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The Corpse Ballet:
Existentialism in Madame d'Ora's Slaughterhouse Photographs

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Between 1949 and 1958, the photographer Dora Kallmus (Austrian, 1882–1963) known under the alias Madame d'Ora, undertook a photography project in the slaughterhouses of Paris. Of the series, nearly two hundred photographs were printed and have until recently been considered only in a strict context of post-WWII trauma or as gestures of empathy. This study examines the relationship of d'Ora's *Slaughterhouse Series* to postwar intellectual critique of theatrical spectacle in the aftermath of Nazi occupation. These photographs will be interpreted through a lens of existentialist philosophy, first by addressing Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir's "ethics of authenticity," which requires total individual freedom (Sartre's precondition for art) and responsibility of action. Secondly, the images will be analyzed in terms of the Nazi infiltration of the French ballet. Finally, the series will be discussed as a rhetorical critique of Surrealist motives in a feminist context. Understood in dialogue with Existentialism, d'Ora's slaughterhouse photographs create a *stage* of engagement for the viewer to contemplate

the new individual and collective existence in the postwar climate while operating to disrupt psychological complacency. By doing this, d'Ora became a critical figure in reorienting the purpose of art and photography in postwar Paris.

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ABBREVIATIONS

MKG – Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg Germany

Mumok – Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna Austria

DK – Dora Kallmus

WG – Willem Grütter

[Not writing] would mean passing through this unfamiliar world with my eyes closed, and that would be unforgivable.[1]

– Dora Kallmus, December 17, 1942

By speaking, I reveal the situation by my very intention for changing it ... I transfix it, and I display it in full view.[2]

– Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?*, 1947

INTRODUCTION

Between 1949 and 1958, the Jewish photographer Dora Kallmus (Austrian, 1882–1963) known as Madame d'Ora, undertook an intensive production of on-site photography in the slaughterhouses of Paris. The nearly two hundred black-and-white photographs of the disturbing *Schlachthof-Serie* (*Slaughterhouse Series*) seem at first diverge from d'Ora's signature avant-garde portraits and fashion photography.[3] Their graphic content, which remains shocking to audiences today, has long been considered only as an exceptional expression of postwar empathy and loss.[4] However, there are

[1] Original German text: Nicht Schreiben "würde bedeuten, durch diese unbekannte Welt mit geschlossenen Augen zu gehen, und dies wäre unverzeihlich" Dora Kallmus, 17 Dezember 1942. Jean-Marc Dreyfus in, *Machen Sie Mich Schön, Madame d'Ora. Dora Kallmus Fotografin in Wien Und Paris 1907-1957* (Hamburg and Vienna: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe and the Leopold Museum, 2017). 232.

[2] Jean-Paul Sartre, *"What Is Literature?" And Other Essays* (Harvard University Press, 1988). 37.

[3] There is a select handful of photographs printed in color.

[4] "*Schlachthof-Serie*" is a posthumous title of the abattoir collection used by the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, this name was not given by d'Ora. The term "slaughterhouse" was a well-established metaphor during the First World War in Europe. A prime example being the 1931 novel *Le grand troupeau* (*To the*

underlying concepts that not only inform the totality of her oeuvre but also pose questions about the devastated aspects of postwar humanity at the time.

D'Ora contacted at least two slaughterhouses in Paris to pursue the on-site work: Abattoir Ivry Les Halles (1956–57) and Abattoir Rue Brancion (1956–57). It can also be surmised that she initiated an additional series at Abattoir de la Villette around 1949.[5] While for nearly a decade, she returned repeatedly to specific motifs in the abattoir, it is important not to homogenize the series since the body of work is quite diverse, and the categories into which the images fall appear to open new and distinct avenues of exploration, as against previous, synthetic approaches to analyzing the series. Although the pictures were produced as a designated series they can be rather easily organized into conceptual classifications. While many of the images could be seen as *memento mori* or still life, the images most pertinent to this study are those of animal carcasses and body fragments, which she photographed as though they were portraits of dancers. Yet another category of images in the series documents the surface qualities of her subjects: their materiality, texture, and tactility. Such themes resonate with her earlier works before the war began in 1939, demonstrating the artist's continued, yet evolved, style and creative interests.

Slaughterhouse) by Jean Giono (French, 1895–1971). Considering the religious victimization of d'Ora and her family, previous readings on these photographs hold biographical verity.

[5] We know this from d'Ora's labeled folders for the negatives as well as written location notes on the back of images. The MKG collection was originally organized in portfolios marked "Jean", "Ivry", and "Brancion" among other formal or conceptual names. As Cathrin Hauswald noted in December of 2017, the meaning of "Jean" is uncertain. Among the "Abattoir Jean" portfolio are the surrealist slaughterhouse photographs, that is in their visual relation to Eli Lotar. On one hand, this supports the argument that "Jean" could reference the Abattoir de la Villette on Rue Jean Jaurès 75019 in Paris' 19th arrondissement. Another thing to consider is d'Ora's contact with Jean Cocteau, who the folders could also be referencing. Only one of the "Jean" portfolios was dated, from 1949, which denotes the earliest known phase of this series.

The Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe (MKG) in Hamburg, Germany holds the largest collection of the *Slaughterhouse Series*, including nearly 60 printed photographs, 100 contact sheets (each displaying six to nine images), two binders of monochrome and color negatives, as well as correspondence with Madame d'Ora's clients, many of whom were involved in the French entertainment industry. There is also postwar correspondence with her collector, Willem Grütter, who donated the photographer's holdings to the MKG in 1972. The remaining archives are held by three other institutions: the Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig in Vienna, which has 32 unmounted black and white photographs (at least 7 of which have inscriptions on the back), the Preus Museum in Horten, Norway, and the Landesgalerie in Linz, Austria.

The slaughterhouse photographs have been neglected in the scholarship on d'Ora's career, even though the artist deemed the series her "great final work" and exhibited a selection of the photographs in 1958.[6] Up until the recent traveling retrospective, *Madame d'Ora: Machen Sie mich schön*, the photographs prior to the 1940s have been the primary interest to publishers and curators.[7] The few studies

[6] Original German: "meine grosse Schlussarbeit." Taken from Magdalena Vuković note 56, letter from DK to WG, 17.8.1955, Preus. Vuković mentions it was also the photographer's intention to publish a book after the war, as a "Life Memorial" including personal essays. "Zum Schluss kommen: D'Ora's Letzte Schaffensphase 1938-58," in *Machen sie mich schön, Madame d'Ora. Dora Kallmus Fotografin in Wien und Paris 1907-1957* (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe and Leopold Museum, 2017), 285–303. Note 56, 303, 332. There is correspondence about the publication at the Preus Museum archives. Letters from d'Ora to Grütter exhibit her frustrations about obtaining permissions or licensing "der heisse Kampf um Erlaubnisse" [the heated battle], a back and forth battle between Versailles and Ivry. "Und das Alles noch erfolglos!!" [And all to no avail!!]. "Ivry" references the abattoir Ivry Les Halles, which was in the 1st arrondissement just north of Île de la Cité. Letter from DK to WG, Paris August 17, 1955. Preus Museum.

[7] The show debuted at the MKG (December 17, 2017–March 18, 2018) where the main fraction of the slaughterhouse photographs and relative archive collection are held. The exhibition, designed as a platform for "re-assessment," was the first-ever career survey of the artist and featured nearly 250 photographs.

conducted on the later phase of d'Ora's career analyze it as an iconography of the devastating trauma of the Holocaust. While that interpretation follows logically from d'Ora's wartime situation, this project aims to loosen that framework in order to critically reposition the images from another perspective.

This research examines the relationship of d'Ora's *Slaughterhouse Series* to the postwar intellectual critique of political infiltration and its relation to the spectacle of the theater. Each chapter will interpret the photographs through a different lens of existentialism. First, I will address Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) and Simone de Beauvoir's (1908–1986) ethics of authenticity. As existentialist prescriptions engaged with the postwar situation in Paris, d'Ora's *Slaughterhouse Series* responded by disrupting the general psychological state of socio-cultural complacency among French citizens. Her photographs interrogate the existentialist definition of "authenticity," which was grounded in values of individual freedom and responsibility of action. For Sartre, freedom became a precondition for art's production and interpretation, with the mark of one's freedom a self-determined process realized by active engagement. This possibility is reified by d'Ora's images of slaughter at the abattoir. The images intend to provoke a disturbance, a notion that Sartre equated with revolutionary value.[8] Photographing and exhibiting the abattoir's violence antagonized complacent behavior, forcing the viewer to

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Under new curatorial direction, it then traveled to the Leopold Museum, Vienna (July 13–October 29, 2018) and the Neue Galerie, New York City (February 20–June 8, 2020).

[8] "'These jokes,' he said, 'have a revolutionary value. They disturb. There is more destructive power in them than in all the works of Lenin.'" Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Childhood of a Leader," in *The Wall (Intimacy) and Other Stories* (New Directions, 1969), 84–134. 109.

confront truths ignored out of disgust. In this way, the taboo, behind-the-scenes view of the Parisian abattoir embodied a critique of mass complacency and artificiality.

Naturally, in the immediate postwar period, a lingering civil concern about political infiltration dominated the intellectual scene in Paris. Vichy's state collaboration with the Third Reich, whose Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (*Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*, est. 1933) had taken over public channels of communication and entertainment. This appropriation included theater companies like the Opéra national de Paris, cinemas, cabarets, museums, and newspapers. Once these institutions were liberated in 1944, Sartrean Existentialism began to address the socio-political ambiguity of the postwar moment, and sought to reassess priorities in the wake of the disastrous Nazi regime and the subsequent loss of faith in humanist values. During the war, cultural escapism into theatrical spectacle had become commonplace; a type of social distraction enabled by Paris's rich entertainment industry, which had continued during the Vichy years. Events hosted by the Opéra, and by cabarets like the Moulin Rouge, had been major hosts of occupation leaders and troops under the Vichy regime. Existentialism, in part, warned against the continued submission to these institutions after the war, which functioned as platforms of illusion and desire, rather than addressing substantial socio-political matters.

The *épuration légale* initiated a type of shameful cleansing of collaborationists that affected figures working at the Opéra during and after the war, people whom d'Ora knew personally. The subliminal notations of degeneracy versus supremacy behind organized Nazi spectacle sheds light on the slaughterhouse photographs themselves,

which become more complex considering their relationship to a second photographic series, this time of ballet dancers that d'Ora produced simultaneously after the war. Chapter Two addresses these two in conjunction, reorienting d'Ora's ballet and slaughterhouse photographs as interrogations of the National Socialist infiltration of French ballet.

Finally, both series understood syncretically as "The Corpse Ballet" will be discussed as a rhetorical critique of Surrealist motives in a feminist context. The adverse postwar situation for women in France will be assessed, as well as aspects of the images such as fetishism and materialism, which were frameworks used by artists at the time that impeded the advancement of female authority. The last chapter reorients d'Ora's placement in the art historical canon by removing the gendered lens of "empathetic" photography and pressing beyond a strict sense of trauma.

Madame d'Ora's late corpus reflects on the socio-political conditions framing WWII, but–without diminishing the impact of the Holocaust on the psyche of the European population–this analysis resists immobilizing the "Corpse Ballet" images under the singularity of war trauma. Rather, d'Ora's series is multi-tiered; its motifs and staged constructions question human morals in general, but also seek to confront viewers directly, shocking them out of their self-serving mindsets. In this, d'Ora behaved as the avant-garde photographer (as opposed to the photographer of the avant-garde) she had never quite been before the war, and became a critical figure as art and photography reoriented themselves in postwar Paris.

Dora Philippine Kallmus was raised Jewish along with her older sister Anna Malvine, who was born in 1878. The sisters were very close and owned a home together in Frohnleiten Styria.[9] Their father was a respected board council attorney and supported d'Ora's scholarly ambitions as well as her entrepreneurism. According to archives at *die Graphische* (as the institute *Graphischen Lehr - und Versuchsanstal* is known today) in Vienna, between 1904–06 she was one of the first women to enlist in the Association of Austrian Photographers as well as to enroll in theory lectures and chemistry lab.[10] D'Ora likely studied under Dr. Franz Novak who taught physics and photochemistry as well as Professor Hubert Landa who led freehand drawing courses.[11] By the time the school officially began enrolling women in 1908 d'Ora had already celebrated a successful first year of her studio opening in Vienna.

Her acclaimed business in studio portraiture was complemented by projects with fashion houses and German magazines such as *Die Dame*, *Madame*, and *Officiel de la Couture et de la Mode*, which expanded her success and spread her name in the field.

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[9] Both were victims of Nazi persecution and Anna was deported during the Holocaust in 1941. The liquidation of Jewish assets in Austria began in 1938. Haus Doranna would officially be taken in 1939, adversely forcing Anna to move back to Vienna. D'Ora successfully reclaimed their beloved home after Aryan expropriation. For more on this case of property restitution see: Lisa Silverman, "Art of Loss: Madame d'Ora's Slaughterhouse Photographs and Haus Doranna," *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 60, no. 1 (2015): 173–190.

[10] D'Ora still faced discrimination, years later she recalled: "They thought it was enough for me as a woman, to have been permitted access to the lectures and they withheld the chemical reagents as if they were dirty jokes." MKG Archives. The institute, founded in 1888 by Josef Maria Eder, continued to prohibit women from enrolling officially until 1908. Today it has been renamed *die Graphische*, or The Higher Graphical Federal Education and Research Institute. Fritz Kempe, *Nicola Perscheid, Arthur Benda, Madame d'Ora*, vol. 1 (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, 1980). 26.

[11] D'Ora's coursework has been speculated but records from the institute verify her official enrollment in these practical courses and lectures. Thank you to Klaus Walder who provided scans of archives from the institute's library collections: Student directories of the Höhere Graphische Bundes-Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt (formerly K. k. Graphische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt), Vienna, Austria.

Profits from these commissions eventually allowed her to open a second studio in Paris in 1925. While thriving independently in the style capital she was also introduced to fellow photographers such as Man Ray (American, 1890–1976), with whom she worked in proximity for *Die Dame* periodicals in the mid to late 1920s. During this period, the fact that d'Ora exhibited at the *Premier Salon Indépendant de la Photographie Moderne (Salon de l'Escalier)* at Théâtre de la Comédie while creating content for the same periodicals as Man Ray, Florence Henri, and Germaine Krull demonstrates an important familiarity with her contemporaries–the Surrealist and Neue Sachlichkeit photographers.[12] Ultimately, her work helped to spread avant-garde intellectualism and the *Neue Frau* phenomenon through advertising and mass dissemination. From the writing assignments she received to publish alongside her photographs–published as short, witty texts–she learned the power of the "text-plus-image" photomontage model, which she would adapt into her vivid final project, the *Slaughterhouse Series*.

The fashion industry routinely used colored photographic imagery to better market their products and engage the desire of consumers, and it was probably there that d'Ora learned to use color effectively. Color, along with other formal strategies that played a role in her early work, bled into her expertise in the late work. While merely a handful of photographs in the *Slaughterhouse Series* were developed in color, its use in the slaughterhouse images amounts to a critique of materiality and authenticity in

[12] *Salon de l'Escalier* took place between May 24 to June 7, 1928. Monika Faber, ed., *Madame d'Ora* (Prestel Verlag and Neue Galerie, 2020). 30.

fashion.[13] This postwar trajectory alone is a sound reason to reevaluate the slaughterhouse photographs, as her artistically curious and technically experimental phase.

In 1940, as Hitler's National Socialist regime advanced, eliciting swift courses of action, Madame d'Ora sought protection by converting to Catholicism and selling her atelier on rue Eugène Flachat.[14] When the Nazi army invaded Paris, d'Ora was considered a "French Jew" but kept working discreetly until July of 1942. Her attempt to flee the city occurred the following August after a large roundup and arrest of Jews, which, for the first time, included women and children.[15] In December that year, she found shelter in Lalouvesc situated in Ardèche, an unoccupied southern province of France.[16] She lost multiple family members and friends to the Holocaust, including her beloved sister who was taken to the Łódź Ghetto and the Chełmno (Kulmhof)

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[13] Archived color negatives further reveal what seems to be an undeveloped mini-series of evocative red blood pools and discarded intestines. The MKG portfolio for these negatives is labeled "rouge de la nature" with the additional note "Le Satan" and "~~Le Diable~~". From the original Kodak packaging of the negatives received by MKG, we can discern d'Ora was using Ektachrome film. This brand became available in the early 1940s and was preferred for its color capacity and high shutter speed compared to the Kodachrome film. MKG Negatives Box 1.

[14] Monika Faber, *Madame d'Ora Vienna & Paris 1907-1957: The Photography of Dora Kallmus* (Vassar College of Art Gallery, 1987). 20.

[15] Jean-Marc Dreyfus, "... That Would Mean Passing through This Unfamiliar World with My Eyes Closed, and That Would Be Unforgivable," in *Madame d'Ora* (New York: Prestel Verlag and Neue Galerie, 2020), 142–48. 144–45.

[16] This label ("French Jew") speaks to her commitment to be a Francophile as well as her knowledge of the language. During the occupation, she was under surveillance and checked in with the police once every week. Dora had an offer to travel from Spain to the United States but forwent the opportunity to wait for her sister to leave Vienna. However, Dora had not known it was too late for Anna to escape. Monika Faber, "Madame d'Ora: Photographing Artists, Society and Fashion / Vienna and Paris 1907-1957" (Museum Lecture, Neue Galerie New York, February 20, 2020).

extermination camp thereafter.[17] After the liberation, d'Ora returned to Paris, but not before making a brief documentary project on Austrian refugee camps between 1945–46.[18] She re-established a more humble studio with her new Dutch assistant Jan de Vries.[19] Then, for the first time, her photography practice took her "on-site" in a serially-geared pursuit, when the public stages of the theater and the taboo alleys of abattoirs became sites of intensive examination for her over the next decade. As the *Slaughterhouse Series* would be the second designated photographic project to follow the war's mass murder, scholars have tied their readings almost strictly to research on d'Ora's personal history as a holocaust survivor and victim of persecution.

Scholars such as Lisa Silverman maintain this framework. In a biographical analysis, Silverman notes that the demands of production from the *Slaughterhouse Series* may have been a way for d'Ora to "punish herself."[20] One can only imagine the motives driving the decision to face this harrowing sensorial experience–the sounds, smells, and sights involved in butchering animals in grimy halls. For a photographer accustomed to the elegant and fastidious world of fashion, the insalubrious conditions required physical and mental sacrifice. For this reason, I would add that, during the extreme event captured by d'Ora's aperture, the camera communicates her psychological endurance into the photograph. A second common reading derives from d'Ora's confidante and collector

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[17] Dreyfus, 146.

[18] D'Ora returned to the site where her sister Anna had been held before deportation. This is the main reason scholars have seen it as a trigger of trauma for d'Ora's *Slaughterhouse Series*.

[19] Faber, *Madame d'Ora Vienna & Paris 1907-1957*. 20.

[20] Silverman. 188

Willem Grütter, who has wondered "... since she was very fond of animals; did she want to criticize the cruel human treatment of animals?"[21] Some scholars support this theory since d'Ora had been exclusively portrayed in photographs with pets. Thus, the slaughterhouse images are often seen as a condemnation of the invisible cruelty behind the meat production industry. Arguably though, since many civilians became malnourished due to stressful living conditions during the Occupation, animal suffering was probably not a primary concern in Paris.[22]

More recent research by Katharina Sykora and Julia Lutz acknowledges the need to diversify current interpretation.[23] Lutz suggests that d'Ora adapted a theoretical strategy from her mentor, Nicola Perscheid (German, 1864–1930), who emphasized the need to, "look and look again."[24] This suggestion implies that there is more than one truth to be unlocked in the photographic image, which I see in d'Ora's skill in staging an event

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[21] Although she sets out to move away from a reading of trauma Julia Lutz's Master's Thesis parallels the lives of an innocent animal with prisoners of war. I argue this is not necessarily the case, but that d'Ora is attempting to personify individuals responsible for working with National Socialists. Thus demonstrating a resentment of the ballet entirely. A letter from WG to Arthur Benda in 1963, states: "...durchgemacht hat und da sie sehr tierlieb war; wollte sie die Grausamkeit, welche die Menschen schon bei Tieren anwenden, anprangern?" Julia Lutz, "Madame d'Ora Schlachthoffotografie der 1950er. Versuch einer gesellschaftspolitischen und psychologischen Lesart" (Masterarbeit, Universität Wien, 2015). 8, note 1.

[22] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Paris under the Occupation," in *The Aftermath of War (Situations III)*, trans. Chris Turner (Seagull Books, 1945). 8–40. 35–37. Further, d'Ora noted being affected by the general food scarcity during her time in exile. Jean–Marc Dreyfus, 148.

[23] For the most recent publication see the catalogue essay: Katharina Sykora, "Das Morbide und das Exzentrische, brüchige texturen und liminale figuren bei d'Ora," in *Machen sie mich schön, Madame d'Ora. Dora Kallmus Fotografin in Wien und Paris 1907-1957* (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe and the Leopold Museum, 2017), 253–68. See also the article: Julia Lutz, "Jenseits Des Illustrativen: Eine Relektüre Der Schlachthoffotografien von Madame d'Ora," *Rundbrief Fotografie* 24, no. 3 [N.F. 95] (2017): 19–30.

[24] Original German: "schauen und wieder schauen." Madame D'Ora: "Memories of Nicola Perscheid", manuscript quoted from Lutz (note 41) in, "Jenseits Des Illustrativen," (2017): 28, 30. And Monika Faber 1983, 9, note 3.

for the viewer. Sykora traces the photographer's aesthetic approach as consistently intimate and therefore empathetically oriented. Perhaps for the first time, Sykora points to the consistent themes that d'Ora explored throughout her career, including materiality, eccentricity, and morbidity. Above all, Lutz and Sykora acknowledge and expand the range of interpretations beyond postwar trauma.

Still, their explanations fall short in expanding an analysis of the series beyond the slaughterhouses' established metaphors. For instance, in one of the most recent publications on the series, Julia Lutz juxtaposes the slaughterhouse images and George Franju's (French, 1912–1987) film *Le Sang des bêtes* (The Blood of Animals), a documentary made immediately after WWII.[25] Her argument could have been enhanced by Siegfried Kracauer's (German, 1889–1966) reading of the film in his *Theory of Film* (1960), which addressed the existential behavior of society concerning the slaughterhouse depictions in Franju's film to traumatic depictions of the Nazi concentration camps:

> *The mirror reflections of horror are an end in themselves. As such they beckon the spectator to take them in and thus incorporate into his memory* the real face of things too dreadful to behold in reality. *In experiencing the rows of calves heads or the litter of tortured human bodies made in the films of the Nazi concentration camps, we redeem horror from its invisibility behind* the veils of panic and imagination. *And this experience is liberating in as much as it removes a most powerful taboo.*[26]

Kracauer's statement about the representation of horror aligns with Jean-Paul Sartre's general view on art, where neither can influence a change until the viewer sees and

[25] *Le Sang des bêtes* was filmed primarily in La Villette, where both Eli Lotar and d'Ora were photographing in the early to mid-twentieth century. For more on this comparison see, Adam Lowenstein, "Films without a Face: Shock Horror in the Cinema of Georges Franju," *Cinema Journal* 37, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 37–58.

[26] Emphasis added. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960). 306.

realizes it.[27] The quote considers the slaughterhouse depictions as an attitude corrective for the citizens to whom Sartre most objected: those who conceal themselves from "the awful dilemma of their existence."[28] What Lutz seems to have missed is that d'Ora created an aesthetic platform for critical moral analysis, and in the process of viewing, it becomes the viewer's responsibility to abandon a mass mentality and reflect on the political symbolism of the staged carcasses.

D'Ora's *Slaughterhouse Series* is a product of its time and place, and Sartre's philosophical praxis, as a critique pointing to individual agency, are a part of that time and place.[29] Sartre's assessment of commitment situated itself as an ethical and political reaction against totalitarianism and genocide. Major figures supported Sartre and de Beauvoir's *Les Temps Modernes*, for example Claude Lanzmann, who produced the Holocaust film *Shoah*, was their editor for three decades. Among many other examples, this speaks to the significance and urgency of existential work as activism against political terror. Accordingly, my repositioning of d'Ora's series insists on broadening the deterministic attachment to historical trauma alone, which has stunted the capacity of this series to assume new meaning.[30]

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[27] Heiner Wittmann, *Aesthetics in Sartre and Camus: The Challenge of Freedom*, trans. Catherine Atkinson (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009). 19.

[28] James Wood, "Introduction" in *Nausea (La Nausée)*, trans. Lloyd Alexander (New Directions, 2013). Xiii.

[29] For a prime example of a psychological trauma reading that also includes a detailed biographical context of the photographer see: Lisa Silverman, "Art of Loss: Madame d'Ora's Slaughterhouse Photographs and Haus Doranna," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 60, no. 1 (2015): 173–90.

[30] It is not to be dismissed that these sensitive and graphic depictions in animal slaughterhouses were captured during a devastated postwar climate by a woman of Jewish descent who, as we know, lost half of her family to the monstrous concentration camps. Such emotional shock would have had undeniable

Previous interpretations also tend to conflate photographed slaughterhouse carcasses in general with petrifying documentation of Holocaust cadavers, as visualized by Kracauer's metaphor. But d'Ora's archive argues against such a narrow reading, as it demonstrates that there was a relationship between her abattoir photographs and *dance*, which in turn makes a statement about Nazi collaboration. The main oversight in previous scholarship seems to have been the fragments of textual evidence on the verso of the abattoir photographs.

Archival examination of photographs and contact sheets from the *Slaughterhouse Series* reveal d'Ora's penciled shorthand inscriptions, which read like pithy French titles. On the contact sheets, these descriptions correspond to specific image cells. The final intention of these annotations was to be published in an unrealized book along with other personal essays. Her writing provides evidence for new speculations on the artist's conceptual motivations and working process. Text such as: "*la dernière révérence*" (the final bow), "*danse finale un essai*" (final dance essay), "*Pierrot; Polichinelle,*" "*Marionnettes*," "*danse macabre*," "*de Révolution – la danse*," "*maître de ballet*," "*á faucher croisé*" as well as "*jambes croisées*" (crossed legs), "*Les kilos de philosophie elle kilo une seulement*" (The weight of philosophy, she only weighs one kilo), "*l'aristocrate ne perdra pas sa jeune ou ne perdera pas saphfre élégance*" (the aristocrat will not lose

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conscious and subconscious repercussions on d'Ora's creative choices after World War II. Broadly speaking, contemporary photography theorist Georges Didi-Huberman emphasizes a caution against the epistemological temptation to "immobilize" images. To achieve this requires the "invention [of] a *position* in which the limit and transgression can have a new relationship." He advocates for the agency in the photograph initiating from the autonomy in the act of the capture itself. Georges Didi-Huberman, *The Eye of History: When Images Take Positions*, trans. Shane B. Lillis (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The MIT Press, 2009). xxxiii.

his youth or lose his sapphire elegance), appear on the contact sheets, among many other examples.[31]

The inscriptions further unite themes of the theater, French ballet, and a critique of the bourgeois society. Mutually, the images and text express concerns about wartime theatrical propaganda and its proponents. While interrogating the representation of vulnerable bodies d'Ora integrates a balletic vocabulary into her macabre abattoir photography. While the roughly ten-year period in which d'Ora shaped her project is unarguably linked to "retraumatization," there is more to be said beyond what is indicated by the iconography or the memorializing of personal history.[32] My research argues for the philosophical and political relativity behind d'Ora's perseverance in recording brutality, especially considering the art history of postwar women's photography.

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[31] The collection of the MKG's developed *Slaughterhouse Series* photographs are either mounted (15) or laminated (34) to a cardboard backing. The posthumous reformatting presumably happened when the collection was processed by the Staatlichen Landesbildstelle, Hamburg (their institutional stamp and accession numbers are seen on the newly backed images.) The provenance and nature of the backing are significant as the *Karton kaschiert* (cardboard laminate treated) photographs make it nearly impossible to access many of the written inscriptions that are expectedly on the verso. At least 12 of the photographs which are mounted, but not laminated, do have writing on the back, and correlate with the text on the back of her contact sheets. Ironically then, those cardboard backings become a type of mask that conceals the photographer's attempt to *unveil* a message to be interpreted in viewing the photograph in tandem with its epigram.

[32] Silverman, 173–190.

I

PROBING AUTHENTICITY:

EXISTENTIALISM IN POST WWII PARIS

In the aftermath of World War II, the emergence of new existentialist ideologies concurred with Madame d'Ora's *Slaughterhouse Series* in Paris. Existentialism's various branches and critique of Humanism were addressed by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. As de Beauvoir pursued a feminist existentialism, the two thinkers had distinct philosophical approaches to the ideology and both of their variations will apply to this study. This chapter engages d'Ora's photographic series in a dialogue with existentialist philosophy's concern for individuals to live authentically under a precondition of commitment. As defined by Sartre in *What is Literature?* (1947) to be "committed" is in part to relinquish passive behavior, and instead, to engage with a type of activist theory, be it an act of speech, writing, or art.[33] In this treatise he insisted "We must learn to speak in images, to transpose the ideas of our books into these new languages."[34] Sartre addressed the need to adapt artistic and photographic communication into the success of his new program of *littérature engagée*. His methods called for accessibility that would extend the message beyond the privileged reception of the bourgeois.

[33] Sartre's first "committed" work, *The Flies*, was written in 1942 Paris during the German occupation. Denis Hollier, "Deeds without Words," in *Absent without Leave: French Literature under the Threat of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). 21.

[34] Sartre, *"What Is Literature?,"* 216–17.

Furthermore, this study considers the importance Sartre placed on the role of aesthetics and theater, viewing both as platforms for a "province of freedom," but only under certain conditions. For Sartre, "theater should express a vow or commitment or a refusal or a moral judgment or a defense of one's rights or a challenge to rights of others…"[35] In doing so, theatrical expression should be communicated transparently, without a masked agenda. More exactly, it should not manifest deceitfully or as propaganda, and therefore unlike the theatrical program of the Third Reich. For Sartre, the work of art and the stage are the outlets for freedom to express a commitment.

The cessation of war brought a heightened awareness to the lack of gravity held by light entertainment and its distraction from individual responsibility. The theater became a symbol of immoral engagement and therefore a target of criticism. As a response, Sartre and de Beauvoir regarded social distraction as a general political entitlement or result of solipsism. One was expected to take a stark stance–all in or nothing–which would entail relinquishing privilege for the greater good of society.

This ultimately posited a new role for the artist. Sartre admired visual artists such as Wols (German, 1913–1951) and Alberto Giacometti (Swiss, 1901–1966) who attempted to describe human existence in its *totality*, which rhetorically, at least, negated any attempt to control a viewer's reception, as would an artificially staged event for the

[35] Furthermore, Sartre says: "This theater does not give support to any one 'thesis' and is not inspired by any preconceived idea. All it seeks to do is to explore the state of man in its entirety and to present to the modern man a portrait of himself, his problems, his hopes, and his struggles." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre on Theater*, trans. Frank Jellinek (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976). 17, 38.

masses.[36] Sartre viewed art as performing an "ontological revelation" by distilling two parts into a whole: "the being of their author and the being of the world in a single movement."[37] Committed art is neither supported by aesthetic delight nor by the dated theory of art for art's sake, Sartre insisted.[38] He also found disturbance in people that denied accepting autonomous art as "empty."[39] Examining d'Ora's slaughterhouse photographs within this framework further positions her as responding to existentialism's call to action.[40]

Another important aspect situating d'Ora's photographs within an existentialist sphere is Sartre's notion that art and performance act as mediators between the artist and viewer.[41] The process of creation should orient itself, not only to transparency but also to *act upon* and inspire a commitment of individual responsibility in viewer engagement. According to Sartre, allowing the viewer agency to determine the meaning of a work "fully," in fact realizes art's ideal purpose of offering choices in a moral situation. The

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[36] Sartre draws a clear distinction between "people's theater" and "bourgeois theater" (for the masses). Sartre's concept of "totalization" can be defined as "the relationship between painter and object, but at the same time both painter and object embody entities in themselves, such that each represents a 'totalization' independently of one another." In other words, each has a separate function, purpose, and being in the world. Heiner Wittmann, *Aesthetics in Sartre and Camus: The Challenge of Freedom*, trans. Catherine Atkinson (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009). 14.

[37] Art is the part of being "in an ongoing totalization and the philosopher-artist lucidly plays a part in the permanent unification of reality." For more see: Jean-Paul Sartre, "Fingers and Non-Fingers" in *Portraits (Situations IV)*, trans. Chris Turner (Seagull Books, 2009). 616.

[38] Sartre, *"What Is Literature?,"* 39–41.

[39] Ibid, 41.

[40] Heiner Wittmann, *Aesthetics in Sartre and Camus: The Challenge of Freedom*, trans. Catherine Atkinson (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009). 9.

[41] Wittmann, *Aesthetics in Sartre and Camus* (2009). 14–15.

author or artist's responsibility is making meaning accessible, and it is only with the collaboration of a viewer that the work's value is realized and its "silence" is deciphered.[42] This perspective allows the spectator a type of autonomy over its original author. It concurs with d'Ora's proclamation that her final project was intended to be, "a book for *everyone*, because photography is philosophy."[43] This follows the ideology's underlying principle of human freedom, which was a response aimed at rediscovering one's purpose of existence, and defining the new role of art within that new orientation after the devastation of WWII.[44]

The question of authenticity versus inauthenticity became a heightened issue in the postwar period, and existentialism set out to determine its parameters. This concern with authenticity partially resulted from the two historical pillars that ground my research: cultural escapism into theatrical spectacle and political infiltration in Paris. To act authentically, in Sartre and de Beauvoir's estimation, was to reject the notion of mere possibility to confront what actually was occurring. This was a process of accepting total personal responsibility and disconnecting one's moral code from external authority. In

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[42] Keeping in mind that too much attention to the artist's biography or intention could easily allow one to "overlook the work's actual aesthetic content" and the potential transcendence of the art's meaning. On the other hand, d'Ora's inscriptions and visuals provoke the autonomy of the viewer, as Sartre insisted. However, my critique of Sartre's point, and Wittmann's explanation is that by allowing the viewer power over the work, room is left for discriminatory shortcomings in the canon of art history. Heiner Wittmann, *Aesthetics in Sartre and Camus: The Challenge of Freedom*, trans. Catherine Atkinson (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009). 31.

[43] Original German: "Mein Buch wird ein buch für alle sein, denn die Fotografie ist ja Philosophie." Letter from DK to WG, 1954.

[44] Finding meaning in life became more difficult after the possibility of Nazism. Sartre mistrusted authority and adopted anarchist tendencies with a general distrust of political sovereignty. For instance, in *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (1957) he warned against defining personal value based on the dominion of religion or political figures. He believed the individual was solely responsible for determining their moral code and the essence of being.

doing so, one achieves existential freedom and discovers an authentic way of life. For Sartre, mediums such as political theater and art were derived from lived experience, and thus could fruitfully posit the opportunity for critical thought and action. Photography in particular, offering fixed captures of reality, were static stages for viewer contemplation. Its immediacy and documentary quality catered to "authentic" means.

After the war, d'Ora responded to existentialism's dialectic of authenticity by photographing representations of both: the suspicious site of the Opéra Garnier, as well as the taboo reality of the abattoir. The photographs articulate two worlds essentially embodying the binary of inauthentic versus authentic. The photographs themselves assume existentialist authenticity with their display of concrete truths of existence, revealed from behind otherwise hidden conditions. Just as d'Ora noted during the Occupation: "reality is not life, reality is death."[45] In this way, her work is meant to *present* rather than merely express meaning, following Sartre's belief that it is only when something is "realized," that the "physical aspect of the world is reflected within it."[46] D'Ora's photographs achieve this through methods of *staging* as well as the *unmasking* of reality, which together address the viewer as an agent of consequence, positioning the series as an instrument for socio-psychological critique.

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[45] Katharina Sykora, 254.

[46] Sartre, *"What Is Literature?" And Other Essays*. 31.

STAGE

The theme of staging is expressed in two different ways in d'Ora's photographs, as a purposeful arrangement of elements in the pictorial field as well as the scene's composition. Both create a platform, similar to a physical theater's stage, on which events are presented. Thus, the stage, in and as the photograph, becomes a recognizable artistic device. What makes this an existentialist move is that the photograph itself becomes a site intended for audience engagement and moral contemplation. By working in still-life mode–an obvious model for "staging" photographic images–d'Ora was able to control the image (a form of agency that Sartre would approve of), as completely as possible, and not unlike the type of staging she did in her portrait work.

Existentialism set out with a specific approach to staged situations as a tool of intellectual communication. Sartre published and lectured on the theater throughout the postwar period. As early as 1943, he was tackling the question of "political theater," pulling inspiration for his own written performances from the techniques of Bertolt Brecht (German, 1898–1956).[47] In 1947, Sartre publicly disagreed with theatrical staging if it contained no human value, deeming it a "superficial imbroglio," which he described as "materialist" or "popular" theater. Instead, he proposed:

> *If it is true that man is free in a given situation and that in and through that situation he chooses what he will be, then what we have to show in theater are*

[47] Though it was not until 1955 that an interview of Sartre was published in *Théâtre populaire,* which had his first recorded references to Brecht. He regards the contributions which Brecht made to be of "capital importance," because of their demystification. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre on Theater*, trans. Frank Jellinek (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976). ix, 44.

> *simple and human situations and free individuals in these situations choosing what they will be.*[48]

In this way, Sartre saw the stage as an opportune medium for reconstructing circumstances of moral judgment in order to present the audience with a set of solutions, which are up to them to evaluate. He saw a potential for the stage to manifest "deeply human" choices, by which spectators are also given "*limit* situations" or extreme alternatives to consider, such as a position that leads to death.[49] Sartre believed, in the case of death, "freedom is revealed in its highest form since it agrees to lose itself in order to be able to affirm itself."[50]

Such ideologies emerging around theater are relevant to interpreting d'Ora's staged scenes, especially since her newfound postwar photographic interest was consumed by death. The artist's knowledge of theory, commercial styling, public relations, and the photographic medium had led her to a period of self and social criticism after 1945. This repertoire allowed d'Ora to experiment with curating subjects and scenes beyond portraits of people. While she spent the first half of her career reveling in Parisian glamour and avant-garde theatricality, after the war, the focus of her work pivoted to stark concerns of human existence.[51] It filtered through her documentary study of

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[48] From the article "Pour un théâtre de situations," published in *La Rue* November, 1947. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre on Theater*, trans. Frank Jellinek (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976). 4.

[49] Ibid., 4.

[50] Ibid., 4.

[51] That is not to overlook d'Ora's continued financial reliance on other commissions after WWII. At this point in time she may have contested this type of work but sought it out necessarily to uphold her standards of living, such as maintaining a fashionable lifestyle. For more on her postwar shift see: Julia Lutz, 20.

Austrian refugees, her portraits of French socialites under suspicion of collaboration, and a series treating the Marquis de Cuevas Ballet.

Besides the *Slaughterhouse Series*, the shift can be distinguished in viewing various portraits, such as those of dancer Serge Lifar (Russian-French, 1905–1986). His portrait from 1935 (fig. 14) compared to the later shots from 1950 (fig. 16) are prime examples demonstrating d'Ora's postwar shift in emphasis.[52] The early image has an air of playfulness. We are left admiring simple details such as Lifar's manicured nails or his casually cuffed blazer. The latter image, conversely, set in a cemetery in Montmartre, bears a bluntly somber impression. Positioned with his arm and hands clasping a deteriorating gravestone, the scene renders ambiguity as to deciphering whether Lifar's behavior is threatening or if he is being taunted. A deeper interpretation will develop in the following chapter, but for now, it is important to note how this shift away from her commercial or fashion work prompts more engagement from the viewer–specifically, engagement that has a moral inclination.

D'Ora's "stages" function as photographic prompts for the viewer. She reconditions the stage to retort passive behavior, drawing attention to the unsettling ambiguity of death, especially as it invokes painful and violent measures. She exploited the nature of the photographic image to capture and preserve an immediate reality, which in turn expedited her objective to relay something real yet unseen. Reality is suspended in climactic visuals of slaughter and these staged situations all surround the process of death. Her fluency with the lens allotted agency in both physical staging of social

[52] Lifar will be discussed in depth in the second chapter.

situations and a conceptual deconstruction in the photograph.[53] For her, the camera became a device for sourcing newfound autonomy after a five-year period of exile and social chaos–during which she considered reality as death itself. D'Ora confronts these pressing occupations instead of leaving wartime terror as a subject of the past, like many other citizens. She uses photography as a trusted mode of documentation, and turns to a culturally censored, yet her most "real" subject–the blood pools and carcasses in the slaughterhouse.

In terms of addressing the audience, the existentialist individual understands a free will of their actions, but the success of this innate freedom is jeopardized by succumbing to materiality, pure desire, or conformity to the desire of others. Conditions for these faults were propagated by enemy parties during WWII *vis à vis* the theatrical stage. In fact, it is precisely this endless impulse of self-destruction that Sartre related to the participation of attending the theater and ballet. As a first-hand witness of the city under four years of German occupation, Sartre noted the capital had become a hollowed-out "dummy display."[54]

[53] In trying to stage an experience for the viewer d'Ora sought material particularities in her production. In a letter, DK explained her preference for matte photography paper as opposed to glossy. This is likely because the reflection of a glossed surface disrupts the viewing immersion. This is partially surprising considering the few photographs that were in fact produced with a glossy surface give the dark blood pools an effect of realism. Her letter states, "Mr. Benda takes excellent photos on matte paper. But he does not get it now and the glossy paper is not my ideal. I gave a sample to work here and I will review it. Kodak doesn't have matte paper." German: "Herr Benda macht ganz ganz ausgezeichnete Fotos auf mattem Papier. Aber er bekommt es jetzt nich und das Glanzpapier ist nich mein Ideal. Ich gab hier eine Probe zur Arbeit und werde diese sehen. - Kodak hat kein mattes Papier." MKG archives, letter July 9, 1958.

[54] Sartre, "Paris under the Occupation," (1945). 22.

Furthermore:

> *It was the purpose of the artificial existence the Germans maintained there – the theatrical performances, the horse races, the miserable, lugubrious festivals – to show the world that France was intact because Paris was still alive.*[55]

The Nuremberg trials left ambiguity in the realm of the theater's operators and affiliates. Directors, artists, and performers were no exception to the purges taking place throughout Germany and France. The *épuration* was a time of weighted public judgment for many beloved stars of French entertainment. As this severe skepticism progressed, many civilians were berated for continuing to ignore efforts of denazification by seeking out short-term plans of amusement, a decision that in itself crossed into the targeted territory of recent political collaboration. Amidst the climate of blind cultural gaiety, d'Ora opposed its hollowness by documenting sites of the most grotesque operation in Paris: the slaughterhouses. The psychological resonance produced by her series became one with ethical substance, distinct from the fleeting fulfillment of entertainment. In fact, much of the artwork from this period comments on this emptiness by eliciting profound moral anxiety.[56] But many of the artists who had created anti-fascist imagery in the 1930s had dispersed by the end of the war. This leaves d'Ora's *Slaughterhouse Series* as one of the few existing visual iterations of political frustration in Paris after the occupation.

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[55] Sartre, 22–23.

[56] For example, Francis Bacon (Irish-British, 1909–1992) who also used the manipulation of the body and corpses to express human capacity for violence and self-destruction. Other artists exploring the moral collapse after living through the war include: George Grosz (German, 1893–1959); Hannah Höch (German, 1889–1978); Trude Waehner (Austrian, 1900–1979); Wols (A. O. Wolfgang Schulze, German, 1913–1951); Magdalena Abakanowicz (Polish, 1930–2017).

As Simone de Beauvoir observed, while the war was over, "it was hanging on our arms like a big, cumbersome corpse and there was no place in the world to bury it."[57] De Beauvoir's simile resonates with the tension bound up in a receding horizon of four animal bodies in d'Ora's *Une Chaloupe* (A Rowboat, fig. 1, c. 1946–48). The nuanced textures of meat fold into one another, amounting to densely layered and abstract forms. The bodies' lack of identification distorts the abattoir setting and inserts us into a dismal landscape. Each heap of meat extends out of the frame horizontally, dominating every inch of visual engagement. The composed carcasses strain our vision to the extent that the photograph evokes an inability to see anything but dead matter. The bodies are drained of life to the point of abstraction. The oppressive viewing experience of these mounds is a seeming physical manifestation of the war's psychological repercussions. This stage draws attention to the alienation and suffering that loomed over survivors in Paris.

By showing only the *aftermath* of death as an abstraction, the image recalls the intense incalculability of violent events, forcing the viewer to confront the anguish of postwar reality. This "authentic" materiality exhibited by the photographed carcasses confronts the viewer with a distorted, unresolved reality. It is as if d'Ora had proposed that this must be acknowledged before discovering a path through seemingly impossible terrain. Abstraction, a subject that is reiterated throughout Sartre's essay *Paris Under the Occupation* (1945), became a shorthand for the human inability to comprehend pain from

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[57] Original French: "*La guerre était fini: elle nous restait sur les bras comme un grand cadavre encombrant et il n'y avait nulle place au monde ou l'enterrer*." Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force Des Choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963). 50–51.

witnessing war. It was a horror too excruciating to grasp, even in retrospective reflection.[58]

Sartre believed one's behavior must be revealed to them in order for them to objectively *see* themself.[59] Considering the spectator of the theater or photograph and either's effect of distant observation, scilicet, watching a situation directly unrelated to oneself, Sartre considers the innate behavioral tendency to "shrink away" when an observer is caught in their act of gazing into a private moment. He argues: "What is wrong with addressing an audience is that *it causes the imaginary character to vanish* and to be replaced by the presence of the real person."[60] This explains why actors on stage do not acknowledge the audience, direct contact or communication ruptures the theatrical illusion. The trick enables spectators to lose awareness of themselves and be engulfed in the narrative before them. Bertolt Brecht popularized the antithesis of such convention by employing the *Verfremdungseffekt* technique, otherwise known as

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[58] *Paris Under the Occupation* describes the deadened city as operating under systematic calculations by the "phantom government" of Vichy. It recounts how the war embedded itself into one's conscious and subconscious mind as an inescapable and abstract horror. The German invasion, Sartre contended, had left only the skeleton of a city or a graveyard of what once was. Moral refuge for the psychological turmoil was partially sought out in conversations surrounding humanist ideals and existentialist principles. Sarah Wilson in her evaluation of Existentialism, addresses the city of Paris as a *lieu de mémoire* (a place of memory) a place that continued to be a site of contemplation after the war. She described a psychological state "in which questions of authenticity and moral value became retrospectively unproblematic absolutes." Since its advent, photography has been often associated with memory. (e.g. Walter Benjamin on the "optical unconscious" and Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1981). This *site of memory* is physically materialized by the starkly lit stages that frame d'Ora's photographic postwar subjects. These stages became areas for d'Ora to interrogate her subjects, treating them like ghosts haunting her from war. Sartre, "Paris Under the Occupation," 8–40. And Sarah Wilson, "Paris Post War: In Search of the Absolute," in *Paris Post War*, ed. Frances Morris (Tate Gallery, 1993), 25–52. 26.

[59] Sartre, *"What Is Literature?" And Other Essays*. 36–37.

[60] Emphasis added. Sartre, from a lecture given in 1944 "On Dramatic Style," in *Sartre on Theater*, (1976). 9. Brecht's epic theater established the strategy of *Verfremdungseffekt*, which intentionally engaged the audience by "breaking the fourth wall" and at times involved actors speaking directly to the audience.

breaking the invisible “fourth wall” between the acting subjects and audience. The social effect of this theatrical procedure was observed with acuity by Louis Althusser (French, 1918–1990) as:

> *The process of becoming, the production of a new consciousness in the audience – incomplete like all consciousnesses yet propelled by its very incompleteness, that acquired distance, that inexhaustible work of criticism in action; the making of a new play-goer, an actor who begins when the play ends, who begins only to give it a conclusion in real life.*[61]

A similar reaction occurs while viewing film or photography. This is precisely the psychological effect of d’Ora’s photograph of slaughterhouse workers engaging with the camera in *Rind mit aufgeschnittener Kehle* (Beef with slashed throat, fig. 2, c. 1956–57). Their ocular contact with the lens compels the viewer to become aware of themself and prompts them to consider their role as a viewing participant. D’Ora’s staging strategy, by which the audience is directly addressed as an observer, is clearly illustrated in this violent image of a white bull slit from throat to chest. A knotted rope tethered to its ankle was the laborer’s instrument for the dramatic takedown of the bull. The bull’s stream of blood blends into the soiled ground. The layers of neglected filth are reminiscent of the routine exploitation and mechanization resulting from the perpetual labor of the abattoir. Following existentialist thought, a similar characterization of life characterized by endless silence and terror, could be made about the previously occupied city. Like the parasitic flies that settle eagerly on the victim, swarming to the scent of carrion, tendencies of consumer fetishism in the postwar city consumed a passive population. The photograph was taken from a low angle, rendering the animal’s figure into a triangular

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[61] As quoted by Frederic Grab, “Introduction,” in Bertolt Brecht, *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 7–17. 16.

shape that recedes to what d'Ora called "the hands of the invisible man" hidden by the wooden doors.[62] Their attitudes casual, all three men lock eyes with the camera. Thus, the composition not only exposes the presence of laborers but makes the viewer aware of their external gaze–we are no longer a fly on the wall but rather a front-row audience. This raises the question of whether, with this shot, the photographer intends to tauntingly inquire: Is witnessing a forceful scene of violence necessary in order to provoke social change?

Shamelessly entertained by the event (and perhaps the presence of d'Ora and her camera), the men's coy smiles conflict with the bull's jarring expression. As the carcass bleeds out, the two butchers in the back-right corner observe the event with mild marvel. The assertive laborer along the left frame has been cropped at the neck, mutilated at the hand of the photographer. The image shows callous death as a spectacle – a normalized amusement of the very agents of the killing. Figuratively, d'Ora has drawn back the curtain for the viewer. The insensitivity exhibited by these figures seems to expose how the process of death, now as a show, has become less shocking after the war. The event here takes place as a collective experience, just as it does in the theater. The unanimous spirit of amused laborers reinforces the attitude that brutality no longer holds shock value.

It is uncanny how d'Ora frames aspects of the slaughterhouse as a stage for the occurrence of "spectacle." That is, she aestheticizes her shots of the carcasses, as if attempting to make the photograph approachable and non-taboo, just as she had done

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[62] A photograph showing the arms of a butcher with a hatchet who has killed a dead cow has the inscription: "Série. Les mains de l'homme invisible." (Series. The hands of the invisible man.) D'Ora cropped out his body to veil his identity and focus on the act itself. MKG Hamburg.

with her portraits. Still, she is acutely aware that death is at the heart of each display. The arresting photographs force the viewer to face something that they are a part of systematically, as an observing participant. Furthermore, the "stage," elevated and spot-lit in high contrast, frames a site in which the viewer contemplates the bodily. Since the photograph, furthermore, mobilizes an opportunity to look again, it intends for the audience to not merely be inundated by their reaction but rather to make a choice about what they see. Now the site of the theater, which had previously demanded artificial engagement and conjured irrational desire, asks its viewer to consider a real-life situation.

The existentialists saw both artistic and philosophical efforts as equal means of conveying a lived experience, which positions the *Slaughterhouse Series* as an existential work.[63] Throughout their careers, both Sartre and de Beauvoir used fiction and philosophy as modes of examining human experience and behavior. Fictional works such as plays were an existential strategy of "indirect communication" that aimed to convey ideological themes to an audience or reader, like authenticity or bad faith, with less

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[63] In Eleanore Holveck's analysis of five Beauvorian themes, she compares the immediate post-war novel *Le sang des autres* (1945) and the *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté* (1947) to demonstrate, in part, the mode of fiction versus philosophical writing to illustrate the same argument. She concludes, "Beauvoir's novel contains more truth than was ever dreamed of by our philosophers." Holveck examines the theme, "philosophical theory is an abstract explanation for what is first a *concrete, lived metaphysical experience*." Beauvoir believes philosophers are distinct in that they create "an intellectual reconstruction of their immediate experience," as opposed to the novelist or artist, who recreates their reality "on an imaginary level." Holveck proves how Beauvoir, in both her philosophical and novelistic approaches, provide equally powerful interpretations of real experience. However, Holveck's perspective that creative liberty constructs an "imagined" situation misguides the possibility of art reaching a level of realism, which d'Ora unmistakably achieves. It is true that d'Ora took liberty in controlling the candid nature of the shots we encounter. Only in this way do d'Ora's photographic encounters resemble a contrived situation. In a transcription of writing to visual d'Ora manufactures photography as a mode that not only describes but *illustrates* real experience. In "The Blood of Others: A Novel Approach to The Ethics of Ambiguity," *Indiana University Press*, Hypatia, 14, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 3–17. 3, 16.

dictation.[64] At the same time, as discussed by scholar Denis Hollier, Sartre's fictional protagonists play out in a state of paradox. Hollier recalls Sartre's statement: "It is not the character who becomes real in the actor," but "it is the actor who becomes unreal in his character."[65] Both remind us that, although theater proves effective in proposing situations, it remains a construct of potential decisions, which can only mature in reality.

Similarly, Madame d'Ora's abattoir scenes tap into the theatrical world as well as the real world. While at first staging personifications in reality could be seen as a conflation of the two sites, her practice of "staging" directly addresses theatrical performers by unmasking them as defunct bodies. In this way, her photography introduces yet another method for the contemplation of reality in postwar Paris, one that resonates with Sartre's ideas about the artist's mediation of reality.[66] D'Ora's raw presentation–the physicality of her subjects and the representation of death–forces the viewer's interpretation to attach itself to a real situation. Although photography may stage convincing "truths," creating a layer of artifice, it also freezes the moment to allow the viewer to probe where imagination meets reality. This visual process permits comprehension of both the invented ambiguity set up by d'Ora as well as the metaphysical level of the event. By emphasizing tactile and sensorial effects in her

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[64] "Indirect communication" followed the method of Søren Kierkegaard's (Danish, 1813–1855), use of pseudonyms in the nineteenth century. He was retrospectively considered to have laid groundwork ideas for postwar Existentialism. Thomas Flynn, "Jean-Paul Sartre: Art and Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford University: Metaphysics Research Lab, 2013).

[65] Denis Hollier, *Absent without Leave: French Literature under the Threat of War*, trans. Catherine Porter (Harvard University Press, 1997). 24.

[66] Heiner Wittmann, *Aesthetics in Sartre and Camus: The Challenge of Freedom*, trans. Catherine Atkinson (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009). 14–16.

shocking images of animals, a bodily reality is offered to vision, and triggers a physical reaction. Ultimately, the series follows the existential ideal to offer a moral survey while drawing influence from concrete experience.

Although d'Ora viewed photography itself as a philosophical practice, her relationship with philosophy was complex and afforded her a critical view of wartime events. She expressed her cynicism in an unaddressed note: "Important fault[s] are pardonable as important beings but unimportant mistakes and unimportant people are simply unpardonable as they show us once more the unbearab[ility] of such people."[67] Several of her slaughterhouse annotations make an analogy between intellectuals and slaughtered cows. The inscription "3 philosophes" on the back of one of d'Ora's contact sheets (fig. 3, c. 1955) shows a frontal view of cow heads hanging in a display case for selling meat.[68] They are bleached by a white spotlight. The framing is direct, almost interrogational, and serves as a shameful display of the subjects.

Considering the reinvention of Enlightenment ideologies under the Third Reich, d'Ora here seems to critique the recent political abuse of philosophical thought. The philosophies of German thinkers such as Martin Heidegger (German, 1889–1976), G. W. Friedrich Hegel (German, 1770–1831), or Friedrich Nietzsche (German, 1844–1900) were adapted to wrongly justify a framework of Nazism. Nietzsche's idea of the *Übermensch* is a well-known conceptual mold adapted into racist eugenics. As such, the philosopher's illuminations on body politics were utilized to support a "cleanse" in

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[67] The note was of the few pieces she wrote in English. The message is partially cryptic but does entail a general sense of betrayal and a strict right and wrong mentality. MKG Archive Box #3.

[68] French inscription: "*3 philosophes*" from the MKG contact sheets collection.

accordance with new "German" criteria in the field of public dance and entertainment (which d'Ora was socially involved with until 1940.)[69] During the occupied years this notion became married with French tradition, as dance was traditionally considered as a skill which "formed the exterior of the person" and additionally, "cleansed the interior."[70] Nazism filtered the trusted voices of Aryan idealism and oppressive absolutism to breed violence.[71]

A more theoretical socio-economic approach might propose that *3 philosophes* substitutes philosophy for commodities. By framing the philosopher-subjects in a display case, d'Ora uses a familiar motif to address the underlying permeation of fascist exploitation, a gesture that refuses ignorance. D'Ora uses the materiality of the abattoir in contrast to what de Beauvoir would address as an "abstract explanation."[72] At the same time, d'Ora interrogates the result of philosophy falling into the wrong hands, by illustrating it as an unforgettably grotesque face in her photograph.

D'Ora titled a similar image of cow heads *Notre Valuer* (What We Value, fig. 4, 1956–57). The caption makes an assumption about the viewer and society as a whole. Being that "value" in this photograph is associated with a soulless and empty thing, she seems to use the image to mock the viewer into contending with her conjecture and to suggest that they evaluate the nature of their own values. Most clearly the image links

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[69] Marion Kant, "The Nazi Redirection of Dance" in *Hitler's Dancers: German Modern Dance and the Third Reich*, trans. Jonathan Steinberg (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003). 96.

[70] Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreography and Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). 27.

[71] The sole absolute in existential thought is individual freedom.

[72] Holveck, 3.

value with commodity, perhaps suggesting that consumerism interrupts our value system, making the viewer see how we might misjudge value as something quantifiable.

Lastly, the image *Ils moquent d'eux ou de nous?* (Are they laughing at themselves or at us?, fig. 5, c. 1956–57) isolates a pair of spotlit cow heads floating in an ominous display setting. D'Ora's title activates the lifeless cows to express a notion of ridicule. The distance between the photograph and viewer is decreased with this ambivalent yet direct question, probing engagement. The question suggests that the subjects know something that the viewer does not, which tempts us to inquire what they would be snickering about. This example exhibits the recurring manner in which the photographer ironically personifies dead subjects.

The inscriptions reinforce the photograph's morally based gesture, as it were, for the viewing participant to freely determine their response. This relationship between artist, as director of experience, and spectator, as receiver, follows Sartre's suggestion for the function of a stage. Sartre described an urgency felt by writers and artists, himself included, to stage situations that shed light on the conditions of man.[73] In doing so, it should allow the spectator to contemplate and "participate in free choice" regarding the factors that put an individual in said situation–war being one example.[74]

Inscriptions on the back of d'Ora's images expand our understanding of the series as a whole, even though they are assigned to individual shots. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, these works may have been influenced by trauma, but are also

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[73] From a 1946 publication. Sartre, "Forgers of Myths," in *Sartre on Theater*, (1976). 35.

[74] Sartre, "Forgers of Myths," 35.

driven by a critique of escapism, such as a will to forget the war.[75] The annotations can be sorted into themes of moral and cultural concern such as aristocracy, dance, theater, racial discrimination, religion, philosophy, etc. Her pithy phrases create a mockery of conformist social values. They also addressed the shift to a commodification of leisure time as discussed by Marx, which was of heightened scrutiny for philosophers in the early century; in this way d'Ora engages with the intellectual reevaluation taking place at the time. Similarly, the existentialists viewed many of the same topics (like materialism, elitism, and capitalist industry) as illusions that denied humanity access to personal freedom. Analyses of d'Ora's pithy titles can enhance an understanding of her motivation, expanding its depth beyond their biographical importance.

As committed works, d'Ora's photographs create a stage in themselves where the curtain never falls. They become a visual paradigm of Sartre's ethics of commitment, compelling deeper scrutiny, beyond trauma, of the emptiness in materialist values, commerce, and entertainment. This is reflected by the staged subjects of the images: who are lifeless, empty, imitations of mere gestures. Their "act" remains unrealized and accordingly addresses how a "staged" attempt does not fulfill an act of commitment alone, rather, the deed must be played out by the viewer. As opposed to the theater, the photograph allows the spectator more suspended distance for contemplation. When the

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[75] For a brief overview of previous scholarly readings of trauma in the *Slaughterhouse Series*, see my Introduction, 5–13.

audience is moved by d'Ora's disquieting illumination on the stage they internalize its "indelible trace," but what matters is if and how they choose to interpret it.[76]

The socio-political concern with a lack of sincerity that Sartre expressed colors a portion of d'Ora's slaughterhouse scenes. In this way, the photographs can be seen as responding to the existentialist definition of authenticity as "substance of the real," in their raw setting and as an attempt to recapture human's individual freedom and responsibility of postwar acknowledgment.[77] If d'Ora's work proposes to critique the staged gaieties in Paris, is it in reference to the artificiality spawned under Vichy propaganda or rather other inter and after war civil entertainment?[78]

UNMASKING

The way that Madame d'Ora uses *masking* also responds directly to Existentialism's concern over inauthenticity in the postwar period and demonstrates that d'Ora's slaughterhouse images embody the same concerns as Sartre's by capturing what she understood as a fully authentic, physically legitimate reality. The images can be seen as direct renderings, made without artifice, and documentations of death as an undeniable truth. Thus, they deconstruct the prevalent sense of a politically censored reality.

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[76] Denis Hollier, *Absent without Leave: French Literature under the Threat of War*, trans. Catherine Porter (Harvard University Press, 1997). 21. See also: Sartre's reflections on Brecht from 1957: "Brecht and the Classics" in *Sartre on Theater*, (1976). 58.

[77] Simone de Beauvoir equates the real with a state of *joie d'exister* or joy of existence, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, 5th ed. (New York: The Citadel Press, 1947, 1976). 135.

[78] After the French liberation and fall of the Vichy Regime in August 1944, the press circulated news on the atrocities of concentration death camps. Political tension followed with the trials of *épuration légale,* and the official mandate to purge all Nazi collaborators.

Rhetorically, the series makes the viewer aware of what has been staged or contrived (be it at the theater or in a shop window), to realize the way things truly are. *Unmasking* realities of the postwar situation in her photographs elevates the viewer's sensitivity to the oppression and exploitation in the world.[79]

Unmasking relates back to Sartre's standards for theatrical productions to refer strictly to the audience's quotidian existence in the real world, as opposed to avoiding it. The idea is fully encompassed by Sartre's notion of *mauvaise foi* or 'bad faith,' which is a key concept in his treatise *Being and Nothingness* (1943). Sartre explains: "It is by means of bad faith that the meaning of nothingness is explained. A human being can under certain circumstances negate something with the aim of evading it."[80] He criticizes those who isolate themselves from the dilemmas of their own existence by living a lie because it is more convenient. To be in bad faith one knowingly relies on a false sense of meaning, by placing purpose in empty things such as entertainment or luxury commodities. D'Ora's images follow an existentialist quest for freedom by organizing an exposé that functions to render visible the cultural behavior of *mauvaise foi*.

Below, I parse her photographic series within a framework of the existential ethics of authenticity, specifically analyzing their address of political deceit and theatrical spectacle during and after the war in Paris. D'Ora's grotesque display of flayed skin and delicate carcasses, voices a cultural displacement of value. Sartre's concern over living falsely could be visualized as dwelling in the photograph *des rêves amusants* (Amusing

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[79] Flynn, "Jean-Paul Sartre: Art and Philosophy," (2013).

[80] Heiner Wittmann, *Aesthetics in Sartre and Camus: The Challenge of Freedom*, trans. Catherine Atkinson (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009). 23.

dreams, fig. 6, c. 1949). The scene shows the hollowed face of a cow, flaccidly draped sideways on a stool, with skin folding onto itself. The extracted layer of skin has been positioned to resemble a mask affiliated with unreality. As such, the cow "hide" linguistically represents the theme at play since to hide, or to conceal, translates directly to the French verb "*masquer*" to mask. The photograph mocks the very notion of dreaming by claiming an association between a deception and skin. So skin, such as in *des rêves amusants,* appears as if it was once something worn but now removed, as separately existing flesh. The nightmarish photograph is presented as an indisputable document. The repeated, and similar, camera shots as well as a crude setting render the subject unambivalent. In lieu of a narrated fantasy, be it theatrical or propaganda, d'Ora unmasks the vulgarity of animal slaughter, while concurrently pairing the subject with a critical title. The text adds another political layer to the dogmatic scene, together they test the viewer's state of contentment.

Addressing the wartime scene, Sartre observed a "hollowness of the appearance of normality in occupied Paris, the ghost town with curfews and no traffic, with its fake culture of *theatrical gaiety*, and the *window displays* in food and wine shops, belied by the notion of *étalage factice* (artificial display)."[81] Freedom was essentially drained from the occupied city; Sartre characterized it as a period of relentless "bloodletting."[82] The political surveillance reinforced the sense of petrification, yet the Germans sought to dress Paris' now desolate skeleton with a convincing façade of normalcy. As a result, the

[81] Emphasis added. Wilson references and paraphrases on Sartre's *Paris sous l'occupation* in *Situations III* 1949. Sarah Wilson, "Paris Post War: In Search of the Absolute," 25–27.

[82] Sartre, "Paris Under the Occupation," 8–40. 16.

voided city became masked by new spectacle, which often took the form of so-called "culturally approved" events at the cinema, cabaret, and theater. The misrepresentation was further stimulated by visual advertisements and festive sounds pronounced by Nazi troops, all which intended to blanket the fear pulsing through veins of citizens. Recognizing the guise of cultural distractions, Sartre clarified the inescapability and suppression of the war, which tainted all conscious and subconscious thought. The occurrence of sumptuous, yet unfruitful, events and displays would inevitably reinforce *mauvaise foi*. Though the purge of Nazism was well underway after Paris' liberation, would Sartre's attestation of *étalage factice* also become eradicated from recent sites of political affiliation?

Four years after the war there was a concern about collective amnesia, which remained ignorant of the violent associations from WWII. D'Ora's image of painted cartoons on a *traiteur* or meat seller's window (fig. 7, c. 1949) supplies a perspective of the romantic façade concealing vileness behind the abattoir operation. Two figures are illustrated wearing the regional dress common to Brittany, the coastal peninsula west of Paris. The long-laced headdress of the femme's traditional folk costume would have been uniquely recognizable to consumers. The left side panel exhibits a painted motif of grazing horses in a picturesque French landscape, most likely an indication that the vendor sells horse meat. Compared to fig. 3, the staged carcasses in her series display the realities of butchery in the most concrete manner by forgoing the commodity display in the photograph of the butcher's window. Effectively, through this juxtaposition, d'Ora has unveiled the false reassurances of the charming window display. Keeping in mind

Sartre's critique of simulation, the photograph serves as a foil to d'Ora's visceral depictions in the *Slaughterhouse Series*.

The photograph also suggests that the viewer reconsider the face value of marketing, distinctly pertaining to Breton products. Prior to Brittany surrendering to Nazi forces in 1940 the region already had an established party of nationalist ideals.[83] The German invasion fomented those political sentiments by founding the *Conseil national breton* (Breton National Council). This committee intended to promote Brittany's independence from France via collaboration with the Germans. Their camaraderie is further exemplified by propagandistic radio broadcasts, which started in 1940, and a military force known as the *Bezen Perrot* (Perrot Unit, est. 1943).[84]

Whereas one may customarily walk past this seemingly benign site, d'Ora's photograph allows for a stilled distance and questioning of a suspiciously quotidian scene. The window imagery refers to a clear sense of regional pride, as it is reinforced by the text written on the window. Compared to the exposé in the abattoir photographs, looking again to fig. 3, the viewer can discern a reality behind the glass, that of the butcher operation itself. However, in fig. 7 d'Ora's documentation of *étalage factice* simultaneously warns against the temptation to gloss over a site of precarious violent nationalism. Should it be expected that Parisians so swiftly resume a nostalgic celebration of a unified France, considering the country had freshly emerged from complex regional

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[83] Daniel Leach's research notes parallels in National Socialist ideology to that of Breton nationalism, such as a deeming a Celto-Germanic 'Nordic super-race.' Furthermore, he proposes a nationalist Grand Council was established as early as 1933. In "Bezen Perrot: The Breton Nationalist Unit of the SS, 1943-5," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Celtic Studies* vol. 4, Nationalism (2008). 7, 12.

[84] Leach, "Bezen Perrot." 11.

alliances with the enemy? The anxiety driving the nation's political purge after the fall of Vichy contradicts the sentimental advertising.

BALLET

As Sartre claimed, the theater was also a contentious site that continued to house illusively pleasant recitals in the immediate postwar period. He voiced the potential for writing, the arts, and the theatrical stage, to offer works capable of conscious acts towards change. The French Ballet was not fundamentally composed with existentially committed standards but continued as a popular choice for light entertainment during and after WWII.[85] Shortcomings of the ballet, in terms of existentialist expectation, are disclosed in Madame d'Ora's postwar photographic analogies.

Ballet conventions in particular avoid authenticity by maintaining standards of ideal classical proportions. Dance historian Susan Leigh Foster elaborates on this idea: "By presenting such elegantly costumed personages engaged in a seemingly endless sequence of smoothly flowing, innovative patterns, ballets seemed to affirm the general belief that *human perfection* was imminent."[86] Existential philosophy testifies against this idealist sense of humanism, and it should have been in even greater question after Nazi eugenics. Moreover, in reference to the trained "responsibility" of the ballerina, forgoing proper physical conduct was considered a threat to demystifying reverie of the controlled

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[85] Georgiana Gore and Laurence Louppe, "France: Effervescence and Tradition in French Dance," in *Europe Dancing: Perspectives on Theater Dance and Cultural Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000), 28–54.

[86] Emphasis added. Susan Leigh Foster, "Staging the Canvas and the Machine" in *Choreography and Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). 68.

viewing experience in the theater. Accordingly, the ballet master's task was to maintain its finely tuned machine, which choreographed "the careful calibration of bodies."[87] These strict protocols, bound by the expectation of audience pleasure, can be compared directly to the sacrificial slaughterhouse. This not only sheds light on the bourgeois theater as a site that organized exploitation of the body, but also supports Sartre's concern over its proliferation of void fantasies– "reality alone is what counts."[88]

Unmasking became a literal theme for d'Ora, emblematized in one of the initial processes of slaughter: flaying. She exhibits the removal of skin (fig. 8, c. 1946–48) in a photograph entitled *Enlèvement*, where the title invokes a number of suggestive meanings: the verbal *Enlever*, meaning to remove (clothing, or skin); the threatening interpretation of *enlèvement* as an abduction or kidnapping; and the elegant *enlèvement* of ballet–the lift into the air of a ballerina by her supporting male dancer. Lastly, *élever*, to rise up onto the balls of one's feet, one of the basic seven-steps of balletic practice. This linguistic interplay draws together a syncretic message of the ballet and abattoir, one that d'Ora bluntly calls to readdress in this photo-epigram but also frequents her postwar oeuvre.

In November 1955 the second phase of Madame d'Ora's abattoir project commenced. In a letter to her collector Willem Grütter, d' Ora wrote: "Finally starting the Abattoirs next week and the ballet will soon follow, it will be here at the end of the

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[87] Foster, 68.

[88] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*. 33.

month!"[89] The letter clarifies the simultaneous production of the slaughterhouse images with her work documenting the international touring Marquis de Cuevas Ballet Company. When the photographer revisited her commissioned projects after the war, working with choreographers (primarily Marquis George de Cuevas), her critical political survey continued.[90] Except being on-site at the ballet, as opposed to in her studio, gave d'Ora less control over the scene, and less of an ability to stage it, thus it is clear that she made an effort to move the project into her studio. This also allowed for d'Ora's trained eye and expertise as a stylist to be key instruments in accomplishing her desired shot. For this very reason d'Ora occasionally took butchered carcasses to her studio for photographic experimentation. Significantly, the ballet theme weaves through a selection of her *Slaughterhouse Series* in explicit ways.

The theme of corporeality is mirrored in both photographic series of the Marquis de Cuevas Ballet as well as the abattoir. Both express narratives of existential concern of authenticity, as well, which can be further understood through their juxtaposition. In several cases, d'Ora positioned inert animal parts in ironically animated poses. In *Geschlachteter Hase* (Slaughtered Hare, fig. 9, 1949), for example, the photograph, reproduced at approximately 13 x 10 inches, is life-sized, a gesture that in itself enlivens the image. In other scenes, she has repositioned discarded animal fragments on-site at the abattoir, but in the case of *Geschlachteter Hase,* the carcass was taken off-site and back

[89] Original German: "Sonst mache ich jetzt nichts. Als endlich die Abattoirs anfangen naechste Woche und dann schliessen sich bald die Ballette daran, welche Ende des Monates hier sein werden!"

[90] Discussed in depth throughout the second chapter.

to her studio. D’Ora’s props, the crisp white paper and woven basket to the right of the frame (fig. 10, 1949), indicate we are no longer in the degrading butchery.[91]

A trick of the cropped frame is used by the photographer to print an elongated portrait. This not only gives the viewer the illusion that the hare is standing upright but also expresses an active state through the carefully positioned legs, which seem as though they have just been crossed. Tufts of fur are its only accessories, emulating petite mittens and shoes; a facade of beauty is supplanted here by organic elements.[92] The figure, with a graceful bend in its arms and off-center balance, showcases a near-exquisite pose. The photographer provides the hare a cast shadow, an indexical mark of movement, or a metaphorical extension of the body as soul, acting as a fictitious mockery of life.[93] The shadow enhances the scene’s ambiguity by initiating a dialogue with performative motives. This ambivalent tension exists between what is typically an ephemeral (temporal or kinetic) sign, but here is instead fixed as a display, together exerting a new sense of unsettling drama. The image displays the animal’s exaggerated and grotesque body in defiance of death.

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[91] The undeveloped negatives reveal that the furless hare has been photographed repeatedly in the same setting but paired with a twin body and flipped over (fig. 10.2, 1949). We know the Marquis de Cuevas portrait (fig. 23) was taken in her studio, and there are several other negatives that reveal her clean working space. This reveals how comfortable she was handling carcasses in her studio.

[92] “Actually, if we consider the grotesque image in its extreme aspect, it never presents an individual body; the image consists of orifices and convexities that present another, newly conceived body. It is a point of transition in a life eternally renewed, the inexhaustible vessel of death and conception.” For more on theory of the grotesque see: Mikhail M. Bakhtin, “The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources,” in *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 303–67. 318.

[93] For more on the shadow as an indexical sign and in relation to Sartre’s committed literature see: Denis Hollier and Rosalind Krauss, “Surrealist Precipitates: Shadows Don’t Cast Shadows,” *October* 69 (Summer 1994): 110–32.

The spotlight gleaming off of its flayed flesh elevates it on the stage, which triggers the sensation of performance. The theatricality of d'Ora's composition is buttressed by the pretense of the stage and the social politics attached to it. A stage carries the expectation of monetary exchange, that is, one pays to participate, which activates the expectation of value.[94] From an existentialist point of view, when presented on a stage, the spectator anticipates the figure to perform because they are not only bound by monetary investment but also likely to overlook the value of another's freedom if driven by a compulsive state driven by personal desire. In the exchange, Sartre criticized the bourgeois theatre's audience for placing more value on the materialist experience and fantasy of the performative moment than on considering the individualism of the being that entertains. Sartre sees the individuals in the audience as having a responsibility to derive morality from the plausible situations proposed by the staged event.[95] When the photograph intervenes this performative value becomes displaced because the aspect of the event, which generated an ephemeral value has distilled it into a different dimension of experience, one without motion. The stillness of the photographic viewing experience is what allows it to become a site of interrogational opportunity.

But the hare's form, now a passive object, has been manipulated to imitate an *act*.[96] Since the photograph stills its subject's motion, the *Geschlachteter Hase* image

[94] Susan Leigh Foster discusses the establishment of value and meaning in the theatre in her recent publication, *Valuing Dance: Commodities and Gifts in Motion* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

[95] Sartre, *Sartre on Theater*. 5, 76.

[96] For more see Simone de Beauvoir: Eva Gothlin, "Beauvoir and Sartre on Appeal, Desire, and Ambiguity," in *Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. Margaret A. Simons (Indiana University Press, 2006). 134–135.

realizes the artist's ability to capture a true sense of theatrics and movement. Compare this with *Die Balletttänzerin Rosella Hightower* (fig. 11, 1955) where d'Ora evokes the same bodily position but from a living subject. By simply rotating her frame to a landscape orientation the dancer drapes over a drab *recamière* – The furniture accentuates her recline and the ballerina's objectified figure, which functions for the display of others. Although the dancer's eyes remain open, their white sclerae contrast with the heavy black maquillage lashes, brows, and lips that intend to mask her normal character. Specifically, the darkness of her elaborate billowy tutu provokes social cues of inauthenticity and distraction from wartime turmoil.

Notice, when the *Balletttänzerin* photograph is rotated right 90 degrees, or to a portrait orientation, and juxtaposed with *Geschlachteter Hase* the gestures of the two figures mirror each other. There is a sense of premeditated performance, or staging, in the way both lean muscular forms imitate one another for the viewer. The ballerina yields to gravity in a position beyond repose. Her elegant arms give way to the floor and her head seems to be slipping down with them. Her numb expression and fixated stare at the floor propose a state of death, the moment when one would force the deceased's eyes shut. Unlike the hare, the *Balletttänzerin* figure is not given a shadow, instead her pale corpse-like limbs are contoured by its hidden presence. Furthermore, the real and unposed notion of death among these photographs is tied to the stage, an existential platform for moral opportunity. Perhaps the hare is not a reflection of the dancer's vanity, but instead an unmasking of her external façade as a grim deterrent, which can only be realized in juxtaposing the two photographs. D'Ora has positioned the *Geschlachteter Hase* in the

spotlight, a new entity for our attention. She renders the dancer unreal by supplanting her with a bona fide double, the decaying hare, which symbolizes the idle value behind ballet's administration. An operation that has depleted the body of *Balletttänzerin.* The photographer composes a tension that engages the spectator, not only because of the shocking content and connection to reality but also because the viewer, as a witness, walks away with newfound acknowledgment of a relationship that is disturbing enough to remain cemented in memory. An important thing to consider is that the postwar series, from which these two scenes were selected, demonstrate an affiliation with slaughter and the ballet, an analogy illustrated acutely by d'Ora's renderings of the theater as a corrupt operation.

In both series, d'Ora sets up a *stage* as a site for viewing and contemplation. This is reinforced by the photographic medium, which in itself stages its subjects by framing them–cutting them out of the visual continuum. The larger stockyards, such as La Villette, were positioned on the fringes of the city, as it were, isolated from the well-touristed arrondissements and segregated from the middle and upper classes.[97] On the other hand, the theater was where the bourgeoisie flocked to envelop themselves in fantasy and to delight in spectacle. This was the cultural outlet exploited by National Socialist propaganda. In knowing that the event of spectacle or slaughter is dependent on the body of the dancer or animal, d'Ora places main subjects from both sites in a project that bridges the two socially antithetical settings. This articulates a philosophical agenda,

[97] During Haussmann's renovation of 1858 there was an effort to concentrate the slaughterhouses in the district of La Villette, which is located in the 19th arrondissement northeast of the city center. The abattoirs and cattle market opened officially in 1867.

as the materiality of her slaughterhouse subjects–dead animals and their body parts–embody the authentic, as avatars of existentialism. Superficiality is therefore displaced from the program affiliated with desire production and subliminal authoritarian motive. In other words, d'Ora's stage is a paradoxical method to interrogate conceptual fabrications (inauthentic) with actual reality (authentic). By doing so she pierces the social opacity of Paris and responds directly to existentialist anxiety about artifice by putting forth visceral scenes of animal carcasses that are undeniably "authentic," in Sartrean terms.

Sartre's concept of "putting on an act" or "mock feelings" references both external and internal behavior of *mauvaise foi*. Calling attention to these components of artificial behavior aims to explain a vexed (dis)placement and determination of personal value.[98] That is, Sartre is critical of artifice because it does not allow people to effectively govern their own values and ethics, thereby being unable to act as responsible citizens. Such moral tenets in part bore existentialism's strict definition of human responsibility, which suggests a new approach to d'Ora's photographs. For Sartre, "man is nothing else than his plan […] nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life."[99]

At a surface level, d'Ora's photographs of lifeless animal bodies point to the consequences of such abdication of responsibility. External forces control their destiny–she captures a subject which has no choice except to obey orders. Without the ability to

[98] "The feeling is formed by the acts one performs; so, I cannot refer to it in order to act upon it. Which means that I can neither seek within myself the true contradiction which will impel me to act, nor apply to a system of ethics for concepts which will permit me to act." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, 1957. 27.

[99] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*. 32.

exercise freedom of choice, existentialism insists, we are reduced to mere things.[100] By photographing a yielding body under a spotlight, d'Ora addresses the dead animal with intellectual consideration it would not have received otherwise. She commits to a re-evaluation, an action that exemplifies existentialism's praxis for heightening individual awareness of oppression and exploitation during the immediate postwar period.

Simone de Beauvoir affords postwar perspective on citizens who:

> *… lost their faith in perpetual peace… [and] discovered History in its most terrible form. They needed an ideology which would include such revelations without forcing them to jettison their old excuses. Existentialism, struggling to reconcile history and morality, authorised them to accept their transitory condition without renouncing a certain absolute, to face horror and absurdity while still retaining their human dignity, to preserve their individuality*.[101]

D'Ora likewise tested the same sensitive socio-cultural climate. In order to re-establish herself in Paris, she found herself reliant on the professional contacts that she secured prior to the war. Having to reconvene with friends who were on trial for collaborating with the enemy likely challenged her to examine her own attitudes toward spectacular culture in the aftermath of the war. The imagery of ballet dancers and ensembles, which she perceived as a "fantasy and unreality," once juxtaposed with the *Slaughterhouse Series*, appear as mirrors of the ways spectators chose to distract themselves.[102] While the experience of theater, outside of what Sartre considered "political" or "people's" theater,

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[100] Simone de Beauvoir believed: "festivals, theater, dance, music, poetry attempt to embody this *joie d'exister*; these celebrations posit concrete human existence as the only value, while at the same time acknowledging its finite character." Her statement demonstrates how these forms of entertainment violate one's innate freedom, and the *Slaughterhouse Series* are curated to concur with her idea. Holveck, "The Blood of Others," *Indiana University Press*, (Fall 1999): 3–17. 8.
[101] De Beauvoir, Force of Circumstance. 47.

[102] In 1957, she wrote in a letter: "For me, ballet is fantasy and unreality." Letter from DK to WG. Andrea Amort, "D'Oras Vorliebe für kapriziöse Tanz-Posen," in *Machen sie mich schön, Madame d'Ora*, 2018, 117–27. 126.

elicits a level of the imaginative, the photograph allows space for contemplation associated closer to the truth. D'Ora's transgressive images challenge the viewer to question their sense of responsibility–the part they play in the system–such as being passive consumers of spectacle.

In critiquing the influence of romanticized theatrical narrative, the *Slaughterhouse Series* aligns with Sartre's view that "...reality alone is what counts, [...] dreams, expectations, and hopes warrant no more than to define a man as a disappointed dream, as miscarried hopes, as vain expectations."[103] By addressing the grisly side of the real world at the abattoir, the photographs cause, in Sartrean terms, a spell of "nausea"–a psychosomatic reaction to the meaninglessness of everyday existence.[104] Such an immersion in stark material reality, detached from superfluity, challenges the viewer as to how much they are willing to face the hardships of existence.

By probing the 'bloody facts' masked behind quotidian or frivolous sites, d'Ora's Corpse Ballet photographs prompt the viewer to account for their unresolved ways of perceiving the world.[105] At once documentation as well as creative vision, these

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[103] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*. 33.

[104] The protagonist of Sartre's novel *Nausea* (1938), Antoine Roquentin, undergoes periods of nausea and is suffocated by the paradox of freedom – situated between blindly living with a false sense of freedom versus having awareness of everyone's unfreedom. It seems Roquentin's solution to this is when he discovers meaning in art and in the pursuit of becoming an artist. Sartre's novel presages his treatise *Being and Nothingness,* which was released five years later in 1943. Sartre may have intended for us "to ponder the conservative ideology that had been bourgeoning throughout the 1930s, and that would bloom, in some quarters, into Nazism and collaborationism a few years following the publication of *Nausea*." James Wood, "Introduction" in *Nausea (La Nausée)*, trans. Lloyd Alexander (New Directions, 2013). Xv.

[105] Quoted phrase taken from Monika Faber, *Madame d'Ora Vienna & Paris 1907-1957: The Photography of Dora Kallmus* (Vassar College of Art Gallery, 1987). 23.

photographs freeze an everyday reality and transcribe it into an arresting horror.[106] Within these patterns, d'Ora established devices of existentially motivated critique. She demonstrates the moral peril of masking violence and criticizes those who perform the "dance" under the seduction of high society. By rupturing taboo, audiences are faced with d'Ora's uncompromising photographic realism and provided an opportunity for self-assessment, before masking from the truth.

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[106] Photography suspends the fleeting property of dance. The transitional movements begin just as quickly as they dissolve. Regarding the materiality of dance, Susan Leigh Foster identifies that "its impermanence and ephemerality are its most striking and defining attributes." Therefore, an aspect of its materiality is intangible until the photograph is able to turn it into an object, which codifies the event's happening. The photograph is an interception of these two modes of creation (dance and photography), of which the viewer gets the final say. Compared to the slaughterhouse operation, we are reminded of systems of mechanical production, and as an object, the dance becomes further commodified. Foster, *Valuing Dance: Commodities and Gifts in Motion* (Oxford University Press, 2019). 15.

II

PHOTOGRAPHIC ESPIONAGE:

NATIONALIST DANCE AFFAIRS

A consistent clientele throughout d'Ora's career as a portraitist were dancers and performers.[107] During the interwar years (1918–1939), her focus shifted from Viennese high society portraiture to shooting theater avant-gardes such as Josephine Baker and Anita Berber as well as French *étoiles* Serge Lifar and Maurice Chevalier, styling and photographing them in her studio.[108] Collectively the images from this period exhibit the artist's engagement with bohemian and modern dance trends. But the German occupation of Paris (1940–1944) stained the careers of many who either collaborated with or were subservient to Nazi forces. A recent essay by historian Jean-Marc Dreyfus clarifies that although d'Ora continued to work tactfully for a different studio during the first year of the Occupation, living on a reduced income, she "did not compromise by taking portraits of German officers."[109] Furthermore, fleeing Paris and living in a surveilled state as a

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[107] The most recent, and one of the only publications on d'Ora's dance images is written by Andrea Amort who focuses on the trajectory of dance throughout d'Ora's career.

[108] A comprehensive list of the dancers, entertainers, or performers DK worked with (primarily women) has been accumulated by Andrea Amort, "D'Oras Vorliebe für kapriziöse Tanz-Posen," in *Machen sie mich schön, Madame d'Ora. Dora Kallmus Fotografin in Wien und Paris 1907-1957*, 2018, 117–27. 119–20.

[109] Dreyfus, 144.

fugitive (1942–44) influenced a shift in her mode of expression from photography to writing.[110]

According to the postwar inscriptions on the backs of the photographs and contact sheets, d'Ora's contact with these politically questionable figures, and with theatrical spectacles in general, influenced her visits to the abattoirs. Following the war, while simultaneously pursuing her *Slaughterhouse Series*, the photographer continued her practice of photographing on-site for the *Grand Ballet du Marquis Georges de Cuevas* (est. 1947). She became close friends with the Marquis, whose company originated in New York, ultimately detaching it from the general collaborationist anxiety of the time. It was in the complex relationships with past friends whose *mauvaise foi* led to d'Ora's criticism to develop in her newfound aesthetic.

A dialogue of political judgment and corporeality exists among d'Ora's photographs of ballet dancers and the slaughterhouse scenes, which were made within the same time frame. This relationship to dance and its underlying critique of collaborationist figures at the Opéra reinforces the photographs' existential qualities. The camera acts as espionage in its exploration of the incognito of these actors. The careful way Madame d'Ora composed the two series demonstrates how they inform one another, both formally and conceptually. The type of animal (mostly pig, cow, or lamb), which she often labeled on the back of photographs or in folders, are iconographic to a political message. Her characterization of bodies establishes an Orwellian dualism that has yet to be investigated.

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[110] Dreyfus, 146.

Written in response to WWII, George Orwell's socio-political novel *Animal Farm* (released in England in August of 1945) narrates a general drive to freedom and self-determination while cautioning totalitarianism. In the story, freedom is initially exemplified through the practice of reading and writing, which only the pigs master–reinforcing the power associated with knowledge. This unequal distribution of power leads to a class system, metaphorized by the farm's newfound hierarchy. Conflict arises from the oppressive and greedy governance exercised by pig leaders. Of them, Squealer, as the farm's master of propaganda, maintains a deceitfully progressive image of the farm by manipulating truth of actual events in ways that "justify" or mask tyranny. [111] The animals, at first, are disillusioned by the exploitation of power, forced labor, and discrimination of species, but still demonstrate methods of rebellion in attempt to gain equality. The narrative's political dualism, especially its attention to the cunning use of propaganda, parallels the force of French resistance against Nazi occupiers, as well as, the free expression of avant-garde dance versus repressive conventions of classical ballet.

Historically, the Nazi co-optation of ballet as a means of nation-building in France complicates the reception of spectacle under the Third Reich's administration in Paris. There was an immediate conflict of interest with Paris theaters and ballet following the liberation due to institutional collaborations with the Vichy government. The National Socialists began insinuating themselves into the German dance scene as early as 1936, upon the opening of German Master School for Dance (Deutsche Meister-Stätten für

[111] In this way, Squealer's character closely resembles the Nazi Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels. A specific instance is when Squealer fabricates an explanation to cover up Boxer's slaughter, the hardworking farm horse. This decision came after Boxer's work injury. Napoleon no longer saw him as useful and he sold his body to humans for financial gain. George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946). 102–104.

Tanz) in Berlin.[112] From this point, the Third Reich Ministry of Propaganda developed its preference for ballet's simplicity, structure, and affiliation with building a German national identity. Subsequently, the program denounced most other dance forms like *Ausdruckstanz* (expressionist dance), with the exception of *Tanztheater*, the latter being a hybrid of modern dance and ballet directed under Kurt Jooss (German, 1901–1979).[113] Dance historians Hedwig Müller and Patricia Stöckemann note, by the mid-1930s, "Dance was assigned the task of heralding National Socialist man and an ideal social order – without the majority of the dancers becoming fully aware of it."[114] New regulations for dance instruction mandated translations of all French ballet and modern technical dance terms into German.[115]

In a further comparison of national style, d'Ora's two series denote gendered characteristics corresponding to dance politics between France and Germany. Her imagery of the ballerinas underpins a French air of lightness, decadent sophistication, and obedience of the female figure. The abattoir imagery embodies a laborious setting of masculinity, physical strength, and relentless dominance, which agree with the genetic ultimatums of the Nazi Aryan male. A cross-fertilization of these ideals in dance became

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[112] Claudia Jeschke and Gabi Vettermann, "Germany: Between Institutions and Aesthetics: Choreographing Germanese?," in *Europe Dancing: Perspectives on Theater Dance and Cultural Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000), 55–78. 60.

[113] Jeschke and Vettermann, 60–61.

[114] Jeschke and Vettermann, quoting Müller and Stöckemann 1993, 27. 60.

[115] "...pliés, tendus, attitudes or arabesques were only included in brackets so not to confuse the German dancer. She would in the future listen to her ballet master giving orders only in German." Marion Kant, "German Dance Theater and German Master Workshops," in, *Hitler's Dancers: German Modern Dance and the Third Reich*, trans. Jonathan Steinberg (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003). 117.

a cultural affair during and after the Occupation. D'Ora's formal mirroring of the controversy in comparisons such as (fig. 9 and fig. 11) exhibit the danger of conflating the two paragons. Together both of the series are a reconfiguration of the propagated equation under National Socialism, thus recalling the historical atrocities of murder. In her dedication and understanding of dance, the photographer reinstated agency by visually addressing the issue, which ultimately can be seen to counteract the manipulation of oppressive ideologies that occurred during the period of her exile.

Following the war, the overwriting of French ballet and theater with Nazi ideals was transparent to those who wished to see it. As Sartre observed, for Parisians and Germans alike the Paris Opéra sustained a vestige of cultural continuity throughout the occupation. It was a means of temporary isolation from the reality of war, a place, according to French music historian Sandrine Grandgambe, where "theatergoers had the chance to lock themselves up every night in that box of dreams."[116] Ballet was a core cultural pastime for German officials, who often preferred it to music performances: 35% of spectacles offered during the period of Nazi occupation were ballets, while an additional 12% included ballet.[117] This not only fashioned a veil of gaiety and amusement across the monitored city but also reinforced Nazi body politics.

Ballet's physical ideals and criteria of discipline, refinement, and excellence resonated within the Nazi racial fairy tale. Additionally, since ballet is preconditioned by

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[116] Claude Arnaud, "The Occupied," in *Jean Cocteau: A Life*, trans. Lauren Elkin and Charlotte Mandell (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016). 634.

[117] According to S. Grandgambe, in *La Vie sous Vichy*, 2001: 119. Mark Franko, "Serge Lifar and the Question of Collaboration with the German Authorities under the Occupation of Paris (1940–1949)," *Edinburgh University Press*, Dance Research, 35, no. 2 (October 2017): 218–57. 218–19.

charm and elevated manner, it promoted a setting for “gracious social intercourse.”[118] Events like the 1936 Berlin Olympics were a proud debut of the “perfected” white, fit, and healthy Aryan body.[119] For example, a select segment from *Olympia* (fig. 12, 1938), Leni Riefenstahl's documentary film of the international spectacle, exhibits a powerful sequence of movement, resembling a synchronized balletic militia. The scene begins with a detail of homogenous women, all dressed in the same fitted sleeveless jumpsuit. Together, with their legs spread a bit wider than shoulder length and each standing at an equal distance apart, they perform aerobics by swinging their arms. Gradually the camera pans out to expose a system of rows, which consists of an obedient corps of female bodies. In the final film still, their order is as structurally precise as the classical columns that support the monument behind them.[120]

A more private sense of corporeal display catering to the racist Nazi utopia was offered by live performance theaters. Such events were equally enjoyed by the elite public, and especially, German troops during the Occupation. For example, Serge Lifar (Russian, 1905–1986), *maître de ballet* and choreographer at *l’Opéra de Paris* (1930–44, 1947–58), attested that ballet offered healthy, erect, expressive, and powerful bodies that

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[118] Foster, *Choreography and Narrative: Ballet’s Staging of Story and Desire* (Indiana University Press, 1996). 26.

[119] After the 1936 Olympics, the Nazis officially opposed German expressionist modern dance. Franko, 239.

[120] Siegfried Kracauer’s observation of the masses pierces through the mirage of Riefenstahl's cinematic propaganda: “Viewed from the perspective of reason, the mass ornament reveals itself as a mythological cult that is masquerading in the garb of abstraction [...] the ornament’s conformity to reason is thus an illusion.” In “The Mass Ornament,” in *Weimar Essays*, ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Harvard University Press, 1927, ed. 1995), 74–86. 83.

supported a '...triumphant constructivism of Germany.'[121] The kind of performative propaganda provided by ballet, substituting gestures for words, was easily adapted into National Socialist programming with the assistance of a number of French dance experts whom d'Ora knew personally and professionally. The theater was effectively a camouflaged site of political strategy: dancers became devices of propaganda, while selective cultural standards fostered an arena for discriminatory behavior.

The French ballet tradition itself was a prime target for Nazi appropriation, having been officially institutionalized under the reign of Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715) specifically as a way to legitimize the dance form in alignment with a national identity.[122] This objective lasted well into the mid-twentieth century Paris as Serge Lifar helped to re-establish neoclassical ideals in the Paris ballet. Since the majority of state cultural institutions had operated, only by cooperating with, the Germans occupying Paris, immediately following the war Lifar was charged with collaborating with enemy forces as a part of the *épuration legale*.

Taking this context into account, and guided by d'Ora's annotations on the backs of her photographs and contact sheets, the terms of d'Ora's private *épuration* comes into view in the slaughterhouse series. As Lifar's contemporary, d'Ora was well placed to use photography to weigh the contradictions of his career. Dance historian Mark Franko, who has conducted the most recent archival research on Serge Lifar, provides evidence detailing the anti-semitism in Lifar's book *La Danse* (1937–38), as well as Lifar's

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[121] Quoting Lifar, Franko, 236.

[122] Georgiana Gore and Laurence Louppe. 29–30.

cultural collaborations with the Nazi *Propaganda Staffel*.[123] Many historians agree that Germans were not only "deifying Lifar as the Russo-French Wagner of ballet…," but that Lifar welcomed the idea of himself as the "Führer of European dance."[124] As ballet master, he left a paper trail of his contributions to German and collaborationist publications throughout the occupation. Adding to suspicions, Franko verified that according to the dates of archival documents, Lifar destroyed most records concerning his career between 1940 and 1944. "The Lifar Affair" labeled him as a disgrace to the resistance; between his exile from France in October 1945 and 'insulting' return to the Opéra in September 1947, he was also boycotted in an attempt to seek refuge in London.[125] Until his renewed contract expiration in September 1958, Lifar continued to endure attacks against his choreography and ongoing authority at the Opéra related to his collaboration with the Nazis.[126] To maintain anonymity upon his return to Paris, Lifar was banned from appearing in public or on stage at the theater, meaning d'Ora was unable to photograph him in this setting.

Franko describes in detail the continuous contact between Lifar and the Ministry of Propaganda throughout the entirety of the occupation. As cultural liaison in both Nazi and Vichy circles, Lifar "... was invited [and attended] the highly visible social occasions

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[123] In Lifar's case, we can consider "collaborationism" to also mean actions outside of pure political engagement that are for personal opportunism or in the lending of ideological support.

[124] Since the trials, the ballet community has stood with him in solidarity, rendering him as the victim, but Franko debunks this perspective with prolific evidence. Mark Franko. 220, 238.

[125] Employees of the theater company threatened to quit their jobs and refused to work with Lifar. He was seen as a disgrace to the resistance. Franko, 228–29.

[126] Franko, 221.

at the German embassy in which prominent collaborators mixed with upper echelons of the Nazi cultural ministry."[127] In June and July of 1940, the Opéra director gloated after welcoming Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels to his theater and looked forward to instilling "the purest classical traditions" with their support.[128] In 1943 Lifar traveled to Berlin to meet with Hitler and Herman Goering in order to discuss European tour plans (which were subsequently approved) for his ballet *Joan de Zarissa*. The Germans regarded this spectacle as a weapon of cultural propaganda as it demonstrated harmonious hybridity of German music by Nazi composer Werner Egk and Lifar's French ballet corps.[129] This evidence accounts for the negative response by the public, as well as the ambiguous nature of his resumed relationship with d'Ora after the Liberation.

D'Ora expressed her revulsion towards the affair decisively, with an image of a hog suspended from its feet, which she entitled "maître de ballet" (fig. 13, c. 1956). The animal itself, a dirty swine, symbolizes a guilty creed. Its drained blood reflects off of the defaced floor. Two rows of fellow corpses are lined along the conveyor behind the

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[127] This statement is supported by photographs of Director Lifar shaking hands with unidentified figures at the German Embassy in Paris. Franko also provides records of Lifar's request to discuss with Vichy head, Pierre Laval, an approval of government funding for theater productions. Franko, 223–24.

[128] Letter from Lifar to Otto Abetz on August 21, 1940, is as follows: "The lively interest and sympathy shown by Herr Doctor Goebbels at our interview during his visit to the Opera on July 1st for our ballet, and in particular for my own activity as ballet master and danseur étoile, incites me to address myself to him again, through your good graces, to His Excellency the Minister of Propaganda. What would not be my joy, if I could present to His Excellency the Minister the general plan of my choreographic work – the closest connection of new tendencies with the purest classical traditions [...] Over the last few years I have dedicated myself to questions of dance and its history and I hope to be able to present Herr Goebbels my perspective on the potential for the development of dance in Germany." Translated by Franko from original French. Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin. Politisches Archiv Berlin, Heft 1379 (Botschaft Paris). Mark Franko, 232, 250–51, note 108.

[129] The production premiered at the Paris Opera on July 10, 1942. Its subsequent success prompted another 35 performances in Paris, while it also toured around Europe. Franko, 226, 234.

maître, their controlled automation closely resembling the uniform repetition of a ballet corps onstage. This is not a representation of the bodies of the victims of war, but of cynicism and vengeance. The photographer has cruelly staged the hog's carcass as the focus of humiliation, as if expressing a personal vendetta. Her personification of the pig's corpse sends a chilling message: the verdict of war crime prosecution.

D'Ora photographed *ballet maître* Serge Lifar on several occasions, once before the occupation (fig. 14, c. 1935) and again at the time of his prosecution (fig. 15, 1945). After his leave of absence as director at the Paris Opéra Ballet in 1945–47 their final photography shoot together took place at the Montmartre cemetery (fig. 16, 1950). That is to say, effectively, beginning with their first meeting prior to the war, d'Ora had recorded a visual timeline that reflected the emotive character of his diminishing career.[130]

In isolation from the *maître*, d'Ora represents Lifar's dance troupe. Photographs like *Procession (cochons)* (fig. 17, fig. 18), ensure that we can no longer see her versions of the abattoir without balletic implication. *Procession*'s intimate close-up view allows the spectator to observe details such as blood dripping from the pig's nose. The scene is anchored by the carcasses' stiff legs, which, in submitting to a gravitational pull, contradict yet imitate the rigidity of the dancer's *port de bras*– the ability to maintain control of their raised arms. *Procession* (dated 1950), foreshadows the impersonal and mechanized reality, realized presented in a later untitled photograph of d'Ora's, in which carcasses are gracefully arrayed in a delicate gradation of light that treats them with the

[130] D'Ora's professional decorum may be the reason why the *maître* pig never manifested into a publication.

same sensitivity as her professionally rendered publicity images of the ballet (fig. 18, 1956–57). Aligned in unison, the slaughtered animals appear ghostly and indistinct in the crepuscular light, not unlike the ghostly figures of the ballet corps (fig. 19, 1955) which d'Ora captured at precisely the same angle as the suspended carcasses. Arrested mid-movement, these ephemeral dancers surrender their individualism, becoming a single unit, their feet uniting in a *croisé derrière*; while their hands meeting gracefully in front. The prima ballerina is bleached in white light from left of the stage, casting an elongated shadow matched to the one weighing down the image of the pig procession. The slaughterhouse comparisons demonstrate how d'Ora's camera manipulates the ballerinas to become political beacons, instead of figures of desire.

In the majority of the Cuevas Ballet photographs taken at the Opéra, the background was ominously darkened during the final printing. By subduing the fabricated theater setting, d'Ora dimmed its sense of fantasy narrative. The focus is either their exaggerated emotional pretense (fig. 20, 1955) or automated alignment (fig. 19, 1955). D'Ora contrasts this false emotional persona to the raw pain witnessed in animal portraits such as (fig. 8). In the first case, the audience experiences the acting dancer's emotion *unreally* whereas the photograph of the carcass, and its political connotations resonate on a personal level.[131]

[131] Hollier expands upon Sartre's views on "unreal" feelings of the actor themselves: "to play a theatrical role is very precisely to-be-in-the-mode-of-not-being. Thus, one must reject Diderot's view that because the actor pretends to experience the feelings he expresses, he does not experience them. Doubtless, he does not really feel them. But that is because he feels them *unreally*." Denis Hollier, *Absent without Leave: French Literature under the Threat of War*, (Harvard University Press, 1997). 24.

Another contact sheet inscribed with the caption *Elle et lui Louis XIV, Louis XV, Rococo* (fig. 21, c. 1955), a reference to the eighteenth-century style permeating French royal culture. The image, taken from a side-aerial view, flattens a pair of brains placed in a clean tray. Two crop-frames have been scored around the image, indicating the potential of a final print. A mockery of privilege exudes this scene since calf brains are a traditional French delicacy. Personifying the *lignée royale* as literal discards of a body part holds an irony, which is discounted in rococo's surge of materialism and frivolity. At the end of the 1940s, Serge Lifar cast himself as the "Le Roi Soleil" in postwar ballet productions evoking seventeenth-century France (fig. 22, c. 1950). This reinforces the personal reference to Lifar as well as the abattoir analogy.[132] Both inscriptions evoke the abuse of power and blind amusements of the Sun King's reign, and interleaved with the carcass characterizations, condemn them.

During this period, d'Ora acquired commissions almost exclusively from the ballet of Marquis Georges de Cuevas (Chilean, 1885–1961). Dance and slaughterhouse subjects intersect once again here, most trenchantly in an untitled print of the ballet impresario and choreographer *Marquis Georges de Cuevas mit toten Schafsköpfen* (fig. 23.1, c. 1956–57). The subject is propped against a white wall, his body draped with a scarf made of skinned sheep heads.[133] The portrait of the Marquis was staged under d'Ora's direction, a fact that becomes more evident upon viewing the multiple camera

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[132] This is mentioned by Franko, but he seems to contradict himself since he also said Lifar was banned from performing on stage after the war.

[133] She picked up the six heads in total from the abattoir and lugged them back to her studio for the occasion.

shots on the contact sheets (fig. 23.2, c. 1956–57).[134] Comparing the sequence of shots with the final image d'Ora chose to print, *de Cuevas mit toten Schafsköpfen,* we realize that she was searching for a greater sense of realism and candidness. The image she decides to print shows the Marquis with his eyes nearly closed. The hint of white makes them look empty as if they have rolled back up into his skull in death. By contrast, the eyes of the sheep skulls bulge out, wide open, with their flaccid eyelids tucked back. Posed as ever-seeing, and lit by a reflection of the camera's flash, the life in their eyes becomes virtually reinstated in the presence of the struggling de Cuevas. The final product appears uncontrived and readily convinces spectators of the morbidity at stake.

Scholars have read this photograph as a *memento mori*, although they have not explicitly applied this term. While one could argue that, as Susan Sontag stated in 1977, all photographs are in a sense a "memento mori," there is a multifaceted motif of death at play in this specific image.[135] At the time, de Cuevas had indeed approached the end of his life and faced an imminent illness, which confined him to a wheelchair.[136] When d'Ora first began attending ballet sessions in 1955, she wrote to Willem Grütter, "I can hardly go on. But the drama is not yet over and tomorrow Sunday rehearsals for me

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[134] Staged by d'Ora but clearly with his approval: In a letter to Madame d'Ora from George de Cuevas, he playfully signs off, "Your old wrinkled friend who resembles the calf's head, George." Translated from French: "Ton vieux ecorelie[?] des têtes de veaux qui lui ressemblent." MKG, Binder #7. Undated, c. 1957–58. The image demonstrates the photographer's ability to charm her clients into project collaborations.

[135] "All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt." Susan Sontag, "In Plato's Cave," in *On Photography* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977). 11.

[136] Katharina Sykora, "Das Morbide und das Exzentrische, brüchige texturen und liminale figuren bei d'Ora," in *Machen sie mich schön, Madame d'Ora. Dora Kallmus Fotografin in Wien und Paris 1907-1957*, 2018, 253–68. 265.

again. It is impossible to describe it and the poor sacrificial lambs, although they often have their beautiful wagons, are brutally led to the slaughterhouse. Dancers die young…"[137] The group portrait *Marquis Georges de Cuevas mit zwei Balletttänzerinnen* (fig. 24, 1955) of the Marquis, again robed in white, sits with two prima ballerina heads fatigued in his lap. The talented repertory of the Marquis' ballet corps was a public sensation to the point that his "choreography seemed at moments sacrifice to display," by attempting feats of astonishment.[138] In the photograph, the dancers' cold expressions and severely cropped on the left side elicits a chilling juxtaposition of death as in *de Cuevas mit toten Schafsköpfen*.

That September three months following the first letter, she mentioned to Grütter the ballet would be returning at the end of the month but in the meantime, "tomorrow I have a 'sacrificial lamb' I will write to you who it is as soon as I 'survive'!"[139] The morbid image of the Marquis, *de Cuevas mit toten Schafsköpfen,* is a visualization of her metaphor. Immobilized by the heads around his neck, he is cast as the lamb or slaughtered victim for the greater good. The moralizing message traces back to the Old Testament story of Isaac, and thus the photograph is a nod to d'Ora's religious and familial heritage. While the white curtain surrounding him seems to symbolize freedom

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[137] Translated from German: "Allerdings kann ich kaum mehr weiter. Aber das Drama ist noch nicht aus und morgen Sonntag gehen die Proben für mich wieder an. Das kann man nicht beschreiben und die armen Opferlämmer, wenngleich sie auch oft ihren schönen Wagen haben, werden brutal zur Schlachtbank geführt. Tänzer sterben jung…" Letter from DK to WG, 25.6.1955, Preus Museum, Norway.

[138] Clement Crisp, "Le Grand Ballet Du Marquis de Cuevas," *Dance Research Journal* 23, no. 1 (April 2005): 1–17. 5.

[139] Translated from German: "Ja, morgen habe ich ein 'Opferlamm' wer es ist werde ich Ihnen schreiben, sowie ich es 'überstand'!" Letter from DK to WG 7.9.1955, MKG Archives Box 2.

of guilt, the bloodstain on the wall behind his shoulder warns the viewer of the theater's demand. Or perhaps it is a notion that no one could come out of a politically charged field unscathed. The picture seems ambivalent: Does her composition proclaim the man's innocence among the turmoil of theatrical blame after the war or does it claim the sacrifice of de Cuevas "master of revels" for public pleasure?[140] The photographer leaves her audience in a state of mistrust similar to the one she and Parisians at large found themselves in after the war.

But clarity may be found in context: the cutthroat attitude of the dance *épuration* eventually led to the accusation that Marquis de Cuevas had performed a variation to the *Cigarette* solo in Lifar's ballet *Suite en blanc,* which premiered during the occupation on July 23, 1943.[141] Franko notes that Lifar's composition "was not typical of French entertainment as it was *not bubbly or risqué…*" Instead, the lighting was cold and the choreography maintained the academic structure of traditional French ballet.[142] De Cuevas gave the performance a new title, *Noir et Blanc*, as early as 1948, and performed it regularly on international tours. The title emphasizes the stark contrast of white

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[140] In addition to the Marquis, d'Ora also photographed other male subjects, Somerset Maugham and Maurice Chevalier, in comparable vulnerable poses on pillows after the war. Both the men she had known prior to WWII, maintained correspondence with during her exile, and rekindled the relationships afterward. Whether she was aware of it or not Maugham, while in the United States had shared antisemitic opinions while Chevalier went through many trials of suspicion for Nazi collaboration.

[141] Ballet critic Clement Crisp recalls: "There was little discernible difference in the setting: the choreography was exactly the same as the Opéra, and performances were memorably good." Crisp, 8.

[142] Franko, 239.

costumes and the black stage design.[143] In 1958, the Marquis opened his season in Paris with his version of the ballet, knowing Lifar had forbidden it. Ballet critic Clement Crisp recalled de Cuevas' *Cigarette* variation as "one of the wittiest, most stylish pieces of dancing I have ever seen."[144] Surely, the Marquis' "witty" adaption did not align with Lifar's renewed classicism, as the sensual dance of *La Cigarette* meant to emulate the ethereal movement of smoke. Perhaps, this detectable manipulation of Lifar's original choreography sheds light on the two directors' brewing quarrels.

In *Tanzendes Paar mit Tänzerinnen* (fig. 25, 1955) d'Ora effectively captures the energy and ominous aesthetic of the performance.[145] Her attention to the side profile of the dancer's *arabesque* morbidly maps onto yet another image from the abattoir, which d'Ora inscribed "Blanc et Noir," and "danse macabre."[146] (fig. 26, c. 1956) In this image, the twisted calf's body is photographed from behind, creating a focus on its stiffly pointed legs and arm. The stage in *Blanc et Noir* becomes a tabletop of the slaughterhouse, both acting as platforms for their subjects to function as preparatory and serving stations. With this juxtaposition, d'Ora makes an analogy between slaughtered animals and victims of the theater. The dancers not only depend on audiences and the precarious nature of the market but also dedicate their bodies to the process.

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[143] Clement Crisp, "Le Grand Ballet Du Marquis de Cuevas," *Dance Research Journal* 23, no. 1 (April 2005): 1–17. 8.

[144] The solo was performed by Nina Vyroubova at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées. Crisp, 8–9.

[145] The Marquis de Cuevas archives are at the University of Texas, Austin. There are records of his performances of *Noir et Blanc*.

[146] Considering ninety-five percent of the final series was developed in black and white we can assume d'Ora's inscription was referring to something beyond the formality of the photograph.

By the end of the decade, Serge Lifar's sensitivity to the Marquis' appropriation likely accrued from the steady surveillance and sabotage he experienced after his return to work behind the curtains of the Opéra in 1947.[147] The altercation between Lifar and the Marquis led to a scheduled sword duel, which made the front page of The New York Times, where the newspaper addressed it as "... what may well have been the most delicate encounter in the history of French dueling."[148] While Germany resumed experimentation and expression in dance more readily than France after WWII, this event exemplifies the pride of these male icons and their rigor to cling onto what remained of France's national glory, not unlike the general attitude of Paris' upper class that Sartre disdained.[149] Considering the Opéra's lack of public transparency of Lifar's resumed employment, addresses the right of questioning one's participation of spectacle insofar as addressing who controls the stage and taking into account how that affects the reception of the performance.[150]

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[147] The Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas was a competitive threat more generally. After WWII and Lifar's first expungement "… the Ballet l'Opéra was to be challenged…" by up and coming touring companies "whose Parisian seasons were very successful in the 1950s." Gore and Louppe, "France: Effervescence and Tradition in French Dance." 41–42.

[148] According to witnesses, consisting of nearly fifty reporters and photographers, 73-year-old Marquis struck Lifar on the arm in the seventh minute and "After blood was drawn, [the] men embraced and wept." The matter was subsequently reconciled, and Le Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas continued with *Noir et Blanc* in their repertory. W. Granger Blair, "Marquis Pinks Dancer in a Ballet With Swords on the Field of Honor," *The New York Times*, March 31, 1958. 1, 3C1.

[149] Unlike France's backwards perspective of ballet being a nationalist 'resistance' against enemies, Germany on the other hand experienced theatre and dance reforms: See Andrée Grau and Stephanie Jordan, eds., *Europe Dancing: Perspectives on Theater Dance and Cultural Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000). 32, 61–62.

[150] The awareness of this would counteract *mauvaise foi*, by acknowledging the facts.

One last mention of a socially prominent figure in relation to the abattoir series is warranted. The artist who reappears consistently in Madame d'Ora's postwar books is the poet, playwright, filmmaker, artist, and critic Jean Cocteau (French, 1889–1963). His name and information appear handwritten in her address book (fig. 27, c. 1923) as well as portfolios holding the *Slaughterhouse Series* (fig. 28, c. 1949); once as "Hommage Cocteau," "period Jean," and simply "Jean."[151] The two were in contact before and after the war, making him a clear factor in the development in this series. In 1958, Madame d'Ora's abattoir series made a public debut during the exhibition *Portraits et Récherches: 60 ans de la photographie* at Galerie Montaigne in Paris. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, est. 1946) hosted the show and Jean Cocteau made an inaugurated dedicated to d'Ora, stating she was "bolder than any young man, who pushes butchers aside with a gesture, in order to replace them with her apparatus, immediately before the daily victims of our cannibalistic cult."[152] With a Benjaminian reference, his use of "cannibalism" relates the work closer to a humanistic analogy, aligning it to d'Ora's study. As an extensive proponent of avant-garde art it

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[151] It is unclear if "Jean" refers to an abattoir. While there were no abattoirs with the name of Jean, La Villette was situated on Rue de Jean Jaurès. However, as it seemingly coincided with the title "Hommage Cocteau," and considering their contact with one another, "Jean" most likely references the French icon– the question is why.

[152] Original German: "…kühner als irgendein ein junger Mann, die Schlächter mit einer Geste beiseite schiebt, um anderen Stelle ihren Apparat zu installieren, unmittelbar vor den täglichen Opfern unseres kannibalischen Kultes." Quoted by Monika Faber, *Nicola Perscheid - Arthur Benda - Madame D'Ora*. (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, 1980). 40. Cocteau's speech is printed in: Fritz Kempe, cf. annotation 13 (MKG). There are at least three press releases by the *Weser Kurier* in the MKG archives, which mention the 1958 exhibition while promoting a 1971 show at Bremen's Landeslichtbildstelle (*Madame d'Ora zwischen Atelier und Abattoirs*) that also included a selection of the abattoir images out of 150 photographs total.

comes as no surprise that he and d'Ora connected in the professional sphere. The complications lie in Cocteau's indictments as a Nazi sympathizer.

Cocteau worked in Paris throughout the Occupation and had been a well-known friend of artist Arno Breker (German, 1900–1991), whose career blossomed under Nazi sculpture commissions. Curiously though, Cocteau was an avid reader of works by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, whom he had met on occasion. For instance, he would attend early lectures on theater by Sartre and afterward raise questions with him.[153] Existential morality crept into his performances, for instance in the plot of *Le Jeune homme et la mort* (1951).[154] After the war, de Beauvoir recalled witnessing Cocteau claim political indifference in part by belittling the Americans as much as the Germans. In response she stated, "We did not agree but we were sympathetic."[155] De Beauvoir's perspective was seemingly shared by the majority of the France resistance who had trouble disconnecting him from his close affiliations with Nazi supporters. Cocteau's involvement in the ballet did not pick up until the late 1940s when he began collaborating with the Paris Opéra on narrative, set, and costume design at which point he inevitably collaborated with Serge Lifar.

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[153] We know this from a note by de Beauvoir in 1962. Their exact dialogue from a lecture Sartre gave in the Summer of 1944 can be read at the end of the chapter. Sartre, "On Dramatic Style," in *Sartre on Theater*, (1976). 6, 24–29.

[154] Instead of classifying it as a ballet Cocteau referred to the dance composition as, "a drama in mime, in which mime broadens its style to that of dance." Jean Cocteau, *The Difficulty of Being*, trans. Elizabeth Sprigge (London: Peter Owen, 1966) 149.

[155] Arnaud quoting Simone de Beauvoir in *la force de l'âge* (Paris, 1960). 675. "Universal Suspect," in *Jean Cocteau: A Life*, (2016). 719.

Ultimately, the connection between Cocteau's oral homage to d'Ora's work, when the *Slaughterhouse Series* debuted in 1958, seems to correlate with the photographer's "Hommage Cocteau" picture portfolio. Clearly, Cocteau was an advocate of d'Ora's project and possibly had inside information, and this establishes a relationship of trust between the two. Knowing Cocteau's broad influence in Paris entertainment and intellectual spheres also could have been a motive for her to involve him.

Since ballet became a political instrument for German Nazism in the wake of the Second World War, the postwar reception of the form held it under suspicion in existentialist Paris. As demonstrated in the first chapter, vexing concerns for cult rituals and cultural distraction still permeated the writings of Sartre and carry through within d'Ora's interrogational images. From a Sartrean perspective, the Opéra and balletic systems became a socio-political threat, reinforced in the advocacy of public desire. After World War II, France's emblematic nostalgia for nationalism influenced the reception and attendance at the ballet. Existentialist ideology placed complacency in question, and with her corpse analogies, d'Ora conveys why. Her criticism of collaborationist figures in their promotion of idealist Aryan body politics is an extended effort of social resistance. By drawing this connection, she raises the question: Does our disgusted perception of the abattoir bodies change when we see them as Nazi pigs or collaborationist sheep?

III

BEYOND "EMPATHY": A FEMINIST REPOSITIONING

A reevaluation of Parisian entertainment after the war can be analyzed in the dialogue of materialism and corporeal cultural fixation pronounced in d'Ora's abattoir ballet analogies.[156] But first, this chapter contends with a gendered label, that is viewing d'Ora as an "empathetic witness," by repositioning her as an existential agent who could be seen as addressing the fetishization of the female form. To do so, it is essential to briefly review the female typologies circulating in the early twentieth century. Then, to further understand the climate of which d'Ora worked, I will retrace the social conditions for women in France immediately after 1945. Furthermore, the research here resituates d'Ora's *Slaughterhouse Series* among the work of her predecessors and contemporaries, many who were surrealists or renegades of the movement exploring corporeality. In doing so, the final section employs Abigail Solomon-Godeau's three-tier study of fetishism and the gaze in viewing photographed female dancers. As such, d'Ora's crossover study of materiality, as commodity (stockings) and literally (as skin), reinforces her suggestive socio-cultural critique of the ballet as an outlet for *naïveté*.

[156] As I have established, the slaughterhouse project coincided with d'Ora's production of work at the ballet, and as the thesis demonstrates, it becomes clear the two series informed one another at times.

Europe in the first half of the twentieth century was saturated with contradictory images of the new “modern woman,” and ultimately became politically remolded under Nazi propaganda.[157] On one hand, she inspired a wave of female autonomy after fighting and seizing new social liberties. On the other, any appearances orbiting the binary of either female “masculinization” or “sexualization” were viewed as threatening experimentations to conservative parties. Amidst the typologies of women in the French and German interwar period, the femme fatale became arguably the most detrimental trope of entertainment as it permeated a normative behavior (since the stereotype had already been so embedded among historical Western culture) for society to shame women. Theater and cinema were the main sites exaggerating female behavior and contributing to chauvinist repercussions in occupied Paris. The oppressive motifs of women were ultimately re-tooled to suit anti-Semitic campaigns under fascist propaganda. Jewish women were singled out in fabricated and sexualized representations, some by reconstructing Old Testament heroines, like Judith.[158] Deeming the Jewish

[157] Katie Sutton explains Germany's conflicting polarization of the New Woman as: "Positioned at the juncture between fascination and rejection, tradition and modernity, heterosexual erotic appeal and the threat of sexual perversion, the masculine woman of Weimar Germany was at the center of popular discourses about gender and social change." Provincial values gradually became the authoritative voice by the end of the 1920s. A swift return to the ethics of matronly and "healthy" women took place in tandem with such conventional tastes. This movement embedded ideas eventually taken up by Nazi propaganda of *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*. Katie Sutton, *The Masculine Woman in Weimar Germany*, vol. 32, Monographs in German History (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011). 8.

[158] For more see: Margarita Stocker, *Judith: Sexual Warrior, Women and Power in Western Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

woman dangerous and stripping her of individualism, would have inevitably affected d'Ora and her professional reputation.[159]

While strong intellectual figures such as Simone de Beauvoir remained at the forefront of political and female activism, much of the environment for women's liberation regressed within the immediate climate of postwar France. The role of gender that has since affected d'Ora's artistic legacy becomes further vexed when considering the Republic's struggle to reconstruct, especially in the period between 1944–47. Although headlines focused on women finally gaining the right to vote in 1944, simultaneously, in the desperate reevaluation of national identity, the French government sought justification for their war-time collaborative failures at the expense of female citizens.

Due to the increasing oppression of female voices in politics, paternal forces maintained their control over legislation to a threatening degree. In *Lessons of Post-war France*, Michael Kelly addresses the government's oppressive tactics against women by noting gender roles were "subjected to the symbolic violence of nation building."[160] The naive righteousness of these actions stemmed from conspiracies of female involvement with opposing parties during the war. The political climate of *épuration* led to moral confusion and disturbing hypocrisy when members of the *Résistance* set out to publicly humiliate women involved in '*collaboration horizontale,*' which singled out women

[159] This is only a brief and selective history of twentieth century Jewish repression and sexism that led up to the treatment of women in postwar France.

[160] Michael Kelly, "War and Culture: The Lessons of Post-War France," *University of Southampton*, Synergies: Royaume-Uni et Irlande, Vol 1 (2008): 91–100. 95.

raped by or sexually involved with German soldiers.[161] Speculations gained enough leverage to result in degrading punishments for over 20,000 women. Regardless of the nature of such offenses, "women had their hair [ritually] shaved by men," and said acts of humiliation demeaned female power while also reinforcing domesticity.[162] Stripped women, many cradling infants, were herded like animals and paraded through streets of jeering crowds (fig. 29, fig. 30, 1944). Other photographs and recordings from these mass "spectacles" show women being covered with iodine and marked with swastikas. After the war, trauma was multifold, and the accusations of female "complicity" were publicly exploited.

This is the situation d'Ora found when she returned to Paris. Nevertheless, the photographer set out to rebuild a life while reflecting on the troubled society she returned to. The double trauma she experienced as a Jewish woman would be addressed by Simone de Beauvoir, whose seminal treatise *The Second Sex* addressed the issues of constructed gender binaries underlying human history. De Beauvoir argued that women held a subordinate position as *Other* or *Object* relative to man, who was the *Subject* or essence of self. Among many topics, she hones the vagueness of "femininity" and its ambivalent room for mythic creation. The publication was released in 1949, the same year as the slaughterhouse project began. D'Ora's gory photographs critique this inclination by indicating how fallacious expectations of female behavior–conventions

[161] Social stigma against abortion is partially to blame, as de Beauvoir addressed in *The Second Sex*, social norms had to be reconfigured in order for women to take liberty of their right to reproduce and control their own life.

[162] Kelly, 95.

that render her society's white sheep (a deindividualized, submissive figure)–results in violent oppression.

D'Ora expressed the coerced experience of French women after WWII in her abattoir scenes of partially skinned lambs. In her image, she could appear to debunk the idiomatic "wolf in sheep's clothing" as a false assumption imposed upon certain women. In the photograph *Schafsköpfe mit anhängendem Körperfell und Gedärm* (Sheep heads with attached body, fur, and intestines, Fig. 31, 1956–57), the hanging bodies are photographed in a state of humility. There is no sense of camouflage or fantasy taking place. As in the majority of d'Ora's abattoir photographs, the hands responsible for the slaughter are not pictured. Not only have the bodies been stripped of fur, but in the process of their torturous mutilation, they are put on display, inside-out. The photograph's lack of color may mislead a viewer from recognizing the dark blood soaking into what was once white fur. Their brutal physical condition unifies them. The scene's horror is fortified because the skins remain barely attached to the carcasses, merely draped over their skulls, leaving the sheep's inner anatomy exposed.

D'Ora's animal subject anonymizes a sense of personified death and allegorizes fur as an exterior guise, for example exemplifying various "skins" documented here, both worn and placed upon them. In this way, the photograph could symbolize a scene of ambivalent mythic identities, tooled *by* men *for* women, such as mysteriously dangerous, the object of desire, or domestic mother. These typologies are not claimed outright in the image. Rather, the forged female "typologies" conceptually debut here as decorticated *skins*. In this way, d'Ora's demonstration of skin stripping could be seen as a morbid

reality of womanhood. How will the photographed bodies, rendered malleable, be reevaluated? Do the sheep mock a conventional feminine behavior or are they meant to be martyrs? Is d'Ora's depiction intended as a revolt against stereotype? Such inquiries were certainly not being addressed artistically by her fellow male contemporaries. It became the task of women artists like d'Ora to combat the recurrence of falling back on mythical structures authored by man, as addressed by de Beauvoir. Perhaps the shocking realism of her documented dead animal bodies sought to pave the way for a type of honest perception, especially when starkly compared to idealized visuals of women.

A gendered bias still impedes scholarly readings of Madame d'Ora's creative decisions. Scholars such as Richard Martin in 1987 and Katharina Sykora in 2018 orient their analyses of the *Slaughterhouse Series* to d'Ora's seemingly "empathetic" intention.[163] This interpretation likely stems from Willem Grütter, d'Ora's prominent collector, who recited the artist's adoration for pets and saw the images as denouncing animal cruelty. This study reorients his claim as it creates a gendered limitation. By framing her as an "empathetic witness" we stunt the capacity of these images, by suggesting a maternal convention for the subject. To break out of this conservative paradigm, we can first analyze her philosophical response to Surrealism. Additionally, d'Ora's artistic process of posing carcasses at her studio negates empathy. To endure the demands of handling dead objects, she would naturally have to disassociate from

[163] I agree with Martin's observation that "Kallmus remains the witness, but never simply the observer in the deep commitment to the subject she portrays." But as a first-time viewer of her images, he was likely unaware that d'Ora was rearranging the bodies. Richard Martin, "The Photography of Dora Kallmus," *Arts Magazine* 62, no. 1 (September 1987): 72–73.

emotional tendencies. While considering how the *Slaughterhouse Series* has been posthumously undermined, the final chapter assesses new approaches for repositioning d'Ora as a feminist agent. Furthermore, considering how d'Ora's heritage, place of origin, and photographs were received after her return to Paris in 1946, how does one *be* an Austrian artist in France after the war? Especially accounting for Austria as being one of the first countries to become an "affiliate" (although through force) with the National Socialists.

LEGS

D'Ora began her slaughterhouse project around 1949, twenty years after Eli Lotar's (French, 1905–1969) shot his iconic images of the abattoirs de la Villette. Some of her first photographs directly reference Lotar by echoing his location and composition. Lotar published three of his photographs, uncaptioned, in Georges Bataille's (French, 1897–1962) renegade surrealist periodical *Documents*. By contrast, d'Ora printed her versions with ironic captions, as well as some in color, while expanding the project for almost a decade, shooting hundreds of images. While the two photographers are often compared for their images of cow legs, d'Ora's earliest phase at the slaughterhouse should be considered a more thorough and diverse investigation of the abattoirs, and a response to her Surrealist predecessors' representations of corporeality.

After the war ceased, the Surrealist movement was "... largely a spent force and was further compromised, in the eyes of many, by its lack of Resistance credentials and

the defections of its important members to the Communist Party."[164] Sartre openly contended surrealism's avoidance of "reality," ultimately seeing it as a movement doomed from the start. In 1947 he wrote of the Surrealists: "They lived in a comfortable and lavish period when despair was still a luxury … They were proclaimers of catastrophe in the time of fat cows; in the time of the lean cows they have nothing more to say."[165] Sartre associated comfort and cows with the bourgeoisie, and he identifies the liberal flexibility of the pre-war era with the ease of Surrealist shenanigans. Still, the experimental methods of Surrealism, and its intellectual progression, bred during the interwar years, continued to inspire local and émigré artists.

While some of these primarily male figures worked in the same abattoirs of Paris, many others made images of the female form or referenced it as a form of false submission, like the animal corpse, puppet, or mannequin. As a female photographer commenting on these subjects, d'Ora disrupts the existing discourse within the art historical canon. As she moved away from a production of work for popular pleasure (fashion, style icons, and entertainment) one sees an intellectual transition that flirts with surreal practices, in order to critically deviate from and at times satirize them.

Her acute awareness of avant-garde artists is clarified by her archives and the slaughterhouse photographs themselves. In Paris, while photographing (between 1926–29) for the fashion periodical *Die Dame*, she had worked closely with surrealist icons such as Man Ray (American, 1890–1976) and saved clippings of his work as well as her

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[164] Frances Morris, "Introduction," *Paris Post War: Art & Existentialism 1945-55* (Tate Gallery, 1993). 16.

[165] Sartre, *"What Is Literature?" And Other Essays*. 164.

own, both taken for the magazine, mounted in a portfolio labeled “Petite Documentation.”[166] Keeping records of his work demonstrates her interest in surrealist photographers prior to the war. Furthermore, the initial set of d’Ora’s *Slaughterhouse Series* taken in 1949 formally refers back to the interests derived from surrealist figures, which has yet to be explored in depth.[167] D’Ora’s series correlates with the notorious abattoir images from La Villette district in Paris taken almost two decades earlier by her well-known counterpart Eli Lotar for *Documents.*[168] The magazine was an “anti” Surrealist satellite project from 1929, organized under Georges Bataille. In a formal comparison, Dora Kallmus and her work will be placed in dialogue with visual artists in her contemporary sphere.

Madame d’Ora’s photograph (Fig. 32, c. 1949) engages in a *tête-à-tête* with a black and white image (Fig. 33, 1929) published in the *Documents’* Critical Dictionary. The first entry is titled ‘Abattoir’ where we see three of Eli Lotar’s images interspersed with a brief textual remark by Bataille. Perhaps the most iconic of the shots from the issue’s entry is *Abattoir (Slaughterhouse)* (Fig. 35, 1929).[169] With the horizon line

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[166] For example, d’Ora kept Ray’s published image of *Noire et blanche* (1926) as well as several of his portraits of dancers. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, portfolio “Tirol. d’Ora - Photos. Petite Documentation” Archives box 4.

[167] We know this from her dated portfolio at the MKG, which contains photographs of severed calf legs. There were as many active female Surrealists as there were men, although the latter have been prioritized in scholarship. Gender and the body influenced the subject of many of whom experimented with various ways of viewing or manipulating the female body. In this sense, Dora Kallmus is reclaiming agency by employing similar subjects without the Surrealist exploitation.

[168] The issue ran a short lifespan of fifteen issues and ceased printing in 1930.

[169] A copy now owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY has accrued a modest publication and exhibition history. A selection from the series of photographs had been exhibited in 1928 alongside Bernice Abbott, Man Ray, Lászlo Moholy-Nagy, Germaine Krull, and André Kertész. We know d’Ora was working

between the cobble ground and brick wall, Lotar draws our attention to rows of thirty amputated calf legs. The legs are not discards, as they too will be sold, but have been left out to dry after butchers dismembered the remainder of the animal. They are aligned as erectly as military troops, with an ironic sense of readiness. One tilted leg, however, fractures their sense of order. The white legs enhance the sporadic markings on the wall above. These abrasions reference indexical chaos as if a struggle had ensued. Lotar photographed the vantage point at lower than eye-level, as if we just walked around the corner to reveal an alignment of legs emanating the Tillerian phenomenon.[170] He also allows us to familiarize ourselves by including the partial text of the hand-painted 'Pichard' company name, grounding us to an actual location–The Abattoir de la Villette that resided at the very edge of northeast Paris.[171]

The vast difference between d'Ora's abattoir images and Lotar's is that d'Ora produced them obsessively over an extended period.[172] Unlike Lotar, she was not commissioned and had no financial incentive, besides a potential publication, to pursue

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alongside a selection of the same artists including Ray, Krull, Florence Henri, and Maurice Tabard in Paris and exhibited with them at Salon de L'escalier. We know Lotar's display was received decently, cast with a positive critique of "poetic impulse" rather than empathy for animals (in d'Ora's case). For more see: Dawn Ades and Simon Baker, *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and DOCUMENTS* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, Hayward Gallery, 2006). 112.

[170] Siegfried Kracauer (German 1889–1966) identified the essence of a Marxist fetishism in observations on the infamous Tiller Girls, who provide another pre-Nazi trope to grapple with. In 1927 Kracauer declared, "the hands in the factory correspond to the legs of the Tiller Girls." From what he perceived, not only had businesses and products undergone standardization, but the women were also "on a conveyor belt, performing a partial function without grasping totality." Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament (1927)," in *Weimar Essays*, ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 74–86. 78–79.

[171] Multiple meat wholesalers remain in the district today, while the majority of its original venue became the Cité des Sciences et de L'Industrie in 1986. Ades and Baker, *Undercover Surrealism* (2006). 109.

[172] Part of which was likely due to the delay in obtaining a permit to enter the dangerous premises.

the work. Yet, nearly thirty years after Lotar published his photograph, d'Ora's close up of cattle hooves, positioned against the wall, exhibit the nearly the same thing and ambiguous location. In "*La dernière promenade*" [the final walk] (fig. 34, c. 1949) d'Ora's title is strangely active for her torpid subject and thus grimly tongue in cheek. The severed legs are incongruously set up, with six pointing together as an isosceles trapezoid, but only as a single row. Together with the random top set of teeth to the right, suggests a tampering with the scene. Contextually, the title may be vague, but since d'Ora was influenced by the commodification of ballet, she would be drawn to the battle like alignment of the hooves. The prefix of the German term for the slaughterhouse, *Schlacht-hof* translates to "battle" a close resemblance to "ballet." There is also a proximity between the latter *hof* and "hoof". The linguistical correspondence is reminiscent of the Tillerian dance troupes, who performed routines with militaristic precision. As an avant-garde studio photographer, d'Ora was well-versed on the craze of the cancan and took many requests to document women's feet and legs. D'Ora's recurring close-ups of dead calf legs (fig. 39, 40, 48, 49), which initiated from responding to Eli Lotar, can be seen as a comment on the fetishization of women, which had become embodied in ballet dancers beginning in the early twentieth century.

Bataille's text published between Lotar's images directly engages in critiquing the bourgeoisie. It reads: "nowadays the slaughterhouse is cursed and quarantined like a boat carrying cholera."[173] He addresses a juxtaposition of religious institutions to the

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[173] Original French: "Cependant de nos jours l'abattoir est maudit et mis en quarantaine comme un bateau portant le choléra." Georges Bataille, "Chronique Dictionnaire: Abattoir," *Documents*, 1929. Re-published by Éditions Jean-Michel Place 1991. 329.

slaughterhouse, bound through sacrifice as well as pointing out the real victims of this isolated area.[174] That is the blinded upper-class citizens who exile themselves from moral filth. The term ‘sacrifice’ denotes a giving up of one thing for a *promised* return of another. Not unlike the physical demands to acquire stardom, in ballet and entertainment, for instance. The sacrificial act becomes darkly recast by its justification for the violence, and Bataille reveals the nexus of these places– “where blood is shed.”[175]

Unlike a surrealist tendency to use chance aesthetics, d’Ora’s photography involved more control when composing images; a process that frequently involved posing her deceased subjects, careful styling of the shot, and cropping. As noted by Rosalind Krauss, photographic cropping is experienced as a *rupture* in the continuous fabric of reality.[176] This aesthetic rupture reinforces the emotional shock of the morbid event and its engagement with the spectator. D’Ora’s creative process oriented itself to the moment of trimming the perfect frame and her trials can be best evaluated from the contact sheets. Figs. 48 and 49 (c. 1949) are prime evidence of this exercise. Her pen marks leave indentations that can be distinguished when viewing the sheet under a slight angle, allowing light to refract from the glossed surface. Each of the multi-colored matrices narrows into the calf’s legs. Figs. 48 and 49 are isolated moments, alluding that

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[174] Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston, *L’Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism* (The Corcoran Gallery of Art, DC and Abbeville Press, NY, 1985). 169.

[175] Original French: “... des lieux où le sang coule.” Bataille, “Chronique Dictionnaire: Abattoir,” 1929. 329. Another reference to Bataille’s abattoir entry is made in her image *Une Chaloupe* (Rowboat, fig. 1, c. 1946–48). The title describes a type of cargo boat that transported goods and was used commonly into the early twentieth century. A *chaloupe* could be steered by either sailors or rowers, but it was robust enough to carry artillery. Michel Vergé-Franceschi, *Dictionnaire d’histoire maritime* (Paris, 2002). 1508.

[176] Krauss, ‘Photographic Surrealism’. 115.

the photograph is contextually dependent on the series. D'Ora's cropped frames arrest the viewer's attention by bringing taboo to the fore. The postmortem manipulation of these bodies was multifold and d'Ora undoubtedly directed a memorialization of the hidden orchestration.

A perplexing point, especially considering d'Ora's ambivalence to Surrealism, is how her postwar photography tends to refuse adherence to a single narrative. Between her trips to the slaughterhouses and the ballet, her images of both sites often converge at a point of phantasmagoria yet are grounded in real life. Revisiting figures 18 and 19 the artist's subjects seemingly oscillate between a state of life and death–an incessant battle. As if influenced by the glossary of methodologies established by her surrealist predecessors, and expanding upon their foundation, d'Ora's photographs prompt us to question the veracity of what we see.[177] Previous scholars have addressed a similar sense of ambivalence in relation to trauma. Such as Julia Lutz who references Ulrich Baer's observation of how photography mediated by trauma can equate to an "illusory" experience.[178] It should be argued, however, that unlike Surrealism, the images are not to be mistaken for depicting a dream state because of her discreet documentation of killing. Rather, she sets up the viewer to encounter familiar subjects, but with their external guise

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[177] The ontological quality of the photograph's immediacy is best described by Roland Barthes (French, 1915–1980) who reminds viewers, "The Photograph is an extended, loaded evidence — as if it caricatured not the figure of what it represents (quite the converse) but its very existence [...] The Photograph then becomes a bizarre medium, a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest shared hallucination (on the one hand 'it is not there,' on the other 'but it has indeed been'): a mad image, chafed by reality." *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (Hill and Wang, 1980). 115.

[178] Julia Lutz, "Jenseits Des Illustrativen", no. 3 [N.F. 95] (2017): 27. For more see: Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002).

and curated setting stripped from them. D’Ora’s camera captures this reality, which is in itself non-hesitantly dark and transparent. Her photographs provoke the jarring reaction inspired by her predecessors, d’Ora admiration of the avant-garde motives wherein the photograph jolts you out of complacency. Her ambiguity in the images ultimately agrees with the existential idea that the viewer must confront and decide which reality to believe in order to be free.

MARIONETTE

D’Ora’s abattoir images challenge the novelties of French Surrealism’s exploitation of the female form in relation to latent sexual desire. By using similar methods of corporeal disfiguration this critique is translated into a traceable yet harrowing setting in the *Slaughterhouse Series*. Several of her written inscriptions referencing “marionettes” and “invisible hands” propose this correlation, thus connecting her images to avant-garde figures, in particular Hans Bellmer (German, 1902–1975) who worked in her social sphere prior to the Second World War. He employed different methods in configuring inanimate sex dolls, in order to subsequently photograph and publish them.

Surrealists like Bellmer probed the Id’s carnal desire, often using the woman’s body as a playground to conduct their experiments. The female doll embodied the idea of an object by removing a human agency– not that the latter was discounted as a model. The purpose of a doll is both for play and display, actions that are strictly pleasure-seeking. Amusement derives from the doll or puppet’s ability to mime human action.

Walter Benjamin discussed this psychological impulse to displace the unbearability of the world into an act of play:

> *When the urge to play overcomes an adult, this is not simply a regression to childhood. To be sure, play is always liberating. [...] the adult, who finds himself threatened by the real world and can find no escape, removes its sting by playing with its image in reduced form.*[179]

In his analysis of dolls, Benjamin demonstrates how the urge for imaginary pleasure derives from escapist behavior. Furthermore, to photograph the doll is to enhance the distance of its display and rely on viewer engagement to reenact the form of play. The image then results in a double-functioning pleasure. Thus, the marionette, as the doll of the stage, represents something fully artificial, yet still able to produce a sense of sexual satisfaction for a willing participant.

Depicting neither corpse nor dancer, d'Ora's untitled photograph of a marionette (fig. 38, n.d.) characterizes the female body as a yielding, malleable object, embodying the idea of consumption. The work's date is unknown but, since her projects were narrowly focused and mostly financially motivated after the war, the photograph was likely taken prior to her leave from Paris during WWII.[180] The image's relevance to this study resides in the themes of puppet theater re-emerged on the verso annotations of

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[179] Originally published in 1928. Walter Benjamin, "Old Toys: The Toy Exhibition at the Märkisches Museum," in *On Dolls*, ed. Kenneth Gross (Notting Hill Editions, 2012), 81–88. 86.

[180] A possible way to retroactively date the image could consider the bohemian artists in her social circle prior to WWII. One possibility is bohemian doll artist and costume designer Lotte Pritzel (German, 1887–1952), who, during several photography sessions, d'Ora came to befriend. The two women worked in the same social sphere with avant-garde performance icons such as Anita Berber (German, 1899–1928). She photographed her on two specific occasions, once in 1913 and again in 1924. The later photograph shows Pritzel leaning onto a ledge, the angle of her face mimicking her puppet creation, which is poised with its legs crossed and dainty hands caught in mid-gesture. The portraits could provide a connection to the curious marionette in d'Ora's frame. The puppet's distinctly refined formalities and detailed costume – billowy feathers and ruffles of linen – could further attribute the puppet as one by Pritzel.

d'Ora's slaughterhouse contact sheets. For instance, in *Marionettes* (fig. 37, c. 1949), puppet strings have been bluntly substituted for chains. The bare animal carcasses are strapped to the wall, with their dead eyes open. In this way, fig. 38, the conventional female puppet presages the artist's interest in the controlled body taken up again in her artist motivations at the abattoir.

D'Ora captures the innocence of the marionette in a state of abandonment. She shows the viewer a doll disassociated from the puppetmaster's "invisible hands". Her eyes have rolled back into her head detached from the only strings keeping her "alive." She sits neglected and caught up in strings, while the remaining strands pull across outside of the left frame. Her legs flop nervelessly and resemble a character seen in d'Ora's abattoir leg close-ups (fig. 39, c. 1948, and fig. 40, 1949). She captures the marionette in slight resistance to the apparatus destined to control her, as her head turns gently away. Both of her palms face upward in a relinquishing of power, capturing her in the most honest state of being–empty.

D'Ora seems to ask the audience if pleasure can be discerned even in the photograph's absence of live performance narrative. A marionette or doll is predestined to function as an object to be imposed upon. As such, the marionette will never own its freedom, just as a ballerina, which the figure seems to represent, has a will bound to the entertainment of a crowd. Both female forms, cater to the audience's *imagination*, which is the very issue when considering a socio-cultural focus in the aftermath of war. Thus,

becoming existentially motivated, the image asks: Have we traded in our sense of inner purpose and fulfillment for superficial judgment?[181]

Hans Bellmer's photographs of dismembered female mannequins serve as a useful comparison to d'Ora's attention to surrealist motifs.[182] While both artists stage corporeal photographs, Bellmer's obsession to contort the female body, wooden or flesh, exemplifies the surrealist's investigation of the relationship between mind and body as well as humanity's dark desire to control a less powerful agent.[183] Bellmer used artificially manufactured parts to imitate female bodies. The monstrous mannequins become life-size puppet theater–the photographs animate them even more by subduing an understanding of the true materiality–wood and plaster parts. This lends the figure a humanly replicant ambiguity and this eerie simulation intends to prompt an emotional response from the viewer.[184] The series proliferates a lack of agency affiliated with woman, as his authorship renders the spiritless figures with contortion and blankness. They are made to be governed by him and to elicit desire from the photograph's viewer.

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[181] Additionally, since d'Ora was well-versed in photographing mannequins early on as a commercial photographer, there is a component of critiquing a commodity-driven society embedded in the scene.

[182] A figure for another study is Lotte Pritzel (German, 1887–1952), a puppet maker and costume designer who knew both d'Ora and Bellmer. Pritzel became friends with Bellmer during his time in Berlin (until 1939). Pritzel and d'Ora shared multiple close contacts, such as Anita Berber, therefore d'Ora likely followed the work of Bellmer as he piqued the interest of French avant-garde artists (the Surrealists in particular). Editha Mork, *Lotte Pritzel 1887-1952: Puppen des Lasters des Grauens und der Ekstase (Dolls of the vices of horror and ecstasy)* (Puppentheatermuseum, Münchner Stadtmuseum, 1987). 93.

[183] Bellmer was intensively reading text by Marquis de Sade (French, 1740–1814) as well as Bataille's *Histoire de l'Oeil* (1947). Andrew Brink, "Hans Bellmer's Sacrificial Dolls," in *Desire and Avoidance in Art: Pablo Picasso, Hans Bellmer, Balthus and Joseph Cornell: Psychobiographical Studies with Attachment Theory* (Peter Lang, 2007), 77.

[184] Bellmer's puppets also coincide with the German interwar tensions surrounding Aryan body image. As a claimed anti-fascist, he took part in the French Resistance during WWII. For this reason, Bellmer's work is commonly taken as a protest against Nazi authority and propaganda.

This battle makes the metaphor of d’Ora’s puppet photograph so relevant to the conversation of agency amidst her *Slaughterhouse Series*.

Bellmer sustained a long-term project in scrutinizing the relationship between the manipulation and display of the female body.[185] Pubescent dismembered mannequins make up the two series of fetishistic dolls titled *Die Puppe* (or *La Poupée*). The second series produced between 1936–38 was more mutilated than the initial set. The photograph *La Poupée* (fig. 41, 1938) comes from this latter work before he had moved to Paris to continue working with surrealist circles established there. From photographic comparisons between the two artists, it is reasonable to question d’Ora’s familiarity with Bellmer’s work, especially since he came to Paris for work in 1938. The doll has been severed at her waist to accommodate a second end of genitalia. The same double-doll is photographed reclining in a nest of hay in *La Poupée* (fig. 42, 1938), suggesting something animalistic and ultimately dehumanizing the female nude. It is reasonable to assume d’Ora’s familiarity with Bellmer’s work, especially since he came to Paris for work in 1938. Bellmer’s treatment of the female object and display of inauthenticity (which continued after WWII) are provocations of d’Ora’s dialogue in the slaughterhouse depictions.

A relationship to Bellmer’s sadistic game of female body puzzles in *La Poupée* is established by her photograph of a decapitated cow’s head (fig. 43, c. 1946–48). Three legs have been carefully arranged around the head. In (fig. 44, 1946–48) another severed

[185] This was largely influenced by his attention to Freudian psychoanalysis and psychiatric theories of Paul Ferdinand Schilder (Austrian, 1886–1940). For more see: Sue Taylor, “Hans Bellmer in The Art Institute of Chicago: The Wandering Libido and the Hysterical Body,” *The Art Institute of Chicago* 22, no. 2 (1996): 150–65, 197–99.

cow head, also surrounded by detached legs, is posed as a close up without a margin of background, and thus more intimate than Bellmer's image. With these two images, d'Ora allows the viewer to see the same act of bodily contortion in two ways, one that is fetishized (figs. 39, 40) and alternatively, as a personal portrait (fig. 44).

Themes proposed by Bellmer's images, extreme violence, sex, and corruption of innocence, Sartre had addressed as threats of desire. He described the relationship between sexual and violent acts often culminate with dependency, that is, desire is not fulfilled without certain degrees of both actions. Eva Gothlin explains that Sartre maintains the connection between desire and sadomasochism in his *Notebooks for an Ethics* (*Cahiers pour une morale*) written in 1947–48. She argues that he views desire as an "invasion" due to "consciousness *surrender[ing]* to the body."[186] Sartre equates the act of desire with violence in two ways. First by way of conflict between object and subject, that of unrequited desire.[187] Secondly, Sartre observed there is a violent "conquering" of a body in any act of desiring it. For Sartre, desire and its connection to the bodily disrupts access to a clear consciousness, resulting in inauthenticity.[188] Accordingly, d'Ora illustrates how a photograph transforms an object into a subject with newfound intervention left to the viewer, although the image itself is static and the object

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[186] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). 180.

[187] Eva Gothlin, "Beauvoir and Sartre on Appeal, Desire, and Ambiguity," in *Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir*, (2006). 138.

[188] Eva Gothlin also compares Beauvoir's stance on the same subject. Unlike Sartre, her sexual desire is not restricted to a "sadomasochistic dialectic." Furthermore, Beauvoir believes desire can provide "the keenest awareness of the other and of the self." She relieves sexual union from its Sartrean caution of losing one's control over consciousness. In "Beauvoir and Sartre on Appeal, Desire, and Ambiguity," in *Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. Margaret A. Simons (Indiana University Press, 2006). 138, 142.

(carcass) itself is under the influence of d'Ora's control. The viewer sees the carcass' final act, and she intends for you to probe your reaction to the violence of the subject in its dissociated state of pleasure.

D'Ora's photographic response to the Bellmer's sadistic female experiments can be seen in images such as *Qualen des Mittelalters* (Tortures of the Middle Ages, fig. 45, c. 1949). D'Ora's scene of slaughter tools and a hanging piece of bleeding flesh critique violence influenced by desire, against which Sartre cautioned. D'Ora's stark transparency of torture demonstrates how the process of contorting a real body delineates the sense of pleasure, which is evocative in Bellmer's oeuvre. Since *Qualen des Mittelalters* displays the instruments responsible for a kill, it mirrors the structure of control that Bellmer exhibits in his unnerving doll anatomy (fig. 46, 1933–36). The effect of shock and disgust evoked by d'Ora's image stands against the approachability of Bellmer's synthetic female bodies.[189]

Eroticism is absent in d'Ora's pictures, since her exposé of inert animal parts show them as undesired objects. Among the surrealists, the transgressions of Bellmer, whose return to artistic practice in Paris after the war coincided with d'Ora's, seem to

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[189] This eventually led to his exploitation of romantic partners. After WWII, Bellmer's obsession with making versions of the female body continued with Unica Zürn as his model, whom he met on a visit to Berlin in 1954. As his artistic muse, she moved to Paris with him and replaced what the puppet had once stood for. Zürn posed for a shocking series of black and white photographs in 1958, one which was published in a Surrealist magazine with the carnal title *Tenir à frais* or "keep it in a cool place." In this series, Zürn's depersonalized and dehumanized body transforms into a piece of bound meat (fig. 47, 1958). Zürn's reflected that the one "who is sketched by him, or photographed … participates with Bellmer in the abomination of herself. Impossible for me to render him greater praise." (S. Taylor quoting Unica Zürn from "Remarques d'un observateur" in *Gesamtausgabe*, 166–79.) Taylor addresses the unnerving level of their projects now knowing Zürn's "psychological vulnerability." She struggled with mental health and committed suicide in 1970. And this brings us to a meeting of minds with d'Ora's slaughterhouse imagery, which functions from an opposing point of view. Translated by Sue Taylor, "Hans Bellmer in The Art Institute of Chicago: The Wandering Libido and the Hysterical Body," *The Art Institute of Chicago* 22, no. 2 (1996): 150–65, 197–99. 165.

strike an existential response. By displacing woman with animal, pleasure production is ceased. Whether or not she was directly critiquing Bellmer's work, one can view the imagery compared in this chapter to be in dialogue with his insinuated claims about authority, bestiality, and the passive body within a photograph.[190] Both photographers intervened with unresistant bodies to address threats of sovereignty. Bellmer continued his project from dolls to live models after WWII, which renders his entire oeuvre as an example of sadomasochism during a hostile time for French women. On the other hand, d'Ora reminds the viewer that although the war has ended, issues of external control, dominance, and visual spectacle remain. Her photographs reflect the outcome of this troubled reality, rather than binding to Surrealism.

STOCKINGS & SKINS

[...] the poor sacrificial lambs, although they often have their beautiful wagons, are brutally led to the slaughterhouse. Dancers die young...[191]

After spending time at the ballet, documenting dancers both behind and front of stage, d'Ora's dark metaphor echoes that of other intellectual readings on the corpse and capitalistic fetish in the early twentieth century.[192] D'Ora's grotesque display of raw

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[190] Passive in terms of a patriarchal society's view of female performers and laborers and their livestock.

[191] Original German: "[...] die armen Opferlämmer, wenngleich sie auch oft ihren schönen Wagen haben, werden brutal zur Schlachtbank geführt. Tänzer sterben jung…" Note from DK to WG, 25.6.1955, Preus Museum. In Vuković, "Zum Schluss kommen: D'Ora's Letzte Schaffensphase 1938-58," in *Machen sie mich schön.* 299.

[192] Her concern in part stems from an ulterior intolerance of the bourgeoisie, the social class which the operation of entertainment much depended on. Bertolt Brecht wrote numerous socio-political satires during the Weimar Republic that challenged the superficial motives of society, that is living without a true sense of meaning and were seen as ignorant to this fact. Brecht's work, *The Seven Deadly Sins of The Petty*

material seems to voice a cultural displacement of value, which could be explained by a notorious device common in commercial work or advertising–the photographic tendency of masking or fabricating an attractive guise. In the immediate postwar period in Europe, photographers more commonly kept their artistic work separate from commercial work such as portraiture commissions, the latter from which they made their living. But in Madame d'Ora's case, the interests interwove, as in her series' after WWII, when her shift to taboo subject matter lifts off the mask of beauty pretensions.[193] Her grotesque yet aestheticized carcasses also critique superficiality based on structures of commerce and exchange. This unmasking performed by the photographer's melding of the two reveals a taboo beneath glamor and morbidity. In providing this commentary, d'Ora exhibits a professional understanding of the socio-cultural carnal fetish.[194]

Bourgeoisie (1933), addressed concerns of wild desire driven by materialism and bottomless gaiety. The female protagonist Anna comes from a well to do family and lives her life according to the desires of her heart, inevitably leading her life in sin. In the final chapter on *Envy* Anna recites "Beauty will parish and youth pass away," the dancer's nightmare, relating to the same theme notioned by d'Ora in 1955. Bertolt Brecht, "'The Seven Deadly Sins of the Lower Middle Class': Ballet Cantana," *The MIT Press*, The Tulane Drama Review, 6, no. 1 (September 1961): 123–29. 129. Both ideas consider the question: after the deterioration of wealth what is one left with to justify their existence? Brecht became the practitioner of epic theater, which took up themes affiliated with the politics of the period. In fact, the genre's philosophy engages the audience, by direct confrontation, functions similarly to d'Ora's *Slaughterhouse Series*. Epic theater introduces a complement to d'Ora's objective in her slaughterhouse images, since both call for the rational realization that whatever is presented on the stage is not reality itself, but a site or "forum" of contemplation. In writing his own plays, Sartre also experimented with lessons of Brecht, for more on this see: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre on Theater*, trans. Frank Jellinek (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976).

[193] Initially, her work for the fashion industry began in 1909 with commissions from the Wiener Werkstätte. Her fashion photography continued daily from 1925 while working with the French publication *L'Officiel de la Couture*. Biographical entry by Esther Ruelfs, MKG.

[194] Just as Walter Benjamin observed in his Marxist critique of Paris expositions: "Fashion stands in opposition to the organic. It couples the living body to the inorganic world. To the living, it defends the rights of the corpse. The fetishism that succumbs to the sex appeal of the inorganic is its vital nerve. The cult of the commodity presses such fetishism into its service." For Benjamin, the *corpse* was reminiscent of Siegfried Kracauer's perspective that city mentality places a premium on visuality. That is if one participates in the fetishes of fashion one's "being" becomes irrelevant since the focus becomes limited to a surface value of things. The philosopher's concern over a vanishing aura is similar in nature, which perhaps

Fashion, which directed the first half of d'Ora's career, reveals its façade and admits itself as a tool for reimagining identity in a way that is similar to Benjamin's critique that the theater: "provided the vocabulary for articles of fashion […] the same *niaiserie* that seeks in ballet the origin of the real betrays itself…"[195] Benjamin equates a lack of substance and meaning with materiality as well as ballet. A concept of cultural mindlessness, or all body no mind, could be embodied in the form of a dimwitted cow sent to slaughter or dancer to entertain. He elaborates,

> *For fashion was never anything other than the parody of the motley cadaver, provocation of death through the woman, and bitter cold colloquy with decay whispered between shrill bursts of mechanical laughter. That is fashion. And that is why she changes so quickly; she titillates death and is already something different, something new, as he casts about to crush her.*[196]

Benjamin evokes an existential appraisal of fashion that equates to falsity. Benjamin's fashion as a fetish equation elicits macabre allegories, which mirrors an interest of material and guise in d'Ora's abattoir project. Under either condition, violence or fashion, the body provided a tool for the means to an end of satisfaction, mediating both emission and reception of desire.

In an analysis of cultural fetishization of the female body, Soloman-Godeau examines commodification and modes of exchange. She isolates three forms of fetishism

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he would equate to the organic soul of the artwork. By his reference to the organic purities of the world, Benjamin seems to allude to the structured apparatuses of capitalism and technology, which act as parasites to its inhabitants. Fetishism is the result of the commodity process communicated through fashion. This work was written between 1927–1940 and examined modernity and the nineteenth century lifestyle of Paris. Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk (The Arcades Project)*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Harvard University Press, 1999). 8.

[195] Benjamin, The Arcades Project, 38. A2, 9.

[196] Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*. 63.

proliferated by culture and executed by the camera: The patriarchy's psychic fetishism of the corporeal, Marx's commodity fetishism, and the natural fetishized properties of the photographic medium. All unite and influence one another on "the site," of which is a photographed woman. Her case study focuses on nineteenth-century photographs of Virginia Oldoïni Countess of Castiglione who through styling and repetitive documentation managed to fabricate an identity, over the course of nearly a century, while marketing her body in a way that the scholar finds "deranged." Soloman-Godeau ultimately argues that the Countess reinforces a dangerous visual proliferation, where women in spheres of prostitution and ballet are commodified. She discusses an expectation of the portrayal of women, which became codified in photography through modes of exchange. This point is a fruitful way to reconsider d'Ora who had been a lifelong portrait photographer before her postwar turn to examine gender and fetishization in images of the slaughterhouse and ballet.

D'Ora's attention to the role of textile and material developed early in her career.[197] Laced and beaded brocades of royal society made up her earliest clientele (fig. 52, 1916). This interest lingered in her inquisitions at the slaughterhouse, where she documented animals with and without their skin as well as the process of its removal (fig. 8, 1946–48). The relationship between stockings and skin can be assessed among the photographs. De-skinning bare animal legs elicits an anxiety of pain, a seedy environment, and commodification. This is why d'Ora's photographs of partially

[197] In fact, tha artists initial career aspirations were to become and actress or a tailor. Katharina Sykoya also explains d'Ora's interest in materiality and morbidity, specifically its role in the *Slaughterhouse Series*. "Das Morbide und das Exzentrische, brüchige texturen und liminale figuren bei d'Ora," (2017). 255.

decorticated animal carcasses subsequently shock the viewer into contemplation much unlike the reaction of a typical scene taken of a female figure, dressing or undressing herself.[198]

Photographic exploitation of the female body, animate or inanimate, is at stake in two main aspects of the *Slaughterhouse Series*: leg fetishization and physical materiality. As Benjamin clarified in his address on fashion, both themes are barriers to living by the existential aim of authenticity. Madame d'Ora spent the majority of her career involved in commercial fashion projects, whether it promoted her high-status clientele or trending German magazines. By highlighting the concept of unmasking, the veiny *skins* and *limbs* of the slaughtered animals in her photographs also admits a type of self-criticism against her career in modern advertising and the luxurious depictions of affluent customers.

Both the animals and dancers in d'Ora's photographs exist by adhering to a monetary system. Livestock are immediately born and bred for capital value and the ballerina is primed to perform for the eyes of paying customers, but further whetted by the desire of the viewer. Reinforced by the *Slaughterhouse Series*, the visuals of d'Ora's ballet dancers do not fall into a typical emblem of fetishized female objectification, but instead, reveal the somber and even dangerous reality of the fantasy. D'Ora steps into a choreographic role by directing her own ballet corps behind the camera.

This preserves Solomon-Godeau's idea of the "flesh market," extracted from a Marxist theory of commodity fetish, the dancer's financial dependency during economic

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[198] In his multi-lens analysis of the material's sexual allure, Endres notes: "... [it] is heightened by the seemingly paradoxical fact that the leg and foot are *shown in the process of being dressed*..." Emphasis added. For more on an analytical history of stockings see: Johannes Endres, "Stockings," in *Textile Terms: A Glossary*, ed. Anika Reineke et al. (Berlin, 2017), 243–47. 243.

hardship ultimately leads to a “recipe for [sexual] exploitation.”[199] The Paris Opéra, where d’Ora was on-site working, was an established venue of spectacle and elicitor of these assignations a century earlier.[200] As Soloman-Godeau argues: “... the legs of the dancers are the focus of the fetishizing gaze of the male spectator is only the reflection of a far more generalized phenomenon which superimposes a map of (erotic) significance on the woman’s body.”[201] And when she is photographed, this fetish is further realized by the delicate ensemble she wears, manufactured to be a display.

The juxtaposition of photographed legs in the abattoir and those of the dancer’s in the Marquis de Cuevas Ballet Company diminish a conventional eroticism encouraged by the entertainment industry. D’Ora’s exploration of fetishism can be seen in *Spitzentanz* (fig. 51, 1955), which captured two sets of dancer’s practicing *en pointe*. Dance historian Susan Leigh Foster characterizes the *pointe* technique as: “Pliant, quivering with responsiveness, ready to be guided anywhere […] leaving one leg behind, ever erect, a strong reminder of her desire.”[202] The ballerina’s lean and firm body, intended to signify grace, is meanwhile functioning as the unattainable signal of desire. In the image, the precise intersection of their feet cues a sense of automation. The dancers have been cropped at the hips, allowing their sheathed legs to become the main display. The camera

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[199] For more see Lynn Garafola, “The Travesty Dancer in Nineteenth-Century Ballet.” From Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “The Legs of the Countess,” *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 65–108. 89, note 27.

[200] Ibid., 89, note 27.

[201] Ibid., 87.

[202] Susan Leigh Foster, “The ballerina’s phallic pointe,” in *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996). 1.

flash bounces off the white fabric and enhances the legs' defined contours. Stockings are the substance of this scene. Charles Baudelaire felt that tights, as a second skin, were:

> *… successfully designed to rid the complexion of those blemishes that Nature has outrageously strewn there, and thus to create an abstract unity in color and texture of the skin, a unity, which, like that produced by the legs of the dancer, immediately approximates the human being to the statue, that is to something superior and divine.*[203]

Encompassed in the stocking is more than an attempt to veil truth but also the impression of flawlessness as opposed to nudity. The material deifies its subject, which in turn establishes distance with the spectator. The illusioned relationship that is defined results in a culturally "tasteful" act of private longing, which can be blamed on justifications of commodity driven society. In the suggestive presence of silky rayon, a man positioned between the legs of the right dancer peers down with a suspiciously coy expression–his presence draws the gaze of a viewer. His positioning, framed between them, was a distinct choice of the photographer to single out his behavior, which shrinks away from the camera as witness.

When the dainty corpse limbs in *Abgezogener Hase* (Skinned Rabbit, fig. 50, c. 1949–57) and pointed ballerina legs are viewed in tandem, the fetish is rendered obsolete. When the gaze encounters this jarring juxtaposition it abnormalizes a sexualization of the feminine motif of the leg. The flayed corpse builds a resistance to eroticize the

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[203] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays, trans. And ed. Jonathan Mayne, London, Phaidon, 1964: 33.

iridescently feminine material. The justification of "keeping safely within the bounds of decorum" no longer applies to the photographer's method.[204]

> *… in those contemporary photographs of dancers, actresses, and demimondaines produced for public consumption, legs are always sheathed in tights. Tights were virtually the prerequisite for the transformation of carnal flesh into the sublimated, sculptural form of aesthetic, albeit eroticized, delectation.*[205]

Comparing this with the poised white calf legs in a blood pool (figs. 39, 40) must be interpreted in terms of the provocation of death.

Material, such as gauze or tulle, is also appointed an aesthetic autonomy, to transform not only the appearance of its sitter but to manipulate the reaction of its spectator.[206] Keenly fascinated by material expression, d'Ora sought out the natural viscera of skinned animals. In several of these material studies she processed the photographs in color, which is rare among her general oeuvre. The color distinguishes the skin from being something manufactured. It communicates the meaning she placed in the material's undistorted state, which could only be a product of nature. Furthermore, the photographer characterized these materials through text, by creating a dialectical substitution of a synthetic fabric for an already substantial one. *La Dentelle* (The Lace, fig. 53, 1955) the veiny curtain of flesh, is so vibrant it still looks alive, and pulsates from the surface of the photograph. The draped skin carries a menacing network of stocky

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[204] Solomon-Godeau, 91 note 32.

[205] Ibid., 74.

[206] Solomon-Godeau addresses the effect of skirts as instruments in monitoring the proportion of leg that would be displayed on stage. This led to a shortening of the traditional ballet tutu in the middle of the nineteenth century, from mid-calf to knee length, "although the longer skirt was retained for certain roles." Solomon-Godeau. 90.

veins that mocks the delicacy of dancer's lace. The flesh, shown in color, subsists as an antithesis of aestheticized costume, and its title fortifies this idea.

The crescendo of d'Ora's material attention is visualized in *Tierhäut* (fig. 54, c. 1954). Here she barely leaves any distance between the viewer and the pile of skins. The textures of velvety pelt and rosy blood fold into one another. The brown hide and inner layer of skin are soiled, making it difficult to imagine the exquisite leather commodity to come from it. Instead of lace trailing down the open-back of a dancer or the shiny coat of a dandy, *La Dentelle and Tierhäut* boldly confront the viewer with a mockery of privilege and shallow materialistic desires. D'Ora illustrates the tactility of raw animal skin as something undeniably real.

This element of d'Ora's slaughterhouse photographs communicates an understanding of how surface aesthetics inflate a dangerous reverie to which the audience surrenders–losing itself in the idea of pleasure or, as Sartre put it, "the temptation of irresponsibility."[207] It renders the dancer's body as mediation of hollow fulfillment. The body's outward appearance and performance evoke a false value, which is challenged by the existential commitment in theater production. D'Ora witnessed the commercial pressures of dancers at the theater, which was merely a fraction of the political dilemma for women or as d'Ora saw them: "poor sacrificial lambs." The philosophical continuities of the two final projects of her career thus not only exhibit existential objectives but also constitute an exposé regarding Parisian gender politics and entertainment.

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[207] Jean-Paul Sartre, *"What Is Literature?" And Other Essays* (Harvard University Press, 1988). 8.

Amidst mid-nineteenth century Haussmannization, the Paris abattoirs and meat markets of La Villette became the largest district of slaughterhouses due to its effort to concentrate them into one area between 1865 and 1867. Coincidently, the original site of abattoirs has today been eradicated to make way for a district of entertainment and attraction. During the 1980s, music venues, theater halls, and one of the city's grandest public parks was erected on the soil of what used to be deemed *la Cité du Sang*. On Rue de Jean Jaurès, where both Eli Lotar and Madame d'Ora once recorded their eerie amputated cattle legs, is now the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris.[208] Considering Paris' history of topographic redefining, d'Ora's postwar photography series provides a nexus of an evolving intellectual, cultural, social, and artistic capital.

[208] Opened to the public in December 1990. This newer college campus is a branch of the larger institute founded in 1795.

My book will be a book for everyone, because photography is philosophy.[209]

– Dora Kallmus, 1954

The task of a philosophy of photography is to reflect upon this possibility of freedom … Such a philosophy is necessary because it is the only form of revolution left open to us.[210]

– Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography,* 1983

CONCLUSION

This study introduces select images from Madame d'Ora's *Slaughterhouse Series* as existential sites for critical thinking. It opposes what many scholars have interpreted as conveyance of emotional trauma, which has limited the project's capacity. As demonstrated, d'Ora invites the viewer into a moral think-tank, revealing an equal power of shock and horror as staged re-presentations. Exhibiting abrasive, controversial, and metaphysical experiences, the viewer encounters controlled, yet nonetheless raw, scenes, in order to digest the potential moral value of these images. In this, the abattoir project became d'Ora's creative peak and her newfound avant-gardism came at a critical moment of broad redefinition in Paris.

The mass-scale administrations on which she comments–socio-political complacency, the entertainment industry, and cultural materialism–have only been further exploited by the pillars of increasing globalization. Perhaps, this is in part a point

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[209] Letter from DK to WG, 1954.

[210] Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion, 2000). 82.

of polarization making d'Ora's images significant to audiences today. Considerations are put forth by d'Ora in her visceral slaughterhouse imagery and clarified further by their epigrams.

D'Ora's consistent demonstration of written social commentary proves an acute observation to the shifting world around her. Beginning with articles in style magazines, and particularly the journal entries she focused on during her exile, all eventually influenced a critical reflection in her postwar photography.[211] As shown, this is most evident in the *Slaughterhouse Series*, which reveals a variety of inscriptions and titles paired with the images. As archived letters reveal, and the contact sheet inscriptions demonstrate, the series was intended to become a published work, which would have likely included personal essays alongside photographs. The themes (pulled from dance, the theatrical world, aristocracy etc.) relate to socio-cultural aspects of a Parisian *mode de vie* and establish a clear intellectual target of her abattoir and ballet projects.

Criticizing the superficiality of French lifestyle was not a new concept but became central to Sartre and de Beauvoir's existential philosophy. Art and theater were outlets of commitment and, only if executed properly, trusted vehicles of communication. As Sartre explained in *The Imaginary*, the portrait *invites* a viewer to "realize its possibilities by regarding it aesthetically."[212] D'Ora can be seen as employing such a philosophical method of engagement with her staged events, which display only actual events of butchered animals. In her critique of the theater, she seems to

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[211] Her fluency in German, French, and English influenced this mode of expression as well, as she practiced writing in all three languages. MKG Archives.

[212] Flynn, "Jean-Paul Sartre: Art and Philosophy," (2013).

question the substance of cultural materialism by substituting it with unsparing realism. Her photographs offer the spectator an anti-aestheticized perspective of this analogy between material and real, especially compared to that of Francis Bacon or Chaim Soutine's carcass paintings executed around the same time. In this way the series tested the canonical function of "art" in order to commit to a greater ability of the photograph as a document of critical potential. Responding to the existential conversations circulating in publications, the photographs battle ignorance of corrupt politics and human cruelty with authentic horrific events. As a socio-political allegory of the suppressed reality in post-1945 France, her images unlock the anxiety associated with political and civil unrest.

The *Slaughterhouse Series* additionally voices a lack of innocence in the participation of spectacle or light entertainment in the post WWII period. Her personifications equating dead pigs with figures in the ballet industry, has clear political ramifications. This is reified by the Nazi infiltration of the French entertainment business. D'Ora's inscriptions clarify a will to expose this truth, as her contacts and profession allowed her to often be a first-hand witness behind the scenes.

While Madame d'Ora's "great final work" remained largely unrealized publicly during her life, these new perspectives on the *Slaughterhouse Series* shed light on her postwar intellectual commitment and its potential to exude moral betterment from utter disturbance–a praxis Sartre would approve of. While there may never be an absolute solution, the existential conversation inspired by these photographs derives from its

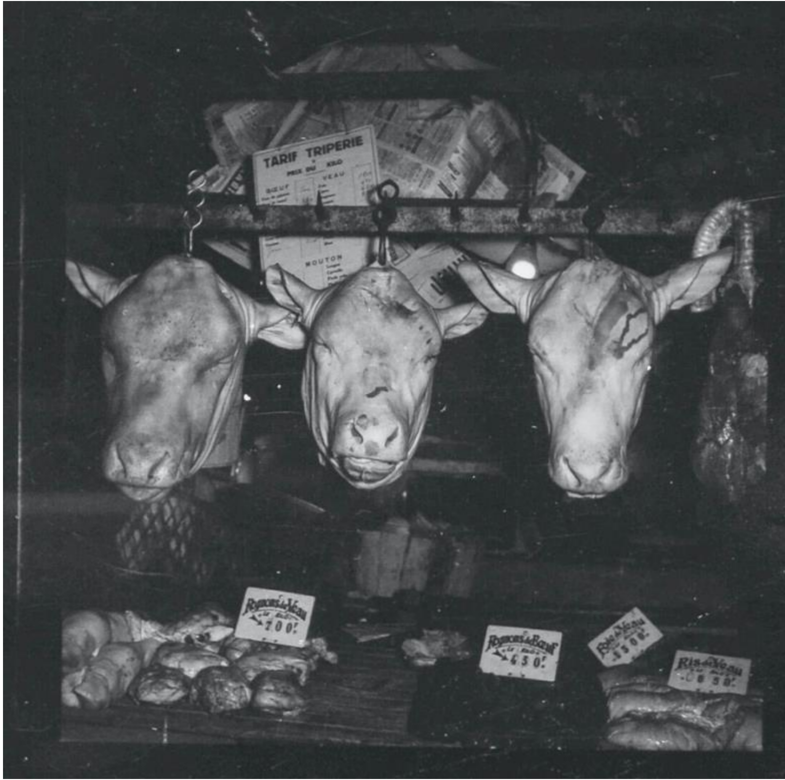
potentiality and realization that human freedom, action for oneself, is a liberating exercise.

As such, these works provide the profile of a Francophilian Austrian woman, who despite her Jewish heritage and experience of persecution, immediately intended to provoke intellectual engagement *vis à vis* her photography in a sensitive postwar climate. Her visual assertions and their socio-political circumstance are rare interventions into the current canon. This research hopes to be a stepping off point for future discoveries regarding Dora Kallmus' postwar trajectory.

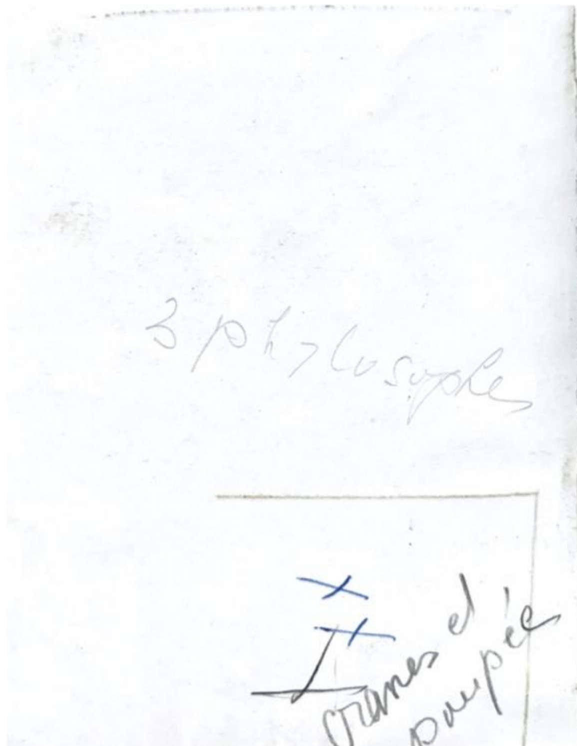
FIGURES

Fig. 1 Dora Kallmus (Madame d’Ora), “*Une Chaloupe*” [A Rowboat], c. 1946–48. Photograph, 29.4 x 38 cm. (© mumok - Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien G 602/8)

Fig. 2 Madame d'Ora, *Rind mit aufgeschnittener Kehle* [Beef with slashed throat], c. 1956–57. Gelatin silver print, 29.7 x 36.6 cm (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.434)



Above:
Fig. 3.1 Madame d'Ora "*3 philosophes*" contact sheet recto, c. 1955 (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, 1991.3390)



Below:
Fig. 3.2 contact sheet verso, c. 1955 (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, 1991.3390)

Fig. 4 Madame d’Ora, “*Notre Valuer*” [What We Value], c. 1956–57. Gelatin Silver Print, 31.4 x 27.7 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.406.57)

Above:
Fig. 5.1 Madame d'Ora, "*Ils moquent d'eux ou de nous?*" [Are they laughing at themselves or at us?], c. 1956–57. Gelatin silver print, 35.5 x 28.7 cm (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.406.56)

Below:
Fig. 5.2 Detail

Fig. 6 Madame d’Ora, “*des rêves amusants*” [Amusing Dreams], contact sheet recto, c. 1955 (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1991.3356)

Fig. 7 Madame d'Ora, *Schlachterladen in Frankreich* [Butcher shop in France], c. 1949 Gelatin silver print (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.432)

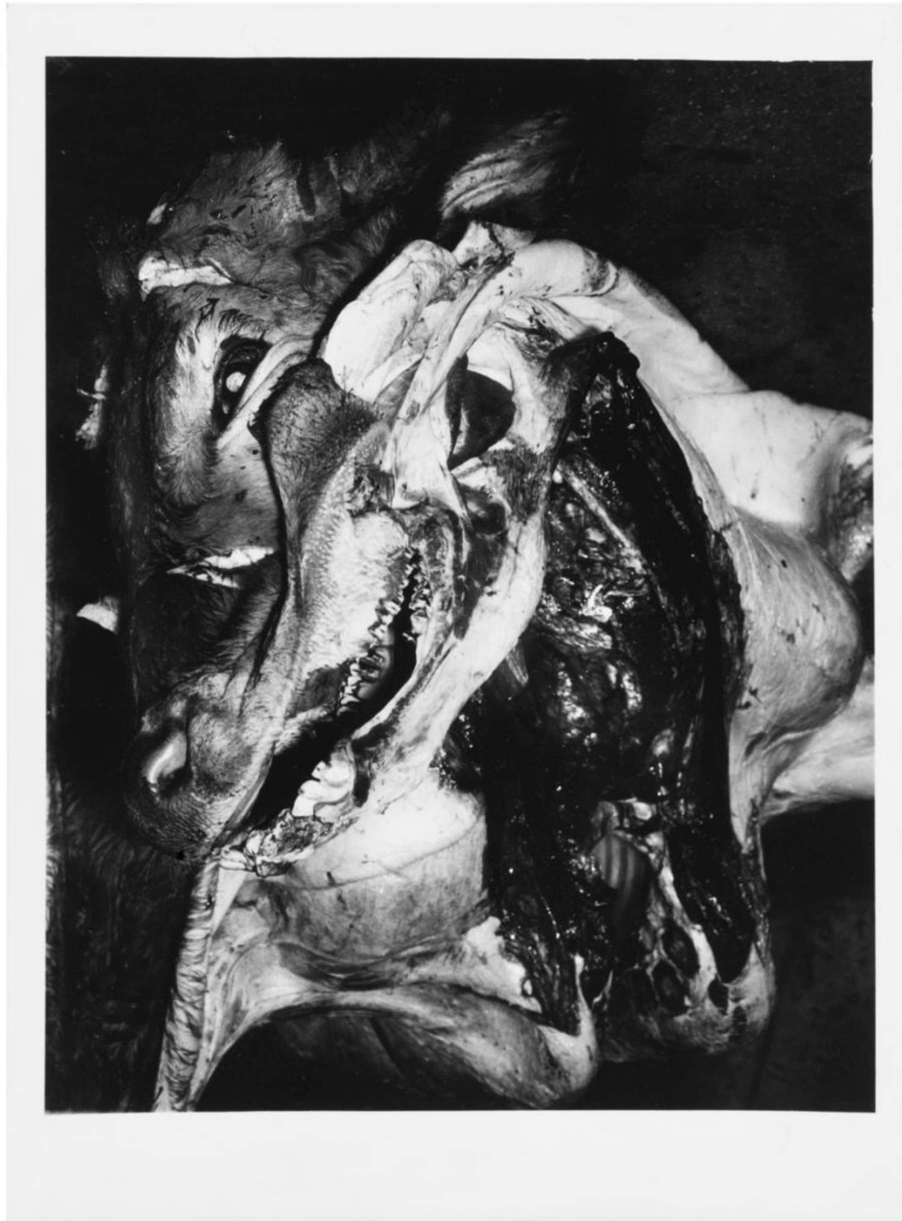


Fig. 8 Madame d’Ora, “*Enlèvement*” c. 1946–48, Gelatin silver print, 27.2 x 20.8 cm (© mumok - Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien G 602/10)

Fig. 9 Madame d'Ora, *Geschlachteter Hase* [Slaughtered Hare], c. 1955, Gelatin silver print, 32.8 x 25.4 cm (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.406.54)

Above:
Fig. 10.1 Madame d'Ora, Slaughtered Hare (detail), Gelatin silver print, 29.3 x 23.5 cm (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.452)

Below:
Fig. 10.2 Slaughtered Hare sequence, c. 1955, negative. (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg)

Fig. 11 Madame d’Ora, *Die Balletttänzerin Rosella Hightower* [The ballet dancer Rosella Hightower], 1955, Gelatin silver print, 21.3 x 31 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.266)

Fig. 9 (detail)

Fig. 11 (detail)

Fig. 12 Leni Riefenstahl (German, 1902–2003), *Olympia: Fest der Schönheit* [Part II Festival of Beauty], 1938, Film Still Sequence. (Top to Bottom – 33:06, 33:12, 33:21)

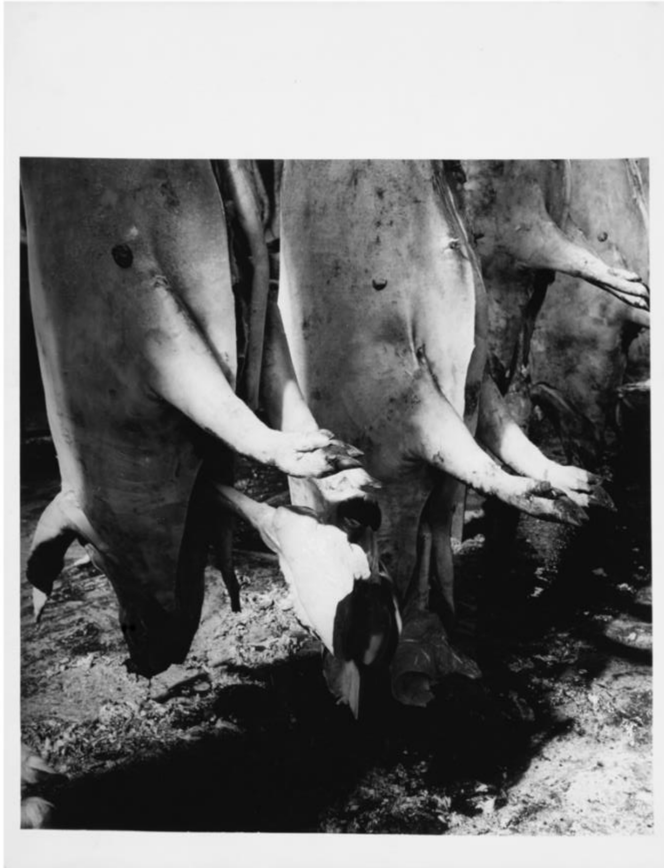
Above:
Fig. 13.1 Madame d’Ora, “*Maître de ballet*” contact sheet recto, c. 1955 (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1991.3404)

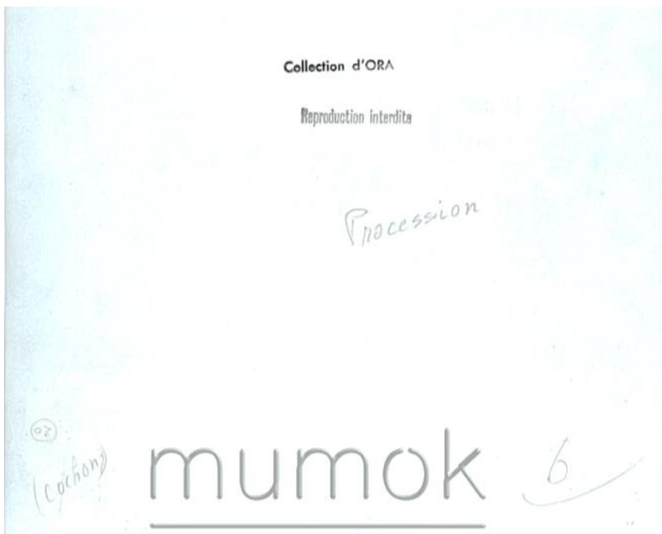
Below:
Fig. 13.2 contact sheet verso, graphite inscription “Maître de ballet,” c. 1955 (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1991.3404)

Fig. 14 Madame d’Ora, “*Lifar*” c. 1935, Gelatin silver print, 22.8 x 17.2 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P2008.267)

Fig. 15 Madame d’Ora, “*Serge Lifar*” 1945, Gelatin silver print, 27.4 x 20.7 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.406.36)

Fig. 16 Madame d’Ora, *Serge Lifar*, 1950, Gelatin silver print, 20.4 x 18.4 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.289)





Above:
Fig. 17.1 Madame d'Ora, "*Procession (cochons)*" c. 1955, 30 x 23.5 cm (© mumok - Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien G 602/20)

Below:
Fig. 17.2 photograph verso, graphite inscription "*Procession (cochons)*" c. 1955 (© mumok - Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien G 602/20)

Above:
Fig. 18 Madame d’Ora, *Aufgehängte Schweineleiber* [Suspended pig bodies], 1956–57, Gelatin silver print, 29.3 x 27.3 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.448)

Below:
Fig. 19.1, **19.2** Madame d’Ora, *Ballettgruppe des Marquis George de Cuevas*, and detail, 1955, Gelatin silver print, 29.3 x 25.4 (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.256)

Fig. 20 Madame d'Ora, *Balletttänzerinnen vom Cuevas-Ballett*, 1955, Gelatin silver print, 29.5 x 24.9 cm (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.257)

Above:
Fig. 21.1 Madame d’Ora, “*Elle et lui*” “*Louis XV ou XIV*” contact sheet recto, c. 1955 (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1991.3373)

Below:
Fig. 21.2 contact sheet verso, graphite inscription “*Elle et lui, Louis XV ou XIV*”, “*Rococo*” c. 1955 (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1991.3373)

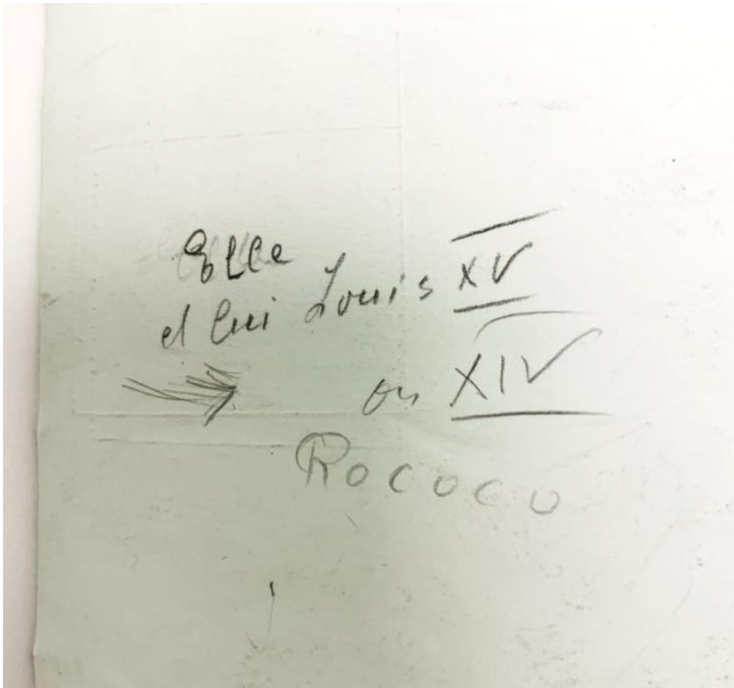


Fig. 22 Untitled (Serge Lifar dressed as Louis XIV in the postwar period), c. 1950 (Archive de la Ville de Lausanne: AVL P 63, Mark Franko)

Fig. 23.1 Madame d'Ora, *Marquis Georges de Cuevas mit toten Schafsköpfen*, c. 1956–57, Gelatin silver print, 30.2 x 20.8 cm (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.1026)

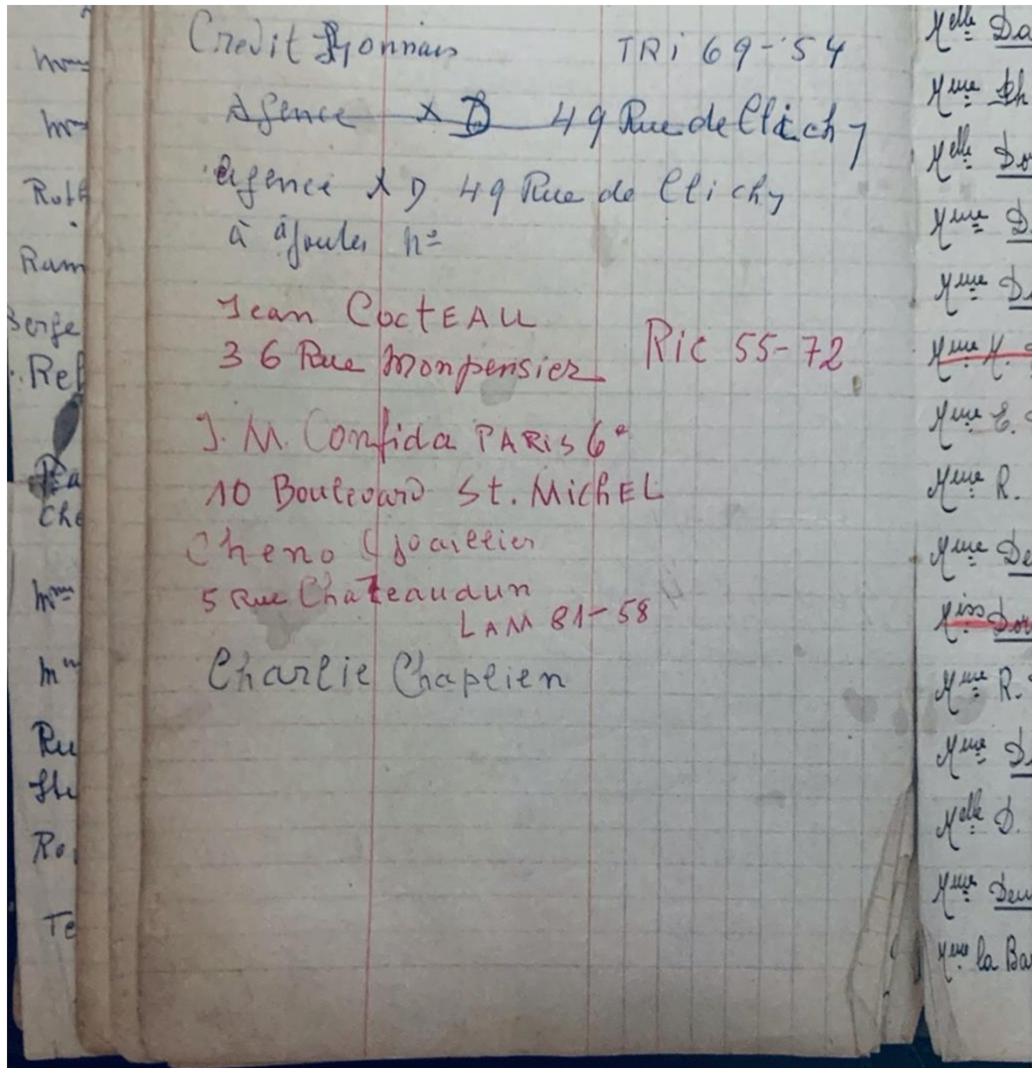
Fig. 23.2 Madame d’Ora, contact sheets for *Marquis Georges de Cuevas mit toten Schafsköpfen*, c. 1956–57 (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1991.3408, P1991.3410)

Fig. 24 Madame d’Ora, *Marquis Georges de Cuevas mit zwei Balletttänzerinnen*, 1955. Gelatin silver print mounted on cardboard, 35 x 25.2 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.250)

Above:
Fig. 25 *Tanzendes Paar mit Tänzerinnen*, 1956–57, Gelatin silver print, 27.3 x 24.8 cm (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.406.45)

Below:
Fig. 26.1 Madame d'Ora, "*le blanc et noir*" c. 1955, contact sheet recto, (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1997.598)

Fig 26.2 contact sheet verso, graphite inscriptions "*le blanc et noir*" "*danse, macabre*" (P1997.598)



Credit Lyonnais TRI 69-54
~~Agence X D~~ 49 Rue de Clichy
Agence X D 49 Rue de Clichy
à ajouter n°
Jean Cocteau
36 Rue Monpensier Ric 55-72
J. M. Confida PARIS 6e
10 Boulevard St. Michel
Cheno Joaillier
5 Rue Chateaudun
LAM 81-58
Charlie Chaplien

Fig. 27 Page from Madame d'Ora Paris address book, "*Jean Cocteau, 36 Rue Monpensier Ric 55–72*" c. 1923 (Photoinstitut Bonartes, Vienna)

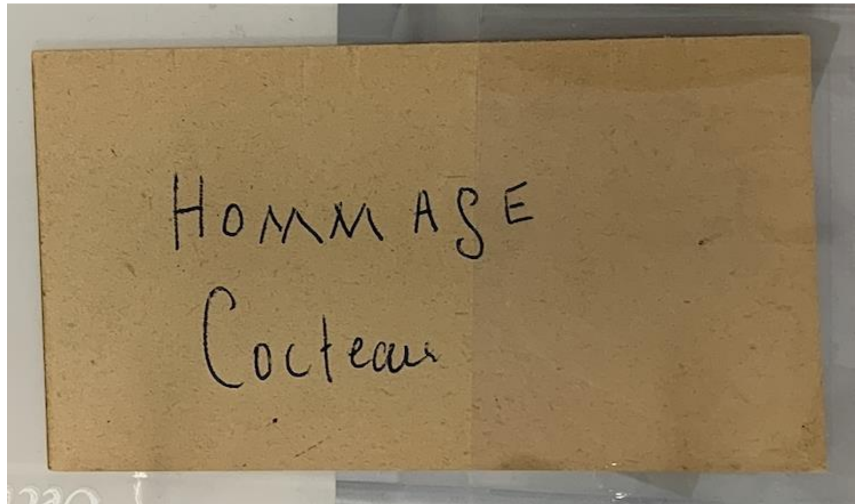
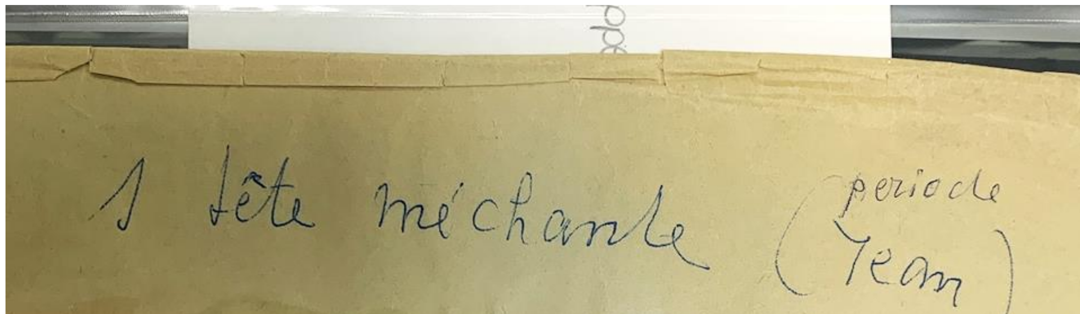


Fig. 28.1 "*Hommage Cocteau*" c. 1949, Pen inscription (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg)



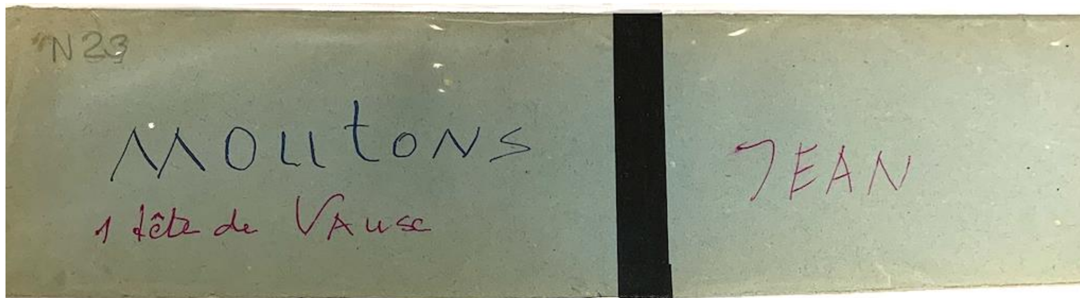


Fig. 28.2 "*1 tête méchante*" [1 mean head] "(*periode Jean*)" Pen inscription (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg)

Fig 28.3 "*Moutons, 1 tête de Vause*" "*JEAN*" Pen inscription (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg)

Fig. 29 Robert Capa (1913–1954), *La Tondue de Chartres* [The Shaved Woman of Chartres], 1944, Gelatin silver print. (Getty Images: International Center of Photography, 2005.46.2)

Fig. 30 Unknown photographer, Untitled (Stripped French Women in a crowd during the *épuration sauvage*), 1944.

Fig. 31 Madame d’Ora, *Schafsköpfe mit anhängendem Körperfell und Gedärm* [Sheep heads with attached body fur and intestines], 1956–57, Gelatin silver print, 29.2 x 25.7 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.451)

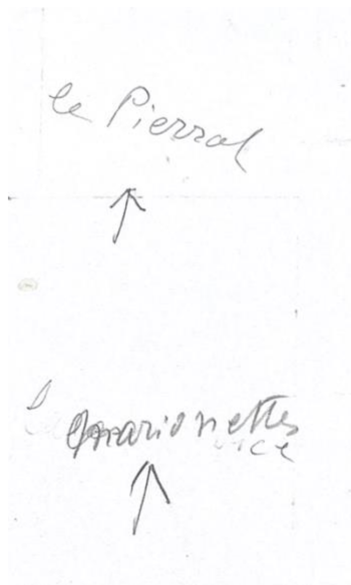
Fig. 32 Madame d’Ora, *Abgetrennte Kuhbeine* [Severed cow legs], c. 1949, Gelatin silver print, 28.7 x 37.3 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.406.48)

Fig. 33 Eli Lotar (French, 1905–1969), Untitled, 1929 photograph from ‘Critical Dictionary: Abattoir’ in *Documents*.

Fig. 34 Madame d'Ora, "*La dernière promenade*" [The final walk], c. 1949 (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg)

Fig. 35 Eli Lotar, *Aux abattoirs de La Villette*, 1929 photograph from ‘Critical Dictionary: Abattoir’ in *Documents,* 22.2 x 16.2 cm. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005.100.303)

Fig. 36 Madame d'Ora, contact sheet recto for "*La dernière promenade,*" 1949, (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1991.3058)



Above: **Fig. 37.1** Madame d’Ora, *“Marionettes*,” c. 1949, contact sheet recto (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1991.3407)

Below: **Fig. 37.2** “*Marionettes*” and “*le Pierrot*” inscriptions, c. 1949, contact sheet verso (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1991.3407)

Fig. 38 Madame d’Ora, *Marionette*,
Date unknown, Gelatin silver print, 17 x 16.6 cm
(© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst
und Gewerbe Hamburg, P2013.237)

Fig. 39 Madame d’Ora, *Ohne Titel*, c. 1946–48, 27.7 x 31 cm (© mumok - Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien G 602/5)

Fig. 40 Madame d’Ora, *Vorderbeine eines Huftieres* [Forelegs of a hoofed animal], 1949, Gelatin silver print, 36.3 x 28.8 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.1093)

Above:
Fig. 41 Hans Bellmer (German, 1902–1975), *La Poupée,* 1938, 10 x 10 1/8 in., photo-gelatin silver (The International Center of Photography, 211.1987)

Below:
Fig. 42 Hans Bellmer, *La Poupée,* 1938, photo-gelatin silver (Boijmans Netherlands)

Fig. 43, Madame d'Ora, *Ohne Titel,* c. 1946–48, 22.8 x 29.8 cm (© mumok - Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien G 602/29)

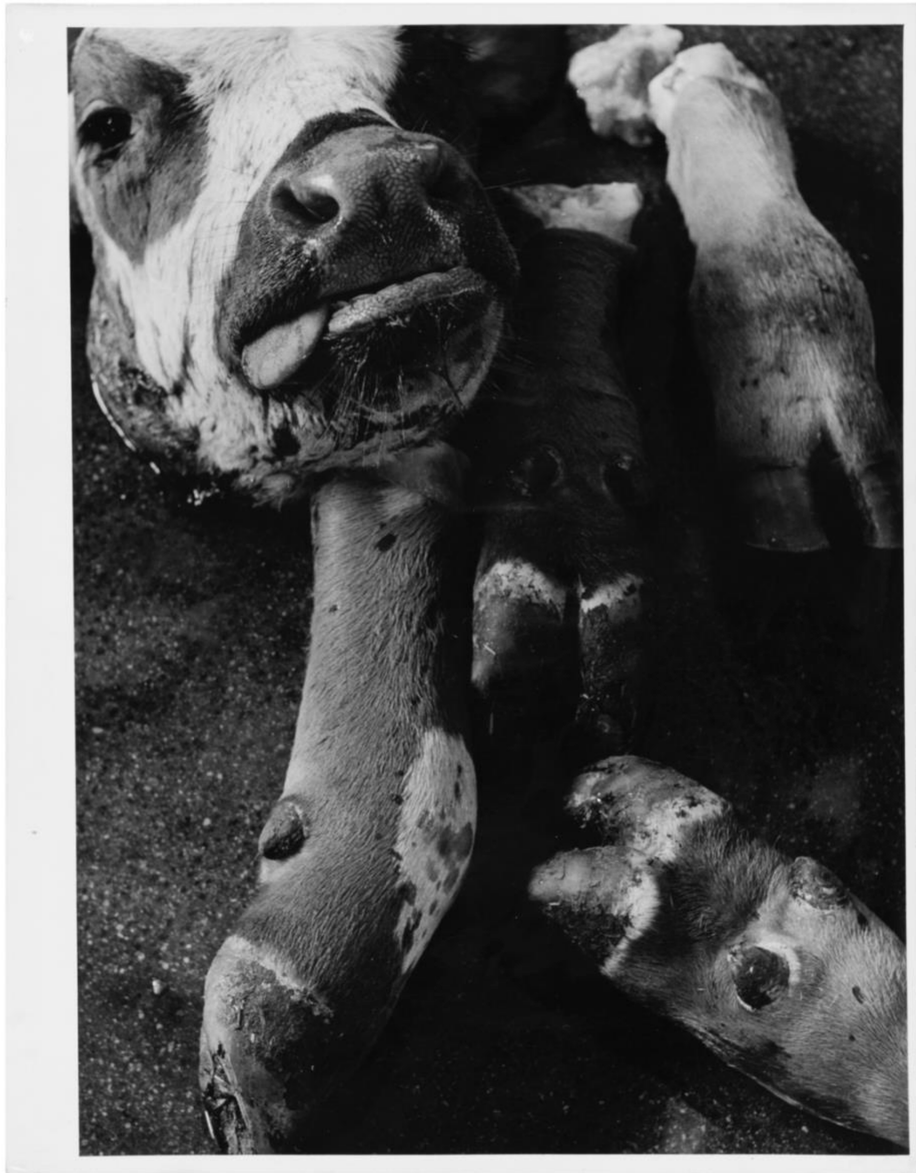


Fig. 44 Madame d'Ora, *Ohne Titel,* c. 1946–48, 31.2 x 27.7 cm (© mumok - Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien G 602/30)

Fig. 45 Madame d’Ora, “*Qualen des Mittelalters*” (Original German title) [Torture of the Middle Ages], 1949–57, 31.2 x 27.4 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.406.58)

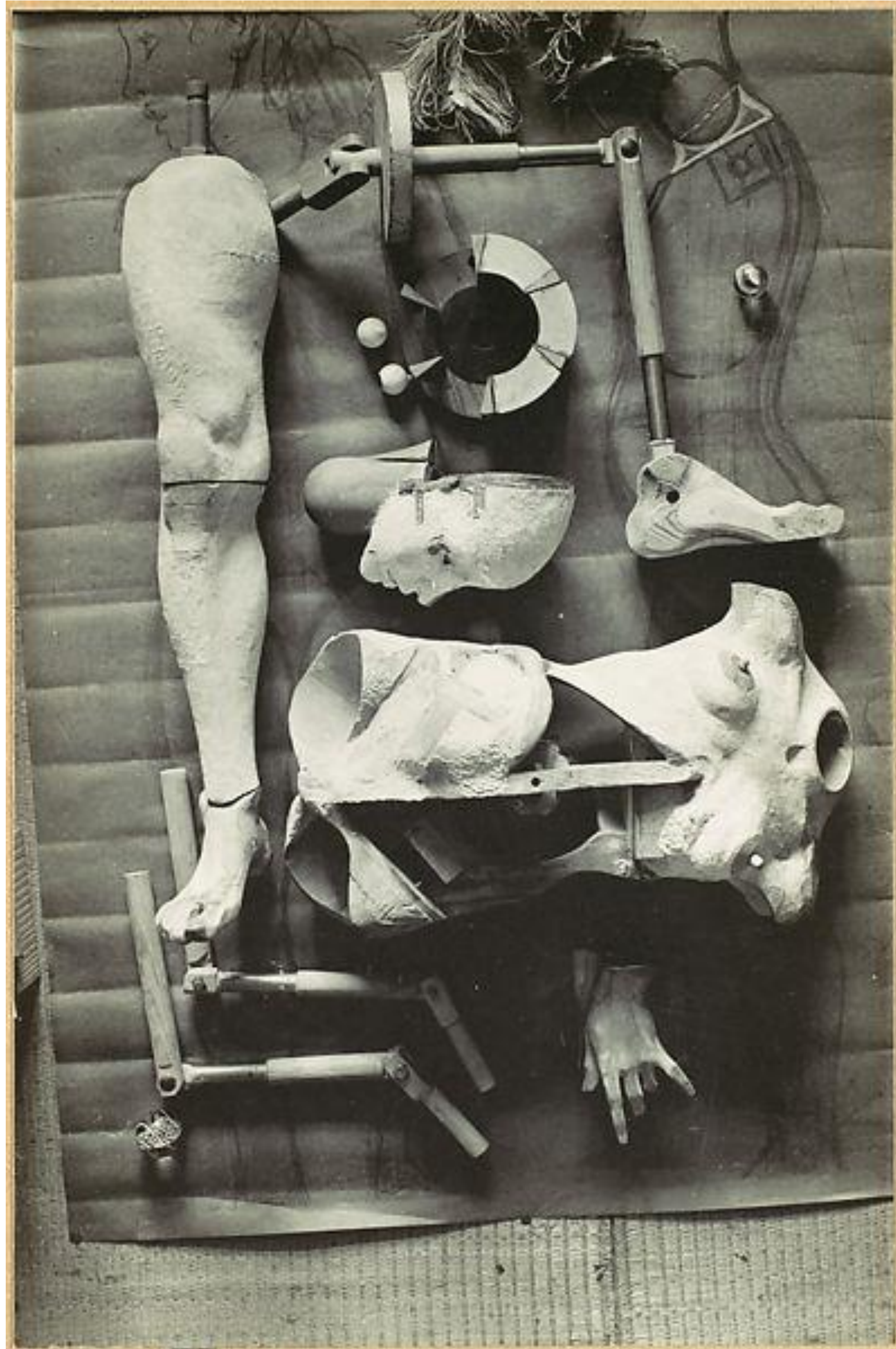


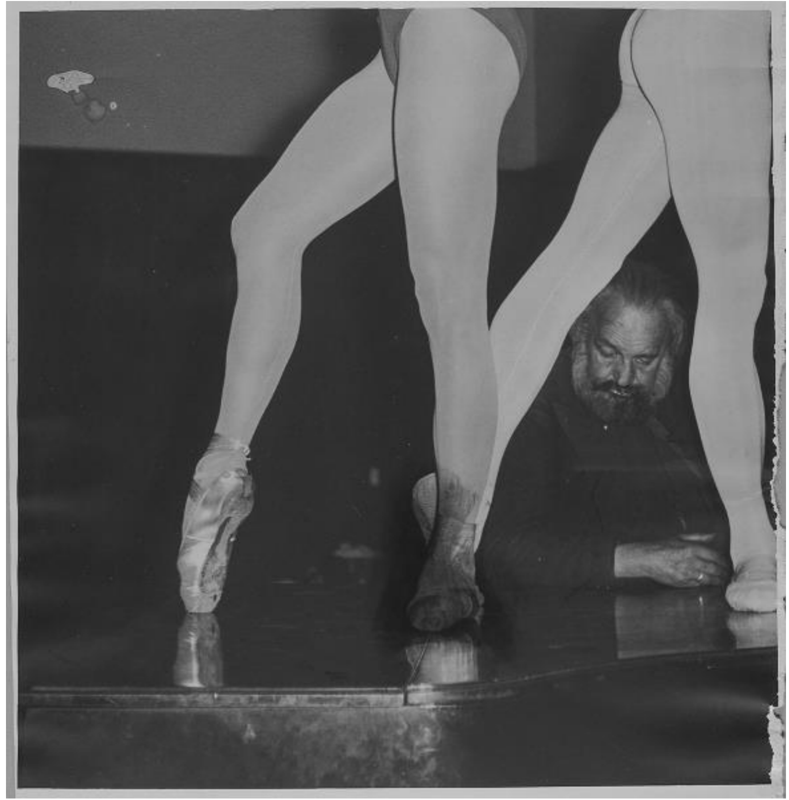
Fig. 46 Hans Bellmer, *La Poupée,* 1933–36, Gelatin silver print (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987.1100.332)

Fig. 47 Hans Bellmer, Untitled (*Unica ficellée* [Unica Bound]), 1958 (printed 1983), Gelatin silver print, 6 3/8 x 6 3/8 in. (printed by Roger Vulliez). (Ubu Gallery, New York)

Above:
Fig. 48 Madame d'Ora, contact sheet recto, c. 1949 (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg)

Below:
Fig. 49 Madame d'Ora, contact sheet recto, c. 1949 (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1997.588)

Verso inscription: "*Á faire, une bête sans jambes? des jambes sans bête?*" [To do: a beast without legs? legs without a beast?]



Left:
Fig. 50 Madame d’Ora, *Abgezogener Hase* [Skinned Rabbit], c. 1949–57, Gelatin silver print, 31.7 x 12.5 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.453)

Right:
Fig. 51 Madame d’Ora, *Spitzentanz* [Pointe Dance], 1955, Gelatin silver print, 19.8 x 19.4 cm (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1997.511)

Fig. 52 Madame d'Ora, *Gräfin Draskovich von Trakostjan bei der Krönung Kaiser Karls zum König von Ungarn* [Countess Draskovich of Trakostjan], 1916, Gelatin silver print, 20 x 15.5 cm (© Estate of Madame d'Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.547)

Fig. 53 Madame d’Ora, “*La Dentelle*” [The Lace], 1955, C-print, 16.4 x 22.7 cm. (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, P1976.857.1089)

Fig. 54 Madame d’Ora, *Tierhäute* [Animal Skins], c. 1954, C-print. (© Estate of Madame d’Ora, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, taken from publication *Machen sie mich schön*, 2017)

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