

NOLAN/ECKMAN GALLERY

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HANS BELLMER

(1902 - 1975)

Biography

- 1902 Born in Katowice, Germany. Bellmer adores his mother but his father, a brilliant engineer, is tyrannical and domineering.
- 1921-23 Studies engineering in Berlin. Discovers the art of de Chirico, Ernst, and Arp, and reads Zola, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Poe and Wilde. Meets Grosz and Heartfield.
- 1924 First trip to Paris, where he meets de Chirico and studies work by Seurat and Jules Pascin.
- 1925 Meets Lotte Pritzel, a maker of small wax dolls, the wife of his doctor..
- 1926 Opens graphic design firm, which quickly attracts large clients.
- 1928 Meets Margarete. They marry within the year.
- 1931 Margarete diagnosed with tuberculosis. Bellmer's mother sends him a box of childhood toys. Re-encounters his 17 year-old cousin, Ursula. Both events deeply stimulate Bellmer's memories of childhood.
- 1933 National Socialists, led by Adolf Hitler, come into power. Bellmer decides to close his design firm and create the Doll. He is joined by his brother Fritz. Bellmer's mother provides financial help. The first Doll is produced.
- 1934 Bellmer's publication of *Die Puppe*. The book is taken by Ursula to André Breton in Paris. Eighteen photos of the Doll appear in *Minotaure* on December 5th.
- 1935 Visits Paris with support of poet Paul Eluard. Introduced to the Surrealist circle. With advice from Lotte Pritzel, produces second Doll using head, hands and legs from first Doll.
- 1936 French edition of *La Poupée*.
- 1937 Construction of sculpture *La mitrailleuse en état de grâce (The Machinegun in a State of Grace)*.
- 1938 Death of Margarete in February of tuberculosis. Bellmer moves to Paris and meets Joyce Reeves.
- 1939 France at war with Germany following invasion of Poland. As a German national, Bellmer is interned in the south of France. Later he is joined by Max Ernst.

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- 1940 Throws his German passport in a sewer. Lives in Marseilles and Castres. Meets Marcelle (a.k.a. Céline) Sutter.
- 1942 Marries Céline.
- 1943 Birth of twin daughters, Doriane and Béatrice.
- 1944 Separates from wife (he does not see daughters again until 1967). First one-man exhibition in Toulouse. Publication of *Mode d'emploi (Instructions)*. Returns to Paris.
- 1945 Peripatetic living in the south of France. Begins project of illustrating *Histoire de l'oeil (The Story of the Eye)* by Georges Bataille. Drawings on themes from Sade.
- 1946-50 Affair with Nora Mitrani.
- 1949 Final return to Paris. Publication of *Les jeux de la poupée (The Games of the Doll)*.
- 1950 Publication of first book about Bellmer, organized by Christian d'Orgeix.
- 1953 Exhibition at Galerie Springer, Berlin. Meets Unica Zürn, who is to be his companion for the next 16 years. Re-edition of *Die Puppe* by Rudolf Springer.
- 1955-75 Numerous one-man exhibitions in Paris, Berlin, Cologne, Munich, Geneva, New York, Chicago, and London, etc. Many engraving projects completed.
- 1956 Publication of Bataille's *Madame Edwarda* with illustrations by Bellmer.
- 1957 Publication of *The Anatomy of the Image*.
- 1958 Photographs Unica Zürn naked and tied up with strings.
- 1959 Death of Bellmer's mother in Berlin.
- 1965 *The Doll* sculpture produced, followed by *La Toupie (The Top)* in 1968.
- 1967-69 Summer holidays with Doriane and Béatrice and Unica's children.
- 1969 Bellmer's last trip away from Paris. Bellmer's health deteriorates, Unica Zürn increasingly unstable mentally.
- 1970 Suicide of Unica Zürn.
- 1971 Retrospective exhibition at Centre National de l'Art Contemporain, Paris (Centre Pompidou)
- 1975 Bellmer dies in Paris.