

Surrealist, Comrade, Dear Friend, Colleague...

A Surrealist Statement on Don (1964–2011)

Various Authors

2011

When our friend Myrna Rochester, an expert on the surrealist Rene Crevel, told us it was necessary for us to meet someone interested in surrealism who was finishing his doctorate at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, we were skeptical, even perhaps somewhat hostile. There are, after all, lots of people interested in surrealism, but most only in a superficial way. But when we met Don LaCoss, we were impressed; not only did he know as much about surrealism as we did, but he loved it just as much.

He was committed to poetry, freedom, and love—to their exaltation in daily life and to their actualization in the phenomenal world. It was as if we had known him forever or, as if we had found, after searching for years, a long lost friend. We immediately began to elaborate, and continued to elaborate, a beautiful conversation about projects, hopes, and dreams that were mutually inspiring and beneficial. That was a part of Don's way of living; always sharing ideas and inspirations.

Working with him was always fun, wherever he was, there was laughter and pleasure and games. He was fortunate to find Susan Crutchfield who shared his enthusiasms and he experienced the great joys and magic of childhood with their son Benjamin.

Every day was a passionate one for him. He did not waste a minute, but filled his hours with explorations in the emancipation of the imagination and his efforts toward actualization of his imagination in daily life. After all, what now exists was at one time only imagined, and Don's imagination was wild and free. He used his critical powers to attack alienation, reification, and false consciousness, and urged us "not to shy away from looking back on history to help imagine the unimaginable post-capitalist future."

In the introduction Don wrote to Michael Lowy's *Morning Star: surrealism, marxism, anarchism, situationism, utopia*, published by the University of Texas Press, he wrote that "surrealism with its commitments to an unorthodox Freudo-Hegelianism attempts to abolish unfreedom by the self-liberation of individual consciousness and the simultaneous transformation of the social world." In *Surrealism in '68: Paris, Prague, Chicago*, he analyzed that pivotal historic period in relationship to surrealism and the surrealists groups of that era. It was a surrealist slogan "Be realistic, Demand the Impossible!" that emboldened the rebels of Paris 1968.

Don undertook the editing of the Surrealist Series at the University of Texas Press after the loss of his friend Franklin Rosemont. He was currently working on a book to be published by that press on George Henein, Egyptian surrealism, and surrealism in the Arab world entitled *The Imp of the Perverse*. The jazz musician Sun Ra was the subject of an inspired essay by Don published in Ron Sakolsky's magazine *Oyster Catcher*. With Ray Spiteri in 2003, Don edited *Surrealism, Politics and Culture*.

At 46, he still had so much to contribute; what a loss to us all and to surrealism. Don's polemical side can be found in his contributions recently to our surrealist manifestos: Another Paradise Lost: A Surrealist Program of Demands on the Gulf of Mexico Oil Disaster, No War on the Moon!, and No Compromise: In the Defense of the Dark Side of the Moon, that appeared in the Earth First! Journal.

Paul Garon, author with Beth Garon, of *Woman with Guitar: Memphis Minnie's Blues*, described Don's style as "a wonderfully sharp and armor-piercing weapon." Don was most recently putting together works for the International Surrealist Exhibition being organized by Joseph Jablonski in Harrisburg, Penn., on the theme of the Mayan Millennium in 2012.

Part of Don's special passion was to search out images of emancipation in comics or to detourn them to bring out their latent content, thus, remaking the past, inspiring the present, and revolutionizing the image of the future all at the same time and with glorious humor.

The work Don was doing is essential work for human emancipation, and it must continue. It is our plan to do a collection of his essays and to finish his book on Henein and surrealism. His work with the *Fifth Estate*, alternative publications, and causes he held dear are incredibly significant. It is in these places that is found the laboratory of new ideas, the ones that shine like bright stars; the places where freedom stretches itself, and where the possibilities of a marvelous future are awakening.

– The Surrealist Movement in the U.S.

Penelope Rosemont, Paul Garon, Beth Garon, David Roediger, Michael Lowy, Joseph Jablonski, Gale Ahrens, Tamara Smith, Joel Williams, Guy Ducornet

fifth Estate

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