, or even the introduction of alterations such as more or less arbitrarily transposing maps of two different regions, can contribute to clarifying certain wanderings that express not subordination to randomness but complete insubordination to habitual influences (influences generally categorized as tourism, that popular drug as repugnant as sports or buying on credit).

A friend recently told me that he had just wandered through the Harz region of Germany while blindly following the directions of a map of London. This sort of game is obviously only a feeble beginning in comparison to the complete creation of architecture and urbanism that will someday be within the power of everyone. Meanwhile we can distinguish several stages of partial, less difficult projects, beginning with the mere displacement of elements of decoration from the locations where we are used to seeing them.

For example, in the preceding issue of this journal Marcel Mariën proposed that when global resources have ceased to be squandered on the irrational enterprises that are imposed on us today, all the equestrian statues of all the cities of the world be assembled in a single desert. This would offer to the passersby — the future belongs to them — the spectacle of an artificial cavalry charge, which could even be dedicated to the memory of the greatest massacrers of history, from Tamerlane to Ridgway. It also reflects one of the main demands of the present generation: educative value.

In fact, nothing really new can be expected until the masses in action awaken to the conditions that are imposed on them in all domains of life, and to the practical means

of changing them.

"The imaginary is that which tends to become real," wrote an author whose name, on account of his notorious intellectual degradation, I have since forgotten. The involuntary restrictiveness of such a statement could serve as a touchstone exposing various farcical literary revolutions: That which tends to remain unreal is empty babble.

Life, for which we are responsible, presents powerful motives for discouragement and innumerable more or less vulgar diversions and compensations. A year doesn't go by when people we loved haven't succumbed, for lack of having clearly grasped the present possibilities, to some glaring capitulation. But the enemy camp objectively condemns people to imbecility and already numbers millions of imbeciles; the addition of a few more makes no difference.

The primary moral deficiency remains indulgence, in all its forms.

potlatch #20

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

30 May 1955

Architecture and Play

In his *Essay on the Social Function of Play*, Johan Huizinga establishes that "In its primitive stages, culture has the attributes of a game and develops in the form and the framework of games." The author's latent idealism and his narrowly sociological understanding of the higher forms of play do not diminish his work's basic worth. Moreover, it would be futile to try to find any other motive behind our theories on architecture or drifting than a passion for play.

Even though almost everything that happens in this world provokes our anger and disgust, we are nevertheless more and more able to find it amusing. Anyone who understands by this that we are given to irony is missing the point. Life around us is arranged so as to be moved by absurd forces and tends unconsciously to satisfy its true needs. These needs and their partial fulfilment, their partial understanding, everywhere confirm our hypotheses. For example, a bar called AT THE END OF THE WORLD (Au bout du

monde), on the edge of one of Paris' strongest unities of ambiance (the rue Mouffetard, rue Tournefort, rue Lhomond area) is not there by chance. Events are only fortuitous insofar as the general laws governing their category are unknown. An effort must be made to reach as great an understanding as possible of the elements making up a situation, beyond the utilitarian imperatives whose strength will constantly diminish.

What one wants to do with architecture is a fairly accurate analogy of what one wants to do with one's life. As the saying goes, beautiful adventures can only begin and be played out in beautiful surroundings. The concept of beautiful surroundings will change.

Already now, it is possible to savour the ambiance of various desolate areas that are as ideal for drifting as they are scandalously unfit for habitation, but where the system nevertheless crowds in the working masses. Le Corbusier himself, in *Urbanism is a Key*, admits that, in view of the miserly and anarchistic individualism of construction in highly industrialised countries, "under-development can be as much the product of surplus as of scarcity." This observation can naturally be brought also to bear on the neo-medieval promoter of the "vertical community" himself.

Widely dissimilar individuals, taking apparently similar approaches, have modelled some intentionally puzzling styles of architecture, from the famous castles of King Louis of Bavaria, to the house in Hanover that the dadaist Kurt Schwitters has apparently pierced through with tunnels and forests of pillars made from agglomerated objects. Each of these constructions contains something of the baroque character found in all efforts at creating integrated art that would be completely determinant. In this regard, it is worth noting the relationship between Louis of Bavaria and Wagner, who himself must have been pursuing an aesthetic synthesis in the most difficult and, in the end, the most fruitless manner.

We must make it clear that if the architectural manifestations which we are bound to exalt are in some way related to naïve art, we value them for another reason altogether, namely their embodiment of the unexploited future potential of a discipline that is to an overwhelming extent economically beyond the reach of the "avant-garde." It is impossible not to perceive the trappings of a formally reactionary mentality, closely related to the social attitude of paternalism, in the exploitation of the commercial value absurdly attached to most modes of expressing naïvety. More than ever, we believe that the ones who are worthy of some respect must have had answers for everything.

We will not desist in our intention to participate as intensely as possible in the realisation of the risks and power of urbanism.

We are well aware that the provisional, the free realm of playful activity, seen by Huizinga as opposed, as such, to "ordinary life" characterised by a sense of duty, is the only possible field of action held back fraudulently by taboos with pretensions of endurance, of true life. The behaviour we seek tends to establish all the conditions favourable to its complete development. What we must do now is change the rules of the game from arbitrary conventions to ones with a moral basis.

potlatch #22

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

9 September 1955

Why Lettrism?

Guy Debord & Gil J. Wolman

1

It seems necessary to define the post-war period in Europe as one of a generalized failure of attempts at change, in the realm of emotions as much as in the political realm. At the same time that spectacular technical inventions are multiplying the chances of future constructions as well as the dangers of still unresolved contradictions, one witnesses a stagnation of social struggles, and, on the mental level, a complete reaction against the movements of discovery that culminated around 1930 in the association of the broadest demands with the practical means of imposing them.

From the rise of fascism to the second World War, the exercise of revolutionary means has been deceptive and the regression of hopes linked to them has been inevitable.

Following the incomplete liberation of 1944, intellectual and artistic reaction broke out everywhere. Abstract painting — a simple moment of modern pictorial evolution in which it only occupies a very meager place — is presented by all the publicity machines as the basis of a new aesthetic. The alexandrine is dedicated to a proletarian renaissance, in which the proletariat will become outmoded as a cultural form just as the quadriga and trireme have become outmoded as means of transport. The by-products of writing that had caused indignation, and that had not been ready, are getting an ephemeral but resounding affirmation: the poetry of Prevert or Char, the prose of Gracq, the drama of the atrocious cretin Pichette, and all the others. The cinema, in which the various arrangements of scenarios are used as if they were harmonies, proclaims its future lies in the plagiarism of De Sica, and finds novelty — and, above all, exoticism — in various Italian films in which poverty has imposed a style of camerawork little different from the habits of Hollywood, but so long after S. M. Eisenstein. Furthermore, it is known that the scholars who otherwise do not dance in caves have given themselves up to laborious phenomenological refinements.

Confronting this dismal and profitable mess, in which each repetition has its disciples, each regression its admirers, each remake its fans, a single group shows universal opposition and complete contempt in the name of the historically necessary supercession of old values. A kind of inventive optimism has taken the place of refusal, affirming

itself beyond refusal. It is necessary to recognize the healthy role that Dada assumed in another epoch, despite its very different intentions. We may be told that it is not a very intelligent project to restart Dadaism. But it is not a matter of re-doing Dadaism. The very serious setback of revolutionary politics, linked to the glaring weakness of the working-class aesthetic promoted by the same retrograde phase, has led to confusion in every field, a confusion that will soon have raged for thirty years. On the spiritual level, the petit-bourgeoisie are always in power. After several serious crises, its monopoly is even more extended than before: everything that is actually imparted to the world — whether it is capitalist literature, social-realist literature, a false formalist avant-garde that lives on forms that have fallen into the public domain, or wormy and theosophical agonies of certain movements of recently arrived emancipators — entirely nurtures the petit-bourgeois spirit. Under pressure of the realities of the epoch, it is necessary to finish with this spirit. From this perspective, all measures are good. The outrageous provocations that the Lettrist group has carried out or prepared (poetry reduced to letters, metagraphical recital, cinema without images) unleashes a fatal inflation in the arts. We therefore joined them without hesitation.

2

While always exercising a praiseworthy intolerance toward the outside world, around 1950 the Lettrist group fostered a fairly serious confusion of ideas among its members.

Onomatopoeic poetry itself, having appeared with Futurism and much later reaching a certain perfection with Schwitters and some others, no longer was of interest as the absolute systemization that was presented as the only poetry of the moment, and so condemning all the other forms to death and giving itself a short shelf-life. Meanwhile, the consciousness of the true role we were allotted to play was neglected by many in favor of an infantile conception of genius and fame.

The tendency still in the majority saw the creation of new forms as the highest value of all human activity. This belief in formal evolution without cause or end, other than in-itself, is the basis of bourgeois idealism in the arts. (The imbecilic belief in immutable conceptual categories led some ex-members of the group to an Americanized mysticism.)

Drawing conclusions that an idiot such as Malraux didn't dare or know how to draw from essentially similar premises, the Lettrists' rigorous application of the benefits of experience brought about the definitive collapse of this formalist demeanor by taking it to its limit, the giddy acceleration of evolution around emptiness, in a clear break from all human needs.

The usefulness of destroying formalism from within is clear: it does not leave any doubt that the intellectual disciplines, whatever interdependence they share with the rest of the movement of society, are subject to the relatively autonomous crises arising from the discoveries necessitated by their proper determination as technique. To judge everything as a function of content, as we are being invited to, is to return to judging acts as a function of their intentions. If it is certain that the explanation of the normative character and persistent charm of various aesthetic periods must always be looked for alongside the content — and the change in the times, or of contemporary necessities,

makes other contents touch us, leading to a revision of the classification of the "great epochs" — it is no less certain that the power of a work during its own time would not solely depend on its content. One can compare this process with that of fashion. After half a century, for example, all costumes belong to equally outdated fashions, from which contemporary sensibility can rediscover all sorts of appearances. But everyone notices the ridiculousness of the feminine bearing of 10 years ago.

Thus the "precious" movement, despite being obscured by the scholastic lies of the Seventeenth Century — and just as the forms of expression that they had invented, which are as strange as can be to us today, are coming to be recognized as the principal current of ideas of the "Grand Siecle" as a result of the need that we feel for the constructive overthrow of all aspects of life — uncovers the way that emergent Capital contributed to this development through behavior and decor (conversation and strolling as privileged activities, and, in architecture, the differentiation between living places, changes in the principles of decoration and furniture). On the contrary, when Roger Vailand wrote "Beau Masque" in a Stendalian tone, despite its almost estimable content, it had only a passing chance of pleasing as a prettily-made pastiche. That is to say, he, no doubt contrary to his intentions, addressed himself to intellectuals with outdated tastes. And the majority of criticism that foolishly attacked the content, praised the prose style.

We will return to this historical anecdote.

3

From this fundamental opposition — which is definitely the conflict of a sufficiently new way of living one's life against an ancient tradition of alienating it — there arise antagonisms of all sorts, which are provisionally smoothed out in view of general action that is amusing and that, despite its awkwardnesses and insufficiencies, is positive.

Certain ambiguities also arise from the humor that some people place (and others do not place) in their chosen affirmations for their stupefying aspect. Although completely indifferent to any nominal survival through this or that famous literature, we write so that our works — which are practically nonexistent — remain in history, with as much certainty as those histrionic people who would become "eternal." What's more, we declare on all occasions that we are beautiful. The baseness of arguments that are presented to us in the film clubs and elsewhere do not give us the opportunity to reply seriously. Elsewhere we continue to have plenty of them.

The crisis of Lettrism, announced by the semi-open opposition of the old farts to the experimental cinematography, which, to their discredit, they judged to be "unstylish" violence, broke out in 1952 when the Lettrist International (which regrouped the extreme faction of the movement in the shadow of a magazine of the same name) distributed injurious texts at a press conference held by Chaplin. The aesthetic Lettrists, now in the minority, were not in solidarity with this action — leading to a break that their lame excuses did not succeed in postponing or subsequently healing — because, according to them, the creative role carried out by Chaplin in the cinema placed him beyond criticism. The rest of "revolutionary" opinion reproached us once again, because the work and person of Chaplin still appeared to them to remain in a progressive perspective. Since then, many of these people have revised this illusion.

To announce the senility of doctrines or the people who have given their names to them is an urgent and easy task for those who have retained the taste for resolving the most alluring questions posed by our day and age. Whatever the impostures of the Lost Generation, which showed itself between the last war and today, it is condemned to debunk itself. Nevertheless, having recognized the bankruptcy of the critical thought that these frauds have found before them, Lettrism has contributed to their more rapid oblivion. It is by no means strange that the presentation of an Ionesco, re-making several scenic excesses of Tzara thirty years later and twenty times more stupid, does not get a quarter of the distracted attention. There are several years to go before we reach the exaggerated corpse of Antonin Artaud.

4

The words we make up during this epoch unfortunately tend to limit us. Without a doubt, the term "Lettrist" is a difficult description for people who have no particular esteem for this kind of sound effect, and, except on the soundtrack of a few films, have not made use of it. But the term "French" seems to give us exclusive links with this nation and its colonies. Atheism has been qualified as "Christian," "Jewish" or "Islamic" with disconcerting ease. And we are obviously locked within a more or less refined "bourgeois" education, if not such ideas, then at least such vocabulary, as well.

Thus a good number of terms will be used guardedly, despite the evolution of our researches and our usage (leading to refinement) of many waves of followers: Lettrist International, metagraphy and other neologisms that excite the fury of all sorts of people. The first condition of our agreement is to keep such people a long way from us.

It could be objected that we are propagating an arbitrary, stupid and dishonest confusion among the intellectual elite. We are confronted by people ready to ask us, "What exactly do you want?" with a concerned and protective air that is immediately destroyed by such a question. But, in the certainty that no literary or journalistic hack has seriously occupied him or herself with what we have been carrying out for a number of years, we know that any confusion has in no way been engendered by ourselves. And, on the other hand, it pleases us.

5

Insofar as this "intellectual elite" of modern Europe has at hand today an approximation of intelligence and a modicum of culture, the confusion of which we have spoken no longer holds sway. Those of our companions from years gone by who try once again to draw attention to it or simply to live by their pens have become idiotic in order to fool the world. They sadly ruminate upon the same attitudes that will be re-used more quickly by others. They don't know how a method of renewal refreshes life. Ready to abandon everything to appear in the "New New French Review" — like clowns kindly presenting their tricks because their quest never leads anywhere — they lament the fact that they never find a place in this swamp, such as that of Etienneble (the consideration that has even been granted to Caillou) or the appointment of Aron.

There is even cause to believe that their last ambition will be to found a little Judeo-plastic religion. With a bit of luck they will wind up as some sort of Father Divine, as Mormons of aesthetic creation.

Let's pass on from these people who have amused us in the past. The amusements that overtake a man are an exact measure of his mediocrity. Baseball or automatic writing, what does it matter? The idea of success, when it is not tied up with the most simplistic desires, is inseparable from a complete overthrow at the global level. The remnants of successful breakthroughs always strongly resemble worse blocks. What we find more valuable in our actions is to succeed in undoing our many habits and ingrained associations. It could be said that it is rare enough for people to set their life (that part of their life in which they are allowed a choice) in harmony with their feelings and views. It is good to be fanatic about certain things. At the beginning of the year, an orientalist-occultist magazine spoke of us as "the most misty spirits, anemic theoreticians of the virus of 'supercession,' otherwise purely of a verbal effect." It is good that the effect of those who embarrass these creeps is not merely verbal. Naturally, you do not have to dynamite the bridges of the Ile de Louis to accentuate the insular character of this locality or, on the opposite bank, to complicate and embellish the brickwork of the Bernard quay. We do what is most urgent with the limited resources we have at the moment. Thus, by contradicting various meatheads who approach us, by putting to a quick end the confusionist attempts at "joint action" with us, by completely doing without indulgence, we prove to those same individuals the necessary existence of the virus in question. But, if we are ill, our detractors are dead.

While on this subject, let us clarify an attitude that certain people, among the most avoidable, have reproached us for: namely the expulsion of not a few participants in the Lettrist International and the systematic allure obtained by this kind of penalty. In fact, we find it appropriate to take positions rather close to all the aspects of life that present themselves to us. Among all the positions that we take, some of them are held dear by us, just as some of our lines of research are held dear. All other modes of friendship, of worldly relationships, or even of good manners leave us indifferent or disgusted. Objective shortcomings in this sort of agreement can only be sanctioned by a break. It is better to change one's friends than one's ideas.

In the final analysis, judgment is made according to the life that is led. The promiscuities that the expelled people have for the most part accepted or accepted again, and the generally dishonest arrangements that in extreme cases have been underwritten, give the exact degree of gravity to our quickly resolved disagreements and perhaps to the importance of our pact with each other as well.

Far from defending ourselves from making of these hostilities personal matters, we declare on the contrary that the idea that we have human relations obliges us to make these issues personal in nature and determined by definite questions of ideas. Those who resign from the Lettrist International condemn themselves: we have nothing to rage about and nothing to excuse.

The Lettrists who have been cast aside begin to make quite a large number. But there are infinitely more people who live and die without ever having a chance to understand and take part. From this point of view, each person is responsible for whatever talents they have. Should we put up with pathetic individual resignations out of sentimental considerations?

From the above, one will understand that our business is not a literary school, a new form of expression, or a modernism. We are concerned with a way of living that will take place through explorations and provisional formulations, which are themselves only exercised in a provisional way. The nature of this enterprise forces us to work in a group and to show ourselves a little. We wait for many people and events that will come. We also have another great force: we no longer wait for a mass of known activities, for individuals and institutions.

We have a lot to learn and we must experiment as much as possible with forms of architecture as well as with rules of conduct. Nothing agitates us less than the elaboration of a doctrine: we are sufficiently far from explaining ourselves, let alone explaining those things that would support a coherent system that would integrate the novelties that appear to us worthy of giving passion.

However it is put, it will be understood that we must start with everything. It has also been said that humanity has never posed problems that it cannot resolve.

potlatch #23

information bulletin

of the lettrist international

13 October 1955

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:

MICHÈLE 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 conversation. 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

Aaah, 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 suppos-

edly 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 Sebastopol, 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'Évangile) 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?

Editor in Chief: J. Fillon, 32 rue de la Montagne-Geneviève, Paris 5e.

potlatch #24

information bulletin of the
french section of the
lettrist international

24 November 1954

An intelligent view of the Avant-Garde at the end of 1955

URBANISM. In Paris today we recommend visits to: Contrescarpe (Continent); Chinatown; the Jewish Quarter; Butte-aux-Cailles (the Labyrinth); Aubervilliers (at night); the public gardens of the 7th Arrondissement; the Medical-Legal Institute; rue Dauphine (Nesles); Buttes-Chaumont (play); the Merri neighborhood; Parc Monceau; Ile Louis (the island); Pigalle; Les Halles (rue Denis, rue du Jour); the Europe neighborhood (memory); rue Sauvage.

We do not recommend visits, under any circumstances, to: the 6th and 15th Arrondissements; the grand boulevards; Luxembourg; Champs-Elysees; Place Blanche; Montmartre; Ecole Militaire; Place de la Republique; Etoile and Opera; the whole 16th Arrondissement.

DECORATION. Project by J. Fillon for decoration of a living room: three quarters of the room, occupying the part that one crosses on entering through the only door, are elegantly furnished and have no particular purpose. At the far part of the room there is a barricade, partitioning off the functional part of the room, occupying one quarter of its total area. The barricade is absolutely authentic, built from cobblestones, sandbags, barrels, and other objects commonly used for this purpose. It is approximately as high as a person is tall, with several peaks and a few gaps. Loaded guns may be laid across the top. A narrow passageway leads to the functional part of the room, which is tastefully furnished and laid out in such a way as to provide a pleasant place to receive friends and acquaintances.

This living room, which of course also requires the appropriate lighting and ambient sound, could be used as a departure from the standard layout of a run-of-the-mill house, merely introducing a superficially picturesque element. Nevertheless, its true purpose is to form a part of a wider architectural complex where its decisive value in the construction of a situation comes to the forefront.

EXPLORATION. In the near future, a team of Lettrists, operating from a base on rue des Jardins-Paul, will undertake a thorough exploration of the Merri neighborhood, which has not yet appeared on any psychogeographical map. WE INVITE ALL AND SUNDRY JOIN THE LETTRIST INTERNATIONAL. We will keep a few.

EDUCATIONAL GAMES. A recent development, "ideological debate structured as a boxing match," seems to have a brilliant future among the intellectual elite, for whom it seems ideally suited. (IDEOLOGICAL DEBATE STRUCTURED AS A BOXING MATCH WILL HELP TO INCREASE YOUR PRESTIGE WHILE WASTING TIME.) Here are the rules:

The two opponents and the referee, whose decision is final, sit at the same table, separated from each other by the referee. The length of the match is decided beforehand along with the number of rounds and their precise duration.

When the referee declares the match has begun, the two opponents size each other up for a moment and then the first to go on the attack makes a statement on whatever subject he feels is appropriate. His opponent then responds, either with a vigorous rebuttal of the argument just formulated, or by making some statement on a related or unexpected topic, or -- best of all -- with a combination of the two. The referee makes sure that the opponents do not interrupt each other. nevertheless, any contender speaking for too long loses points. A chronometer marks the end of the round with an appropriate signal and the debate is broken off immediately.

The referee then awards the round to one of the opponents or calls a draw. During the break, the contenders' fans and trainers may bring them alcoholic beverages or cups of coffee (and in some cases, drugs). The match begins again when the order is given. The referee calls a knockout when either of the opponents, surprised by the vehemence or subtlety of an attack, is unable to continue the debate. Should no knockout occur, the winner of the match is decided at the end on points, depending on the number of rounds won. Cheating, even when obvious, is not penalized.

Already noted as favorite topics are Zen, the New Left, phenomenological ontology, Astruc, Gallic coins, censorship and the intelligence of chess. (The Lettrists, who would be unbeatable, do not play this game.)

potlatch #25

information bulletin of the
french section of the
lettrist international

26 January 1956

The Form of City Changes More Quickly

As reported in issue #7 of Potlatch (August 1954) [The Destruction of Rue Sauvage], various private companies began destroying rue Sauvage in the early months of 1954. The land bordering on the side towards the Seine was promptly occupied by hovels. In 1955, the Ministry of Public Works began to take an incredibly energetic hand in matters, going so far as to cut off rue Sauvage just beyond rue Fulton in order to put up a huge building — to house PTT offices — covering approximately a quarter of the previous length of rue Sauvage. It no longer reaches boulevard de la Gare. It now ends at the top of rue Flamand.

The most attractive part of Square des Missions Étrangères (see issue #16 of Potlatch) has been occupied since the winter by a number of prefabricated caravans, reminiscent of Abbé Pierre's low blows.

Moreover, the constant movement of the red-light, pleasure (?) district, from the Left Bank, to the eastern side of boulevard Michel and then towards Montagne-Geneviève, is taking on alarming proportions. At present, Montagne-Geneviève is hemmed in by several establishments on rue Descartes.

The psychogeographical interest of the three places must therefore be considered to have substantially diminished, especially in the case of the first two, which are now practically not worth the trouble of a visit.

potlatch #26

information bulletin of the
french section of the
lettrist international

7 May 1956

Towards a lettrist lexicon

deriver: to divert water (13th cent., Job; gramm. fig. etc.), derivation (1377, L.) -atif (15th cent.), from Latin derivare, -atio, -ativus, in a proper and fig. sense (from rivus, stream).

deriver: to remove from the water's edge (14th cent. B), comp. of rive (water's edge).

deriver: (mar.) to drift (16th cent., A. d'Aubigne, var. of driver), infl. by Eng. drive (push).

Der: derive, -atio (1690, Furetiere).

deriver: to undo what is riveted. See river.

The First Stone Falls - Mohamed Dahou

We have learned with pleasure that the architect Max Bill, Director of the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm (i.e. the new Bauhaus, the sclerotic successor to the Munich school) has had to resign from his post. At the Industrial Design Conference, held in conjunction with the Tenth Triennale of Industrial Art in Milan, Max Bill was taken vehemently to task by Jorn and his Italian colleagues, in the name of moving beyond the Functionalist program. In view of the subsequent controversies, it was beyond question that Max Bill, whose theoretical collapse was accompanied by ludicrous threats of legal action, should resign. However, no truly progressive tendency has come to light in the Ulm school and we will continue to oppose it with a confidence strengthened by this notable victory.

Our common organization for the action to be carried out today in architecture has been set up at the following address: Laboratorio Sperimentale del Movimento Internazionale per una Bauhaus Immaginata (2, via XX settembre - ALBA - Italy).

potlatch #27

information bulletin of the french section of the lettrist international

2 November 1956

The Alba Platform

September 2-8 a Congress was held in Alba, Italy, convoked by Asger Jorn and Giuseppe Gallizio in the name of the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, a grouping whose views are in agreement with the Lettrist International's program regarding urbanism and its possible uses (see Potlatch #26). Representatives of avant-garde groups from eight countries (Algeria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Holland, Italy) met there to determine the bases for a united organization. The tasks toward this end were dealt with in all their implications.

Christian Dotremont, who had been announced as a member of the Belgian delegation in spite of the fact that he has for some time been a collaborator in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, refrained from appearing at the Congress, where his presence would have been unacceptable for the majority of the participants.

Enrico Baj, representative of the "Nuclear Art Movement," was excluded the very first day. The Congress affirmed its break with the Nuclearists by issuing the following statement: "Confronted with his conduct in certain previous affairs, Baj withdrew from the Congress. He did not make off with the cash-box."

Meanwhile our Czechoslovakian comrades Pravoslav Rada and Kotik were prevented from entering Italy. In spite of our protests, the Italian government did not grant them visas to pass through its national iron curtain until the end of the Alba Congress.

The statement of Wolman, the Lettrist International delegate, particularly stressed the necessity for a common platform specifying the totality of current experimentation: Comrades, the parallel crises presently affecting all modes of artistic creation are determined by general, interrelated tendencies and cannot be resolved outside a comprehensive general perspective. The process of negation and destruction that has manifested itself at an accelerated rate against all the former conditions of artistic activity is irreversible: it is the consequence of the appearance of superior possibilities of action on the world. . . . Whatever prestige the bourgeoisie may today be willing to grant to fragmentary or deliberately retrograde artistic tentatives, creation can now be nothing less than a synthesis aiming at the construction of entire atmospheres and styles of life. . . . A unitary urbanism — the synthesis we call for, incorporating arts and technology — must be created in accordance with new values of life, values which we now need to distinguish and disseminate. . . .

The Congress concluded by expressing a substantial agreement in the form of a six-point resolution, declaring the “necessity of an integral construction of the environment by a unitary urbanism that must utilize all arts and modern techniques”; the “inevitable outmodedness of any renovation of an art within its traditional limits”; the “recognition of an essential interdependence between unitary urbanism and a future style of life” which must be situated “in the perspective of a greater real freedom and a greater domination of nature”; and finally, “unity of action among the signers on the basis of this program” (the sixth point going on to enumerate the various specifics of mutual support).

Apart from this final resolution — signed by J. Calonne, Constant, G. Gallizio, A. Jorn, Kotik, Rada, Piero Simondo, E. Sottsass Jr., Elena Verrone, Wolman — the Congress unanimously declared itself against any relations with participants in the Festival de la Cité Radieuse, thus following through with the boycott initiated the preceding month.

At the conclusion of the Congress Gil J. Wolman was added to the editorial board of *Erística*, the information bulletin of the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, and Asger Jorn was placed on the board of directors of the *Lettrist International*.

The Alba Congress will probably one day be seen as a key moment, one of the difficult stages in the struggle for a new sensibility and a new culture, a struggle which is itself part of the general revolutionary resurgence characterizing the year 1956, visible in the upsurge of the masses in the USSR, Poland and Hungary (although in the latter case we see the dangerously confusing revival of rotten old watchwords of clerical nationalism resulting from the fatal error of the prohibition of any Marxist opposition), in the successes of the Algerian revolt, and in the major strikes in Spain. These developments allow us the greatest hopes for the near future.

Failure of the Marseille Exhibition

August 4 was to see the opening of an Avant-garde Arts Festival in Marseille, organised with the support of various official bodies promoting tourism and the Ministry of Reconstruction and Urban Planning. It was obvious from the chosen venue — Le Corbusier’s “Cité Radieuse” — and from the list of expected participants, that this event would be the apotheosis of the confusionist and retrograde tendencies that have consistently dominated modern expression for the past decade. Public consecration of such a gathering came, as is usual, just as the hollowness of these tendencies was becoming obvious to a growing sector of intellectual opinion; at a time when an irresistible momentum is beginning to carry us towards an overwhelming liberation in all areas.

Four days previous to the opening of the Avant-garde Arts Festival, the *Lettrist International* launched a boycott appeal, on the grounds that the Marseille event would contribute strongly to a future division between two camps with no possibility of dialogue between them.

Participants in this spectacle, in which none of the elements that will be seen in twenty years’ time as typical of 1950’s stupidity are missing, will find themselves irremediably branded with having taken such an indiscreet part in the most sublime manifestation of the spirit of an age. We therefore encourage all of the invited artists, at least those who do not consider themselves finished, to dissociate themselves immediately from this

hodgepodge of deism, tachism, and impotence . . . We call on the international avant-garde to denounce the intent of this manoeuvre and to publicise the names of those who are party to it.

The Avant-garde Arts Festival, received by the press with almost universal indifference (only two Paris dailies made very brief mention of its inauguration), Abandoned at the last moment by several of its organisers and many of whose events did not succeed in drawing an audience of more than twenty spectators, quickly showed itself to be a failure, even in financial terms.

One or two articles in the sympathising weeklies were not enough to conceal the liquidation of the pretty Tachisto-Seccotino avant-garde. At most, they made every effort to sow discord by implicating the opposition. Thus, the Figaro Literary Supplement, in its August 11 issue, claimed that the Lettrists took part in the Festival and boycotted it at the same time. Then, the following week, on publishing our formal rebuttal, they significantly omitted the last sentence: "The appeal by the Lettrist International, which you mentioned, was not, of course directed at art merchants and was widely heeded."

The fact is that by August 1956, it was too late to impose a coherent vision of modern art based on a repetition of past experiments. The post-war period of reaction is coming to a close. It was also too late to pay civic homage to the heroes of an avant-garde that has become inoffensive. It was never offensive in the first place, and this is now becoming obvious. Above all, this period is basically characterised by anarchic and fragmentary restatements. It was therefore ill-advised to try to extend the undertaking — simply by setting the theatre festival, a poor relation of the Avignon festival, in "modern" surroundings and by hastily tacking on painting and cinema — to show a unity that has never existed. Its only chance of existence lies with the unified revolution that is now getting underway.