


The background of the entire page is white, overlaid with vibrant red ink splatters and brushstrokes. These marks are scattered across the page, with some forming long, sweeping lines and others as smaller, more contained blotches. The overall effect is one of dynamic, expressive movement.

\*as  
handsome  
as the  
*chance*  
encounter

Johanna Zanon

RAM GALLERI

27 FEB. - 29 MARCH 2020

The left side of the image features a vibrant red background with dynamic, white, splatter-like patterns. These patterns consist of various shapes, including long, thin lines, circular droplets, and irregular blotches, creating a sense of movement and spontaneity.

\*as  
handsome  
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RAM GALLERI  
27 FEB. – 29 MARCH 2020

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# FOREWORD

Over its thirty years of operation, RAM gallery has maintained the multidisciplinary profile it has had from the very start. This is rare in Norway, where many art institutions have traditionally been organized as guilds for artists working in specific art medias. RAM is and has always been a gallery where contemporary art, craft, design and – originally – architecture interact.

In the time leading up to our anniversary in 2019, we decided to put emphasis on the gallery ethos of being a platform for dialogue between different disciplines and creative expressions, resulting in a number of exhibitions that explore points of connection between contemporary and historic artists, between conceptual and material art, and between fine art and design. The present exhibition, *As Handsome as the Chance Encounter*, curated by fashion historian Dr. Johanna Zanon, is in my opinion an excellent manifestation of this ambition, as it enacts a journey through a cultural landscape of art, fashion and literature.

The exhibition recreates the topography of a decadent and phantasmagoric Paris inhabited by the Faustian character of Maldoror from the poem *Les Chants de Maldoror*, by Isidore Ducasse, better known as Comte de Lautréamont; without, however, resorting to literality. It is a poetic interpretation, rather than a factual re-enactment. Zanon brings together emerging Norwegian artists Jara Marken, Steffen André Nilsen, Pia Antonsen Rognes with Parisian designers Clinique Vestimentaire, Coralie Marabelle, Mansour Martin, and Proèmes de Paris. Conceptual French artist Grégoire Motte bridges different, perhaps incongruous, worlds – adding an element of unpredictability to the scene.

Art and fashion have a long joint history, and yet rarely do we see cross-cultural explorations of these fields in Scandinavia. In France, the relationship between artists and fashion designers has been more relaxed, even fruitful. Iconic fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli (1890-1973) founded her fashion house in 1927, and from the very start she entertained friendships and collaborations with artists of the avantgarde, including the Surrealists who were so fond of *Les Chants de Maldoror*. Artists such as Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, Alberto Giacometti, Jean Cocteau and Andy Warhol have all left their mark on the creations of Schiaparelli, and many of the artists have in turned incorporated her designs into their own art works.

Now, almost a century later, it should be entirely natural to initiate exhibitions that explore the common ground between these two worlds. And yet, it is so rarely done that when we initiated our discussions with Johanna Zanon about the project, we could not find any comparative exhibition project in recent years in Oslo. The fact that fashion history is now an established academic discipline that shares the epistemology of art history, makes the effort all the more relevant.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Johanna Zanon for her enthusiastic work with this project, to all participating artists and designers and to the several collaboration partners and funding bodies that made this possible.

Joakim Borda-Pedreira  
*Director, RAM Galleri*



# as handsome

A  
A  
COMPARISON

Johanna Zanon

Chance was a decisive factor in making this exhibition. A combination of events resulted in the accidental encounter of two projects originally conceived separately, one on Paris-based emerging fashion designers, and another on small art objects and limited editions by young Scandinavian artists. Their timely encounter confirms the merit of creative constraints. It was while looking for a way to bring together two bodies of work that seemed, at first glance, totally alien to each other that I reminisced the famous quote from *Les Chants de Maldoror*: ‘as handsome [...] as the chance encounter upon a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella.’<sup>1</sup> Could the exhibition space become the dissecting table of fashion designs and works of art?

*Les Chants de Maldoror* is a prose poem written in 1869 by the Comte de Lautréamont, the pen name of Isidore Ducasse. The book, comprising of six cantos, revolves around Maldoror, a figure of unrelenting evil who has forsaken the Creator, aka God, and mankind. The book fell into oblivion until it was rediscovered by the Surrealists, who made it a classic of French literature. André Breton, in particular, saw in Lautréamont the forerunner of Surrealism.<sup>2</sup> The chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella came to represent in our collective memory the archetype of the Surrealist image.<sup>3</sup> It encapsulates the theory of objective chance, that is, the enforced juxtaposition of two distant realities, which challenges the viewer’s preconception of reality and gives them access to a ‘surreality.’

The quote, out of its original context, has since been used without ever mentioning the object

of the comparison. Moreover, many translations of Lautréamont’s famous quote substituted ‘handsome’ with ‘beautiful,’ as ‘handsome’ is not commonly employed to describe an object. Conveniently, the French language does not distinguish between the two, and *beau* can be just as well applied to a human being as it can to an inanimate object. So what exactly is *beau*? Or rather who is handsome? As a matter of fact, the quote describes the first appearance in the sixth and last canto of 16-year-and-4-month-old Mervyn, whom Maldoror spots in Rue Vivienne in Paris, from where he begins stalking him:

‘He is as handsome as the retractability of the talons of birds of prey; or again, as the uncertainty of muscular movements in the wounds in the soft parts of the lower cervical region; or rather, as that perpetual rat trap, always reset by the caught animal, which can take on rodents indefinitely, and even work when hidden under straw; and above all, as the fortuitous encounter upon a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella!’<sup>4</sup>

While re-reading *Les Chants de Maldoror*, remarkable coincidences have emerged between the text, fashion, and art.<sup>5</sup> What were the odds of Lautréamont mentioning Norway in *Les Chants de Maldoror*? Yet, the first canto reads as follows: ‘The one who does not know how to cry (because, he always suppressed his suffering) remarked that he found himself in Norway.’ Even the location of the exhibition seemed to encourage such random collisions, as RAM Galleri is located in the ‘Fashion District’ of Oslo and is also in the centre of the contemporary art scene.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, Canto VI, p. 289-290.

<sup>2</sup> Breton wrote in the first *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924): ‘Have shown ABSOLUTE SURREALISM: Messrs. Aragon, Baron, Boiffard, Breton, Carrive, Crevel, Delteil, Desnos, Éluard, Gérard, Limbour, Malkine, Morise, Naville, Noll, Péret, Picon, Soupault, and Vitrac. They seem to be the only ones so far, and there would be no mistake about it, if it was not for the fascinating case of Isidore Ducasse [...]’ (André Breton, *Manifestes du Surréalisme*, Paris, Gallimard, 1998, p. 37).

<sup>3</sup> If the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella is the epitome of the Surrealistic image, Breton quoted another comparison in the first *Manifesto of Surrealism*: ‘handsome as the law of cessation of chest development in adults, whose propensity to growth is not linked to the quantity of molecules that their organism assimilates.’ (Breton, *Manifestes du Surréalisme*, p. 50).

<sup>4</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, Canto VI, p. 289-290.

<sup>5</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, Canto I, p. 43-44.

<sup>6</sup> RAM Galleri, Kongens gate 15, 0153 Oslo, Norway.

## I.

Arbitrary juxtapositions are not absent connections, quite the opposite. Lautréamont himself recognized, not without irony, the ability comparison has of bringing alien realities together. He commented his own use of this literary device:

'It is, generally speaking, a singular thing that the attractive tendency that leads us to seek out (in order to then express them) the resemblances and differences that are found, in their natural properties, in the most conflicting objects, and sometimes the least apt, at first sight, to lend themselves to this kind of sympathetically curious combination, which, I give you my word, gracefully add to the style of the writer, who for personal satisfaction treats himself with the impossible and unforgettable face of an owl serious till eternity.'<sup>7</sup>

From the accidental display of objects emerges a wealth of intertwined themes, approaches, and discourses. Some connections disappear as quickly as they appear, while others only seem to grow stronger and linger in the viewer's memory.

Disentangling the threads of Lautréamont's book, the exhibition space becomes the dissecting table upon which the chance encounter of fashion and art objects is explored. Initiating multiple material, visual, and conceptual encounters, this exhibition shows, for the first time in Norway, creations of fashion designers – Clinique Vestimentaire, Coralie Marabelle, Mansour Martin, and Proèmes de Paris – together with works of artists – Grégoire Motte, Jara Marken, Pia Antonsen Rognes, and Steffen André Nilsen.

Artist Jara Marken's practice is an attempt to get closer to nature. Her *Danser I-VI* (2020) sculptures assume organic forms and echo the changing light of Scandinavian seasons. They draw their inspiration from seaweeds, in different shades of blue and grey, with her textile collages sporting hints of purple on a beige background (*Landskap I-III*, 2020). While they are made of plaster, her sculptures look soft: they have kept the imprint of the fabric in which the plaster was first cast. Texture, color and rhythm are all prominent in Marken's practice.

Coralie Marabelle uses fashion, primarily an urban phenomenon, to counter the effect of ageing on clothing: she upcycles discarded garments to create new pieces, such as *Giant Dress no.1* (2019). Her approach is part of a wider trend of sustainable fashion, which seeks to reduce the environmental impact of the fashion industry. While three-quarters of Mansour Martin's collections, including *Galactica* (Fall-Winter 2020), are sustainable, their entire production line can be traced to France, Belgium, Italy, and Portugal. Clinique Vestimentaire radically rethinks the making of clothes by using a single thread, thus providing a potential solution to the textile waste issue that plagues the fashion industry.

## II.

Fashion objects are enveloped in narratives, spun by the brands themselves, the media, and consumers. Proèmes de Paris derives its stories from literature. The brand name is a contraction of 'prose' and 'poem,' which incidentally echoes Lautréamont's prose-poem. Proèmes de Paris favors shades of black and white for their radical take on classical silhouettes. The dress on display (Fall-Winter 2018) on display has a black background on which one can read excerpts from *Le Mondain* by Voltaire, a poem advocating luxury.

Artist Grégoire Motte's work is also rich in stories. These are in constant discussion with his tongue-in-cheek artworks. Yet the story told by his three *Fontana Romana* (2018-2020) is perhaps the polar opposite to Voltaire's poem, as their plastic bottles seem to subscribe to an aesthetic of cheapness. Motte is a master of 'chance encounters' and his work is full of lucky accidents. Each of the fountains is an encounter between plastic bottles and shellfish. The undertone of dark humor that runs through the exhibition brightens with Motte's fountains.

## III.

Artist Steffen André Nilsen creates crowns in ceramic (2019), which are an outer body expression of an individual's identity and past. This accounts for the crowns' diverse colors and shapes. Like Aristoteles, Nilsen sees mind and body as two separate entities. In an unexpected twist though, he associates the body with power, wealth, eternity, and identity. Two of the crowns are minuscule, which is reminiscent of the trend for tiny fashion accessories that impede their practical use. In contrast, Coralie Marabelle's *Giant Dress no. 1* is immensely voluminous, with a neckline wide enough to fit a torso, mile-long sleeves, and a trailing skirt.

While Nilsen materializes abstract concepts in the shape of crowns, fashion brand Clinique Vestimentaire digs into the bodily material and makes human anatomy visible on the surface of the skin. In an involuntary nod to Maldoror's comparison of Mervyn, Clinique Vestimentaire uses the visual repertoire of dissection, with dissection tables, scalpels, and other surgical tools – like her *Grefte vestimentaire BOUCLIER* (sartorial graft SHIELD, 2019). Using a single thread, its designs are indebted to the ways in which muscles are attached to the human skeleton, using strings as sinews.

<sup>7</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, Canto V, p. 264.

## IV.

Artist Pia Antonsen Rognes creates a mess of textile, latex, and synthetic hair, which reeks of death. There are no bones or muscles here, but rather undigested, spat-out body parts. While typically interpreted as examining the themes of inner conflict and self-destructive behavior, one cannot avoid reading Rognes's piece here as Maldoror's destruction of Mervyn. The contorted shape alludes to Mervyn's broken body after Maldoror had his way with him. Black intestines are as dark as Lautréamont's text. Albeit in different ways, both Rognes and Nilsen express a disconnection between inside and outside, the surface and the core, the body and the mind.

Rognes also plays with the codes of fetishism, expressing with *Traces of Love and Revulsion* (2014) a desperately repressed and hidden love. Fashion brand Mansour Martin explores the interaction of sexuality and violence through *fetish tailoring*, with fetish woollen jackets and trousers, slashed in many places. Like medieval slashed sleeves, the slits let the viewer cast a sensuous glance at the wearer's intimacy. Both the works of Rognes and Mansour Martin seem to corroborate the Surrealists' interpretation of the encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella as disguised sexual symbolism.<sup>8</sup> Maldoror's sexual attraction to Mervyn spirals out of control, spirals into violent outbursts, and culminates in Mervyn's death.

The comparisons that emerged from the chance encounters between the objects on display conceived in distinct fields, with a set of diverse rules and norms, produced with different intents and destined to multiple viewers, have proven remarkably easy to bring about. So easy, in fact, that when reading the results of these unplanned comparisons one could possibly miss the extreme eclecticism of the show. Even more surprising perhaps is the capacity to draw results that are fruitful, and not just amusing. I wonder whether material comparisons work regardless of the compared objects, like two points always form a line in Euclidean geometry, or whether I got lucky.

But maybe the reason why encounters unearth stimulating intersections lies in the richness *Les Chants de Maldoror* itself, which spurs imagination and allows for multiple re-readings. While its dense darkness radically criticizes bourgeois society, as the author saw it in mid-19th-century France, the work encapsulates the seeds for a constantly renewed rebellion against societal issues up to this day. In his *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950), poet Aimé Césaire was the first to see in Lautréamont's work an implacable denunciation of a capitalist and colonial society.<sup>9</sup> For Césaire, the Creator is neither God nor religion: it is the capitalist entrepreneur, violent, corrupt, and barbaric.

Following in Césaire's footsteps, one can use *Les Chants de Maldoror* as a catalyst to take a critical look at the capitalist, neocolonial, and patriarchal structures of European societies in the early 21st century. And pretty much everything else.

<sup>8</sup> See Man Ray: *Objets de mon affection*, Paris, 1983, p. 142; and Arturo Schwarz, Man Ray: *The Rigour of the Imagination*, London, 1977, p. 161–162.

<sup>9</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Paris, 1950. According to Césaire, Maldoror is a realistic character from Balzac, hard, inflexible, unscrupulous, and hungry for flesh, who has been to the colonies, caught malaria, and encountered lethal fauna and dark folk tales. Césaire reads the 'flea mine' motive of the book as a 'denunciation of the evil power of gold and hoarding.' He analyses the episode where a child in rags runs after an omnibus that continues its route undeterred as an allegory of a society where the privileged classes refuse to make space for newcomers.

## MAN RAY



L'énigme d'Isidore Ducasse  
1920, remade 1972, Sewing machine, wool and string, 35,5 × 60,5 × 33,5 cm,  
Tate Modern © Man Ray Trust/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2020.

# undressing Maldoror from the Rags of the Creator

to THE RICHES  
OF MERVYN

Johanna Zanon

Literature has fed fashion. As early as the 1780s, Queen Marie-Antoinette of France wore shepherdess dresses inspired by pastoral novels. From the mid-19th century, couturiers based in Paris regularly named their designs after literary characters, and paid tribute to their favorite authors. For instance, Yves Saint Laurent's 1980 collection *Shakespeare and the Poets* was a vibrant homage to Lady Macbeth as much as to French poets Guillaume Apollinaire, Louis Aragon, and Jean Cocteau.

Writers have been equally fascinated with fashion, especially from the nineteenth century and the birth of dandyism in literary circles. In Great Britain, Jane Austen, Henry James, and Virginia Woolf were particularly sensitive to sartorial issues. Honoré de Balzac, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Marcel Proust were among the French literary figures most interested in appearances, weaving the fabric of fashion into their novels. Sometimes they also wrote for fashion publications. Mallarmé even launched his own fashion journal, *La Dernière mode*.

Although Lautréamont has not typically been considered a fashion-minded author, elements of dress feature prominently in *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869). To begin with, the poetic encounter on the dissecting table involves a tool of clothing production, the sewing machine, and a fashion accessory, the umbrella. The range of dress- and fashion-related topics by Lautréamont is remarkable. It includes garments, textiles, nudity, masquerade, beauty, perfumes, cosmetics, jewels, hair, and tattoos, as well as social status indicated by fashion and labor around dress.

Fashion scholars have used fictional works to study the history of garments and clothing practices, debating over representational issues.<sup>1</sup> Literary scholars have investigated how elements of dress move plots along and inform the readers on the characters' personality, feelings, and emotions. Both fashion studies and literary scholarship have researched the historical and social contexts of dress in fiction. Combining approaches from both fields, let us undress *Les Chants de Maldoror* and see how elements of dress were articulated and to what end.

Lautréamont's writing has many bizarre and transgressive scenes. It employs vivid visual language, undertakes drastic shifts in tone and style. Many of his comparisons and metaphors derive from the semantic field of fashion and are used in surprising ways. An octopus, for instance, has 'a silk gaze';<sup>2</sup> and Maldoror 'will check that the spatters of brain have splashed up the satin of [his] forehead.'<sup>3</sup> In fact, many occurrences involve luxury textiles, such as silk and satin. In that regard, Lautréamont joins poets like Barbey d'Aurevilly, who was equally fond of beautiful fabrics.<sup>4</sup> Such fabrics add texture to the prose, as they evoke a sense of touch. Besides textiles, Lautréamont describes occurrences with images of dress and the practice of dressing.

The ocean threatens to 'wrap' men in its 'bubbling folds.' And some men 'reject their dignity, like a useless garment.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See notably Rose Fortassier, *Les Écrivains français et la mode de Balzac à nos jours*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988; Clair Hughes, *Dressed in Fiction*, Oxford: Berg, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 244-245.

<sup>4</sup> Fortassier, *Les Écrivains français et la mode*, p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 174.



While clothes are often mentioned, they are rarely described beyond the generic categories to which they belong – shirt, dress, coat, shoe, etc. Fashion historians gain information about specific types of garments that have fallen out of use from such mentionings. One example is the domino that appears in the fourth canto, where the text announces the ‘time of pink dominos and masked balls.’<sup>6</sup> Dominos were hooded dresses typically worn to go out for occasions such as masked balls and opera shows. These were associated with specific body gestures, to which Lautreámont also refers when he writes: ‘I pushed my head back like a hood.’<sup>7</sup>

Literary scholars commonly interpret the lack of detailed descriptions of garments and stylistic trends as a deliberate choice of writers wanting to give their text longevity. A novel not steeped in current fashion may still speak to its readers in a few years time, so the thinking goes. In the case of *Les Chants de Maldoror*, the absence of references to particular styles may be explained with Lautreámont’s unique combination of symbolic and material interpretations of dress, which elicits visual representation. Put differently, what matters is not what garments look like, but what they mean for the characters and the plot.<sup>8</sup>

In the first canto, Maldoror spies on a bourgeois family and sees the mother and wife doing needlework: she decorates or mends a shirt. After this, needles reappear throughout the text. In the second canto, Maldoror says, ‘I could, by sewing your eyelids with a needle, deprive you from the show of the universe, and prevent you from finding your way; I would not be the one to guide you.’<sup>9</sup> In the fourth canto, two pillars in a valley are compared to baobabs,

‘taller than two pins.’<sup>10</sup> Like with the mentioning of luxurious fabrics, needles and needlework represent the materiality of dress in the text.

Whereas the materiality of dress is featured prominently in the chants, fashion as the seasonal change of looks is referred to less often. That can be explained historically: when Lautreámont wrote *Les Chants de Maldoror*, the French couture system had only existed for just a decade. Fashion historians usually date the birth of haute couture to 1857, when the Englishman Charles Frederick Worth opened his couture house in Paris. Worth established the principle on which the fashion system would be based, namely the seasonal renewal of styles. In contrast, traces of an older clothing system are to be found in *Les Chants de Maldoror*, where the quality of the garment is paramount to its value. For Lautreámont, the materiality of textiles and the craftsmanship of dressmaking say more about clothes and their wearers than the look of a dress or even the symbolic value attached to a brand name.

Mervyn is described as the ‘son of the blond England,’ sporting blond curly hair and wrapped in Scottish tartan. Here again, the material is more important than the cut and the style of the garment and positions its wearer in several ways. The tartan identifies Mervyn as a foreigner from the British Isles; distinctions between Englishness and Scottishness that may also be associated with the tartan are overlooked by Maldoror. Mervyn’s dress echoes the French ‘Anglomania’ that started in the 18th century and continued to flourish well into the 19th century. In 1869, the year when *Les Chants de Maldoror* was published, tartans were popular for both men and women as shown in the French

<sup>6</sup> Lautreámont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 229-230.

<sup>7</sup> Lautreámont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 242-243.

<sup>8</sup> An example of such labourers is the washerwoman who, in the second canto, is supposed to collect the dirty laundry with blood stains. Lautreámont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 64-65.

<sup>9</sup> Lautreámont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 76.

<sup>10</sup> Lautreámont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 186-187.

Costume of Mrs. Cinti-Damoreau in the first act of the *Le Domino Noir* opera by Scribe and Aubert, Paris: Martinet, 1837.  
© Bibliothèque Nationale de France, BMO C-261 (12-1163).





Fashion plate no. 933 from *La Sylphide*, January 20, 1869.

fashion magazine *La Sylphide*. The tartan also identifies Mervyn as a member of the wealthy upper class. Mervyn lives with his family in a grand house, with Venice mirrors, damask curtains, panelling woodwork, ebony flooring, books with golden edges and mother-of-pearl covers, Indian scarves, piano with ivory keys, and so on and so forth.

Creating stark oppositions, Lautréamont pits luxury against extreme poverty. Maldoror encounters many poor people and outcasts who wear rags as a sign of their social condition. One can find evidence for the interpretation that Lautréamont associates luxury with vice and poverty with moral rectitude, for instance in the omnibus episode of the second canto, where an poor child from the streets runs after a bus, trying to catch it, while wealthy passengers do nothing to persuade the driver to stop. The child is picked up by a ragman, who, as Maldoror attests, has 'in him more heart than any of his fellows from the omnibus.' Maldoror sympathizes with the caring ragman whereas he despises the 'stupid and idiotic race' that will repent to have behaved so poorly.<sup>11</sup>

However, this interpretation is not coherent in the text. Mervyn, for instance, is dressed luxuriously, but he is also innocent. In addition to that, Lautréamont dresses the Creator in rags, suggesting that god is a hypocrite who hides his vice in poverty. In the third canto, the Creator lies on the road, wearing torn clothes, 'his lower lip dangling like a somniferous cable; his teeth were not washed, and the dust mixed with the blond waves of his hair.'<sup>12</sup> Another time, Maldoror 'saw a throne, made of human faeces

and gold, onto which sat, with a stupid pride, the body covered with a shroud a made of unwashed hospital bedsheets, the one who calls himself the Creator!'<sup>13</sup> Poverty and eschatology are here combined to give an undignified depiction of the Creator.

The fact that Maldoror's own appearance is constantly changing underlines the point that moral distinctions are blurry in *Les Chants de Maldoror*. Once Maldoror is a cyclop, then he has two eyes; once he is blond, then he has black hair, only to be blond again; his lips are either nonexistent or made of bronze, jasper, sulfur, etc. He conceals his identity in many instances. In the first canto, he is shrouded in a long black coat that covers his face up to the nose.<sup>14</sup> To spy on his fellows, he hides his face with 'a piece velvet, black as the soot that fills the of chimneys interior'; 'eyes should not be witness to the ugliness that the Supreme Being, in a smile of powerful hatred, bestowed upon me.'<sup>15</sup> Wherever he goes, the authorities are looking for Maldoror, who prides himself with escaping them 'with a supreme chic' by using 'superior disguises.' The narrator finds Maldoror's disguises visually masterful, but morally questionable.<sup>16</sup> For example, Maldoror does a rather convincing impression of a lovely cricket, with brisk movements' in the sewers of Paris. Technologies of self and dress converge to provide Maldoror the ability to hide and reveal his own self at will. Elements of masks and masquerades appear on several instances. In the fourth canto, he writes: 'I will not throw to your feet the mask of virtue to appear in front of you such as I am; because, I never wore it (if, however, it is an excuse).'<sup>17</sup>

In fashion as in everything else, the text has multiple layers of interpretation, and no definitive meaning can be ascribed to sartorial elements. Yet the materiality that dress conveys *Les Chants de Maldoror*, closely interwoven to bodily considerations, is central to the poem.

<sup>11</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 71-72.

<sup>12</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 162.

<sup>13</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 88.

<sup>14</sup> See notably the painting by José Chávez Morado, *Los Embozados*, 1955, oil on masonite.

<sup>15</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 20-21.

<sup>16</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 286.

<sup>17</sup> Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1869, p. 209.



LES  
CHANTS  
DE  
MALDOROR

\* Excerpts from

by  
Comte de Lautréamont

(CANTOS I, II, III, IV, V, VI)

PARIS

1869

sold in all book stores

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LES CHANTS  
DE MALDOROR

CHANT PREMIER

Plût au ciel que le lecteur, enhardi et devenu momentanément féroce comme ce qu'il lit, trouve, sans se désorienter, son chemin abrupt et sauvage, à travers les marécages désolés de ces pages sombres et pleines de poison ; car, à moins qu'il n'apporte dans sa lecture une logique rigoureuse et une tension d'esprit égale au moins à sa défiance, les émanations mortelles de ce livre imbiberont son âme comme l'eau le sucre. Il n'est pas bon que tout le monde lise les pages qui vont suivre ; quelques-uns seuls savoureront ce fruit amer sans danger. Par conséquent, âme timide, avant de pénétrer plus loin dans de pareilles landes inexplorées, dirige tes talons en arrière et non en avant. Écoute bien ce que je te dis : dirige tes talons en arrière et non en avant, comme les yeux d'un fils qui

May it please heaven that the reader, emboldened and momentarily as ferocious as what he reads, find, without losing his sense of orientation, an abrupt and wild path through the desolated marshes of these dark pages, full of poison; for unless he brings to his reading a rigorous logic and a tension of mind equal at least to his defiance, the deathly effluvia of this book will soak his soul as water does sugar. It is not recommended for everyone to read the following pages; but a few will relish this bitter fruit without danger. Consequently, timid soul, before penetrating further in such uncharted lands, direct your heels backward and not forward. Hear my words well: direct your heels backwards and not forward, as the



eyes of a son who respectfully looks away from the august contemplation of the maternal face; or, rather, as an endless chevron of cold-sensitive cranes meditating intensely, who, during winter, flies powerfully through silence, full sail, towards a specific spot on the horizon, whence all of a sudden springs a strange strong wind, announcing the tempest. The oldest crane, who forms by herself the vanguard, sees this, and shakes her head like a reasonable person, causing her beak to click, and is unhappy (as I would be in her place), while her old neck, denuded of feathers and contemporaneous with three generations of cranes, moves in irritated undulations that give warning of the ever-approaching storm. After looking in cold blood several times in every direction with eyes that conceal experience, cautiously, the first (because it is she who has the privilege of showing the plumage of her tail to the other cranes of inferior intelligence), with her vigilant cry of melancholic sentry, so as to fence off the common enemy, she turns with flexibility the tip of the geometric shape (maybe it is a triangle, but one does not see the third side that these curious migratory birds form in space), either to port, or to starboard, like a dexterous captain; and, manoeuvring with wings that do not look larger than

se détourne respectueusement de la contemplation auguste de la face maternelle ; ou, plutôt, comme un angle à perte de vue de grues frileuses méditant beaucoup, qui, pendant l'hiver, vole puissamment à travers le silence, toutes voiles tendues, vers un point déterminé de l'horizon, d'où tout à coup part un vent étrange et fort, précurseur de la tempête. La grue la plus vieille et qui forme à elle seule l'avant-garde, voyant cela, branle la tête comme une personne raisonnable, conséquemment son bec aussi qu'elle fait claquer, et n'est pas contente (moi, non plus, je ne le serais pas à sa place), tandis que son vieux cou, dégarni de plumes et contemporain de trois générations de grues, se remue en ondulations irritées qui présagent l'orage qui s'approche de plus en plus. Après avoir de sang-froid regardé plusieurs fois de tous les côtés avec des yeux qui renferment l'expérience, prudemment, la première (car, c'est elle qui a le privilège de montrer les plumes de sa queue aux autres grues inférieures en intelligence), avec son cri vigilant de mélancolique sentinelle, pour repousser l'ennemi commun, elle vire avec flexibilité la pointe de la figure géométrique (c'est peut-être un triangle, mais on ne voit pas le troisième côté que forment dans l'espace ces curieux oiseaux de passage), soit à bâbord, soit à tribord, comme un habile capitaine ; et, manœuvrant avec des ailes qui ne paraissent pas plus grandes que celles d'un moineau,

parce qu'elle n'est pas bête, elle prend ainsi un autre chemin philosophique et plus sûr.

Lecteur, c'est peut-être la haine que tu veux que j'invoque dans le commencement de cet ouvrage ! Qui te dit que tu n'en renifleras pas, baigné dans d'innombrables voluptés, tant que tu voudras, avec tes narines orgueilleuses, larges et maigres, en te renversant de ventre, pareil à un requin, dans l'air beau et noir, comme si tu comprenais l'importance de cet acte et l'importance non moindre de ton appétit légitime, lentement et majestueusement, les rouges émanations ? Je t'assure, elles réjouiront les deux trous informes de ton museau hideux, ô monstre, si toutefois tu t'appliques auparavant à respirer trois mille fois de suite la conscience maudite de l'Éternel ! Tes narines, qui seront démesurément dilatées de contentement ineffable, d'extase immobile, ne demanderont pas quelque chose de meilleur à l'espace, devenu embaumé comme de parfums et d'encens ; car, elles seront rassasiées d'un bonheur complet, comme les anges qui habitent dans la magnificence et la paix des agréables cieux.

a sparrow's, because she is not dumb, she thus takes another philosophic path, a safer one.

Reader, you would have me invoke hatred in the beginning of this work! What makes you sure that you will not sniff it up, paddling in innumerable pleasures, as much of it as you wish, with your proud, wide and thin nostrils, while turning from the belly, like a shark, in the fair, dark hair, as if you understood the importance of this action no less than the importance of your legitimate appetite, slowly and majestically, for the red effluvia? I can assure you that they will please the two misshapen holes of your hideous snout, O monster, if first you set yourself to breathe in three thousands times the accursed consciousness of The Eternal! Your nostrils, which will be vastly dilated with sublime content, with static ecstasy, will ask nothing better of space, now become embalmed as if in perfumes and incense; because, they will be replete with complete happiness, like the angels who live in the magnificence and peace of the pleasant heavens.



eyes of a son who respectfully looks away from the august contemplation of the maternal face; or, rather, as an endless chevron of cold-sensitive cranes meditating intensely, who, during winter, flies powerfully through silence, full sail, towards a specific spot on the horizon, whence all of a sudden springs a strange strong wind, announcing the tempest. The oldest crane, who forms by herself the vanguard, sees this, and shakes her head like a reasonable person, causing her beak to click, and is unhappy (as I would be in her place), while her old neck, denuded of feathers and contemporaneous with three generations of cranes, moves in irritated undulations that give warning of the ever-approaching storm. After looking in cold blood several times in every direction with eyes that conceal experience, cautiously, the first (because it is she who has the privilege of showing the plumage of her tail to the other cranes of inferior intelligence), with her vigilant cry of melancholic sentry, so as to fence off the common enemy, she turns with flexibility the tip of the geometric shape (maybe it is a triangle, but one does not see the third side that these curious migratory birds form in space), either to port, or to starboard, like a dexterous captain; and, manoeuvring with wings that do not look larger than

J'établirai dans quelques lignes comment Maldoror fut bon pendant ses premières années, où il vécut heureux ; c'est fait. Il s'aperçut ensuite qu'il était né méchant : fatalité extraordinaire ! Il cacha son caractère tant qu'il put, pendant un grand nombre d'années ; mais, à la fin, à cause de cette concentration qui ne lui était pas naturelle, chaque jour le sang lui montait à la tête ; jusqu'à ce que, ne pouvant plus supporter une pareille vie, il se jeta résolûment dans la carrière du mal... atmosphère douce ! Qui l'aurait dit ! lorsqu'il embrassait un petit enfant, au visage rose, il aurait voulu lui enlever ses joues avec un rasoir, et il l'aurait fait très-souvent, si Justice, avec son long cortège de châtiments, ne l'en eût chaque fois empêché. Il n'était pas menteur, il avouait la vérité et disait qu'il était cruel. Humains, avez-vous entendu ? il ose le redire avec cette plume qui tremble ! Ainsi donc, il est une puissance plus forte que la volonté... Malédiction ! La pierre voudrait se soustraire aux lois de la pesanteur ? Impossible. Impossible, si le mal voulait s'allier avec le bien. C'est ce que je disais plus haut.

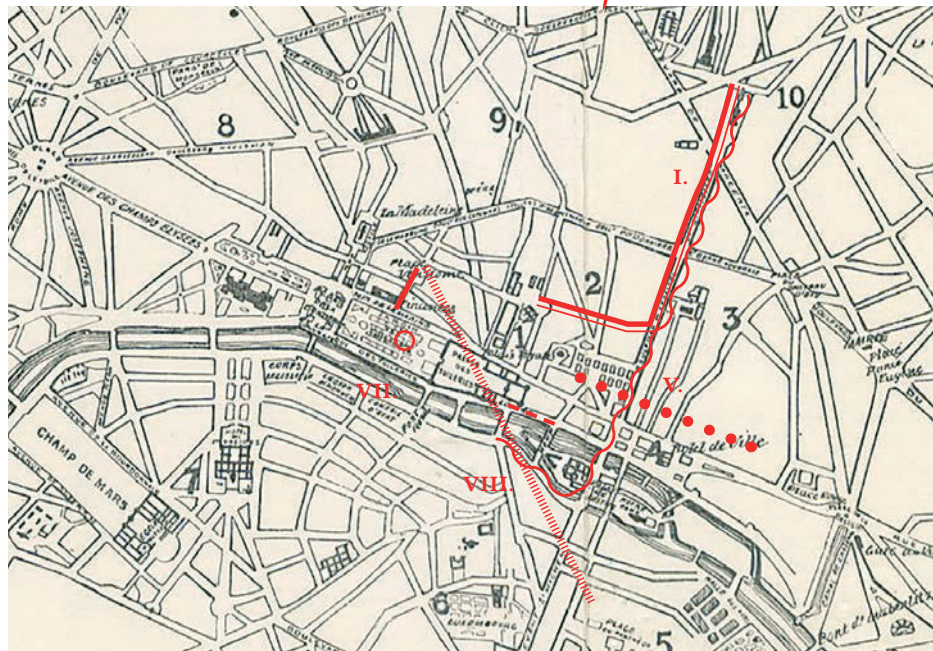
Il y en a qui écrivent pour rechercher les applaudissements humains, au moyen de nobles qualités

du cœur que l'imagination invente ou qu'ils peuvent avoir. Moi, je fais servir mon génie à peindre les délices de la cruauté ! Délices non passagères, artificielles ; mais, qui ont commencé avec l'homme, finiront avec lui. Le génie ne peut-il pas s'allier avec la cruauté dans les résolutions secrètes de la Providence ? ou, parce qu'on est cruel, ne peut-on pas avoir du génie ? On en verra la preuve dans mes paroles ; il ne tient qu'à vous de m'écouter, si vous le voulez bien... Pardon, il me semblait que mes cheveux s'étaient dressés sur ma tête ; mais, ce n'est rien, car, avec ma main, je suis parvenu facilement à les remettre dans leur première position. Celui qui chante ne prétend pas que ses cavatines soient une chose inconnue ; au contraire, il se loue de ce que les pensées hautaines et méchantes de son héros soient dans tous les hommes.

have. I, for one, set my genius to portray the pleasures of cruelty! Pleasures that are not fleeting, artificial; but, which started with man and with him will end. Cannot genius be cruelty's ally in the secret resolutions of Providence? Or, if cruel, cannot one have some genius? My words will provide the proof; all you need do is listen to them, if you like... Sorry, it seemed to me that my hair stand on end; but, that's nothing, for with my hand I easily managed to put them back to their original position. He who sings does not pretend that his cavatins are a novel thing; on the contrary, he prides himself that the elevated, evil thoughts of his hero are in all men.



In the  
*footsteps of*  
 MALDOROR AND  
 MERVYN  
 IN PARIS, 1869.



**STANZA I.**  
 Mervyn, followed by Maldoror



**STANZA V.**  
 Maldoror and the madman  
 meet at the Palais Royal Gardens ○  
 The madman reminisces  
 his childhood somewhere  
 Rue de la Verrerie



**STANZA VII.**  
 Mervyn goes from home  
 to the Carrousel Bridge  
 Maldoror arrives  
 at the Carrousel Bridge



**STANZA VIII.**  
 The Creator runs to help save Mervyn,  
 who is Place Vendôme with Maldoror  
 and the madman

Mervyn flies from  
 Place Vendôme to the Pantheon



# a material re-enactment of the sixth

CANTO IN  
THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Johanna Zanon

The sixth canto of *Les Chants de Maldoror* distinguishes itself from the previous five cantos by its form: whereas the first five parts distribute motives across an epic poem<sup>1</sup>, the sixth canto picks them up and weaves them into a novel. This wild tale of violence tells of Maldoror's seduction and assassination of Mervyn, a sixteen-year-old adolescent.

Yet this is no story in the traditional sense. Its plot takes many twists and turns, and a motley crew of supporting characters enters the scene. In addition to Maldoror and Mervyn, we meet the Creator and Mervyn's parents and siblings; we encounter a madman and his family, witness an archangel, and come across four butchers, and one ragman.

Some of the characters morph into animals. Maldoror transforms first into a cricket and then a black swan; an archangel is sent to earth as a crab; the Creator turns into a rhinoceros. Objects become animate, as a wooden beam communicates with the Creator. While the imagery is consistently dark and gruesome, digressions are plentiful, like when an angora cat attacks Maldoror and sucks his skull after he boiled her kittens in a vat of alcohol.

Literary scholars suggest that Lautréamont parodies nineteenth-century serialized fiction with his wicked plot. They find prominent authors of serials like Louis Noir, Eugène Sue, and Pierre Alexis Ponson du Terrail referenced in *Les Chants de Maldoror*.<sup>2</sup> Beyond serials, Lautréamont alludes to, among others, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, treatises of natural history and medicine, and Charles Baudelaire. All this gives the *Chants* a tremendously rich intertextuality.<sup>3</sup>

The story ends, like a Greek tragedy, with the death of Mervyn. The Creator has been unable to prevent this outcome. Evil has won. Yet this summary of the canto's last act sounds more straightforward than it actually reads. Lautréamont does not offer any explanation for the murder of the boy.

The nine artists and fashion designers featured in this illustrated essay echo the eight stanzas of the sixth canto and its preamble. The objects they have produced take central stage as they re-enact the sixth canto in the twenty-first century. The narrative of the last canto, in all its convoluted complexity, serves as an analytical framework to dissect each object.

<sup>1</sup> Lautréamont reassures us, 'The fifth first cantos were not useless; they were the frontispiece of my work, the foundation of the construction, the preliminary explanation of my future poetic art [...].' Further down, he asserts that together the five first cantos form an 'hybrid preface' to his fictional work. Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Naruhiko Teramoto, 'Travail de la réécriture dans l'oeuvre de Lautréamont,' PhD diss., Université de Nancy: 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Luc Steinmetz identified the following references in his annotated edition of the text: Dante, *Divine Comedy*; Charles Baudelaire; Ponson du Terrail; Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables* (1862); Walter Scott, *Guy Mannering, or the Astrologer* (1812); Théophile Gautier; Eugène Sue, *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842-1843); Jules Baillarger, *Les Rêves et les moyens de les diriger* (1867); natural history writings; medicine writings; Honoré de Balzac, *Une Ténébreuse affaire* (1841); Dr. Chenu, *Encyclopédie d'histoire naturelle* (1850); Hermann von Hemholtz, *Théorie physiologique de la musique* (1868); Louis Noir's serial for *Le Conteur*.

# 1. Maldoror hunts

MERVYN LIKE  
PREY

The sixth canto starts when Maldoror returns to Paris. As he continues his killing spree, he is on the lookout for his next victim. He spots Mervyn at the angle of Rue Colbert and Rue Vivienne and hunts him like prey, following him up to the doorstep of his parents' house. Mervyn does not know why he is suddenly beset by obsessive fear.

*'85 male passersby were contacted either on a fear-arousing suspension bridge or a non-fear-arousing bridge by an attractive female interviewer who asked them to fill out questionnaires containing Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) pictures. Sexual content of stories written by subjects on the fear-arousing bridge and tendency of these subjects to attempt post-experimental contact with the interviewer were both significantly greater.'*

— Dutton, D. G., & Aron, A. P. (1974).  
'Some Evidence for Heightened Sexual Attraction under Conditions of High Anxiety.'  
*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 30(4), 510-517.

Parisian brand Mansour Martin unveiled their second collection, Galactica, in January 2020. Their clothes were made 'for a curious, sensual, and dreamy' wearer of any gender. In keeping with fashion designers who have used fetish wear as an inspiration, like Vivienne Westwood and Alexander McQueen, Mansour Martin conceived a fetish suit indebted to 1970s eroticism. The slits in the woollen jacket and trousers invite lusty glimpses at body parts.

Is that Mervyn's knee that I can see?

MANSOUR MARTIN



Mansour Martin, *Fetish Tailoring* (jacket and trousers), *Galactica* collection, Fall-Winter 2020, British dark navy wool, made in France.  
© Mansour Martin.



JARA MARKEN



Jara Marken, *Danser I-VI*, 2020, plaster, Jara Marken, *Landskap I-III*, 2020, textile.  
© Jara Marken / Preben Holst.

## 2. Mervyn collapses

AT HOME

Mervyn goes through the gate, walks the courtyard, climbs the eight steps to the entrance door, goes to a living room ornamented with carnelian panelling, and throws himself on a sofa. He is so upset he cannot speak, overwhelmed, as if corrupted by evil.

Jara Marken's work has playful, child-like, and naive dimensions that are reminiscent of Mervyn. Besides, the misunderstanding surrounding Lautréamont's famous quote, which compares Mervyn with an object, finds a chance echo in Jara Marken's plaster sculptures as they straddle the line between inanimate objects and objects with human-like qualities. Her sculptures may be called 'handsome.'

*'It is required of the naive, that nature brings forth the victory thereof over art, it does this either against the knowledge and will of the person or with their complete consciousness. In the first case, it is the naive of surprise and amuses; in the other, it is the naive of conviction and is moving.'*

— Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, 1795–6.

3. Maldoror  
sends an  
ANONYMOUS LOVE  
LETTER TO MERVYN

Maldoror sends an anonymous love letter to Mervyn and lures him to a secret meeting in the early hours of the third day.

*'Three stars instead of a signature, exclaims Mervyn;  
and a blood stain at the bottom of the page!'*

— *Les Chants de Maldoror*

French poetry has been one of the most consistent sources of inspiration for *Proèmes de Paris*. The Fall-Winter 2017 collection *Dystopia* started from Arthur Rimbaud's *Le Dormeur du Val* (1870), while the subsequent one, *Melancholia*, focused around a posthumous poem collection by Charles Baudelaire. Both poets were inspired by Lautréamont. *From Darkness to Light* (Fall-Winter 2018) was inspired by Voltaire's *Le Mondain* (1736).

Shall we recite the dress?

*'I love the pleasures of a court;  
I love the arts of every sort;  
Magnificence, fine buildings, strike me;  
In this, each man of sense is like me.  
I have, I own, a worldly mind,  
That's pleased abundance here to find;  
Abundance, mother of all arts,  
Which with new wants new joys imparts  
The treasures of the earth and main,  
With all the creatures they contain:  
These, luxury and pleasures raise;  
This iron age brings happy days.  
Needful superfluous things appear;  
They have joined together either sphere.'*

— Voltaire, *The Worldling*, 1736.



PROÈMES DE PARIS



Clinique Vestimentaire, ARMOR (armure), 2019, thread, 500 hours of craftwork.

## CLINIQUE VESTIMENTAIRE

Maldoror: 'I expressed the wish that you would be imprisoned in the sweat glands of my skin...'  
 '...and I find myself handsome! Handsome as the defect of congenital conformation of the male sexual organs, consisting in the relative brevity of the urethral canal and the division or absence of its lower wall, so that the canal opens at a distance variable from the glans and below the penis...'

— *Les Chants de Maldoror*

## 4. Maldoror braces

HIMSELF FOR  
 THE ENCOUNTER  
 WITH MEUVYN

Jeanne Vicerial: 'After having shaped my mannequin to the desired measurements, I covered it with threads according to an arrangement that followed the inspiration of anatomy books. Textile muscle weaving comes from the comparison between human muscle weaving and textile weaving techniques[...]. In some textile projects, the density of certain parts was impossible to fix in an ordinary way, with a conventional sewing needle. So, I had to start finding special tools, for example the surgeon's curved needle that made it possible to perfectly fix some textile muscle weavings.'<sup>4</sup>

As a dress surgeon, Jeanne Vicerial performs sartorial grafting to conceive her *SHIELD*. This surgical procedure moves threads from one site to another on the body. The cornerstone of grafting is to elicit rejection of the grafted material. By using this technique, Vicerial 'creates a new skin: the garment,' made to last. She also devised an *ARMOR* in black thread. Both garments allude to the protection of the body in a war-like environment. Fashion is indeed a remarkable tool that we use to mediate, perform, and conceal our identity, both to the world and ourselves.

<sup>4</sup> Interviewed by Marco Pecorari, "Prêt-à-Mesure and Clinique Vestimentaire," *Contributor*, n. d., at <https://contributormagazine.com/interview-with-jeanne-vicerial-the-mastermind-behind-pret-a-mesure/>



5. Maldoror  
*recruits*

A MADMAN  
A) AN ACCOMPLICE

After spending the day with a madman, treating him to luxury clothes and an exquisite dinner, Maldoror forces him to accept his money. He seizes the chamber pot from underneath the bed and puts it on the head of the madman.

*'I crown you king of intelligences, he exclaims with a premeditated grandiloquence; no matter when you call I will run; draw my hands in my vaults; body and soul I belong to you. At night, you will bring the alabaster crown to its ordinary place, with permission to use it; but in the daytime, as soon as the dawn illuminates the cities, put it back on your forehead, as the symbol of your power.'*

— *Les Chants de Maldoror*

Steffen André Nilsen: 'We all have an invisible crown that tells us who we are and where we come from.'

Minuscule crowns for chamber pot individuals.  
Minuscule crowns for vulnerable sparrows.  
Turd crowns for disgusting pigs.  
White crowns with rough edges for thick giants.  
Clunky blue crowns for self-righteous pricks.  
Yellow and red crowns for incandescent girls.  
Heartwarming crown for new lovers.

MAMA UBU. *Yes. Bougrelas has gone to crown himself.*

PAPA UBU. *I don't envy him that crown.*

MAMA UBU. *You have every reason not to, Papa Ubu.*

— Alfred Jarry, *King Ubu*, 1896.

Steffen André Nilsen, *Crown (II)*, 2019, modelled stoneware, glaze.



STEFFEN ANDRÉ NILSEN



Grégoire Motte, *Fontana Romana no. 19*, 2019, mixed materials (plastic bottle, shellfish).

6. the creator  
sends

A CRAB to STOP  
MALDOROR, BUT HE  
KILLS THE CRAB

*Go to the side where the swans' lake is; and, I will tell you later why there is one completely black among the troop, and whose body, supporting an anvil, surmounted by the corpse in putrefaction of a crab, rightly inspires mistrust in its other aquatic comrades.*

— *Les Chants de Maldoror*

When Lautréamont wrote his poem, the ocean was the only natural force that humans had not tamed. 150 years later, not only have the seas been explored and measured, but they are also ridden with plastic debris. The association of plastic waste and shellfish may once have been bizarre. Today it has sadly become a common sight on terrestrial shores. Grégoire Motte instigates yet another encounter between plastic and a creature of the sea. His humorous sculptures challenge the majesty of the fountains that punctuate the Roman landscape.

The dead shell of the archangel and his two little sentinels now rest atop a Borsec bottle, squirting water through an ingenious mechanism. The crab was not Maldoror's only victim. He is joined by a rounded bottle flanked by two shells and a tall bottle with corpulent shoulders, bearing a can of sardines and an oyster shell – all of them dead servants of the Creator.

*The king demanded that the golden crab build a wall in front of the castle, higher than the highest tower, blooming with flowers, and a garden with three fountains that played gold, diamonds, and brilliants.*

— *The Golden Crab*

7. Maldoror and  
Mervyn MEET  
ON THE CARROUSEL  
BRIDGE

*'How could the Carrousel bridge keep its constant neutrality when it heard the harrowing screams that the bag seemed to emit?'*

— *Les Chants de Maldoror*

Maldoror and Mervyn meet on the Carrousel Bridge. Maldoror throws Mervyn into a canvas bag, and repeatedly hits the bag on the parapet. Eventually, Maldoror gives the bag and its injured content to a passing butcher, pretending that Mervyn is a scabies dog, and asks the butcher to put Mervyn down. Arriving at an isolated slaughterhouse in the north of Paris, the butcher and three of his colleagues are about to finish the dirty work, when one of them raises concerns about the content of the bag. They open the bag, only to find a bloodied, mangled Mervyn. The butchers run away. Mervyn goes back home.

Pia Antonsen Rognes, *Traces of Love and Revulsion*: 'I embrace the bleeding void groaning inside of my chest, my black intestines crawling, as they believe my lies, my lying body.'<sup>5</sup> 'Contorted and torn in the restraint of conflict, in being destruction and solution merged in painful shape. Appealing to affection as much as to revulsion. Desperately repressed and hidden. Secretly loved.'

<sup>5</sup> Pia Antonsen Rognes, text that accompanies *Traces of Love and Revulsion*, 2014.

*Melanosis coli [...] is a frequent finding in colonic biopsies and resection specimens, to our knowledge severe jet black melanosis coli with pseudo-obstruction has not been reported in literature. Such gross Melanosis is exceptional and particularly striking. [...] Melanosis coli is a condition usually associated with chronic laxative use in which dark pigment is deposited in the lamina propria of the colon.*

— A.H. Malik, S.I.H. Andrabi, and M. Niayesh, 'Pseudo-obstruction with pitch black colon – A very rare Presentation of Melanosis Coli,' *Ulster Medicine Journal* (2008), 77(1): 54-55.

PIA ANTONSEN ROGNES



Pia Antonsen Rognes, *Traces of Love and Revulsion*, 2014, mixed materials (textile, latex, synthetic hair). © Pia Antonsen Rognes / Magnús Elvar Jónsson.



CORALIE MARABELLE



Coralie Marabelle Craft Line, Giant Dress no. 1, Recycle and Upcycle collection, in collaboration with Emmatis Alternatives, July 2019, made of upcycled shirts.

8. Maldoror and THE MAJIN MERVYN KILL

$$\begin{aligned}
 \mathbf{a} &= \frac{d^2 \mathbf{r}}{dt^2} = \frac{d}{dt} \left[ \frac{d\mathbf{r}}{dt} + \boldsymbol{\omega} \times \mathbf{r} \right] \\
 &= \left[ \frac{d^2 \mathbf{r}}{dt^2} + \boldsymbol{\omega} \times \frac{d\mathbf{r}}{dt} \right] + \frac{d\boldsymbol{\omega}}{dt} \times \mathbf{r} + \boldsymbol{\omega} \times \frac{d\mathbf{r}}{dt} \\
 &= \left[ \frac{d^2 \mathbf{r}}{dt^2} + \boldsymbol{\omega} \times \frac{d\mathbf{r}}{dt} \right] + \frac{d\boldsymbol{\omega}}{dt} \times \mathbf{r} + \boldsymbol{\omega} \times \left( \frac{d\mathbf{r}}{dt} + \boldsymbol{\omega} \times \mathbf{r} \right) \\
 &= \left[ \frac{d^2 \mathbf{r}}{dt^2} + \frac{d\boldsymbol{\omega}}{dt} \times \mathbf{r} + 2\boldsymbol{\omega} \times \frac{d\mathbf{r}}{dt} \right] + \boldsymbol{\omega} \times (\boldsymbol{\omega} \times \mathbf{r}) .
 \end{aligned}$$

Formula of centrifugal force.

The madman pushes Mervyn, whose hands are tied behind his back, to the Place Vendôme. He ties a rope around Mervyn's feet. The end of the rope is in Maldoror's hands, who stands atop the Vendôme column. Maldoror pulls the rope. Mervyn hangs upside down. Maldoror starts to spin Mervyn around the column, gathering speed and gaining force with every rotation. Finally, Maldoror lets go of the rope. Mervyn flies across Paris and crashes on the dome of the Panthéon, where his skeleton still lays.

Twice yearly during the sales, Coralie Marabelle piles up used, donated clothes in the shop windows of her Parisian boutique. *Giant Dress no.1* is made from discarded shirts in pastel colors. Sewn together from shirt fragments, it mirrors Mervyn's broken body on the dome of the Panthéon. This 'Frankenstein dress' is as wide as it is disproportionate, with sleeves that touch the floor. It is almost as if the centrifugal force that catapulted Mervyn across Paris had pulled this shirt out of shape.

# Biographies

## CLINIQUE VESTIMENTAIRE

Jeanne Vicérial graduated in Clothing Design from École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs; Embroidery from Formation Lesage; Cordwainers Fashion Bags and Accessories from the London College of Fashion; Pattern Making from Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne; and Costume Design from École Paul Poiret in Paris. In 2019, she defended her PhD (ENSAD-PSL Research University, Paris), with a project combining theory and practice to rethink existing fashion production models. She apprenticed at Hussein Chalayan before establishing the creative studio Clinique Vestimentaire in 2014. This 'sartorial clinic' takes care of a patient's body for clothing purposes. In collaboration with the mechatronic laboratory of École des Mines Paris, she invented a machine that weaves garments after individual measurements on a semi-industrial scale without any textile waste. Its products belong to 'prêt-à-mesure' (ready-to-measure), an hybrid technique combining ready-to-wear and made-to-measure. She was awarded a residency at Villa Medici-French Academy in Rome (2019-2020).

## CORALIE MARABELLE

Coralie Marabelle graduated from Studio Berçot in Paris in 2011. Between 2008 and 2013, she worked for Hermès, Alexander McQueen, and the craft line of Maison Margiela. She was awarded the Public Prize at the International Festival of Fashion and Photography in Hyères (2014), the L'Oréal Paris Fashion Grant (2017), and the Great Prize of Creation from the City of Paris (2017). In January 2016, she established her namesake brand together with Antoine Gagey, who is in charge of the commercial aspects of Coralie Marabelle. While they showed the three first collections during Paris Fashion Week, the duo then decided to do away with seasonal fashion cycles, and release one capsule collection a month. In fall 2018, their first boutique shop opened at 114, Rue de la Folie-Méricourt in Paris. The brand produces upscale ready-to-wear garments, in limited series, and made in France.

## GRÉGOIRE MOTTE

Grégoire Motte (born in 1976) is an artist from Lille, France, currently based in Brussels. Off-beat humour and self-mockery are driving forces of Motte's work, who employs materials from daily life in his body of work. In 2002, Motte graduated from the Fine Arts School of Tourcoing. He co-founded the artist-run space Artists Club Coffre Fort with Thibaut Espiaut and Istvan Ist Huzjan in Brussels in 2012. Motte participated to the Salon de Montrouge in 2013. Together with Éléonore Saintagnan, he directed the film *Les Bêtes Sauvages* (2015). His latest exhibitions include '...Ces Gabians Rouges...' at Villa Noailles in 2019, 'Blanche Endive' at Espace Le Carré in 2019-2020. He published a libretto entitled *Blanche Endive* (2019, Commissaires Anonymes) with Gabriel Mattei and Damien Airault, as well as *Baby* (2019, Éditions Grandiose), a collection of short stories closely intertwined with his works.

## JARA MARKEN

Jara Marken (born in 1991) is a visual artist from Oslo. While her work often features textile, she works with a wide range of media, such as paintings, and plaster sculptures. She graduated with a BA in Art and Craft from the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO) in 2018, with a project entitled 'Sculptures Paradise.' Her work was shown in several group exhibitions, including 'Got It for Cheap' at Galleri Golsa (2017, and 2018), 'Limbo 9-5' at Slurpen Huset in Oslo (2019), Øststuttsillingen (2019), and Hvitsten Salong (2019). She had her first solo exhibition entitled 'UltraNaive' at Galleri Neuf in November 2018. In 2019, she curated the exhibition 'Språk fra hånden' at the Telemark Art Centre. Interested in the intersection of art and fashion, she also collaborated with the Norwegian sportswear brand 'Raske Rêvêr' during Oslo fashion week (OsloRunway) in August 2018.

## MANSOUR MARTIN

Based in Paris, the Mansour Martin fashion brand was founded by Belgian artistic directors Mansour Badjoko and Martin Liesnard. Mansour Badjoko graduated from both La Cambre in Brussels and the Institut Français de la Mode in Paris. He worked as a stylist for major fashion brands, while developing theatre and dance costumes. He currently lives in Brussels. Martin Liesnard was introduced to sewing at age four by his grandmother, who worked as a sewing teacher. He graduated in fashion and design management from a university in Paris. He has worked in marketing, communication, and creative project management for fashion, entertainment and perfume brands. He lives in Paris. Mansour and Martin have combined their knowledge to create a brand based on inclusivity, multiculturalism, and sustainability. Made in Europe, their clothes are designed for all genders and identities. Each collection departs from specific stories and is implemented through collaborative, multidisciplinary, and innovative practices.

## PIA ANTONSEN ROGNES

Pia Antonsen Rognes (b. 1986) is a visual artist from Trondheim, Norway. She holds a BA in Textile Art from the Bergen Academy of Art and Design (2012) and an MA in Fine Art from the Iceland Academy of the Arts in Reykjavik (2014). After she received the Craft Prize at the Norwegian Association for Arts and Crafts' annual exhibition in 2013, she was awarded the Debutant Prize at the 39th Trøndelagsutstillingen in 2015. Her work has been featured in numerous group shows, while her first solo show 'In This Fever of Defiance' took place at SOFT gallery in Oslo in 2016. Two years later, in 2018, she had a second solo show titled 'Desiring Violence' at Trøndelag Centre for Contemporary Art (TSSK). Coming up in the fall 2020, she will show her latest work in a solo exhibition at Babel in Trondheim.

## PROÊMES DE PARIS

Proêmes de Paris is a Paris-based womenswear label established in 2014. The brand, whose name is a contraction of 'prose' and 'poem', develops a rich visual universe inspired by literary and linguistic references. It is the brainchild of Marion Gauban-Cammas, its creative director, and Ulysse Meridjen, its managing director. Gauban-Cammas graduated from Atelier Chardon Savard and worked for Jean-Charles de Castelbajac, Jean Paul Gaultier, and Christophe Lemaire. Meridjen was trained in economy and business, and manages REC, a trend prospective firm. Supported by the French fashion trade syndicate, Proêmes de Paris was part of the Designers Apartment showroom. It won the Great Prize of Creation from the City of Paris in 2018 and was exhibited at the Joyce Gallery in 2019. Proêmes de Paris also runs a cultural project, titled '*Les filles qui lisent*' (girls who read), with performances, workshops, and talks on literature.

## STEFFEN ANDRÉ NILSEN

Steffen André Nilsen (b. 1989) currently studies at the Art Academy in Bergen. He attended the Bilder Nordic School of Photography in Oslo, NTNU in Gjøvik, and Prosjektskolen Kunstskole in Oslo. In 2019, he was an exchange student at the Fine Arts department at the Willem De Kooning Academie in Rotterdam. Nilsen uses a range of different media (including ceramic, painting, video, and photography) and describes his work as theme-based rather than material-based. Originally from Vega in Nordland, Nilsen's work has strong ties with the place where he comes from. He is interested in concepts related to identity, language, and the body. He has shown his work in his native town in 2012 ('Vegadagene,' Gladstad Prestegård), 2018 ('Janasavje,' Gladstad Prestegård), and 2019 ('It's About Time,' Vega Verdensarvsenter). His work has also been exhibited in Spain (Brucstock Festival, Barcelona) and the Netherlands (Pink Pank, Rotterdam, 2019).



## CURATOR

Johanna Zanon (b. 1988) is a curator, researcher, and art concierge currently based in Oslo. She was trained at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (2011) and the École Nationale des Chartes (2012), both in Paris, before she became the archivist of the Galeries Lafayette department store, where she managed heritage projects. In 2014, she moved to Oslo to write her doctoral dissertation on the revival of haute couture brands, for which she was awarded a PhD in history in 2017.

Besides publishing numerous academic papers on fashion history, Johanna Zanon has pursued curatorial projects including a series of films about French fashion for Cinemateket i Oslo ('Siste skrik fra Paris', 2019) and the 'After "After Munch"' programme for Clarion Hotel Oslo (2019-2020), where she works as art concierge since July 2019. She has been invited as a curatorial resident at Praksis Oslo (2020).

## CREDITS

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