

Rocks In My Pillow

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Review: *Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall*, by Allan Antliff, Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007

“Do you believe,” she went on, “that the past dies?”
“Yes,” said Margaret. “Yes, if the present cuts its throat.”

Leonora Carrington

When I first heard about this project, I was excited at the prospect of a book entirely devoted to the history of anarchy and art. Sadly though, the result is a disappointment. Politically-speaking, the book rides the fence between the anarchist milieu and the authoritative voice of academia when what is needed is a sturdy pair of wirecutters, perhaps a catapult, or maybe even a battering ram. For me, the most positive aspect of the book is that its essays stimulated my critical thinking in response to its arguments. To be fair, attempting to write a history of the confluence of anarchy and art from the Paris Commune (1871) to the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) is such a monumental project that much of the story will inevitably fall into the cracks of the eight episodic chapters that comprise its less than 200 pages. When I initially skimmed the book, I expected to be writing a basically positive review with my main critique being about the way in which surrealism is handled. However, upon actually reading it with some care, I soon realized that the book is problematic from start to finish.

The pivotal first chapter of the book, “A Beautiful Dream,” centers around a discussion of the ideas of the Realist artist, Gustave Courbet, and his friend, the anarchist philosopher, P.J. Proudhon, with respect to the tensions which exist at the crossroads of political engagement and free artistic expression. Are these tensions to be positively resolved in the creation of an anarchist Federation of Artists like the one Courbet was associated with during the Paris Commune (as Antliff suggests), or are they to be suppressed by a Stalinist bureaucratic policy of Socialist Realism like the one that we read about in a later chapter?

Or do these tensions merely represent the two poles of a continuum in the never-ending debate between the proponents of artistic freedom and social critique, whether or not they call themselves anarchists? Where, then, is an anarchist response to the “radical form vs. radical content” debate that understands that neither must dominate, but that each must be respected? As I see it, there are lots of brilliant cooks and no perfect recipe that applies to every situation. The ideal measure of each ingredient is not predictable, but there are shining historical moments worth noting which flare up here and there when the mix seems just right for the occasion. Yet, strangely, while he emphasizes the institutional place of art in the Paris Commune’s federated structure, Antliff is silent about one of those inspirational moments — the wild array of artistic expressions of anarchy spontaneously appearing in the streets during that Festival of Revolt.

We might wonder why Antliff doesn’t just leave the administration of museums and exhibition halls behind and take to the streets to examine the murals, which included announcements and denouncements, political posters, engravings, and affiches in a riot of colors and styles that covered the walls of Paris during those heady days, none of which needed to be approved by even the Federation of Artists. “Such was literature,” said the poet Arthur Rimbaud, as he surveyed the carnivalesque scene. Instead of rhapsodizing about the beauty of Proudhonian federation, why not celebrate Courbet’s role in the radically poetic act of the toppling of that hated symbol of war and empire, the Vendome Column? About a century later, the situationists would try their hand at superseding art by intentionally “creating situations” in the streets as Paris again erupted

in an insurrection with undeniable anarchist implications in the merry month of May. It seems remarkable to me that absolutely nothing is said about any of these events in the Antliff book.

As to the legacy of the Commune, it seems to be assigned by Antliff to the stalwart social anarchism of such Neo-Impressionist painters of fin-de-siècle France as Paul Signac, Camille Pissarro, Lucien Pissarro, George Seurat, Maximillien Luce and Henri Edmund Cross. Theirs is certainly an important stream that flows from the wellsprings of the Commune, but the Neo-Impressionist “wandering” motif – which Antliff finds so fascinating that he names his second chapter after it – has literary antecedents. These can be traced from the phantasmic “otherness” of Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), a gothic tale combining the legends of Faust and the Wandering Jew to the enduring popularity of Eugène Sue’s socialistic novel, *The Wandering Jew* (1845), who, as the archetypal marginalized outcast, is identified with the downtrodden and oppressed workers of the world. In fact, the motif of the Wandering Jew had been used by Courbet himself in a lost portrait of Jean Journet, the itinerant disciple of utopian socialist Charles Fourier. Or perhaps our starting point should be Courbet’s 1854 realist self-portrait, *The Meeting* in which he transformed the familiar image of the Wandering Jew as persecuted social pariah into a painting of himself as a combination of assertive vagabond and self-confident traveling artisan on the road to artistic independence. But all these go unacknowledged by Antliff.

Just how elastic is this category of the wanderer? Does it include Charles Baudelaire’s flaneur as well as the ragged dispossessed? After all, the poet and dandified aesthete Baudelaire does make a cameo appearance in Courbet’s painting *The Studio*, and Michael Bakunin, whose wandering ranged across the insurrectionary map of Europe, darkly hovers in the shadows. Both were on the barricades during the 1848 uprising which was not only in opposition to the Empire, but was directed against time itself as insurgent sharpshooters took aim at the clocktowers of Paris. If such poetic revolutionary acts ought to be acknowledged, where then is the poetry of the streets in this book? Where can we find the rebellious insouciance of the barbed street argot used by the anarchist-oriented cabaret singers – the real *Moulin Rouge* of Bruant, Paillette and Rictus? Why not even include the bombastic performance of the anarchist Ravochol singing the “*Père Duchesne*” on his walk to the guillotine, belting out the blasphemous words about cutting the priests in half, razing the churches, dethroning God and hanging the landlord? And where is Charles Maurin’s woodcut of Ravochol at the gallows?

Where, oh where, is the voice of the poet? Where are Mallarmé and the Symbolists (anarchists for all their aesthetic pretensions) to rock us in the Dionysian embrace of the unbridled imagination? Who needs Emile Zola’s pity when we have Baudelaire’s correspondences: the sound of color, the fragrance of thought? Through the historical haze I can see the artist, Toulouse-Lautrec, making an absinthe toast to those anarchist dandies Oscar Wilde and Félix Fénéon, who are standing at his side in the decadent demimonde of Montmartre. And what of the bohemian environs of Montmartre, like the “floating world” of the Japanese printmakers whose work Lautrec so admired? Where are his unsentimentalized portraits of his friends among the lesbian can-can dancers and prostitutes, and of all the flotsam and jetsam of that *déclassé* milieu? Why are they not featured here alongside his contributions to the anarchist reviews and the street posters of the day?

Where is Max Blechman’s “revolutionary romanticism” when we need it most? What has become of Alfred Jarry, whose absurdist life was his major work, sadly reduced to being merely a “French satirist” in Antliff’s book. (More like French satyrist I would say.) Where is his obscene laughter which would later be an inspiration to Jacques Vaché in carving a pataphysical path

toward what would one day become surrealism by means of his own “umourous” attack on the Debraining Machine of militarism? And where is Vaché’s jailbreak from the Bastille of “pohetic” aestheticism recorded?

Jarry was a friend of Picasso in his anarchist days, when the Spaniard signed his paintings with the egoist “Yo.” Both were staunch anti-colonialists, which was evident in Jarry’s King Ubu and in the fierce “primitive” masks worn by the prostitutes in Picasso’s groundbreaking *Les Femmes d’Alger*. Though both artists are mentioned in a limited way in the Antliff book, where is their vigorous challenge to colonialism, or even Eurocentrism, in its pages? Its index includes neither word. Nor is the word “imperialism” to be found there either. Silence reigns with reference to the anti-militarist newspaper collages of Picasso’s anarchist years in Barcelona. Alas, no pre-World War I Bottle of Suze to be imbibed as an aperitif of refusal is available in the dry pages of this book. When faced with conscription, Picasso’s path was evasion and Vaché’s was “desertion from within”?

And what of Jarry and Picasso’s other anarchist friend, Guillaume Apollinaire, the coiner of the word, “sur-réalisme.” Though he boldly challenged artists and critics alike to “speak in the present in the words of the future,” Apollinaire remained wedded to the literary aestheticism of the day, a stance which so irked Vaché that he later would become Apollinaire’s arch antagonist. Yet if you look for the story of this historic confrontation in the Antliff book, you will not find it there.

Flash to 1915, New York dada, and the chapter on “Obscenity.” Antliff’s focus is on Francis Picabia’s “object portrait” of a sparkplug, a sort of one-dimensional illustrated version of the dadaist “readymade,” which he wittily called *Portrait of a Young American Girl in a State of Nudity*. Enter fellow anarchist, Marcel Duchamp, the supposed inventor of the readymade. But can we even discuss readymades at this late date without reference to the outrageous dada presence of the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven in New York? Where is Baroness Elsa, the originator of the genre with her 1913 found object/readymade, *Enduring Ornament*? Why doesn’t Antliff take the opportunity to debunk, once and for all, the masculinist myth that it was Duchamp who invented the readymade with *Fountain*, a urinal which was androgynously and anonymously signed “R. Mutt,” yet was probably done, or at the very least inspired, by Duchamp’s intimate friend, the Baroness Elsa. Her readymade, *God*, also done in 1917 and signed in her own name, used a plumbing metaphor as well. In fact, seeing the two as sister pieces is corroborated by the Baroness’ prophetic remark, “America’s comfort — sanitation — outside machinery — has made America forget [its] own machinery — body.”

Upon reflection, the obscenity scandal surrounding Picabia’s *Young American Girl* pales in comparison to the obscenity charges leveled against a magazine to which the Baroness contributed her gender-bending scatological poetry, *The Little Review*. The editors of the Review were the confirmed anarchist Margaret Anderson and her cross-dressing lesbian lover Jane Heap. Together, these three women destabilized the gender norms of their day with no holds barred, especially the Baroness, whose sexual anarchy was the living embodiment of dada. As a radically dandified female flaneur, her body itself became a kind of readymade. She walked the streets of New York with a bald head dyed brilliant vermilion, while wearing decontextualized industrial detritus, junk, found objects, shoplifted commodities stripped of their utilitarian function and conventionality, gilded vegetables (she preferred beets and carrots) and surrounded by an entourage of five dogs. From the rear, she could be recognized by the discarded automobile taillight she had once found in the gutter and fastened to her bustle. This bodily bricolage was a public

performance of radical androgyny rather than a piece of artwork to be displayed in a gallery, and the contrast couldn't be clearer between her body festooned with organic vegetables and the male dada machine-centered fantasies of Picabia.

Vaché probably would have loved the Baroness' outrageous dada performance of gender, but she scared the pants off poets Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, who didn't have his sense of "amour." Her own poetic rants appeared in *The Little Review*, alongside an unabridged and sexually explicit serialized version of *Ulysses* by the young novelist, James Joyce, who considered himself a philosophical anarchist. For such crimes against sexual repression, *The Little Review* was duly censored and burned by the U.S. Post Office authorities, then brought to trial on obscenity charges in 1921, and finally shut down. Yet in his dada chapter on "Obscenity," Antliff fails to mention *The Little Review* or the Baroness though they both had anarchist credentials, preferring to concentrate instead on Picabia, and to a lesser extent, Duchamp, at a time prior to their involvement with surrealism.

Similarly, Antliff loses the opportunity to illuminate the sexual politics of anarchist art during the early years of the Russian Revolution by concentrating his attention on the rise and fall of Alexander Rodchenko rather than his fascinating wife, Varvara Stepanova. She only appears in his "True Creators" chapter as an adoring helpmate and, in the following "Death to Art!" chapter, as an apologist for the betrayal and co-optation of anarchist principles by her collusion in the false codification of Soviet constructivism as "anti-art." We hear nothing of the ways that she challenged the gender norms of her day during her lifetime. Where is the Symbolist Stepanova, decadent and androgynous, or the neo-primitivist Stepanova, who, in her painting, *Self Portrait*, looks angrily at the viewer through a "primitive" mask reminiscent of those worn by the prostitutes in Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*? And where is the "Frenzied Stepanova" as she was affectionately referred to by the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky?

Even though Vasily Kandinsky was so impressed with her work that he coined the term "varvaric art" to describe it, we get no insights as to what made it "varvaric" from Antliff. While we sense the tragedy of Rodchenko in his conversion from proud wearer of the anarchist pseudonym "Anti" to compromised propagandist for the Soviet state, we are deprived of understanding Stepanova's fall from anarchist grace. And, by the way, where is the Decadent bisexual diva, Ida Rubinstein, of pre-Revolutionary Russia who was prevented by the Tsarist authorities from dancing the seven veils in a production of Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*? Did she dance them for Romaine Brooks, the American painter who was her lesbian lover in Paris, or for her male lover, Gabriele D'Annunzio, at the temporarily autonomous Republic of Fiume?

Given the omission of queer anarchy from the first five chapters of an eight chapter book, Antliff finally addresses the subject in Chapter 6, "Gay Anarchy," by focusing a portion of the chapter on an openly gay anarchist couple, the poet Robert Duncan and the visual artist Jess Collins. With all of Duncan's poetry to choose from, Antliff instead selects a prose article, "Reviewing View, An Attack." The American magazine *View* had been started in 1940 by another "out" gay poet named Charles Henri Ford as a chic commercial magazine of avant-garde art, including surrealism. At this juncture, the chapter's real purpose becomes clear. It is not primarily about gay anarchy but about Antliff's desire to bash surrealism. Here Antliff unsuccessfully attempts to position Duncan as his cat's paw, making him not merely a critic of *View* magazine, but of surrealism itself.

Questions abound in the mind of anyone reading this chapter with more than a cursory interest in surrealism. Why doesn't Antliff let the reader know that *View* was not a surrealist magazine,

but, rather, a “surrealist-influenced” magazine under Ford’s editorship? In fact, cultural historian David Roediger has characterized the magazine as having a “surrealism lite” approach. If Antliff realizes that Duncan was actually deeply influenced by surrealism himself, particularly in relation to Antonin Artaud’s writings about the peyote ceremony of the indigenous Tarahumara people of Mexico, he doesn’t let on. Why aren’t we made aware that *Ark*, an anarchist magazine of the arts which Duncan compares favorably with *View* in his article, was produced by his Libertarian Circle comrade, Philip Lamantia, who himself was a surrealist poet? Antliff is careful to call Ford a “surrealist enthusiast” rather than a “surrealist.” However, he implies that Duncan’s critique of *View* not only takes a potshot at what the San Francisco poet considers to be the “deviant” images portrayed in Ford’s magazine, but that this criticism is meant to be applied as an accusatory blanket statement to surrealism itself.

Antliff distorts the picture even further by resharping that old saw with which he hopes to cut down surrealism: homophobia. Yet, whatever might be said about the homophobia of individual surrealists, the idea of surrealism is not any more homophobic than the idea of anarchism, even though some people who profess to being anarchists are homophobic. Moreover, while many anarchists would balk at scholarly research about anarchism that was strictly limited to the writing of non-anarchists, that is exactly what Antliff does in relation to his own research in surrealism, leading to his many omissions and misrepresentations in relation to the movement. Antliff’s ploy of using Duncan as a pawn in order to vilify surrealism for its supposed encouragement of a “homosexual cult” of “freakishness” is especially problematic. How can we take Antliff’s critique of surrealism seriously when it seems fueled more by his deep-seated contempt for that movement than any attempt to truly understand its many affinities with anarchism?

Ford and surrealist André Breton had differences about more than sexual preference. While the latter identified surrealism with revolution, the former preferred the more reformist term “cultural renovation” for his magazine. The high point of Breton’s collaboration with *View* was the Oct-Nov 1941 issue which was entirely devoted to surrealism, and edited, not by Ford, but by the Greek surrealist, Nicolas Calas. By the time of Duncan’s 1947 attack on *View*, which Antliff makes the centerpiece of his story, Breton had already departed New York City for liberated post-war France the year earlier. As early as 1942, fed up with relying on *View* as a vehicle for surrealism because of its art market commerciality, Breton had founded a full-fledged surrealist publication, *VVV*, which was completely independent of Ford, with surrealist photographer David Hare as editor, and with Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst and himself as editorial advisors.

Had he bothered to do the math, Antliff would have realized that *VVV*’s debut issue predated Duncan’s attack on *View* by five years. It seems likely, then, that if Duncan had wanted to attack surrealism per se, or even target Breton specifically, he would have gone after *VVV*, not *View*. In fact, one writer, among the few American surrealists who were published in *VVV* was the 15 year-old poet, Philip Lamantia, later to be editor of the very same *Ark* magazine lauded by Duncan in relation to his critique of *View*. Yet, not only does *VVV* not exist in Antliff’s book, but he actually blames *View*’s orientation of “surrealism for consumers” on Breton, who emphatically disowned that approach.

In this same chapter, Antliff notes that Duncan’s lover, Jess Collins, once was the student of an art teacher who he valued highly, the anarchist and Abstract Expressionist Clyfford Still. This insertion of Still into the story at this point seems to be aimed at making a distinction between his encouragement of Collins’ desire to apply a libertarian abstractionist aesthetic to the gay male body versus surrealism’s supposedly less salutary approach to homosexuality. Yet

why is there no mention of the surrealist collages of Max Ernst, which Collins considered to be an important influence on his artistic development? Once again, queer anarchist issues seem to be subsumed into Antliff's vendetta against surrealism. While it is indeed refreshing to see Abstract Expressionism associated in the book with the queer sensibilities of Jess Collins rather than the macho posturing of an art stud like Jackson Pollack, Antliff's desire to erase all positive traces of surrealism from the Abstract Expressionist ledger cheapens not only the otherwise commendable inclusivity of this chapter, but demeans the entire book yet again.

Moreover, nowhere in the volume is there any discussion of the influence of surrealist experiments in "pure psychic automatism" on the origins of Abstract Expressionism. No mention is made of the desire of surrealists to connect with the primal. Nowhere to be found is their great admiration for the creative work of indigenous peoples, which often quite fluidly travels back and forth between the real and the mythic realms. Such an approach to art, as to life, is in league with surrealism's quest to break the artificial dichotomy between the dream and the social construct known as reality. Though this poetic concept is not anchored to an art world context, artists have, time and again, found it to be an impetus for their own creativity.

The most prominent Abstract Expressionist painter, Jackson Pollack, had, before his days of glory, once interacted with Chilean surrealist painter, Roberto Matta, in New York, immersing himself in regular games of exquisite corpse as a way of unleashing the Marvelous. In fact, it was, in part, as a result of his first-hand exposure to the European surrealists temporarily forced into New York exile by the Nazis that Pollack arrived at the "action painting" style which was to make his reputation in the art world shortly after they had returned home. Though his liquid drip/splatter/pouring techniques were clearly rooted in "pure psychic automatism," their surrealist antecedents were publicly erased. Their European lineage went unnoted by both Pollack and art critics, like Charles Henri Ford's old paramour, Parker Tyler, writing in *View* magazine, so as to market Abstract Expressionism as a distinctively American school of avant-garde art. Their ultimate aim was to shift the capital of the art world from Paris to New York.

Once this Americanization process was completed, Abstract Expressionism soon began to be used as an ideological weapon in the Cold War, and, by the Sixties, its clichéd tropes had become the staple fare of collegiate art departments all across the country. In Antliff's chapter, "Breakout From The Prison House of Modernism," we get a first hand account of the frustrating and disempowering results of this development on one New York art student. As a refreshing change from Antliff's authoritative voice as art historian, we are treated here to a lively email interview which he conducted with anarchist graphic artist Susan Simensky Bietila. In it, she tells her personal story of the way in which her art teachers at Brooklyn College sought to discourage her desire to create politically-engaged art during the early days of the Vietnam War, when McCarthyism still hung heavily in the air. This was a time when academia's emphasis was on the apolitical formalist concerns of abstractionism as exemplified by her assigned "mentor," Ad Reinhardt, who, though he was politically opposed to the war, did not believe in mixing politics with art.

One wonders what would have transpired if Bietila's mentor had been more like Jess Collins's teacher, the anarchist Clyfford Still? Would she have seen Abstract Expressionism in a different light as a result of his example? Might she have explored its connections with surrealism or been exposed to surrealism's affinities with anarchy or the art work of surrealist women? Most importantly, would she have been encouraged by Stills, precisely because of his anarchism, to devise her own unique approach to developing the linkages between art and anarchy in her work. Unfortunately, Reinhardt was not that kind of teacher. Instead, he was not averse to publicly dismissing

an historic anti-war mural like Picasso's Guernica as "just a cubist/surrealist painting of some kind." At this point we might question why Antliff fails to follow-up Bietila's mention of Reinhardt's callous dismissal of Guernica with some questions for her about whether the knowledge of Picasso's association with surrealism and Spanish anarchism might have offered her some additional insight into both the painting and her own art. Might not the conversation have turned quite naturally to surrealist poet, Benjamin Péret, and his lover, the surrealist painter Remedios Varo, both of whom fought in the anarchist Nestor Makhno battalion of the Durruti Column during the Spanish Revolution (Civil War)?

Yet, once again, Antliff's antipathy towards surrealism prevents what might have been a fruitful discussion from occurring. In fact, his obvious disdain for surrealism goes so deep that in his 2007 pamphlet, *Unleashing The Imagination: An Anarchist Tour of the National Gallery of Canada*, he happily contextualizes the Québec Autonomatists of Refus Global (Total Refusal) as anarchists while decontextualizing their strong ties to surrealism. By withholding such information on the creative interplay of anarchism and surrealism from his readers, Antliff seems to be doing to surrealism just what he accuses the National Gallery of doing in relation to anarchism and just what Reinhardt did in his day at Brooklyn College. As to Bietila, is it any wonder that modernism without surrealism would seem like a prison house to her?

Even the Provos with whom she later hooked up in Amsterdam had connections with the English surrealist, Charles Radcliffe. His *Heatwave* magazine was modeled after *The Rebel Worker*, which had been produced by a collective of young radicals of her own age in the States who would soon go on to form the Chicago Surrealist Group. And one of them, Penelope Rosemont, like Bietila, had been involved in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) during those exciting days. In any case, beginning with the Provos, this chapter of the book thankfully leaves the twin elitist outposts of higher education and the art world in the dust, and immerses us in the sprawling anti-authoritarian politics of the New York City counterculture of the Sixties and Seventies. With Bietila as our trusted guide, we move freely from the Provos to the Yippies to SDS and from the Rat to the Guardian. Later, in her story, we touch down in the midst of Active Resistance, World War 3 Illustrated and the Drawing Resistance Traveling Art Show. Bietila's passionate, candid and insightful comments here, and throughout the entire chapter, are a breath of fresh air in what is otherwise an unnecessarily stifling book.

The final chapter, "With Open Eyes: Anarchism and the Fall of the Berlin Wall," actually has very little directly to do with the crumbling of the Wall, but for the first time the book enters into the realm of music. For Antliff, this rather predictably, means the music of the seminal anarchist punk band, Crass, and the powerful collages and posters which Gee Vaucher did in conjunction with their records. Good-o, but where might you ask is African diasporic music in the Antliff book? The anti-authoritarian influences of hip hop, reggae, free jazz, and Afrobeat on anarchist culture go unremarked. In fact, the only reference to black people in the entire book is a disparaging comment about the Black Panthers. Though the latter is an understandable anarchist critique of their perceived authoritarianism, since it stands alone as the only reference to black culture in the whole book, it is disconcerting to say the least.

Where is the Nigerian originator of Afrobeat, the late Fela Anikulapo Kuti in this book? An examination of Fela's politically-charged music and his legendary autonomous zone, the Kalakuta Republic, would have been a nice touch. According to one of his biographers, Michael Veal, Fela's cultural resistance reveals an "anarchism ultimately opposed to all forms of authority, hierarchy and official organization." And, like Vaucher's role with Crass, the full color collages and

posters of Gharioki Lemi represent a staggering combination of devastating political satire, gut-wrenching images, and provocative messages from the Seventies and Eighties pan-Africanist milieu. In fact, Fela's life and music were scandalous, irreverent, and, as Trevor Schoonmaker has put it, "inherently punk." Sadly, Antliff fails to conceptualize the DIY militancy of punk as a quality that exists beyond artificially constructed racial and musical genre boundaries. This is a lost opportunity to broaden the scope of what is thought of as "anarchist music." But, of course, even without the punk analogies, Fela's music and Lemi's artwork stand together as one of the great anti-authoritarian collaborations of all time.

Of Antliff's other choices for the last chapter, the wondrous collages of Freddie Baer are duly noted, but where are the visual feasts cooked up by collagist James Koehline and what of the hearty black humor of his fellow collagist, Winston Smith, both of whose art work has been widely disseminated in relation to the magazines, books, and recordings of the anarchist milieu and both of whom have surrealist affinities as well? Instead, the remainder of the chapter is spent on the late Richard Mock, a political printmaker to whom Antliff has staked his claim as an anarchist art historian. Here Mock is made to play Courbet to Antliff's Proudhon.

In the end, it is the last sentence of the book in which Antliff explains Mock's prints that is most revealing of the book as a whole: "Critiquing oppression while calling attention to the anarchic potentialities within society, they prefigure a world of possibilities in which each and every one of us are the index of reality's radicalism." As a counter vision, I would like to propose a geography of autonomy which cannot be indexed by the confines of reality, where impossibility is the demand, oppression and alienation are the starting points of resistance, and where the discovery that our creative potentialities are not limited to the art world is cause for joyous outbursts of anarchic laughter as we cut loose the drunken boat of art from its miserablist moorings and set it adrift in a sea of dreams, propelled freely by the astonishing winds of unexpected adventure.

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