

ubu

JINDRICH STYRSKY – EMILIE COMES TO ME IN A DREAM

COLLAGES & PHOTOMONTAGES – PRAGUE, 1933

EROTICISM IN SURREALIST PHOTOGRAPHY & COLLAGE, 1929 - 1948

March 6 – May 3, 1997

Two concurrent exhibitions exploring the interrelated themes of eroticism and dreams in surrealist photography and collage will open at **Ubu Gallery** on March 6, 1997 and run through May 3rd.

Surrealism, as it emerged in Paris in the 1920s and spun off a number of satellite movements particularly in middle Europe – grouped together disparate spirits who were united in their opposition to prevailing social conditions and attitudes. The restoration of a new conservative social order after the chaos of World War I worried them enormously. The surrealists saw the reestablishment of bourgeois values and morality as a straitjacket whose grip had to be combated at all costs. Their preoccupation with the themes of eroticism and dreams – as well as death, violence and anticlericalism – arose out of this revolutionary stance. Masturbation, voyeurism, fetishism, group sex and more were explored in depth in the plastic arts of the 1930s, especially vividly through photography and collage.

The eminent Czech avant-garde artist, Jindrich Styrsky (1899 – 1942), who was closely allied with the Parisian Surrealists and who was the subject of Ubu Gallery's inaugural exhibition in 1994, masterfully investigated the themes of eroticism and dreams in a series of publications between 1930 and 1933. These included his periodical, *Erotická revue*, and the six volumes released by his private press, Edition 69. Styrsky believed that in pornography he had found a destabilizing medium that could be used to subvert established social and artistic norms and mores.

The culmination of Styrsky's involvement with pornography was the release of his erotic masterpiece, *Emilie Comes to Me in a Dream*, in Prague, in May, 1933. This extremely rare book (of the original total of 69 copies, less than 20 are presumed to survive) included a pornographic dream of Styrsky's and an afterword by Bohuslav Brouk, a psychoanalyst affiliated with the Czech surrealists, which commented forcefully on the subject of pornography as art. These texts sandwiched a series of surreal and sexually explicit photomontages. Ubu Gallery is pleased to display three copies of *Emilie Comes to Me in a Dream* – including one of the ten deluxe copies of the book – along with the original collages which were the maquettes for the photomontages contained therein. Ubu Gallery is also publishing a new edition of *Emilie Comes to Me in Dream* with full color reproductions of the original collages and English translations of the Czech texts.

A concurrent exhibition, "Eroticism in Surrealist Photography & Collage, 1929 – 1948," presents additional works in a related vein by Hans Bellmer; the important Polish avant-garde artist, Janusz Maria Brzeski, who made a cycle of collages entitled *Sex in Paris* in 1930; the Parisian Surrealist, Georges Hugnet; and Andre Racz, a Rumanian who exhibited with Peggy Guggenheim at her gallery, Art of this Century – including participation in the first collage exhibition held in this country at her gallery in 1943. Also included will be additional related works by Styrsky.