

SURREALISM, SYMBOLISM AND THE
FILMS OF LARRY JORDAN

By Thomas Faville

Surrealism, Symbolism and the Films of Larry Jordan

As inspiration is an eclectic and organic process, any examination of an artist's direct influences is bound to be somewhat unfair to the artist. Larry Jordan's animated films present no exception to this problem, as they encompass the visual collage style of Max Ernst, the poetic imagery of Lautreamont, Rimbaud, Mallarme, Apollinaire and Poe, the theoretical concerns and filmmaking practices of Cocteau, Dreyer, Bresson, Wallace Berman, Stan Brakhage and Kenneth Anger, the sensitive technique of Joseph Cornell, the Symbolist regard for the unconscious, the Surrealist belief in chance, and, most importantly, the individual vision of the artist. 1. In deference to Jordan, the paper that follows is more general supposition than documented treatise. In this spirit, perhaps, past relevance and present connection will be revealed at least in flavor if not in fact.

I. "Max Ernst died the 1st of August 1914. He resusciated the 11th of November 1918 as a young man aspiring to become a magician and to find the myth of his time." 2.

When Jordan first came to San Francisco in the early 1950's, poet Robert Duncan and painter Jesse Collins introduced him to the work of Max Ernst. Ernst's collage novels La Femme 100 tetes (1929), Reve d'une Petite Fille qui Voulut Entrer au Carmel (1931) and Une Semaine de Bonte (1934) provided a definite influence on Jordan's collage films and striking similarities exist between the two artists' work. Andre Breton describes the remarkable effect the first viewing of Ernst's work had on him in the preface for Ernst's exhibition in Paris, May 1921:

"I remember the emotion, of a quality which has never been repudiated, which overcame Tzara, Aragon, Soupault, and myself when we discoveres them at Picabia's house, where we were gathered the very moment they arrived from Cologne. The external object had broken away from its usual ground, and its components had in a sense been liberated from the object itself, so as to maintain completely new relationships with other elements, escaping form the principle of reality but being of no consequence on the level of reality (overturning of the notion of relationship)." 3.

Tristan Tzara's description of Ernst's collage holds equally true for Jordan's film work:

"By isolating the human event, he reduces it to a low position in the hierarchy of the ridiculous, while at the same time he raises it so far as to imbue it with the value of a permanent symbol. To give body to the conciliation of these opposites, Max Ernst sacrifices the generally admitted base of pictorial art and, broadening the scope of the problem, makes use of impersonal materials, taken by surprise, ready-made or anonymous, worn by wind and rain, which fit like gloves every new circumstance to be expressed and lend themselves to it out of the pure delight of a random object encountered by a man out for a walk." 4.

Ernst and Jordan both make use of cut-up and reordered Victorian steel engravings to manipulate reality. Ernst describes his first

consideration of the collage process as a brush with the absurd:

"One day in 1919 ... I was struck by the obsession exerted on my excited gaze by the pages of an illustrated catalogue which contained pictures used in anthropological, microscopic, psychological, mineralogical and paleontological demonstrations ... the very absurdity of this collection caused a sudden intensification of my visual faculties, and gave rise to a hallucinating series of conflicting images." 5.

Conflict of images and reformation of found images into new relationships forms the basis for both Jordan's and Ernst's collage work:

"A ready-made reality, whose naive destination has the air of having been fixed, once and for all (a canoe), finding itself in the presence of another and hardly less absurd reality (a vacuum cleaner), in a place where both of them must feel displaced (a forest), will, by this very fact, escape to its naive destination and to its identity; it will pass from its false absolute, through a series of relative values, into a new absolute value, true and poetic: canoe and vacuum cleaner will make love." 6.

These new relationships arise, in part, through the surrender to the unconscious dream state of automatism called for by Breton in the Surrealist Manifesto of 1924:

"Surrealism n. Pure psychic automatism, by which an attempt is made to express, either verbally or in writing, or in any other manner, the true functioning of thought. Dictation by thought, totally outside the control of reason, beyond all esthetic or ethical considerations. ... Surrealism rests on the belief in the higher reality of certain neglected forms of association, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to destroy the other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in the solution of life's principle problems." 7.

Ernst acknowledges that the most noble conquest of collage is "the irrational. The magisterial eruption of the irrational in all domains of art, of poetry, of science, in the private life of individuals, in the public life of peoples. He who speaks of collage speaks of the irrational." 8.

Jordan and Ernst depart dramatically from surrealist theory, however, concerning the need for a rational balance to unconscious automatism:

"Max Ernst sets his own dialectic of semi-automatic technique and rational control -- inspiration and intellect -- against the pure psychic automatism demanded by Breton. For Max Ernst the picture is a 'found object' from the unconscious, from which he distances himself in the course of the creative process. He deliberately pours scorn on the fairytale of the creativity of the artist. He is a controller, not a creator." 9.

Jordan expressed his sense of balance and control in a description of his working method, which he compares to backpacking: first he gets everything selected, cut-out and ready, then, when working, things happen on their own. 10. Jordan's respect for the past also indicates a concern for balance:

"To avoid chaos is very difficult, but I would feel very trapped if I thought that this time and this place was it. ... The times that come up for me from the past are very important, I mean, I'd feel awful if I didn't have the Egyptians and the Greeks and the Medieval period." 11.

This combination of exterior control and unconscious surrender releases an energy in Ernst's and Jordan's work that is both magical and alchemical. When asked "What is collage?" Ernst replies:

"The simple hallucination, after Rimbaud; the placing under whiskey-marine, after Max Ernst. It is something like the alchemy of the visual image. The miracle of the total transfiguration of beings and objects with or without modification of their physical or anatomical aspect." 12.

Matta comments on Ernst's "magic" as though it were a sign of evolved being:

"The power to create hallucinations is the power to exalt existence... The artist is the man who has survived the labyrinth. It is hard to imagine man ever finding happiness without employing his hallucinatory powers." 13.

Although Jordan and Ernst share a common ground for their art in collage, and a common method of production in the synthesis of rational control and surrender to irrationality, they differ tremendously in the sensitivities of their work. Jordan exhibits little of Ernst's perversity morbidity and Freudian preoccupation with aberrant sexuality. His concerns revolve around magic, spiritual journey and mystical discovery, rather than dwelling on the harsh juxtapositions of horror and reality that interest Ernst.

Jordan's sensitivity seems to be both innate and developed, in part through his contact with Tarthang Tulku, founding lama of the Nyingma Center for Tibetan studies, Berkeley, California, with whom he co-produced The Sacred Art of Tibet in 1972, and also in part through his relationship with Joseph Cornell, developed over a ten year period of correspondence. Jordan assisted the enigmatic Cornell in 1965, producing the only film footage of the artist in existence. Cornell, who sometimes described himself as a surrealist and acknowledged that he has been inspired by Ernst's La Femme 100 tetes, (14.) developed the graceful other-worldliness and jewel-like precision, that would later mark the films of Jordan, in the delicately altered universe of his boxes.

The major influence on Jordan's sensitivity came from the Symbolist poets, whose extraordinarily sensual imagery and mystical experiments in the realm of the unconscious were also a great inspiration to the Surrealist movement.

II. "Poetic old-worldliness played a large part in my verbal alchemy.

I accustomed myself to simple hallucination: I saw quite deliberately a mosque in place of a factory, a drummers' school conducted by angels, carriages on the highways of the sky, a salon at the bottom of a lake; monsters, mysteries, a vaudeville poster raising horrors before my eyes.

Then I expressed my magic sophisms with the hallucinations of words." 15.

It is the fusion of poetic intention and visual alchemy that animates Larry Jordan's world. Jordan's film work, like Stephane Mallarme's poetry "...is the outcome of his ardent desire to awaken, ...that other world which has its dwelling within us and whose existence is acknowledged by all modern psychologists whether they call it the ancestral world, or the world of dreams or presentiments, or the world of prayer, world of art or of the unconscious." 16.

Jordan himself said that his work combines "the ancient world, the underworld, surrealism and the natural." 17.

One of the writers most responsible for emancipating poetry from the confines of conscious regularity was the Count of Lautreamont (Isidore Ducasse), who remained in obscurity until his rediscovery by the Surrealists in the 1920's. Lautreamont's Les Chants de Maldoror is an extremely black and nightmarish vision which employs violence, shocking amorality and disjunctive dream imagery to trace the life of anti-hero, Maldoror. The fact that Jordan's work has none of the dark violence of Les Chants de Maldoror does not lessen the impact that Lautreamont had on Jordan as an artist, however. As was shown by the radically different moralistic preaching of Lautreamont's other work, "Poesies Un" and "Poesies Deux", Lautreamont himself did not identify with Maldoror, but was concerned with a much larger issue:

"Lautreamont's poetry clearly has as its basic dynamic an upward striving towards liberation from the confines of human culture... Moreover, the poet has painted both sides of the picture." 18.

Lautreamont's objective was realized and employed by Jordan and the Surrealists:

"The violence of Maldoror is committed to a kind of ironic pedagogy. The poem's satanic vision, we are told mockingly, is indeed therapeutic. It is meant to cure the reader of what Mathurin (one of Lautreamont's favorite writers) called 'the curse of sanity.'" 19.

The Surrealists adopted Arthur Rimbaud as an honorary member for what they saw as his great investigation of the surreal and infinite. Rimbaud, like Lautreamont, was in search of something beyond the ordinary world of reality:

"Rimbaud's is the drama of modern man, as critics have often pointed out, by reason of its particular frenzy and precipitation, but it is also the human drama of all time, the drama of the quest for what has been lost, the unsatisfied temporal existence burning for total satisfaction, for total certitude." 20.

Rimbaud shared the belief expressed by Jordan "that poetry is the natural state of the mind and rational thought is the perversion." 2 He stated his poetic ambition in the "Lettre du Voyant", May 15, 1871, as a quest to discover the unknown self. In his poem "Dawn", the object of his quest is personified as a goddess:

"At its silver top I recognized the goddess.

Then I took off her veils one by one. In the path, where I waved my arms. In the field, where I gave away her name to the cock. In the city, she fled between steeples and domes; and running like a thief along the marble warves, I chased her." 22.

In "To a Reason", Rimbaud's poem on the need for spiritual transformation, the "reason", or the soul, is again personified as a goddess:

"A tap with your finger on the drum releases all sounds and brings new harmony.

One step of yours, and the new men rise up and march.

Your head turns aside: new love! Your head turns back: new love!

The children sing to you: 'Change our fate, overcome the plague and begin with time.' They beg you, 'Raise where

you wish the substance of our fortune and our prayers.'

You will go everywhere, since you have come from all time." 23.

This theme of spiritual quest and transformation of the soul is central to many of the films of Jordan, particularly Duo Concertantes, Our Lady of the Sphere, Orb, Moonlight Sonata, and Carabosse.

Rimbaud's "Being Beauteous", in which a being of great beauty (the poet) dies but is reborn into an essential state that accepts transformation as a necessary part of inhabiting the poetic space between earth and heaven suggests Jordan's Orb, in which the eternity of the cosmic is positioned behind the earthly journey of two lovers. Although the lovers' journey ends in death, the mid-point of the film is an image of caterpillars climbing down a tree (the tree of life) which acts both as a play on the fall of man and as a comment on the metamorphic nature of the soul (see pictorial addendum).

Metamorphosis is the central concern of Rimbaud's "Bottom":

"Reality being too prickly for my lofty character, I became at my lady's a big blue-grey bird flying up near the mouldings of the ceiling and dragging my wings after me in the shadows of the evening." 24.

"Ruts" evokes a world of fairys and circuses, images that occur in Jordan's Our Lady of the Sphere and Masquerade:

"Fairy procession. Yes, wagons loaded with animals of gilded wood, poles and gaily-striped cloth, to the gallop of twenty spotted circus horses, and children and men on their most amazing beasts." 25.

Guillaume Apollinaire's "Twilight" is extremely suggestive of Jordan's Masquerade, in which Harlequin, who has recieved a deadly wound in a duel, dies despite Columbine's intercession:

"Ghosts brush by her
Day droops in the grass
Columbine disrobes and
Admires her reflection in the pool

A charlatan of twilight
Praises the feats to be performed
Stars color of milk
Spangle pale heaven

Wan harlequin mounts the boards
Bows to his audience
Wizards from Bohemia
Fairies and sorcerers

Then he unhooks a star
Then twirls it in his palm
While a hanged man with his toes
Clashes cymbals

The blind man rocks a fine baby
A doe goes by with her fawns
The dwarf stares sadly
As harlequin grows
And grows

And grows" 26.

We'll fathom you tomorrow
 And who knows what living beings
 Will be drawn from those abysses
 Along with entire universes" 29.

The poet as prophet is presented by Apollinaire as a natural outcome of his exploration of the irrational forms of knowledge:

"Everybody is a prophet my dear Andre Billy
 But for so long people have been made to believe
 They have no future and are ignorant forever and born
 idiots

There's nothing religious in any of these matters
 In the superstitions or in the prophecies
 Or in anything that people call the occult
 There is above all a way of observing nature
 And of interpreting nature
 Which is completely legitimate" 30.

The mysterious female muse appears in the imagery of the symbolists, in Jordan's work, particularly Our Lady of the Sphere, and in Apollinaire's "The Hills":

"And the third number is the lady
 Going up in the elevator
 She keeps on going going up
 And the light keeps spreading out
 And those clarities transform her" 31.

Jean Cocteau also presents the feminine as muse, particularly in Orphee. In Orphee, however, the female spirit is as much a destructive energy as it is the sought after object of inspiration, for while Orpheus does enter the underworld after Eurydice, it is the group of moon-worshipping Bacchantes to which Eurydice once belonged who destroy Orpheus at the end of the play. Death, portrayed as a beautiful woman who divides Orpheus' attentions from Eurydice, also signifies the destructive potential, rather than the inspirational aspect, of femininity.

Although Jordan and Cocteau disagree on the character of the muse as embodiment of unconscious energy, they seem to agree in theory on the nature of the energy which binds the universe, connecting both the conscious and unconscious planes. For Cocteau:

"The two foci around which everything else revolves are his intuition that reality is illusory and unstable and his frequently stated belief that all processes follow a pre-determined, ineluctable course." 32.

While Jordan acknowledges the existence of chaos and the desire to surrender to the flow of unconscious energy, it appears that he does so out of the belief that a sustaining pattern will emerge as a result. Jordan has stated his belief that coincidences aren't necessarily coincidences:

"Edgar Allen Poe illucidated that when he said 'The word is not coincidence, it's coincidence.' Certain things coincide." 33.

This, however, is more a realization of the underlying nature of reality than it is an affirmation of religious conviction, as is shown by Cocteau's emphasis on the mechanical aspect of existence:

"From Death's mechanized ritual in 'Orphee' to the telephone in 'La Voix humaine' and oedipus' intricate destruction in 'La Machine infernale', machines and mechanical devices

form one of the constants in Cocteau's art... The processes as well as the structure of his universe operates mechanistically there is no chance, no accident. At the same time, interestingly enough, there is no teleology: the course of events does not tend ultimately toward anything specific." 34.

This view of unavoidable descent into nothingness gives form to Cocteau's art:

"Within the context of his world view, art appears to have had a double role. First, as spectacle (regardless of genre) or entertainment, it provided a release from solitude and nihilism... On a second level, however, it became a means of forming or directing reality itself: the artist resembled a child guarded by a star, a child who could manipulate the real with his games." 35.

Jordan has also assumed this role of manipulator/magician in his art, portrayed as the hand which sets to motion the world created through art. The second part of Jordan's artistic persona is the artist as child, either falling through the chaos of unconsciousness (Our Lady of the Sphere, Moonlight Sonata), or passively watching and incorporating the passage of life's mysteries (Orb, Carabosse). The symbol of the hand as the creative force runs through the history of art, from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel to the present day. Max Ernst presents the hand as introducing a radiating object into an otherwise ordinary landscape (see pictorial addendum). Apollinaire refers to the action of the hand in magical, dreamlike imagery:

"The dance whirls in the depths of time
I've killed the handsome bandleader
And now I peel for my friends
The orange whose flavor is
A marvelous fireworks display" 36.

For Jordan, the hand is an all powerful intrusion, beginning or modifying the course of events (Duo Concertantes, Our Lady of the Sphere, Carabosse). It is Cocteau, however, who articulates the symbol of the hand most clearly, in Blood of a Poet (see pictorial addendum). In the first episode, "The Wounded Hand or the Scars of the Poet", an artist is at his easel when he realizes that the figure he has drawn has a real mouth. He tries to wipe the mouth off the drawing but is distracted by a visitor, who recoils in horror when the artist goes to shake his hand. The poet washes his hand and then notices that the mouth has come off the drawing and is adhered to his hand, half-drowned and gasping for breath. The poet tries unsuccessfully to shake the mouth off his hand, and then resignedly resuscitates it, after which the artist and the mouth make love and fall asleep. When the artist wakes up, he slaps his hand over the blank mouth of a statue, which then comes to life and says: "Do you believe it's so simple to get rid of a wound?" 37. After a series of trying events, the artist smashes the statue, but in doing so, is engulfed in a cloud of plaster and becomes frozen. A voice says "By breaking statues one runs the risk of becoming one himself." 38.

According to Charles Glenn Wallis, "Le Sang d'un Poete is a myth of the life of the poet..." The first episode, "'The Wounded Hand or the Scars of the Poet'", tells the progress from Naive Poetry to archaeology. ...The crayon sketch, ostensibly a lifeless copy of something real, contains a living mouth, i.e. poetry may, in some mysterious fashion, transcend its own limitations as an outward symbol and present a reality equal to that of which it is a copy... When the painter tries to wash his hands, i.e. to remove the outward marks of his vocation, he recognizes his real stigma. His discovery of the mouth

in his hand is his recognition that, while the magical effect may reside in the poem, the magical power is in the poet himself. ...His transfer of the mouth to the pre-existent statue, I take to be a symbol of a compromise which he tries to effect, viz. he no longer tries to deny universally that poetry has daemonic and magical properties, but seeks to impute them to the art of the past. ...In attempting to persuade himself universally that the daemonic magical power of poetry is non-existent and to deny the seat of this power in himself, he finds that he has transformed himself into something as lifeless and immobile as a conventional statue in a public square." 39.

Jordan's cognizance of the powers of poetry accounts for his respectful approach to the process of creativity.

III. "O Dreamer, that I may dive
in pure pathless delight, understand
how subtly to connive
to keep my wing in your hand." 40.

As Larry Jordan has produced ~~30~~⁵⁶ experimental and animation films and three feature-length dramatic films since he began to work as a filmmaker in 1952, it would be impossible to give an accurate or complete overview of his work in the space of this paper. Closer examination of a small section of his films, however, should demonstrate many of the influences discussed in the text above.

Jordan's Duo Concertantes is said by the author to be concerned with "resurrection, rebirth, flight into higher spheres..." 41. The film begins with a young man walking by buildings of what is presumably the Centennial Exposition (the title of the first part of the film) and looking at a book with a picture of a bird in a cage: the bird in the cage can be seen as the soul trapped in the body; the young man is an aspect of the artist, quiet witness to the unfolding of life's mystery presented in the film (similar to the child in Carabosse). A hand introduces a bird through a leaf-covered doorway, suggesting the release of the soul from the body and alluding to the divine nature of the artist-as-creator, represented by the hand that begins and modifies the action in Jordan's films (see pictorial addendum).

A ball bounces down a massive pile of empty chairs in a symbolic representation of the decline and death of the circular life principle. A man dressed in a mourning coat, the personification of the divine course of selection, stands in the ocean and bounces the ball in a dish, figuratively deciding the life's fate between death and the unconscious ocean and new life and the conscious world of air and sunlight. In a scene that brings to mind Jean Cocteau's theory of the mechanical nature of life, a bandaged man, apparently the one who has died, places stoppered bottles into a strange machine, which then sends them flying off in sequence into the atmosphere. As the bandaged man watches, a coffin yields up a balloon which is intercepted by the bird introduced in the beginning, and carried away into a cosmic world of exploding stars, twirling constellations and zodiacal happenings: the soul, hereby united with the departing life (the balloon -- literally breath in a circle) has entered the cosmic process of resurrection and rebirth. Two anatomical figures, made entirely of muscle, armwrestle in heaven, the alchemical bottles swirl in space and then a hand releases a lighted bulb. An ornament with the wings of a butterfly, representing the fusion of the bird/soul and ball/life principle, floats up and flies to the moon.

The man in the mourning coat, again the divine course of events personified, directs a camera at the moon (suggesting the artist as divine creator) and takes in energy which then comes out from the lens of the camera as butterflies (see pictorial addendum). A ball drops past a group of bird-people, a light-hearted contrast to Ernst's sinister metamorphic bird-people (see pictorial addendum). The ball falls into an egg in a forest. Butterflies come out; a hand with a wand taps the egg and a bird comes out and flies away -- a new life has been created.

Jordan's Our Lady of the Sphere (1969) is a paean to the feminine principle and to the muse of the unconscious. The film begins with a hand dropping an egg, symbol of fertility, life and rebirth. A child -- the artist in the role of the initiate -- stares in wonder into a cave (opening to the underworld of the unconscious). This image of contemplation gives way to terror as the child falls into the cave. The egg of rebirth floats up and enters the moon, cosmic center of reflected unconscious energy, and closed trunks issue out of moon craters and fall with the terrified child (see pictorial addendum). Atlas is seen riding one of the trunks with the world on his back, symbolizing the titanic effort required to unlock the trunks and discover the age-old wisdom hidden therein.

The boy falls to the ground and transforms into a silent member of a divine circus, in which acrobats twirl, an interlocked astral couple tumble through space and god appears as a tightrope walker effusing light (see pictorial addendum -- circus and tightrope walker). Dante is seen in paradise, having met Beatrice, muse in his spiritual search. The Lady of the Sphere appears, travels by wrecked ships, a lighthouse by a stormy sea and other turbulent images of journey through unconsciousness (see pictorial addendum). The Lady summons up figures in deep-sea diving suits (see pictorial addendum) to bring the child up to a paradisaical land, an act that symbolizes the initiate's spiritual rebirth.

The second part of Our Lady of the Sphere, "Patricia Gives Birth to a Dream by the Doorway", is a complex vision of the creative interplay between artist and muse.

Moonlight Sonata (1979) is a delicate and beautiful film in which the artist presents the influence of the moon and surrender to the void in a series of images animated to Eric Satie's *Grossienne V*. The film begins with a child in fetal position falling through space past the huge, gleaming moon. A man rides a spinning ball of energy back and forth across a bridge over the canals of Venice while spinning a hoop -- the man represents the masculine component of the life energy, animated by the energy of the life-force (the spinning ball), resting on the depths of the feminine unconscious (as a bridge rests on water), and spinning the hoop of unified opposites around his waist (the symbol of the Uroboros, worm that eats its own tail and contains the masculine and feminine in harmony) -- (see pictorial addendum).

A dancing ballerina who has one leg raised above her head in an almost impossible extension fades in as a symbol of rapture and ecstasy. The artist is seen by the shores of the ocean; a wrecked ship in the background attests to the danger involved in consigning oneself to the uncharted course of surrender to the unconscious. A head, abode of conscious intellect, yields a decorated ornament, which flies up through the air.

A woman is pictured riding a ball of energy along a pointer held by the male attendant of two horses: animated by the spinning life-force, the woman represents the female component of the life energy, and rides upon the male's pointer, symbol of intellect and phallic power. The boy enters the frame and falls head over heels into the placid lake of unconscious surrender (see pictorial addendum).

Carabosse (1980) is an alchemical examination of the interplay between artist and audience in the magical act of creation. This interplay is not altogether rewarding as is suggested by the title of the film: Carabosse was an evil fairy who gave unfortunate presents. This theme of unfortunate interplay is suggested by a prelude to the actual body of the film in which the artist's hand as motivating force enters and changes a spinning engine fan into a spinning pomegranite, symbol of fertility. The hand then pours a drop of liquid onto the pomegranite, turning it into a skull. By dropping an egg, again fertility symbol, onto the skull, the affects of the drop of liquid are neutralized and the skull turns back into a spinning fan.

During the beginning procedure, a child has been standing to one side on a pair of stilts, perched on top of a strange machine. The machine turns into a house, perhaps representative of the foundations of the society to which the child, aspect of the artist as participant in his own work, belongs. After various alchemical image combinations, a chemical crucible flips up to the boy's head and flames (thoughts) and a balloon (artistic creation) comes out. Another boy with a telescope appears on the ground next to the house and points his telescope at the crucible on the other boy's head, resulting in sparks and the creation of an egg and a balloon.

Together the boy with the telescope, who represents the audience and the boy with the crucible, who is the artist, create a pedestal with a dancing ballerina on it (manifestation of the interplay between audience and artist -- a perceived work of art). The crucible flips off the head of the boy on stilts and the boy with the telescope sends drops of liquid to the ballerina which make her dance faster and faster until she turns into a moon which dissolves into a pitcher that drops a liquid onto the house causing flames to leap up: metaphorically, the work of art collapses under the weight of the audience's demands and turns into a destructive rather than an inspirational force. A ball appears where the ballerina was, rolls off the pedestal and turns into a flower beside the house. A bust replaces the ball, symbol of both classical art which has been accepted by the masses, and art which has become ossified in its attempt to be accepted by the masses. The flower sends up an egg, but the boy with the telescope destroys it with another drop of liquid, at which point the flower folds up and dies, and the house collapses, sending the boy on stilts and the bust falling.

A hand appears in space from which issues a balloon, an egg, a pomegranite and stars; the boy on stilts looks on and the moon looms in the background. An elephant rises up and supports the boy, providing a new base which is both solid and natural in contrast to the artificial structure of the home. A cage with a girl mounted above appears next to the elephant. A flame under the girl produces a series of feminine symbols: a chalice, a venus-like torso, a ball, a star, a doughnut and then the moon which slowly takes off and travels through the heavens, and passes through a pavilion causing a woman's head, which was visible only from the back, to face forward (symbolizing the muse as intermediary between the artist and the unconscious world ruled by the moon). The

Woman is replaced by a pelican, a clock and then a mandolin. The moon then goes through space, passing objects that represent different interests and concerns of the artist: binoculars (vision), a watch (time), a gramophone (music), a balloon (life/spirit), and a horn (horn of Gabriel/end of time). A larger pavilion appears with the woman in it. The woman disappears as the Lady of the Spheres passes by. The moon floats around and passes through the pavilion.

In the second half of Carabosse, after the audience's unreasonable demands have caused the failure of the art work/ballerina, Jordan affirms those things which inspire him to continue making films: prophetic vision, an awareness of the unfortunate restraints of time, a belief in art as the ideal, a desire for spiritual evolution and the knowledge that beyond the absurd world of materialism, there lies the infinite universe of the divine.

NOTES

- 1 Larry Jordan, as interviewed by Thomas Faville, March.23, 1983.
- 2 Max Ernst, "Some Data on the Youth of M.E.," in Max Ernst: Beyond Painting, Director, Robert Motherwell (Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc. 1948), p. 28.
- 3 Andre Breton, in Max Ernst, by Gaston Diehl (Crown Publishers, Inc. - New York,1973), p. 35.
- 4 Tristan Tzara, "Max Ernst and his Reversible Images (1934)," in Max Ernst: Beyond Paintingp. 187.
- 5 Max Ernst, "Beyond Painting," in Max Ernst: Beyond Painting, p. 14.
- 6 Ibid., p. 13.
- 7 Andre Breton, First Surrealist Manifesto.
- 8 Max Ernst, "Beyond Painting," in Max Ernst: Beyond Painting, p. 17.
- 9 Uwe M. Schneede, Max Ernst (Praeger Publishers, New York, 1973), p. 56.
- 10 Larry Jordan interview, March 23, 1983.
- 11 Larry Jordan, "Larry Jordan at Canyon Cinematheque, March 18, 1976" Canyon Cinemanews, #3, 1976, p. 7.
- 12 Max Ernst, "Beyond Painting," in Max Ernst: Beyond Painting, p. 12.
- 13 Matta, "Hellucinations (1948)," Ibid., p. 194.
- 14 Dore Ashton, A Joseph Cornell Album, p. 6.
- 15 Arthur Rimbaud, A Season in Hell, quoted in Max Ernst: Beyond Painting, p. 12.
- 16 Arthur Ellis, Stephane Mallarme, p. 23.
- 17 Larry Jordan interview, March 23, 1983.
- 18 Alex De Jonge, Nightmare Culture (St.Martin's Press - New York), p. 96.
- 19 Paul Zweig, Lautreamont The Violent Narcissus (Kennikat Press, Port Washington, New York, 1972), p. 15.

- 20 Wallace Fowlie, Rimbaud's Illuminations (Greenwood Press, Pub., New York, 1953), p. 26.
- 21 Larry Jordan, Canyon Cinemanews, #3, 1976, p. 9.
- 22 Arthur Rimbaud, "Dawn," in Rimbaud's Illuminations, by Wallace Fowlie, p. 161.
- 23 Rimbaud, "To A Reason," in Rimbaud's Illuminations, Fowlie, p. 209
- 24 Rimbaud, "Bottom," Ibid., p. 179.
- 25 Rimbaud, "Ruts," Ibid. p. 197.
- 26 Guillaume Apollinaire, Alcools (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1965), p. 47.
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- 30 Apollinaire, "On Prophecies," in Calligrammes, p. 69.
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- 33 Larry Jordan, Canyon Cinemanews, #3, 1976, p. 10.
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- 39 Charles Glenn Wallis, in Art In Cinema, Frank Stauffacher, ed. (Arno Press, New York, 1968), pp. 79-84.
- 40 Stephane Mallarme, "Autre Evential," in Selected Poems, by Stephane Mallarme (University of California Press, 1957), p.69.

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Orb



Masquerade



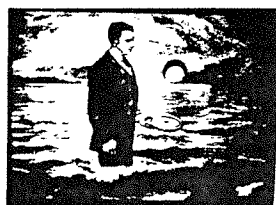
Ernst's hand



Cocteau's hand



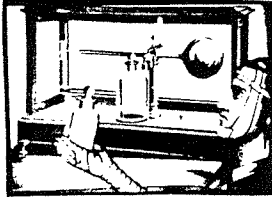
Jordan's hand



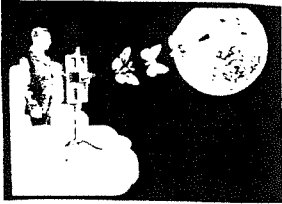
Divine selectivity



Ernst's similar view



Machinery of life



Artist as divine creator



Jordan



Ernst



Child falling



Cosmic circus



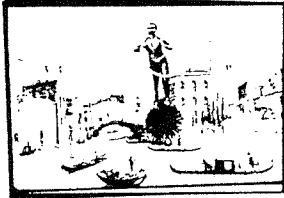
God on a tightrope



Our Lady



Ernst's vision



Jordan



Ernst



Jordan



Ernst



Jordan's surrender



Ernst's surrender