

# *Cubist, as in Cuba*

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A contribution to the June 2014 *Brooklyn Rail*. Guest editor: Ann McCoy.

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including colour reproductions of the two paintings mentioned in the article below (note: first one is reproduced sideways...)

Check the superb article by Nor Hall, and the one by my 'neighbour': Marina Warner – and lots more.

Traduction **française** <http://www.pantheatre.com/pdf/6-reading-list-cubist-cuba-fr.pdf>

Traducción al **español** <http://www.pantheatre.com/pdf/6-reading-list-cubist-cuba-es.pdf>

From Ann McCoy

Dear Invited Participants,

For June I will be the guest editor of the *Brooklyn Rail*, a widely read art and culture journal in New York. Each guest editor chooses a theme and invites a list of critics, artists, etc. to write short contributions that can be a paragraph or an essay up to 800 words. ... I have invited several artists to contribute pages from their journals and sketches. If you are unfamiliar with the publication you may access it online at: [www.brooklynrail.com](http://www.brooklynrail.com)

Since the Abstract Expressionists much art has turned to sources other than the unconscious for inspiration. Today much mainstream art looks to ideology and the unconscious is devalued and demeaned. Artists who do draw from the unconscious are dismissed as throwbacks to outdated Romanticism. Dreams, synchronicity, and visions are thought of as byproducts of bourgeois society and the irrational is to be avoided. Critical theory stresses art that is motivated by politics and society rather than subjectivity. Artists drawing from mythology, antiquity, alchemy, etc. are dismissed under the heading of "historicism". This abandonment of the unconscious seems to be more prevalent in the visual arts than in poetry, film, and theater.

My idea for this issue of the *Brooklyn Rail* came from a discussion with Donald Kuspit regarding his book "The End of Art", as well as discussions I have had with Michael Zansky. I wanted to approach the subject from the standpoint of artists rather than analysts. Artists tend not to be invested in any one approach and to ignore strict boundaries between schools (Jung vs. Freud, etc) to include all approaches that take into account the unconscious dimension of the psyche.

Without a link to the unconscious, art becomes banal, and lacking in dimensionality. I want to focus on a need to again draw from the well of the unconscious. Many artists begin with childhood trauma as a jumping off place, but view the dynamism of the unconscious as transformative and fueling creativity. Some contemporary artists are working with an expanded notion of psyche, and see the unconscious as a timeless continuum, where ancient cultures may relate to a personal mythology, and be as relevant as contemporary events. An upcoming symposium organized around the work of Thomas McEvilley will feature artists drawing from ancient sources.

I would like to invite the following contributors.

Ginette Paris  
Nor Hall  
Enrique Pardo  
Peter Lamborne Wilson  
Christopher Bamford  
Celia Rabinovitch  
Carter Radcliff  
Lenore Malen  
Donald Kuspit  
Richard Fletcher  
William Kiesel  
William Lyons  
artists: (pages from dream texts etc.)  
Michael Zansky  
Gillermo del Toro  
Carolee Schneemann  
Nalini Malani  
Louise Bourgeois

Dear Ann,

Here are some paragraphs and two reproductions of paintings that hopefully strike the right chord for your request and fit my current artistic and philosophical obsessions. A few of the references, especially to Roy Hart and to voice performance - or to my own work in Pantheatre for that matter - might not be familiar to your readers, and might need more footnotes. E.P.

Nota - This version is a slightly extended one: the journal version had to be under 800 words!

### *Cubist, as in Cuba*

I'll start with a serious *jeu d'esprit*: I have come recently to define my work as "Cubist - of the Cuba kind" - i.e. with an underworld connection to Haiti and Voodoo..." I leave Fidel aside for the moment, but I do pick up of course on some of Picasso's "synthetic cubism" experiments - as opposed to the analytic ones, though some of those too fish out (invoke, pray out) for voodoo implications. And I include in this both my theatre work (Pantheatre - choreographic theatre and voice performance) and my recent return to painting.

A cubist jump... I am hesitating to buy a book on Gilles Deleuze by Christian Kerslake (it costs a fortune!) titled "Deleuze and the Unconscious", after reading a superb article of his (talk about "historicism"!) titled "The Somnambulist and the Hermaphrodite: Deleuze and Johann de Montereaggio and Occultism"<sup>1</sup>.

Another jump: I have resisted studying Lacan - unwilling (and ill-willing, probably) to spend time on his hyper-cryptic linguistic knots, and his seemingly buffoonish 'scientificity', but noticing nevertheless the quality of inspiration he stirred all round. I am impressed by those who are unravelling, glossing, paraphrasing his lacanic-laconic sophistications, from feminism and gender studies to current eco-philosophy, where I find some of the best excursions to the frontiers of mind. After the disappearance of James Hillman - and I am considered a super-Hillmaniac! <sup>2</sup> - I count with astonishment the number of post-lacanian books and articles that lay around my bedside table! I do live in France, of course, where Hillman is practically unknown, whereas Lacan is everywhere.

For 2015 I am taking the *Myth and Theatre Festival* into "Philosophy and the Voice". It is the fortieth anniversary of Roy Hart's death, an amazing voice artist-philosopher - a point I want to make, militantly. I want to propose some answers as to why Roy Hart's voice is shunned in contemporary philosophy (and in much voice research, artistic and philosophical) while there is a huge fascination with Artaud's voice. Here I discover Lacan's... 'devotion', I would say, to the voice, and his behind-the-scenes dialogues with Derrida's not-so-secret love affair with the voice. Roy Hart was an exact contemporary of Derrida's (and of Deleuze, and of Foucault) yet no bridges were made (in either direction) not even today!

I am teaching/directing some very intense *voice performance* sessions with a small group of artists in Paris. Again, definitely "cubist of the Cuba kind" - freewheeling and mapping the edges of shamanic vocal

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/243/225>

<sup>2</sup> See [www.pantheatre.com/1-james-hillman.html](http://www.pantheatre.com/1-james-hillman.html)

acting out. Some of my 70s roy-hartean road companions still seem to hold stalwartly to the legend that Jung could not acknowledge Roy Hart's vocal "embodiment" of the notion and dynamics of shadow - implying that he could not see the value of such expressionism, or could not take it. I do not think Jung does address the voice - nor does James Hillman for that matter, though he did take voice lessons with Liza Mayer during some of his visits to Malérargues - the Roy Hart Centre. Jung, and even more so Hillman, turn to the notion of *anima* as their "muse of the unconscious". There are marked connections between the notions of *anima* in Jung and Hillman, and of voice, especially in Lacan, Derrida and Deleuze - with many layers of paradox. Philosophers are usually astonished to hear the philosophical voice acted-out, while voice performers might experience it only as subjective body (often seen as 'soul'), or as a musical instrument - and rarely give voice a philosophical, historical or cultural perspective. I must confess something here: when I started working with Roy Hart, in my mid-twenties (art school, conceptual and performance art, etc.) and having never even tried singing in my life, I was so astonished with the implications of Roy Hart's take on singing that I thought Alfred Wolfsohn, who started the voice work Roy Hart then developed, had 'invented' the voice!<sup>3</sup>

There is one more parallel I must make: Alfred Wolfsohn (again, Roy Hart's teacher) was an exact contemporary of Marcel Duchamp - an opposition which definitely worked on me in my art-school years - but which started dissolving when I discovered Duchamp's alchemical opus *Etant Donn e*, his "underground landscape of Eros"<sup>4</sup>.

Mladen Dolar (a Lacanian if there was one, and so interesting!), in his book *The Voice and Nothing More*, makes an important point when he says the voice is always a dream (he actually says "always a dream-voice".) Brilliant lacanian statement - like Giorgio Agamben's more Derridean: "listening to the voice in speech is what thinking is all

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<sup>3</sup> ...which is not unlike the saying that Freud 'invented' the unconscious.

<sup>4</sup> This echoes Kerslake's book on Deleuze: the main figure in *Etant Donn e* is literally an alchemical hermaphrodite!

about". I include these two statements (from my collection of voice definitions!) because this summer's Myth and Theatre Festival is dedicated to *DREAM(s)*, a launching pad for the 2015 "Philosophy and the Voice".

For some years I have been performing a "Study on Hitler". Last summer I invited a photographer to be part of the performance and take photos of Hitler in the underworld. I wanted to use these in a series of paintings. The first is titled *Charnier* (charnel-house). The second moves away from such bleakness (I had to return to sensuality) and is titled: *The Ukrainian Treasures*, after the Nazi plundering of Ukraine. The figure in both paintings is me from the photos taken by Richard Bruston.

## Enrique Pardo

Theatre director, actor, writer, painter – founder and codirector with Linda Wise of Pantheatre, based in France. Director of the *Myth and Theatre Festival*, founded with the late James Hillman. [www.pantheatre.com](http://www.pantheatre.com)