

## “The Strange Inauguration of a Private Gallery: The lettrists reveal their methods”<sup>1</sup>

The Lettrist International, whose surprising and sometimes scandalous innovations in the fields of cinema and writing we haven't forgotten, has just resurfaced after being “hidden” for a long time. Yesterday, it opened an exhibition of “*métagraphies influentielles*” at its gallery on the passage Molière, at the end of the old rue Quincampoix, where, according to one of the members of the group, “the inflation of new values historically begins.”

This crossing itself has a curious history. In the Middle Ages, it was called the “passage du Double Doute [Double Doubt].” Commoners who aspired to be nobles and nobles whose professions were disputed gathered together there. “That’s the case with us,” the lettrists said with regard to the second proposition.

Moreover, they claim to be the only representatives of an extremism that is necessary in aesthetics as in life.

And they have exploited some disturbing aspects: the appearance of being a secret society, closed meetings in the backrooms of Arab bars, rigorous exclusions in the style of the Supreme Soviet (they excluded [Isidore] Isou, the only name in their association that is known to the public), presentations of films immediately banned by the Censor, noisy aggression against Chaplin, at the Ritz Hotel, during the release of *Limelight*.

Yet it seems that these young people have succeeded at infiltrating the lettrist group that we’d known about. Eliminating the “old guard” with limited intentions, they have broadened their program as far as preparing for “the construction of cities and the disruption of the collective unconscious.” A new science, “psychogeography,” will, according to them, determine the very ambiances and adventures of mankind.

As for metagraphy, it is a new form of art – even if its creators rightfully defend themselves against any artistic pretensions. They manage to do this by juxtaposing photos, sentences and words cut out from just about everywhere, the press constituting their raw material. In some way these are novel-paintings. Although quite unexpected, this art doesn’t seem completely uninteresting. The lettrists especially count on great results from the launch of metagraphy into everyday life: posters, objects, leaflets, furniture, decorations.

Nevertheless, there is nothing that their former friends do not reproach them for: “intolerable intellectual dictatorship” (say the surrealists), a pathological taste for arbitrariness, crude methods of intimidation. For that matter, their leaders are always escorted by North African bodyguards.

---

<sup>1</sup> Unsigned, “Étrange inauguration d’une galerie de peinture: Les lettristes révèlent leurs méthodes.” Leaflet parodying the journalistic style, distributed the day after the opening of the exhibition “Avant la guerre” at la Galerie du Passage, passage Molière (3<sup>rd</sup> arrond.) on 11 June 1954. Organized by Gil J Wolman, this exhibition featured 66 “influential metagraphics” created by André-Frank Conord, Mohamed Dahou, Guy-Ernest Debord, Jacques Fillon, Gilles Ivain, Patrick Straram and Wolman himself. Translated by Bill Brown on 27 January 2025.

And Friday evening, while a stunned crowd squeezed itself into their miniscule “galerie du Double Doute,” the lettrists came to blows over the “influential power of one of their metagraphs.” The “oppositional minority” was disavowed and thrown outside, as in the glory days of the Moscow [show] trials.