

Wetterling Gallery

Shana Lutker

Paul, the Peacock, the Raven and the Dove

Wetterling Gallery, Stockholm

October 9-31, 2015

Open letter to Paul Claudel, Ambassador of FRANCE to JAPAN

"As for the current movements, not one can not lead to a genuine renewal or creation. Neither Dadaism nor Surrealism—they have only one meaning: pederasty.

More than one is surprised not that I am a good Catholic, but also writer, diplomat, ambassador of France and poet. But I do not find in all this anything strange. During the war, I went to South America to buy food, canned meat, lard for the armies, and I made my country two hundred million."

—"Il Secolo" Interview with Paul Claudel, *Comoedia*, June 17, 1925.

Dear M. Claudel,

Our activity is only pederastic as it introduces confusion in the minds of those who do not take part in it.

Creation matters little to us. We profoundly hope that revolutions, wars, and colonial insurrections will annihilate this Western civilization whose vermin you defend even in the Orient.

There can be to us neither balance nor great art. Here, already, for a long time: the idea of Beauty has been stale. It remains standing only as a moral idea, for example, the fact that one can be both poet and Ambassador to France.

We assert that we find treason and all that can harm the security of the State one way or another much more reconcilable with Poetry than your sale of "great quantities of lard" on behalf of a nation of pigs and dogs.

It is a singular lack of awareness of the possibilities and faculties of the mind that periodically seek their salvation with scoundrels of your species in the Catholic and Greco-Roman tradition. Salvation for us is nowhere. We, like Rimbaud as a man who despaired his salvation and whose work and life, are pure testimonies of perdition.

Catholicism, Greco-Roman classicism, we give you your infamous religious trinkets. They benefit you anyway; fatten in the admiration and respect for your fellow citizens. Write, pray and slobber on; we demand the dishonor of having treated you once and for all as a prig and a swine.

Signed; Maxime Alexandre, Louis Aragon, Antonin Artaud, JA Boiffard, Joe Bousquet, André Breton, Jean Carrive, Rene Crevel, Robert Desnos, Paul Eluard, Max Ernst, T. Fraenkel, Francis Gerard, Eric Haulleville of Michel Leiris Georges Limbour Mathias Lubeck, Georges Malkine, André Masson, Max Morise, Marcel Noll, Benjamin Peret, Georges Ribemont Dessaignes, Philippe Soupault, Dede Sunbeam, Roland Tual, Jacques Viot, Roger Vitrac.

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The Surrealist fistfight that inspired many of the works in this exhibition transpired ninety years ago on July 2, 1925 at a banquet in celebration of the elder Symbolist poet, Saint-Pol-Roux, at the Closerie des Lilas, located at 171 Boulevard du Montparnasse, Paris.

The Surrealists arrived early to the dinner, before the other guests, and distributed copies of their "Open Letter to Mr. Paul Claudel, Ambassador to Japan" under each place setting. Printed on what was described as a garish purple-red paper, the letter was a response to Claudel, the conservative poet-turned diplomat who had recently insulted the Surrealists in the newspaper *Comoedia*. The banquet guests soon arrived, and things got heated. As Surrealist poet Philippe Soupault remarked, "there are as many versions of this banquet as witnesses." In short, it dissolved into chaos by the time the hake with white sauce was served; glasses shattered, napkins thrown, hair pulled, and arrests made.

Shana Lutker's works are shaped by research rooted in histories of psychoanalysis and Surrealism. Working in a variety of materials, her work is imbued with the dream-like distortion that shapes "History." Objects hover in between functional and dysfunctional states.

For the past years, Lutker has been compiling the history of the fistfights of the Surrealists, visiting the sites across Paris where these took place and delving into archives. These altercations highlight the conviction, absurdity, passion and calculation of this early-20th-century group, and raise questions about the way that passion and art combine today.

This exhibition at Wetterling Gallery is Lutker's third solo exhibition at the gallery and marks the fourth chapter in Lutker's eight-part body of work titled *Le "NEW" Monocle: The History of the Fistfights of the Surrealists*. The first three chapters will be shown together in Lutker's solo exhibition opening on 29 October at the Hirshhorn Museum of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. Related work to this series was included this summer in a group show at Hauser & Wirth, New York, and solo exhibitions at Barbara Seiler Galerie in Zürich and Susanne Vielmetter Projects Los Angeles. Recent exhibitions include a solo project at the Pérez Art Museum Miami, the Whitney Biennial 2014, and Performa 13, New York.