

Clarence John Laughlin, Regionalist Surrealist

Lewis Kachur
Kean University

With his 1940 exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery, Clarence John Laughlin's photographs presented his native New Orleans as a readymade surrealist tableau. The distinctive sepulchral graveyards of the city were one focus; the decaying ruins of nineteenth-century plantations around Louisiana were another. Evoking a sensibility of "mystery and melancholy" similar to that of de Chirico, Laughlin capitalized upon—yet also ultimately contributed to—the mythology of mysterious New Orleans, city of the marvelous. Thus the possibilities and limitations of Regionalist Surrealism as place find a test case there. Later in his career, Laughlin would again explore Surrealism as place with the rugged topography of the Arizona landscape. The changed locale is accompanied by Laughlin's increasing exploration of Dalían double images.

Laughlin grew up in New Orleans and did not travel extensively until after World War II. Thus his position as what I am terming a "Regional Surrealist"¹ is embedded in local color and milieu. Laughlin used the mails and occasional visits to get in touch with the art center, in this case New York, and to receive periodicals, catalogues, and other disseminations. This occurred during the decade of the 1930s, when Surrealism was itself becoming an increasingly international movement. It was also the moment when Alfred Barr's landmark exhibition, "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," was widely recognized as the first to map the pre- and early history of Surrealism.

Laughlin's conscientiously-preserved correspondence reveals an ongoing campaign to bring himself to the attention of the mainstream Surrealists. Starting as a writer, he had only begun taking photographs intermittently in 1930-31, taking

Lewis Kachur: lkachur@kean.edu

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up the practice more intensively from 1934. Yet as early as 1935, he wrote to premier New York surrealist dealer Julien Levy, asking to buy a copy of the journal *Minotaure* and to be placed on the gallery's mailing list. He received the first volume of *Minotaure* and kept it throughout his life. The following year saw the Museum of Modern Art's "Fantastic Art" exhibition, including a full range of works by Giorgio De Chirico. These I believe caught Laughlin's attention. There were sixteen de Chirico paintings in the show, nine of which were illustrated in black and white in the catalogue, thus translating them into the monochrome of photography. Laughlin owned a copy of the catalogue.²

The very next year Laughlin subtitled the photograph *Eye No. 1* "Homage to

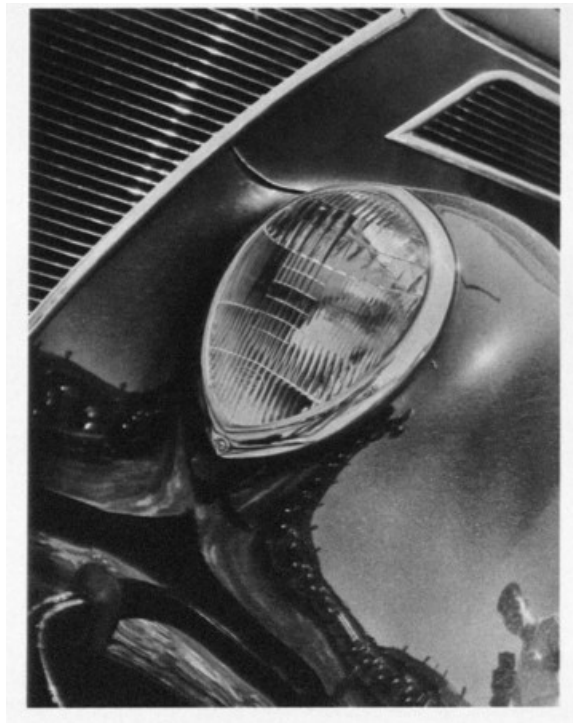


Fig. 1. Clarence John Laughlin, *The Eye #1*, 1937, photo by Clarence John Laughlin © 2008 The Historic New Orleans Collection

De Chirico" (1937, Fig. 1), though a specific connection is not obviously apparent. Laughlin's caption points to "De Chirico's featureless figures of enigma," presumably the mannequin-type paintings in an architectural setting of his "Metaphysical" period, such as *The Disquieting Muses* (1916) or *Troubador* (1917), which are both illustrated in Barr's catalogue.³ Interestingly, Raoul Ubac photomontaged a more

ominous *Hommage à de Chirico* at this time.⁴ It emphasizes the classical statuary, both standing and on plinths, as well as a plunging streetscape perspective. By contrast, Laughlin focuses on distorted reflections in a closeup of a car headlight. The elongations in metal call to mind André Kertesz's disturbing *Distortions*, the series of contorted female bodies reflected in Paris carnival mirrors the Hungarian born photographer made in 1933.⁵ Yet Laughlin's single headlight is also clearly linked to the reflection of the photographer himself in the lower right, with his tripod. Laughlin's writings refer to the camera in quasi-Eastern terms as the "third eye" or sometimes as a "cyclopic" eye. Interestingly, he thus evades a typical surrealist metaphor of the camera as sexualized, or as phallus, in favor of an equally surrealist



Fig. 2. Clarence John Laughlin, *We Seek the Enigma*, 1940, photo by Clarence John Laughlin © 2008 The Historic New Orleans Collection



Fig. 3. Clarence John Laughlin, *The Unending Stream*, 1941, photo by Clarence John Laughlin © 2008 The Historic New Orleans Collection

alternative evoking inner vision and the “mind’s eye.”

As Laughlin began to explore the evocative sepulchral graveyards of New Orleans around 1940, he incorporated distinctively de Chirican titles, sense of space, and contrasted lighting. For instance, *We Seek the Enigma* (1940, Fig. 2) is enacted on the stage of a sepulcher in the Egyptian revival style popular in cemeteries. Laughlin shoots the image from the side so that the veiled woman and the statue next to her become anonymous, seen from behind. The line of shadow is strong, and the architecture creates an oblique orthogonal into space, all de Chirican devices.

Likewise in *The Unending Stream* (1941, Fig. 3), the sepulchers correlate to de Chirico’s shadowed arcades, while the obelisks are reminiscent of his distant towers, such as in *Nostalgia of the Infinite* (1911). *The Unending Stream* shows the Girod Street cemetery, the oldest Protestant cemetery in New Orleans, dating from approximately 1825. The title refers to both the blowing wisps of clouds above and the deaths below. Cemeteries are of course cities of the dead, and as such *memento mori*, which imply the passing of time. Arnold Böcklin’s *Island of the Dead* also comes to mind, itself a late Romanticist source for de Chirico.

De Chirico’s work is critical in considering the general question of a Surrealism of place, in that he himself stylizes many of the features of Turin (Torino), such as its long arcades and statues in squares. I posit that for Laughlin, as earlier for Max Ernst and Yves Tanguy, the experience of de Chirico streetscapes

was revelatory in stimulating a surrealist vision. The pair envisaged Paris through the screen of de Chirico's work,⁶ as Laughlin did New Orleans. Interestingly, Julien Levy was a main supporter of this verisitic wing of Surrealism and of the "neo-Romantics." He exhibited works by de Chirico in 1936 and '37, and praised "the haunting atmosphere of veritable dream" in his early paintings.⁷

Unsurprisingly, then, de Chirico-inflected photos were the centerpiece of Laughlin's November 1940 exhibition at Levy Gallery. A print of *Unending Stream* remained in Levy's collection.⁸ Laughlin decided to exhibit forty-two photographs from two main series, the "Poems of Desolation" and "Lost New Orleans." He began the former after the outbreak of European war in 1939—"my most original and difficult project," as he called it. "In it I tried to create a mythology of our



Fig. 4. Clarence John Laughlin, *House of Hysteria*, 1941, photo by Clarence John Laughlin © 2008 The Historic New Orleans Collection

contemporary world. This mythology... has the personification of our fears and frustrations, our desires and dilemmas."⁹

One of the most dramatic of the "Poems of Desolation" is *House of Hysteria* (1941, Fig. 4), whose title cues us that the neuroses of modern life are at issue. The burned out building also carries a political dimension, related to the warfare

spreading in Europe. The shadows of the charred roof beams are dramatically framed in the doorway, as is the straining hand seen through the hole in the wall. The background figure, face veiled, strikes a dramatic pose framed in the further doorway that recalls the theatrics of contemporary dance. As we see from this composition, the photographer sometimes carefully choreographed his models in creating a highly posed and artificial tableau.

Laughlin sold eleven works from the Levy exhibition, some to Julien's stable of artists, notably the "neo-Romantics" Tchelichew and Eugene Berman.¹⁰ Thus legitimized in the art center, he came to the attention of the Surrealists in exile in New York, including their leader André Breton. Laughlin seized the opportunity to spend extended time there, even taking a position with *Vogue* magazine for



Fig. 5. Clarence John Laughlin, *Elegy for the Old South, No. 2*, 1946, photo by Clarence John Laughlin © 2008 The Historic New Orleans Collection

three weeks. He was among the handful of American artists invited by Breton to participate in the "First Papers of Surrealism" exhibition in the fall of 1942.¹¹ Two of his photographs were published in the second issue of the surrealist journal

VVV (March 1943), with its very “western” cover by Duchamp of an Indian riding the Americas.

This moment of the early 1940s is the most surrealist in Laughlin’s works, along with his affiliations. A key example is the composite photograph created from some twenty negatives, *Elegy of the Old South* (No. 2, 1946, Fig. 5), which is also collaged and overpainted, dramatically altering it to a spooky nighttime scene. It utilizes the two-story frontage of the “Uncle Sam” plantation as a grid structure to contain or frame other images, a pair between each column, divided by the balcony railing. These micro-items are meant as “symbols of the South which once existed,”¹² and include a sepulcher, a plow, an old dress, a framed portrait, the Louisiana sky, and ambiguous wrapped objects. Laughlin effectively parallels the two-tiered interiors of René Magritte’s *Threshold of Liberty* series, or the more gridded of Joseph Cornell’s box constructions. The structure seems closer to Magritte, while the thematic of elegy and the poetics of the past tends to recall Cornell.¹³ Poignantly, the plantation itself had been destroyed six years before Laughlin composed this print from an earlier negative.

After his Army service from 1942 to 1946, when he was stationed in Washington, D.C., Laughlin returned to New Orleans and to what he termed “the last great nonurban culture of this country, the nineteenth-century plantation culture of the lower Mississippi River valley.” He reactivated a project that was part documentary and part local color, “dealing with the atmosphere of houses, and with the poetry and enigma of time in these structures from the past.”¹⁴ As he recorded, some mansions had even been lost in the interim since he began photographing them around 1938-39, heightening the sense of nostalgia already present in the subject. Nostalgia also has a personal resonance, as the first five years of Laughlin’s childhood were spent on a plantation near New Iberia, Louisiana. Over two thousand negatives were exposed, and a selection of one-hundred were culled for Laughlin’s most successful publication, *Ghosts Along the Mississippi* (1948), which also featured his own extensive historical commentaries on each plate.

The book included the documentary photo of the Uncle-Sam-type mansion that was the basis for the composite colored photograph discussed above. Laughlin’s text informs us that it was built in the 1840s and at a cost of \$100,000, for the sugar merchant Samuel Fagot. The following pages include a variant collage *Elegy of the Old South* (No. 3). There a different demolished plantation, Linwood, is set as if inside an oblique view of the monumentalized, stately pillars of Uncle Sam. Their height is exaggerated by dodging out the balcony railing. The departing “spirit of place,” a rather Cornell-like touch, is obviously symbolized by the bird.¹⁵ Laughlin’s editors apparently did not feel that the public was ready for his more experimental works,



Fig. 6. Clarence John Laughlin, *Elegy for Moss Land*, 1940 (*Ghosts*, Plate 1), photo by Clarence John Laughlin © 2008 The Historic New Orleans Collection

and thus the greater ambiguity and open-endedness of the collaged variant no. 2 was not illustrated in the book. As this juxtaposition makes obvious, Laughlin alternated between a more documentary approach, recalling Atget, and a fraction of more subjective works, including those that are altered or manipulated in processing. The very first plate of *Ghosts* is one of the latter, a double exposure *Elegy for Moss Land* (Fig. 6) which, Laughlin admits, basically “projects the book’s whole intent.” “An evocative figure rising from the marsh,” a phantom house, “the past and [. . .] the magic spell of memory.”¹⁶ It seems a typically Southern preoccupation with the past, tinged with Romanticist elegy, and perhaps with surrealist notions of the uncanny as well. Still the sense of mirroring is strong, and combined with a figure looking down into the water, evokes the Narcissus myth. I suspect that Laughlin had in mind the well-known 1937 painting by Salvador Dalí on the theme, especially in its use of a mirrored double image.

To be engaging Dalí in the later 1940s when his American reputation was seriously on the wane may seem improbable,¹⁷ but it is the prerogative of the Regionalist to be out of step with “the latest.” Indeed the Spaniard, also a Levy gallery artist, becomes more significant for Laughlin as he turns from what I have defined as his initial de Chirico-like mode to his later, Dalí-informed style.

While the outbreak of war in Europe and his subsequent military service undeniably impacted Laughlin’s thinking, one should also consider the influence of Hollywood, especially the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind* adapted from Margaret

Mitchell's 1936 novel of the same name. The epic movie brought the life and mansions of the antebellum South into contemporary consciousness. Laughlin began his plantation photos after the novel was published, and before the much publicized classic film was released. By the time it appeared, *Ghosts Along the Mississippi* probably seemed a kind of archaeology of the film's movie sets. With his publication, Laughlin probed an already mythic topic, and to some extent fulfilled its clichéd expectations. This is implicit in Joseph Cornell's praise for "works... evoking all kinds of wonderful things about what I dreamed of the South."¹⁸

When photographing the architecture of New Orleans in the late 1930s, Laughlin wrote, "buildings were approached as psychological and poetic documents rather than from the more narrow viewpoints of the historian and the architect."¹⁹ The same ideal characterizes the mansions of *Ghosts Along the Mississippi*. This book was similarly followed, in the 1950s and '60s, by the photographer's far-reaching campaign to catalogue American Victorian buildings. Laughlin ultimately traveled throughout the Midwest and West, photographing in Illinois, Wisconsin, Utah, Texas, California, and Arizona, and exposing over five thousand negatives. As he wrote, he "had to make a living, mostly by doing photographs for architects and architectural magazines." He "came to be repelled by the lack of individuality and the inhumanity, intrinsic to so much modern architecture."²⁰

His celebration of this premodern architecture notably parallels Salvador Dalí's advocacy of Gaudi and *modernista* buildings in Catalonia. Dalí's major essay on this theme, "On The Terrifying and Edible Beauty of Art Nouveau Architecture," also published in the pages of *Minotaure*, just preceded his well-known photo-collage on "Ecstasy." "The delirious Art Nouveau Architecture," Dalí proclaims, "is the most original and most extraordinary phenomenon in the history of art." The captions below the details of the Paris metro declare: "against idealist functionalism, [for] symbolical- psychic- materialist functioning."²¹ Dalí's phrases are strikingly similar to Laughlin's "psychological and poetic documents" of older buildings, which he felt possessed "psychological functionalism."

In the same vein, in Los Angeles in 1960, Laughlin presents Simon Rodia's Watts Towers as the American equivalent—in the realm of visionary folk architecture—of the Palace of Facteur Cheval, beloved of the French Surrealists. The Palace, too, was celebrated in the pages of *Minotaure*, in an essay by André Breton just preceding Dalí's on Art Nouveau.²²

Landscapes are relatively rare in Laughlin's later work. Yet on a trip to Arizona, he shoots eight images of tree or rock forms in four days, from May 19-22, 1952. The one he later published prominently as his first illustration in a 1982 exhibition at the New Orleans Museum of Art was entitled *Three Brothers Peak*

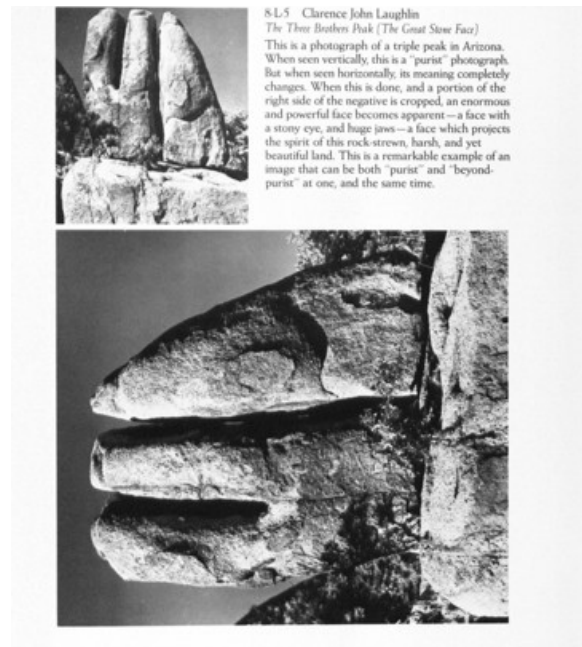


Fig. 7. Clarence John Laughlin, *The Three Brothers Peak* or *Triple Peak* or *Peak with a Double Meaning*, 1952, from exh. cat., New Orleans Museum of Art, 1982; photo by Clarence John Laughlin © 2008 The Historic New Orleans Collection

(Fig. 7).²³ This is a natural rock formation in Granite Dells that Laughlin came upon north of Prescott, Arizona.²⁴ Rotating his print forty-five degrees, he discovered a secondary image of a face, recalling Dalí's analogous experience with a postcard of an African village. This example confirms Laughlin's awareness of Dalí's paranoiac-critical theory and other writings. In fact the whole catalogue layout, which Laughlin created, is strikingly similar in its didacticism to Dalí's brief "communication" from *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (December, 1931; Fig. 8). There, a postcard of an African village rotated forty-five degrees became for Dalí a secondary image of a Picassoid head.

Laughlin usually avoided the Western landscape, feeling it was "covered" by Ansel Adams and others whom he termed the "Purist" school for their straightforward and detailed treatment of nature. The delirium of the paranoiac-critical image, however, seemed to offer the possibility for a surrealist disruption of the landscape. Going beyond the visible to "an animistic and poetic vision," a double image automatically reveals a subconscious projection into the landscape. This is true of other photos among the eight Arizona landscapes, as Laughlin described in his notebooks, for instance:

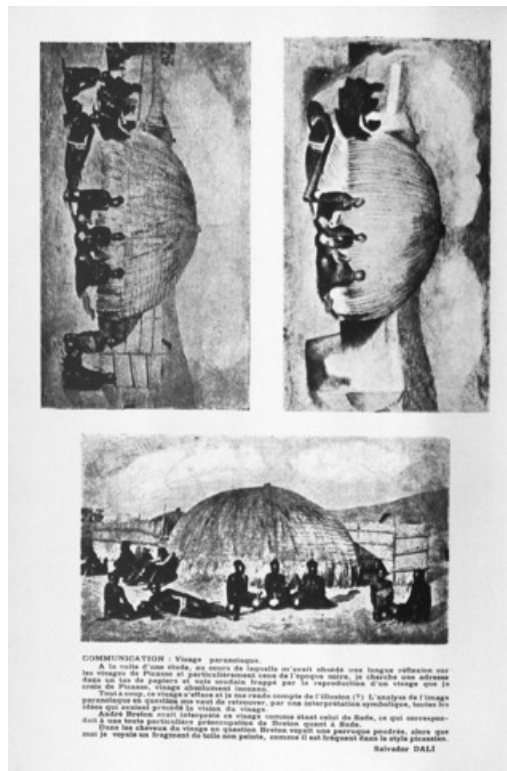


Fig. 8. Salvador Dalí, “Communication,” *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (Dec. 1931)

“Close-up of a huge evergreen with a small human-like form—suggesting a mandrake”;

and

“An extreme close-up of a section of a cliff wall. Uncannily, it evokes the mysterious sunken pueblo cities which are said to have once existed in this country—which were circular, and set below the level of the surroundings.”²⁵

The photo matching this latter description is *Evocation of a Pueblo Culture. Pueblo World in a Rock Wall* (HNOG 1983.47.1.6100; Fig. 9), where Laughlin projects a macrocosm in a tiny microcosm, a vertiginous shift in scale which is also sometimes seen in Dalí paintings. The small crevices near the center call to mind the rock cave dwellings of

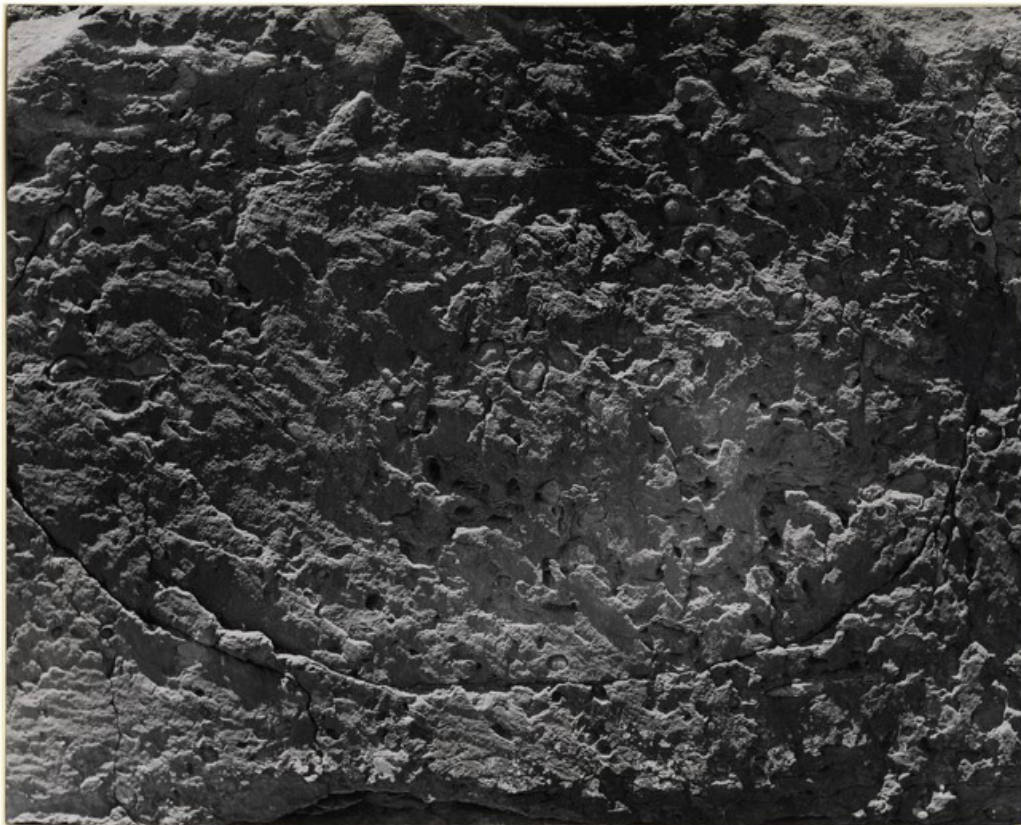


Fig. 9. Clarence John Laughlin, *Evocation of Pueblo Culture*, 1952, photo by Clarence John Laughlin © 2008 The Historic New Orleans Collection

the Southwest.

Spring days near Prescott, Arizona were quite distinctive in their focus on landscape, on a Western swing which produced mostly architectural photos. Laughlin may have been inspired by the visionary rock landscapes of another “Regionalist Surrealist,” Prescott’s Frederick Sommer. A visit to Sommer would seem to be a logical motivation for visiting this town, but it is not confirmed that the two met at this time.²⁶ It seems in fact that he sought a kind of “uncanny” or hallucinatory Surrealism in “Sommer’s” rocks, which are also conceptually and visually analogous to those in the often arid vistas of Dalí’s Catalan landscapes. Like Dalí, Laughlin’s secondary image is often a figurative projection onto the amorphous forms. They differ, however, in the degree to which the double image reveals erotic content—in Laughlin’s case this is less likely than in Dalí’s. Laughlin regarded such

“animistic projection” more as a visual phenomenon, like Leonardo’s stains on the wall, whereas for Dalí the double image was a psychic revelation, leading to a form of self-analysis.

It is worth recalling that Dalí in fact had staked his growing reputation on the elaboration of a self-defined “paranoiac critical image,” that is, on the expressive possibilities of multiple simultaneous images. They became increasingly elaborate in his paintings toward the end of the 1930s. In April 1939 *Life* magazine reported, “New Yorkers stand in line to see his six-in-one Surrealist painting,” referring to *The Endless Enigma*. The catalogue accompanying the Levy Gallery display offered an elaborate rationale for multiple simultaneous images as a powerful innovation in representational art. In addition to Dalí’s essay that traced the art historical pedigree for such images, the catalogue included a highly innovative design. Six glassine sheets are tipped in, individually outlining in red six different possible readings inscribed within *The Endless Enigma* and which could be superimposed to form the complete painting. The catalogue was quite a keepsake and prolonged the influence of Dalí’s concepts beyond the run of the show.

Multiple simultaneous images are a difficult proposition in photography. Yet the effect was pursued in surrealist circles, notably in the photographs of Man Ray. One of his most striking examples, *Minotaure* (1934), captures a shadowy female torso dramatically spotlighted so that it simultaneously reads as the head of the mythical bull-headed beast, arms becoming horns. Again, this double image was published in *Minotaure* magazine which, as we have seen, Laughlin followed. Furthermore, Man Ray was a figure he admired, corresponded with, and invited to visit New Orleans in the early 1940s, though the trip apparently did not take place.²⁷ So, too, consider Brassai’s *Buttress of the Elevated* (1933), whose shadow becomes a strong facial profile. This image was also published in *Minotaure*.²⁸

The double image first appears in Laughlin’s photographs in a work of 1936, *The Serpent and the Egyptian King*.²⁹ As the title signals, a close up of a twisted branch and its shadow in a wheelbarrow can be imagined as a pharaoh with a cobra headdress. This image is contemporary with the Museum of Modern Art’s “Fantastic Art” exhibition, and comes two years after André Breton welcomed this “instrument of primary importance, specifically the paranoiac critical method, which has immediately shown itself capable of being applied with equal success to painting, poetry, the cinema.”³⁰

The double image remains episodic yet does become more frequent after the mid-1940s. For instance, a 1945 composition at first seems a continuation of Laughlin’s “ruin” theme (Fig. 10). One might dub it “Europe After the Rain,” and the reference would be clear. But Laughlin, ever insistent on the narrative dimension



Fig. 10. Clarence John Laughlin, *The Head in the Wall*, 1945, photo by Clarence John Laughlin © 2008 The Historic New Orleans Collection



Fig. 11. Clarence John Laughlin, *The Radiator as a Hand, Number Two*, 1960, photo by Clarence John Laughlin © 2008 The Historic New Orleans Collection

of titles, uncharacteristically baptized it *The Head in the Wall* (1945). Thus he insists on a visual phenomenon, which directs us to read the torn-out window frame as a profile face, with a nose to the right and neck to the left. Given the careful alignment of the background details, the effect seems as planned as it is discovered, an example of surrealist “objective chance” as for instance in Brassai’s *Buttress of the Elevated* (1933), mentioned above.

At the end of his 1952 trip and his time in Arizona, Laughlin reached the Pacific coast, where he photographed an overhead view of the rusted ruins of a truck that had plunged to the shore below. Again, the title directs us to the secondary figuration: *Head of Oceanus* (1952, Fig. 11), as do his specific notes, which speak of “a powerful and disturbing head of a marine monster or sea god whose nose is a rock, and whose eye has a pupil of sea weed.”³¹ The craggy face with large nose is in profile to the right. This print is also turned ninety degrees to reveal the secondary image. Curiously so, for one might see the shape of a fish in the print as snapped, with the same eye, yet facing left. Either way, the erosion of the rocks creates some strangely organic shapes, recalling the craggy seacoast of Dalí’s *Cape Creus*, which he termed “a grandiose geological delirium.” The Spanish costal formations are so anthropomorphic that some are given animal or figurative nicknames by the locals, like “The Dead Woman,” “The Camel,” “The Monk.”³² And they inspired similarly animistic images in Dalí’s paintings. These parallels suggest a symbiotic relationship between photography and painting in both Dalí’s and Laughlin’s practices. Indeed, despite the fact that Dalí never took up a camera, Rosalind Krauss argues that his photographic collaborations were “the most emblematically Surrealist of them all.”³³

One again finds ruins in *The Radiator as a Hand, the Headlight as a Gaping Fish* (1960, Fig. 12). These ruins, however, are not of the past, but rather the forms of transportation of post-war American highway culture. The crumpled metal contrasts with the pre-war *Eye No. 1*, with its techno-optimism reflected in the newly polished automotive metal. Post-war, Laughlin was repeatedly drawn to old cars, sometimes finding in their hulks a physiognomic trace; the possibility of the double image continued to intrigue him. With this found object he aspires to a triple image: a hand, and a gaping fish, inscribed within the radiator of a wrecked car. Thus he continued his elegiac meditation on the American ruin, with its suggestions of decay and entropy. Laughlin wrote at some length of the dystopic symbolism: “This kind of animistic projection grows out of [the photographer’s] profound fear of what machines are doing to our society, and of the still more dangerous things they may do in the future.”³⁴ This brings Andy Warhol’s *Car Crash* paintings to mind, with their gruesome visible victims, different in that they are so decisively of the present. Nonetheless, Warhol’s greater grimness does remind us that Laughlin’s image is also a



Fig. 12. Clarence John Laughlin, *The Throne of the Sea, Number One* or *Head of a Sea Monster, Number One* or *Head of Oceanus*, 1952, photo by Clarence John Laughlin © 2008 The Historic New Orleans Collection

vanitas, as Laughlin's cemetery photos were.

Thus Laughlin's effort to transform himself from a localized "Regionalist Surrealist" to one of general stature was in the post-war years partly framed in terms of a Dalí-like, figurative Surrealism metamorphosized in photography. Laughlin thus actualized Dalí's ambition to make the hallucinatory as precise as a photograph, paradoxically during years when Dalí himself turned from surrealism to a "classic" style.

Laughlin's terms continued to be shadowed by ruins, an elegy for the past, as well as this intermittent exploration of the Dalían double image. As we have seen, Laughlin carried his Regionalist "Surrealism of place" to widening circles of the American West, albeit to a less favorable critical reception in his later years. Subsequently, Laughlin scholars have tended to minimize the impact of Surrealism while others have left him out of the photographic surrealist canon altogether.³⁵ Yet a "Surrealism of place" is no less so for being non-urban.

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New Orleans and after. I am also indebted to two anonymous reviewers and the editor who made significant suggestions for revision.

1 Patricia Leighten called him a “regional artist,” in her article “Clarence John Laughlin: The Art and Thought of an American Surrealist,” *History of Photography*, vol. 12 (April-June 1988): 134. I am also indebted to Isabelle Dervaux’s exhibition “Surrealism USA,” (New York: National Academy Museum, 2005) for considering Surrealism in national terms.

2 Alfred Barr, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936). In the collection of Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. I am grateful to John Lawrence for directing me to this source:

<http://lsu.louislibraries.org/uhtbin/cgiisirs/i/Yu3SWIFsz/MIDL-MAIN/263950065/9>

3 Barr, 211, 214. Barr wrote, “De Chirico’s art of the period 1910-18 has been perhaps the most important single influence on Surrealist painting.”

4 Illustrated in Ian Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams, Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris* (Manchester University Press, 2002), Fig. 11.

5 See André Kertész, *Distortions* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

6 See Walker, 38. Atget is also a factor, as discussed in Walker, 44, and Chapter 5.

7 Julien Levy, *Surrealism* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995; 1936 orig ed.), 19. See also his *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (New York: Putnam, 1977), 183-196.

8 Laughlin’s lobbying campaign had been successful in eliciting a visit from Levy when the latter brought his mobile sales operation to New Orleans in 1939. He was soon offered a show, becoming the principal new photographer Levy took on after the first three seasons of the Gallery (1931-34), after which he turned primarily to painters. See Katherine Ware, “From Dadaism to MoMAism at the Julien Levy Gallery,” in *Dreaming in Black and White, Photography at the Julien Levy Gallery* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2006), 100.

9 “Laughlin’s Photographic Groups,” Keith F. Davis, *Clarence John Laughlin Visionary Photographer* (Kansas City: Hallmark, 1990), group L.

10 John Lawrence, *Historic New Orleans Collection Quarterly* (Fall, 1998): 9. James Thrall Soby bought four for the discounted price of thirty dollars.

11 See further Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge: MIT Press 2001), 171-181.

12 Clarence John Laughlin, *Ghosts Along the Mississippi* (New York: Scribner’s, 1948), plate 73.

13 Cornell wrote to Laughlin in admiration, letter of Jan. 13, 1948, quoted in John Lawrence and Patricia Brady, eds. *Haunter of Ruins, The Photography of Clarence John*

- Laughlin* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1997), 93.
- 14 Both quotes are from Laughlin, *Ghosts*, Prologue.
- 15 Laughlin, *Ghosts*, plate 73.
- 16 Laughlin, *Ghosts*, plate 1.
- 17 Robert S. Lubar, "Salvador Dalí in America: The Rise and Fall of an Arch-Surrealist," in Isabelle Dervaux, *Surrealism USA* (New York: National Academy Museum, 2005), 20-29.
- 18 Cornell, cited in *Haunter of Ruins*, 93.
- 19 "Lost New Orleans" was one of the two main series shown at Julien Levy gallery, and formed the basis of his first book, *New Orleans and Its Living Past* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941).
- 20 Laughlin's Photographic Groups," in Davis (1990), group N.
- 21 Salvador Dalí, "On The Terrifying and Edible Beauty of Art Nouveau Architecture," *Minotaure* 3-4 (Dec. 1933), translated in Haim Finkelstein, ed., *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí* (New York: Cambridge, 1998), 194,199.
- 22 André Breton, "Le message automatique," *Minotaure* 3-4 (Dec., 1933): 65.
- 23 *Edward Weston and Clarence John Laughlin: An Introduction to the Third World of Photography* (New Orleans Museum of Art, 1982), 9. Laughlin later changed the title to *Face of the Land, Number One*. I am grateful to John Lawrence, of the Historic New Orleans Collection for information and transcriptions from Laughlin's manuscript notes in this section.
- 24 Jeremy Cox, Frederick Sommer Archive, e-mail of Nov. 10, 2006.
- 25 Laughlin manuscript notes, Historic New Orleans Collection.
- 26 I am grateful to both Jeremy Cox and John Lawrence for checking their respective photographer's archives on this point. Thus far, no written trace of a meeting of the two has emerged.
- 27 Man Ray/ Laughlin correspondence, Historic New Orleans Collection.
- 28 In *Minotaure* (1935). See Walker (2002), 148-49.
- 29 Reproduced in Davis (1990), 30.
- 30 André Breton, *What is Surrealism?* lecture of 1934, in Franklin Rosemont, ed. *André Breton, What is Surrealism? Selected Writings* (New York: Monad, 1978), 136.
- 31 Davis, (1990), plate 80.
- 32 Ian Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí* (New York: Norton, 1998), 69-70.
- 33 Rosalind Krauss, "The Phantom of Sex Appeal," in *Surrealism: Two Private Eyes* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1999), 723.
- 34 Clarence John Laughlin, *The Personal Eye* (New York: Aperture, 1973), 124.
- 35 Notably, he is not included in Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston, eds., *L'Amour fou*, exh. cat. (Washington: Corcoran Gallery / New York: Abbeville, 1985).