

ubu

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HANS BELLMER: Photographs & Drawings

September 14 – October 21, 1995

Ubu Gallery will present an exhibition of the photographs and drawings of **Hans Bellmer** (1902 – 1975), a Surrealist whose overt influence on current art trends far outweighs the public's recognition of his emotionally and intellectually charged oeuvre. The exhibition will open on September 14th and run through October 21st.

Bellmer is best known for a series of photographs of two life-sized adolescent female dolls that he constructed and photographed between 1933 and 1938. The first doll, which was documented in various stages of its construction, and the fully articulated second doll, whose limbs, head and breasts were arranged in a variety of natural and unnatural configurations, were recorded variously by Bellmer in the guise of an innocent, a temptress and a victim. The lighting and staging—with their nods to German expressionist cinema, Renaissance religious painting and illumination, and explicit fetishism—allowed Bellmer to establish a sexually-laden atmosphere and to realize a personal language of desire which he felt would, in his own words, “make it possible to physically recreate the dizzying heights of passion and to do so to the extent of creating new desires.”

Bellmer continued this exploration in two series of photographs of his lovers—Nora Mitrani, the writer, in 1946 and Unica Zurn, the artist, in 1958—which are graphic in their presentation and explicitness. Bellmer's photographic activity was sporadic and his production was small—no more than 150 different images (and within this group many just subtly varied) of only three themes—yet it possesses an extraordinary richness and individuality without peer in surrealism.

The appreciation of the photographs is enhanced in the broader developmental context of Bellmer's continuous production of drawings, painting, prints and sculpture—represented in this exhibition principally by his drawings. Bellmer's draftsmanship is unique in Surrealism, grounded as it is in the northern European classical tradition, and is unusual and powerful as pure visual style. In Bellmer's oeuvre, drawing leads to sculpture and photography, which, in their turn, cause Bellmer to rethink the drawing. In this regard, Bellmer's art embodies a constant dialogue among all the plastic mediums.