



Angels of Anarchy

Women Artists and Surrealism

 PRESTEL



Angels of Anarchy is the most comprehensive and up-to-date survey yet of the women who contributed so much to the surrealist movement.

Stars such as Lee Miller, Meret Oppenheim and Frida Kahlo are joined by a younger generation of women artists including Francesca Woodman, Josette Exandier and Penny Slinger. Through painting, photography, sculpture, print-making and film these artists demonstrate the ongoing power of the female surrealist vision.

Manchester
Art Gallery



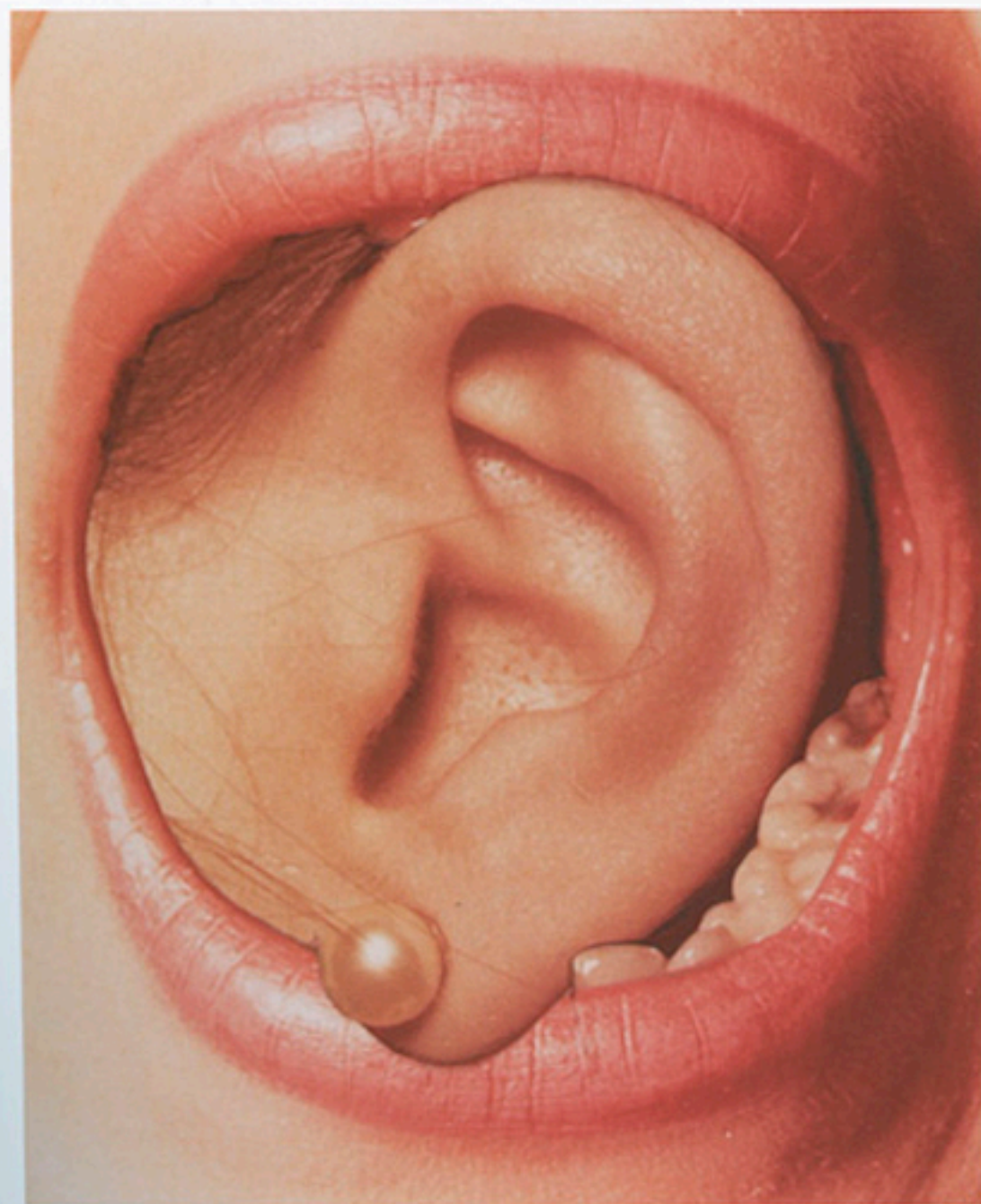
Curator's Acknowledgements

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Patricia Allmer



Of Fallen Angels and Angels of Anarchy

Patricia Allmer

The angel is that which unceasingly passes through the envelope(s) or container(s), goes from one side to the other, reworking every deadline, changing every cision, thwarting all repetition.¹ Luce Irigaray¹

The word 'angel' derives from the Latin 'angelus' meaning 'messenger'; the angel is a signifier that we are 'about to enter another world'.² The angelic function is one of prophecy, guidance and communication, a function of to-and-fro — 'gestures of passage between opposite states'.³ The angelic position is a position of in-betweenness and motion. These functions and positions are the strengths of angels: they overcome and deconstruct the paths of Western patriarchal binary thought, its hierarchical structure, replacing stability with flux, singularity with multiplicity, separation with transgression, and being with becoming and transformation.

Flux, multiplicity, transgression, becoming and transformation are major foci of the surrealist women artists' works represented in *Angels of Anarchy*. Although these artists span three generations, their diverse artistic productions are mostly independent from each other, ranging across a multitude of twentieth-century media. However, they share a close interest in and draw on surrealism and its desires to overcome dualities, boundaries and binaries, as André Breton states in the *Second*

Manifesto of Surrealism: 'Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions'.⁴ This surrealist desire to overcome (hierarchical) oppositions and boundaries is present in a variety of surrealist concepts such as 'communicating vessels', a metaphor for the dream which fuses inside and outside, reality and imagination. The term is taken from a scientific experiment which bears the same name: 'in vessels joined by a tube, a gas or liquid passing from one to the other rises to the same level in each, whatever the form of the vessel'.⁵ As Mary Ann Caws notes, 'this passing back and forth between two modes is shown to be the basis of Surrealist thought, of Surreality itself'.⁶

Communication, exchange, the passing-back-and-forth, are the foundation of a variety of surrealist activities, such as the surrealist game of exquisite corpse — a game involving a number of participants, each writing or drawing on a piece of paper which is folded and passed on to the next.

and dismembered, punctured and severed: is it any wonder she has (we have) gone to pieces?'¹⁶

Questioning and subverting this genre is therefore an elemental function of women artists — not only in order to reclaim the passivising representation of women, but also to inscribe the female artist into the genre of surrealism. Self-portraiture has served the male artist to affirm his identity as subject, 'masterful creator' and 'tortured soul', whilst women have been mostly represented as objects;

as Marsha Meskimmon states: 'The self-portrait as a form is dependent upon the concept of the artist as a special individual, worthy of representation in his own right. And, indeed, it is in *his* own right; since, linked to the status of fine artists, self-portraiture has evolved features mainly exclusive to male artists'.¹⁷ Penny Slinger's collage, *Read my Lips* (1973) (fig. 4 and pl. 111) satirises the fragmented, often metonymic representation of women in patriarchy as observed by Caws. *Read my Lips* seems to be a feminist response to and a re-appropriation of René Magritte's *The Rape* (1934) (fig. 3), which metonymically transposes a woman's body onto her face — the crotch forming her mouth. Here, surrealist collage is used, according to Slinger, to approach surrealism from 'a woman's point-of-view, attempting to bring to light the half that has long remained hidden. [...] present[ing] the muse as her own subject (as opposed to object) [...]'.¹⁸

And the muses do return as outstanding artists. Miller's destruction of her image as muse and model at the level of her photographs is the more powerful, as it heavily references the statuesque representations of herself mentioned above. *Revenge on Culture* (1940) (pl. 73) is an ironic commentary on her own position as objectified, photographic muse. Here a fallen statue of an angel is represented. Its face bears striking similarities to representations of Miller's statuesque face familiar from Man Ray's photographs and images from *Vogue*. Miller's 'fallen angel' is discarded, echoing Emilia Medková's forgotten sculpture of an angel huddled against a wall (pl. 69); the tumbled sculpture's head is severed by what looks like a thick cable, her torso weighed down by a brick. Here the statue, the idealised object of male desire,



Fig. 3 René Magritte, *Le Viol* [The Rape], 1934. Oil on canvas, 73 x 54 cm. The Menil Collection, Houston.

100. Edith Rimmington
The Oneiroscapist, 1947
 Oil on canvas
 51 x 41
 The Vera and Arturo Schwartz Collection of
 Dada and Surrealist Art
 The Israel Museum Jerusalem

101. Edith Rimmington
Relative Strength, 1950
 Pen, ink and watercolour on paper
 52.7 x 37
 Private collection, courtesy The Mayor
 Gallery, London

102. Edith Rimmington
Sisters of Anarchy, 1940–41
 Oil on canvas
 30 x 35
 The Sherwin Collection

103. Edith Rimmington
 Museum, 1951
 Pencil, pen, ink and watercolour on paper
 32 x 23.5
 Private collection, courtesy The Mayor
 Gallery, London

104. Kay Sage
Margin of Silence, 1942
 Oil on canvas
 45.7 x 38.1
 Albany Institute of History & Art,
 Gift of the Estate of Kay Sage Tanguy

105. Kay Sage
The Hidden Letter, 1943
 Oil on canvas
 55.9 x 38.1
 Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Bequest
 of Kay Sage Tanguy

106. Kay Sage
Hyphen, 1954
 Oil on canvas
 76.2 x 50.9
 Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York

107. Kay Sage
Tomorrow is Never, 1955
 Oil on canvas
 96.2 x 136.8
 Metropolitan Museum of Art,
 Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1955

108. Kay Sage
Starlings, Caravans, 1948
 Oil on canvas
 81 x 99.1
 Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco,
 Museum Purchase, Mildred Anna Williams
 Collection

109. Penny Slinger
Teeth Like Flocks of Doves, 1972
 Wax life cast with multi media
 8.6 x 8.6 x 8.6
 The Penrose Collection

110. Penny Slinger
I Hear What you Say, 1973
 Photographic collage
 35 x 47
 The Penrose Collection

111. Penny Slinger
Read My Lips, 1973
 Photographic collage
 35 x 47
 The Penrose Collection

112. Eva Švankmajerová
Surrealist Personality Without a Face, 1995
 Fired clay
 50 x 40 x 10
 Jan Švankmajer

113. Eva Švankmajerová
Bed, 1976
 Oil on canvas
 28 x 35
 Jan Švankmajer

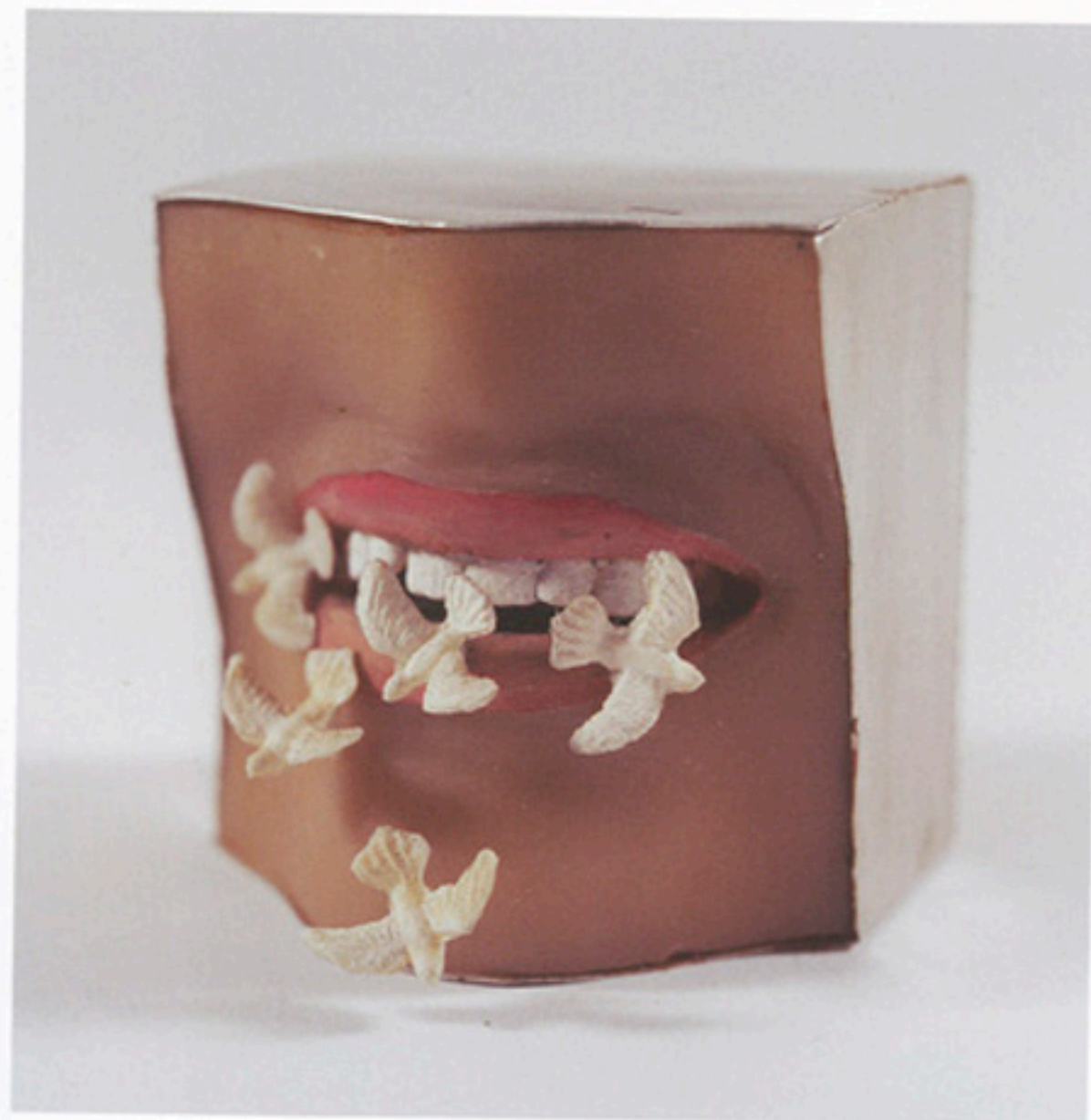
114. Dorothea Tanning
Eine kleine Nachtmusik, 1943
 Oil on canvas
 40.7 x 61
 Tate. Purchased with assistance from
 The Art Fund and the American Fund
 for the Tate Gallery, 1997

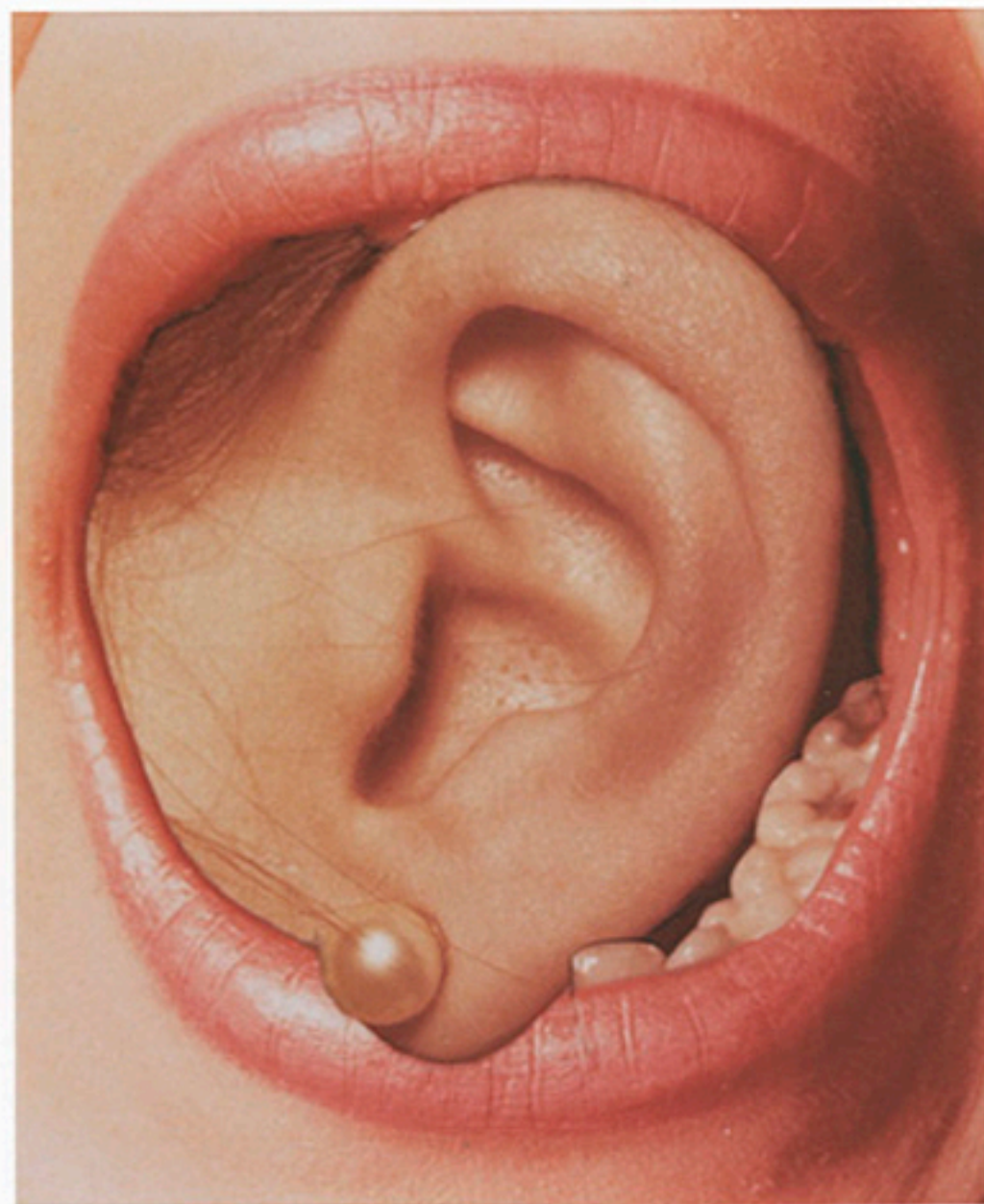
115. Dorothea Tanning
Pincushion to Serve as Fetish, 1965
 Mixed media
 37.2 x 37 x 45.5
 Tate. Purchased 2003

116. Toyen
 Untitled, 1930–40
 Collage
 18 x 26
 Private collection, courtesy The Mayor
 Gallery, London

117. Toyen
L'Avant-printemps [Early Spring], 1945
 Oil on canvas
 89 x 146
 Musée national d'Art moderne—Centre
 Georges Pompidou, Paris

118. Unknown
Cast of Lee Miller's Torso, c. 1942
 Plaster cast with necklace
 54 x 41.5 x 25
 The Penrose Collection





Falling eye-sight, illness and her husband's death in 1955, led Sage to shoot herself in 1963. *Mordicus*, her last volume of poems was published posthumously in 1963 and included drawings by Jean Dubuffet.

Penny Slinger

(b. 1947 Middlesex, London)

Penny Slinger studied at the Chelsea College of Art from 1966 to 1969. During her research on Max Ernst she met Roland Penrose who, together with Lee Miller, encouraged her work during the 1960s and 1970s. She exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Arts the year she left college, and went on to exhibit in a number of exhibitions in London, Europe and New York. Slinger's oeuvre spans a wide array of media — her early work, including sculpture, objects and collages, is most strongly connected to surrealism. In 1980 she moved to the West Indies where she lived until 1994. Her work of this period focussed on Trinidad, Tortola and Anguilla. She co-authored, illustrated and wrote a number of books such as *50% The Visible Woman* (1971) and *An Exorcism — A Photomontage* (1977) which featured an introduction by Roland Penrose. She moved to America in the 1990s where she continues to work as an artist.

Eva Švanimajerová

(b. 1940 Kostelec nad Černými lesy, Czechoslovakia — d. 2005 Prague)

The art of Eva Švanimajerová (née Eva Dvořáková) ranges from painting and ceramics to poetry and prose (which regularly appeared in the surrealist review *Analogon*). However, she was also strongly involved in film: as designer and animator she collaborated with her husband, the director Jan Švanmajer. Her interest in different artistic media extended to the production of *Otesánek* in the early 1970s, an animated short film which she previously also produced as a children's book. *Otesánek* is based on a folk tale, and elements of folk art are also strongly present in her other artistic production.

In 1958, she moved to Prague where she studied at the Prague School of Interior Design and later the Academy of Performing Arts in the theatre department. From 1970 she took part in the surrealist group in Prague. Her early works often focused on artforms which were out of fashion, such as rebuses; later, feminist topics are strongly present in her oeuvre.

Dorothea Tanning

(b. 1912 Galesburg, Illinois)

Dorothea Tanning was born to Swedish parents. She attended the Art Institute of Chicago in 1932. She moved to New York where a visit to the exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, held in 1936 at the Museum of Modern Art, significantly changed her painterly style. In 1939 she travelled to Europe to meet the surrealist artists, but was deeply disappointed, as the surrealist circle was no longer present due to the outbreak of World War II. Returning to New York, she exhibited in 1942 in Peggy Guggenheim's landmark exhibition of thirty-one women painters. It was only then that she met surrealist artists, including Max Ernst (at the time, Guggenheim's husband) with whom she moved to Sedona, Arizona and whom she married in 1946. The couple moved to Paris in 1955 where they stayed until Ernst's death in 1976, after which Tanning returned to America. She contributed as both writer and painter to the surrealist publication *VVV* and also took part in the 1947 International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris. She had numerous one-woman exhibitions from 1944, as well as a number of retrospective exhibitions in Knokke-le-Zoute, Paris and, most recently in 2000, in Philadelphia. Tanning is also the author of two books, *The Abyss*, written in 1947 and self-published in 1977, and an autobiography entitled *Birthday*, published in 1986. She lives in New York.

Toyen

(b. 1902 Prague — d. 1980 Paris)

Toyen is a gender-neutral pseudonym for Maria Čermínová. She attended the School of Applied Arts in Prague and in 1922 met the Czech poet Jindřich Štyrský in Yugoslavia. Her artistic career began with her participation in the short-lived, radical Czech avant-garde group *Devětsil* which drew together constructivists, Dadaists and others. From 1925 to 1929, she lived with Štyrský in Paris where they defined 'poetic artificialism' — an alternative to both abstraction and surrealism. She had her first exhibition there, together with Štyrský, in 1927. Although she already knew some of the surrealists, it was only later that she actively took part in surrealist group activities. In 1928 Toyen and Štyrský moved back to Prague where she produced a series of erotic publications and was a founding member of the Czech surrealist group. During the occupation Toyen went underground. Her political opposition to Stalinism and fascism is strongly present in her cycles of drawings (such as *Cache-toi guerre!* [1944]) during this period. In 1947 she fled with Jindřich Heisler to Paris, where she became a key figure in the surrealist movement.

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Women Artists and Surrealism

Edited by Patricia Allmer

The most comprehensive and up-to-date survey available about women surrealists features an outstanding array of artists from the early twentieth century to modern times.

Surrealism, and in particular its women practitioners, has undergone a resurgence of interest in the past decade as evidenced by numerous exhibitions in the world's leading museums. *Angels of Anarchy* presents the most comprehensive study yet of the women who contributed so much to this fascinating movement. It draws on an international range of artists to investigate how their practices responded to, developed, enriched, and even subverted the conventions and traditions of art history. One hundred and forty-one colour images by thirty-two artists are accompanied by essays that illuminate fascinating aspects of the surrealist approach. By presenting these important artists side-by-side for the first time, *Angels of Anarchy* allows for an unprecedented appreciation of the variety and depth of these artists' contributions to the field of surrealism and art in general.