



*I was feeling the need to put my ideas into words.
(...) Translating my ideas into words
was like preparing canvas and colours
for a new work.
(Man Ray)*

Man Ray 1944

Opening and Presentation of the volume: November 6th, 2012 at 6pm

On Tuesday November, 6th at Fondazione Marconi Antonio D'Orrico, Janus, Giorgio Marconi and Carlo Cambi present the unpublished novel *1944* by Man Ray.

The novel is issued for the first time in english, an anastatic edition published by Carlo Cambi Editore. There is also a new italian translation (the first italian translation was published far away in 1981 in the volume *Man Ray Tutti gli scritti*, curated by Janus, Feltrinelli editore).

1944 was handwritten by Man Ray on a big bound book, on the back a little label drawn by the artist. On the first page there is a black ink stain, as if all the words of the novel originated from there.

The novel, divided into three chapters, is introduced by a foreword by Man Ray, where he tries to define the nature of the words, and by a critical essay written by Janus, the most authoritative Man Ray scholar and a close friends of the artist. Man Ray left his book to Janus. The novel is unfinished both in the beginning and in the ending: the first pages were misteriously torn after the death of the artist and the story is suddenly cut off without a conclusion. This incompleteness is part of its appeal.

1944 is the title of the novel, at that moment the world was still the scene of the frightening Second World War; Man Ray has always used original titles for his works, but probably the artist foresaw the importance of 1944, sensing the end of the War with the illusion of a safer world.

The main character is Robor, who got lost in an imaginary city. Robor in latin means virile strenght but also intellectual energy; it's a name that could be read in reverse, Man Ray was fascinated by wordplay, as all the Surrealists. The protagonist is an aviator, he was a painter before the war, he goes towards a fictionary world trying to forget those images of violence and death that shocked him so much.

“The sense of the novel is a reversal, if Robor is a word that could be read on the contrary, also the history has the same ambivalence, it's peace and war at the same time” says Janus, and again “this novel is a kind of essay on painting and writing, an effort to make cohabiting the two activities”.

On the occasion of the publication of the novel the Fondazione Marconi presents an exhibition with works by Man Ray realized at the same time of the novel. In 1940 Man Ray was forced to left Paris and he took refuge in Los Angeles, where he met important personalities, he get prestigious awards and he was the subject of various exhibitions and here he would have met Juliet Browner, his muse, model and wife from 1946. Hehas dedicated to her the amazing series of photos *The Fifty Faces of Juliet*, some of which are exhibited.

On display there are also some drawings from the series “*Studies for Leda & Romeo or Juliet*”, a play of optical illusions, one of his “object of affection” *Contraption (Marchingegno)* (1944), various photos among which *Chessboard* (1942) that is also the last image of the novel: Robor goes into a

surreal place similar to a café or a nightclub, full of naked women and “ here and there a couple is bent over a chessboard” (Man Ray), “a mix of dreams and memories that seems so strong to stop the pen of the author” (Janus).

Man Ray (Emmanuel Radnitzsky) was born on August 27, 1890 in Philadelphia to Jewish Russian parents emigrated to United States. He grew up in Brooklyn, he enrolled in a course in industrial design, then he attended the Ferrer Center in New York and from 1913 he associated with Alfred Stieglitz and with the New York avantgarde groups. He created his first cubist works and he started to research on different techniques as collage, sculpture, assemblage and airbrush painting. Then he devoted himself to photography. He was the main promoter with Marcel Duchamp of the New York Dadaism, he founded the Society of Independent Artists (1916) and the “Société Anonyme Inc.” (1920) and the review “New York Dada” (1921).

In this period he created his first “object of affection”, among which the famous *Enigme d’Isidore Ducasse*. In 1921 he moved to Paris where he met again Marcel Duchamp and in the same year he was the subject of a solo at the Librairie Six. He made his first *Rayographs* published in the volume *Champs délicieux* (1922) with an introduction by Tristan Tzara. In 1922 he took part in the Salon Dada at the Galerie Montaigne, later he worked for the film *Retour à la raison* and he joined the Surrealist group with which he exhibited at Galerie Pierre in 1925 and in all their following exhibitions.

Until 1940 he lived in Paris, where he established himself as one of the best interpreters of the surrealist poetic with paintings, assemblages, films and experimental photos. After the beginning of the Second World War he moved to Los Angeles where he lived until 1951. During his stay in the United States he devoted himself to painting, making the series *Equations shakesperiennes* and *Alphabet for Adults*. When he was back to Paris he continued his photographic research, his paintings and his objects of affections.

In 1959 the Institute of Contemporary Art of London dedicated to him a big exhibition and two years later he was awarded with the gold medal in photography at the Venice Biennale. In 1966 there was his first big retrospective at the County Museum of Art in Los Angeles. In 1970 there was a big exhibition that opened at the Museum Boymans van Beuningen in Rotterdam and later it travelled in various museums in Europe. Man Ray died on November 18 in 1976. Juliet died in 1991.

Janus curated his first exhibition on Man Ray in 1969 in Turin (Galleria Il Fauno).

He carried on studying and analyzing all Man Ray’s work through various exhibitions: in Ferrara in 1972 (Palazzo dei Diamanti), in New York in 1974 (New York Cultural Center), in Paris in 1974 (Galerie Iolas), at the Venice Biennial in 1976, and again in Paris in 1981 (Centre Pompidou), in Milan in 1988 (Fondazione Mazzotta), in Lugano in 2011 (Museo d’Arte) and with a monography in 1975 (Fabbri, Milano; Hachette, Paris) and above all through the publication of all his writings in 1981, a still unique editorial work.

He was close to Man Ray, who described him as “mon témoin”.

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Free entrance

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