

1. Despite its hazards (because of our physical impediments) - our long-awaited trip to France and England, finally began on April 5th, 1980. The rheumatoid arthritis in my right knee severely handicapped me all through the over 3 months' duration of the journey. While Elizabeth (my wife) was hampered by a former fall - resulting in a shattered left knee cap - which could not be replaced.. At the outset, we were a party of five: Elizabeth and myself; Maxine and Joe Cassin (2 very old friends); and Charles de la Gheronniere - a young Frenchman from New Orleans (with relatives in France) who helped us greatly with the luggage, and language, problems of the ~~trip~~ (for this was truly a pilgrimage - to seek ~~the~~ the things we could not find in this country.. The trip involved a train journey to Washington; taking a British plane ~~to~~ thence to the Heathrow Air Port outside London; and finally, a French plane from London to Paris.. (Charles had had the forethought to get a letter of introduction for me from the French Consulate in New Orleans. So when some problems developed with baggage I wanted to take on the plane personally - the letter was shown to one of the plane's personnel. Not only was I allowed to take on board the desired luggage - but soon we were all politely moved from our tourist class seats - to 1st class (at no extra charge). This kind of courtesy would never have been extended on any British or American plane - (the French treat people involved in the arts, with true, and intelligent, consideration.. ) Even though our long journey was never entirely free from physical pain - we now consider it one of the highlights of our lives - depositing warm and precious memories we shall treasure always..
2. At long length, then, on April 14, 1980, a circulating show of 50 of my photos, entitled "THE THIRD WORLD OF PHOTOGRAPHY: The World Beyond Documentation and Purism" - had a private opening in the American Cultural Center in Paris. This is probably the most important show I have yet designed - because it attempts to prove that there is a 3rd basic way to use the camera - a way that I term "The Transcendence of the Object" - a way that is not directly dependent on "abstraction" (which is only an intellectual game) - whereas, this is not. In this way is intricately involved with intuitive and subliminal perceptions, that go deeply into the subconscious mind - into the primal roots of humanity, into the world that forms the very matrix for all artistic creation. This way (or method) has two fundamental tributaries (sources) : that which we call anthropomorphic vision ; and the other, now denoted as Surrealism. In my own work, the first tributary is represented by such groups as I have named, "Magic of the Object", "Tree Forms", etc. - while the other pertains to the group now titled "Poems of the Inner World".
3. The showing of this exhibition was made possible only by the crucial help of Mme. Helene Baltrusaitis - the French Cultural Consultant to the International Communication Agency, and the American Embassy in Paris; and the daughter of Henri Poulillon, the internationally known French writer on aesthetics - and the wife of Jureis Baltrusaitis - son of a Latvian Symbolist poet - himself one of the most highly original ~~writers~~ in our time - on problems of aesthetics.. The efforts of Mme. Baltrusaitis (whom I had first met in 1965, when I made my initial trip to France) were ably, and generously, backed up by other friends in Paris : Mr. John L. Hedges, Director of the ICA; Ms. Frances Switt, in charge of the Cultural Center, Mme. Christianne Botrel, Georges Gutman and Michel Dambrine - French friends since 1966. (Michel Dambrine (under the pen-name of Alain Marie) has contributed an article on my work to the Catalogue for the show..
4. The opening of my show was attended by at least 200 people. Among them were Brassaï (with whom I had traded 8 or 10 prints in 1966); and the wife of Man Ray (who will be coming to the West Coast later this year - and who intends to stop in New Orleans on the way). She was one of her husband's best models - he did some marvelous pictures of her (and I have long considered him as the father of all American experimental photography). The show got good reviews in a number of Paris ~~papers~~ and magazines (including Figaro - the April 23rd issue..)



issue). The Paris "Free Voice" had this to say: (in its May 1980 issue): "His (Laughlin's) work, in the years to come, may be seen as the starting point for a new approach to photography, one as meaningful as Steiglitz's and Strand's work was to the medium in 1905".... The book used for visitor's comments by the Cultural Center has many sharp and appreciative remarks (I have Xerox copies of them). Parisian gallery visitors often do not confine themselves to trite observations - but make pertinent and pungent reflections..

Later, too, the American Ambassador to France - Mr. Arthur Hartman - came to view my show, and, apparently, liked it. Because, soon after, a reception was given at the Embassy in my honor. The rooms of the Embassy were filled with furniture conveying the grace of 18th Century France. While the gardens were a delight - covered with such great and colorful arrays of tulips - as to seem out of another world.. I will be sending Ambassador Hartman and his wife - a little memento of Louisiana - a copy of my book on the Louisiana plantations. Shortly after this, something rather incredible happened. I was invited to a reception in my honor at the Hotel de Ville (The City Hall) of Paris! This is a gigantic edifice, modelled after the original Renaissance building - almost 3 blocks long - with magnificent salons filled with stately furniture, tapestries, and crystal chandeliers. And M. Patrick de Saevesky - a member of the City Council of Paris - gave an address on my work. Although he was involved in politics - he was obviously a very cultured man - a combination almost never found in America. I replied, as best I could, to his poetic observations (my French is very bad), pointing out that it was very unlikely that I would ever receive such an honor in my own city, New Orleans. (I afterwards learned that this was the first time any American photographer had been so honored in Paris). (I have an English transcript of M. de Saevesky's speech - if any of you would like a copy..) The two talks were followed by a buffet supper served in another room - at which a young man named Michel Rouelle - Director of Cultural Affairs for the City of Paris - presented me with a gift from the city - a large and handsome volume on the great French sculptor - Bourdelle.

5. On April 17th, ~~at the~~ again at the American Cultural Center, I engaged in a dialogue on photography with M. Marcel Bardon, a physicist attached to one of the U.N.'s scientific committees. We found ourselves pretty much in accord, because physics now, is probably the most poetic of all the sciences - since, due to recent discoveries - matter becomes increasingly mysterious.. The dialogue was well attended, and the audience seemed deeply interested.. This function, as well as all others mentioned above, was photographed by the Embassy photographer; and fortunately, I have been given copies of many of the pictures.

~~The~~ My show closed in Paris on May 26th - after having been viewed by several thousand people.

6. The show, however, will remain in France for about 2 years - since it will be shown in at least 10 French institutions... During May, we toured much of France (something I had never had a chance to do before), visiting, in turn, Bordeaux, Toulouse, St. Emilion, Carcassonne, Arles, Chalon-sur-Saone, Dijon, Nancy, etc., and then returning to Paris. We not only met a great many French people in all walks of life - but the honesty and friendliness of practically all of these people was tremendously impressive.. Also, during the trip we were privileged to meet many of the people in the museum, etc., where the show would eventually be shown. A rough schedule for the show is as follows:

(a) From Paris it has been sent to: The Chateau d'Eau (the Galerie Municipal of Toulouse) - whose Directeur is: M. Jean Dieuzide - one of the most remarkable men we met while in France. He is responsible for the printing (in Toulouse) of the Catalogue for my show (in duo-tone - probably the best reproductions that any of my work has yet been given!); designer of one of the finest darkroom setups (in his home) I have yet encountered; collector of an extremely good private library on photography; - a man who is a fountain of energy (having done a tremendous amount of photography involved with the history of Toulouse - (one of the oldest cities in France) - as well as a great deal of experimental work); - and the man who is largely responsible for the conversion of the Chateau d'Eau into a major, and unique, Photo Gallery. There,



he has shown many of the best photographers - not merely of France - but of Europe and America. The Gallery is housed in an old water tower - the tower itself being converted, ingeniously, into a photo library. While a completely circular structure at its base - constitutes the Gallery - its encircling walls and barrel-arched ceiling being executed in superb brick work. .M. Dieuzalde's energy, openness of mind, and dedication to photography could well be used in the U.S. - where those important qualities in museum people are not too common...My show has been in the Chateau d'Eau from July 1st to 31st. Incidentally, examples of my work are going to be added to the Gallery's Collection.

- (b) Next, the show goes to the Musée Nicéphore Niépce in Chalon-sur-Saône - where it will be exhibited in August and September. Due to the vision and foresight of its brilliant Directeur - M. Paul Jay - it is now, probably, the leading museum in the world on the history of photography - having, among many other things, - the earliest known photograph (1822) still existing. Its Collection is now larger, and more comprehensive, than that of Eastman House. And also, it has superbly arranged exhibits showing the evolution of many different types of cameras. In addition, it has also ~~published~~ published well-printed brochures on many modern photographers. Here, too, some of my work is being acquired for their Collection.
- (c) We began the trip with Bordeaux - where the show will eventually <sup>be</sup> shown (at a date not set) in a huge stone room on the ground floor of the Municipal Library - by the Action et Recherche Photographique d'Aquitaine - an organization of young French photographers before which I gave a lecture (with the help of a generous professor and translator - Gilles Mora - who teaches in the University of Toulouse - and also in Louisiana, during the summer). While in Bordeaux, we were assisted immensely in getting around by M. Bernard Gathéron (Field Representative of the American Consulate) and Mme. Janine Barat, herself a photographer. Through their kindness, we were able to see St. Emilion - a lovely little hill village - near the edge of the greatest wine growing district in France - and noted for its delicious coconut macaroons, and its marvelous honey. Also, we had a special treat at the apartment of Mme. Barat - a home-made liquer made from the verberna plant..
- (d) Toulouse: Here, among others, we met Mme. Marie Madeleine Baboulet, President of the local French-American Association. Her help was both courteous and bountiful. At a superb lunch in her large house, we were served one of the specialties of the region - Cassoulet de Languedoc - a special stew. Every province in France has its own food, cheese and wine specialties. And she managed to get us to Albi where we entered one of the most gargantuan cathedrals of S.W. France. So gigantic was it, that we felt like tiny insects crawling around in its vast spaces. The church was adept at creating conditions that made men feel small before a superior Being. Also, in Toulouse, for the first time, I talked in a school of photo technique ("Ecole Technique Privée de Photographie") - but even here, among the young students, there still seemed to be some imagination left.
- (e) We then went to Carcassonne - where tremendously thick double walls still surround entirely the old part of the city - going back to medieval times. They are massive beyond belief - and seem to impart a feeling of weight to the very air..
- (f) Eventually, we arrived in Arles - after a long train ride through a lovely and ordered countryside - incredibly green and fresh. Arles still has many Roman remains - including a Piranesian Coliseum. M. Jean-Maurice Rouquette, Curator of the Musée Réattu, - and who has a wonderful sense of humor - will take my show late this year.... Also, fortunately, I met Azaïn Desvergues, Chairman of the Arles Annuelle Photo Festivals - held each August. Indications are that they would present a large one-man show of my Louisiana photos in 1981 - because of the great interest there is, throughout France, in Louisiana. Also, I would be invited to lecture. The lectures are given in a Roman amphitheater, under the stars, about 11 o'clock at night - with the images thrown onto a 30 foot screen.
- (g) My exhibit - although the exact dates are not yet fixed - will also be shown in:
- The Museum of Fine Arts in Brest;
  - The Musée Français de la Photographie in Bievres;
  - The Fondation Nationale de la Photographie in Lyon;
  - The Ecole d'Art et d'Architecture de Luminy in Marseille;
  - The Musée Fabre in Montpellier;
  - The Museum of Fine Arts, in Toulon;
  - and the Musée des Beaux Arts in Nancy.



Nancy was our last stop, and the chief reason we went there was because I had discovered that the city was full of supernal Art Nouveau material - which proved to be true. But I was not quite prepared to find what is probably one of the most beautiful cities in Europe! This city, the ancient capitol of Lorraine, has a huge area named the Place Stanislas - which is surrounded by large and stately 18th Century edifices, interspersed with huge and magnificent wrought iron gates and railings, and by fountains bearing Baroque figures in white marble. Most of the iron is gilded with gold leaf - and at night the whole ensemble is cunningly lit with artificial light - to mimic the light of torches. Due to this, the marble figures on the many fountains, seem to be transmuted to gold; and because of the restless play of the light - the figures, and the ironwork, seem to move and writhe. And we are as though summoned to a voyage in time (back to the 18th Century) - and the golden shapes and shadows become a spectacle of visual magic.... But this is just one aspect of this wonderful city.. Elsewhere, there is a fascinating, and profuse, variety of Art Nouveau structures; with architects such as Emil André, Paul Charbonnier, and Georges Biet; architectural sculptors, such as Vautrin; glass designers, and glass painters, such as J. Gruber; cabinet makers and iron designers, such as Majorelle - all working together, at times, on one structure - producing marvelous harmonies with their combined talents. There was a glorious welding of all the plastic arts - something that did not happen on this scale elsewhere, and something of great significance in the history of architecture. This magical process reached its apogee, perhaps, in the house now known as the Musée de L'Ecole de Nancy, a house which was originally the home of a wealthy, and early, collector of Art Nouveau, named Eugène Corbin, and which has been preserved intact.. I entered this house of concrete and crystallized dreams on 5/13/80 - a red letter day in my life. I was driven there by Henri Liger (he and his wife, Suzanne, were extraordinarily kind and helpful to us while we were in Nancy.) This unique house has glass by Gallé and Daum; bronze by Prouvé; and wood work by Majorelle. Here metal and glass and wood - aided by superb and inspired craftsmanship, had assumed forms and colors of the utmost delicacy and subtlety. Here the genius of Art Nouveau - one of the most important of all art movements, had truly transformed life into something more than life; into something by which man can be extricated from the chains of the commonplace - into an exaltation of life that is possible only for the greatest art (so that life itself becomes an art - and Art Nouveau was the first art movement that reached this kind of understanding).. While, to the rear of the house, the porch was drowned in cascades of wisteria; the etherealized into a cloud of odorous lavender... This house will forever bless, and haunt, my memory; because in it glass was possessed by tints transferred from unknown and enchanted skies; metal had evolved into complexities and contours that revealed secret potentials; and wood had attained a life, greater and richer than the life of trees.. At another time, Suzanne and Henri took us to the restaurant "Le Mancéin" - created in a series of underground caves beneath the city... And Henri Liger spent days showing us the town around Nancy - one of them with a great cathedral - St. Nicolas de Port - with glorious glass, a horde of menacing gargoyles, a mighty organ whose utterance was like an awesome and overpowering sound out of the sky - literally a voice compounded of thunder and cosmic energy... But the visit to the Musée de Nancy will ever remain my most lasting memory...

7. In late May, we left Nancy, most regretfully, for Paris. There, I was fortunate enough to meet, and form the beginning of a friendship with, two remarkable men: Adam Biro; modest, unassuming, employed by the publisher Flammarion, and one of the most able, and knowledgeable editors now working for a European publisher.. He is to be Senior Editor for a forthcoming, and definitive, history of Surrealism to be entitled: "Dictionnaire Generale du Surrealisme". It will cover Surrealist painters, writers, poets and photographers world-wide; and it is to be published in late 1980 in Switzerland. It will comprise about 1000 pages.. (I will be one of four American photographers in this book - one of the others will be Marg Ray.) Except for 2 photos in Breton's magazine "VVV" and a very small mention in Marcel Nadeau's "History of Surrealism" - this will be my first mention in any official Surrealist publication - which will indicate that in 1939 I was the first American photographer to make appearance



true Surrealist photos. (This fact is apparently unknown to the American photographic establishment - which is completely committed to either "documentation", or "purism" - and therefore, could not be less interested.) M. Biro learned of this through Mr. J.H. Matthews - a Professor at Syracuse University, and now, the leading authority, in this country, on the history of Surrealism... The 2nd man is: Edouard Jaguere - creator, and editor, for a totally new anthology of worldwide Surrealist photography - scheduled to be published in France in 1981. He has long been the driving spirit behind "Phoshas" - now one of the leading Surrealist publications still in existence. Intimately acquainted with most of the the Surrealist innovators - he is also a close friend of Mme. Andre Breton and of Franklin Rosemont - who forms the prow of the American Surrealist movement (in Chicago) and whose suggestion led me to meeting Jaguere. Many people think that Surrealism is dead - but there are scores of new young Surrealists emerging from all over the world. The reaction against the madness of our society will continue to keep Surrealism alive. M. Jaguere's anthology will be called "Les Mysteres de la Chambre Noir". AGAIN, I will be one of the 4 American photographers included..

8. Also, before leaving Paris - I met the Mng. Editor, and Art Director, of Zoom Magazine, who had both seen my show. Zoom is now the best printed photo magazine in the world, and it has recently initiated an English edition. There is to be an article on my experimental photos in it, late this year, probably running to 8 pages. The text is to be written by me... And L'Oeil Magazine is interested in using some of my photos, for an issue on Louisiana..

9. <sup>W</sup> ~~W~~ <sup>ear</sup> ~~ear~~ <sup>y</sup> ~~y~~ <sup>our</sup> ~~our~~ <sup>bones</sup> ~~bones~~ <sup>aching</sup> ~~aching~~ <sup>from</sup> ~~from~~ <sup>strain</sup> ~~strain~~ (by now, only the 2 of us) - we managed to cross the Channel on the boat train - and, at length, to arrive in London. Among the people we talked to were: Sue Davies, my dealer in London, who now has a larger Gallery. Also, Bill Brandt, with whom I traded a print. Among the marvels we viewed was the Victoria and Albert Museum - which probably has the largest Collection of Victoriana in existence. Its Collection is so huge that parts of it: children's toys, Rodin sculpture, and Art Nouveau furniture (a strange melange) have been consigned entirely to another building - the Bethnal Green Museum in a remote section of London. Among the people we met (in this case: through Jonathan Williams) was a very able young man named Mark Haworth-Booth - Keeper of Photographs for the Victoria and Albert - where there is a tremendous collection of 19th Century Photos - and where two huge rooms are now being restored. Possibly, in time to come, my very large Philadelphia Museum Retrospective <sup>S</sup> ~~how~~ <sup>show</sup> - "The Personal Eye" - may be shown there. The large museums in France and England have not yet shown any major shows of 20th Century photography - because of their conservatism. But this may, in time, change - as all things do.. Most of my time in London, however, was spent attending book fairs - of which there were many - resulting in some wonderful acquisitions..

10. And meanwhile, both of us were having increasing trouble with our legs. The rheumatoid arthritis in my right knee had made it impossible for me to take to Europe; the camera I had used for so many years - and I did not have the time to find a camera before I left. Worse still, my nose and throat allergies had also gotten more of a problem.. To the point where, at night, the mucus descending from my sinus cavities would get into my throat, and from there, into my bronchial tubes. Thus causing me to start coughing, choking, and wheezing - and thus making it impossible to get my proper sleep at night - and making my nights an almost continuous struggle for air. This, in turn, had psychological repercussions, and led to my slowly developing a terrible fear of choking to death - of being in a small room (such as the cabin on the "Queen Elizabeth 2", coming back to New York City) - in total darkness, and without being able to see the sky. This continued even after we got back to NYC - and lack of enough sleep made me so weak, that I could get very little done. And it accompanied me back home (which was around the middle of July). I became desperate, nothing seemed to help. But finally, very recently, I have gotten a new doctor (an allergy specialist) who has told me that he may be able to help me without "scratch tests" and without long months of injections.. He is using 4 new drugs - designed to loosen the mucus in the bronchial tubes and to alleviate the coughing attacks. They seem to have started to work, and I can now sleep without a light, and I am getting my strength back very slowly. Perhaps, after all, I shall be able to go into my dark room in October; and to be able to create the large Louisiana show next year. I cannot now be certain. But on this note of hope I must now end this over-long letter.   
 C. & L. 10/80