

*A postcard from*  
**MAN RAY**

(the best thing i ever bought off ebay)

*David Dunnico*

*The Surrealists liked chance, and dreams, and bed.  
I should have been getting out of bed, instead of  
searching on eBay for things “atomic + postcard”...*

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**VICTORIAN POST CARD - Maconnaise Costume - (To Roland Pensee NW5)**

Condition: Used  
"Good photo in great condition"

**£9.00**

[View item details >](#)

Collector: Click & Collect - Street art at Greenwich.

Postage: £1.40 Economy Delivery (See details) [Nearest Post Office](#) | Royal Mail Delivery Options

Delivery: Dispatched within 1-2 business days. [Buyer pays postage](#) (Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun, Tue, Thu, 22 Jul). Why not use Express Delivery? [Expected arrival date 22 Jul.](#)

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**Description** | **Postage and payments** | **Report this**

Seller assumes all responsibility for the listing.  
Last updated on 22 Mar 2019 16:02:08 GB. [View as necessary](#)

**Item specifics**

Condition: Used  Good photo in great condition

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**Seller Information**  
[Feedback history](#)   
30.4% Positive feedback

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Apparel is in a 5-star seller.

Somehow, by chance (well, by algorithm) this search threw up a postcard of a young woman dressed in the traditional 19th Century costume of the Mâconnais district of France, an area located in the south of the Burgundy wine region, although I didn't know any of that at the time. If I had only seen the picture, I would not have looked twice, but the seller's description made me pause:

"VICTORIAN POST CARD – Macconnaise  
Costume – (To Roland Penrose NW3)"

*A postcard of a young woman  
dressed in the traditional  
19th Century costume of the  
Mâconnais district of France*

The front of the postcard





Examples also purchased on eBay of other postcards featuring the same woman in the same costume

*“Quite a bloke”*

*Roland Penrose*

It took a few seconds to place the name – Sir Roland Algernon Penrose CBE (1900 – 1984). He was a painter and collector. He organised the first exhibition of surrealist art in England. He was a friend and biographer of some of the 20th Century's greatest artists and the biographer of Picasso and Man Ray. He married the photographer and muse Lee Miller and founded the London Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA). In short, Roland was quite a bloke.

The seller had included a picture of the back of the postcard. In pencil was Penrose's name and address and a message. It took me a couple of goes to decipher the signature of the sender. It was a single name, M\_ \_? Mary? No, it was “Man”. Given Penrose's circle, the first and only “Man” that came to mind was the photographer Man Ray.

*Blimey!*

*man*

## *The deal was done*



The seller was asking £9.95 (plus £2 postage). So, I offered them £7, which they took, and then kindly refunded a quid on the postage. I later messaged the seller, asking where they had got the postcard from. They replied it had been in an item of furniture they had bought in an auction.

A few days later, the card arrived and I could look at it more closely. I still was not 100% sure if it was from Man Ray, but the post mark said: 23 October 1937 20:45 Rue des Saints-Peres, Paris, so at least it was from the right city. Once I read the message, I was 101% sure it was sent by Man Ray.

In the 1930s, private telephones were uncommon. Calls from one country to another needed to go via operators and were expensive. Postcards were cheap and reliable. Postal deliverers were so frequent that postcards could be used for chit-chat. Communicating by writing on the back of a picture had an obvious appeal to artists such as Man Ray and Roland Penrose. Indeed, Penrose would use postcards in some of his own art.



Roland Penrose: Postcard collage with the Eiffel Tower  
Mixed media collage on paper 18.4 x 31.7 cm.

CARTE POSTA

PARIS-7  
25.1.15  
PARIS-7

Dear Roland

Saturday

I can't see my way to  
London yet. Am entirely  
occupied here for a while yet.  
Spoke to Dominguez who promised  
to send a picture at once by  
Fonier. Duchamp has nothing  
and says not to bother about it!  
You know how he is.

You must excuse my small  
painting that you took over  
 lately. Will let you know if I  
can come over. Regards to Mme  
 and Tha. Yours ever Man



Poland Penrose Esq.

21 Downshire Hill

Hampstead NW3

London  
England

## *The Message*

Man Ray's message was chatty – the pair were good friends – but it was more than just chit-chat – It seemed Penrose was putting on an exhibition and Man Ray was updating him on his efforts to organise work from various artists for inclusion. Wonderfully, there was a lot of name checking. I didn't recognise them all – but I did know and love (Marcel) Duchamp. According to Man Ray, "Duchamp has nothing and says not to bother about it! You know how he is."

In full the message read:

Saturday

Dear Roland

I cannot see my way to London yet. Am entirely occupied here for a while yet.  
Spoke to Dominguez who promised to send a picture at once by Foinet.  
Duchamp has nothing and says not to bother about it! You know how is.  
You might expose my small painting that to you took over lately. Will let you know if I can come over. Regards to Mesens and Thea  
Yours ever Man

CARTE POSTALE

Rosa

21

o

Dear Roland

saturday

I cannot see my way to London yet. Am entirely occupied here for a while yet. Spoke to **Dominguez** who promised to send a picture at once by **Foinet**. **Duchamp** has nothing and says not to bother about it! You know how he is.

You might expose my small painting that to you took over lately. Will let you know if I can come over. Regards to **Mesens** and **Thea**. Yours ever Man

Oscar Dominguez (1906 – 1957) Spanish surrealist painter; Marcel Duchamp (1887 – 1968) French-American painter, sculptor, chess player, and writer whose work is associated with Cubism, Dada, and conceptual art; Paul? Foinet Family firm in Paris who supplied artists materials. I'm unclear which of the family Man Ray is referring to; E.L.T. Mesens (1903 – 1971) Belgian surrealist artist and writer; Thea Struve (1914 – 1991?) German photographer. Sadly, half-forgotten and very hard to find any information about.



CARTE POSTALE

PARIS  
21

Roland Penrose Esq.  
21 Downshire Hill  
Hampstead NW3  
London

anglinae

Dear Roland

saturday

I cant see my way to London yet. Am entirely occupied here for a while yet. Spoke to Dominguez who promised to send a picture at once by Foinet. Duchamp has nothing and says not to bother about it! You know how he is.

You might expose my small painting that to you took over lately. Will let you know if I can come over. Regards to Mesens and Thea. Yours ever Man



Man Ray and  
Roland Penrose  
Photo by  
Lee Miller

E.L.T. Mesens  
with a portrait of himself  
by René Magritte

Oscar  
Dominguez

Marcel  
Duchamp



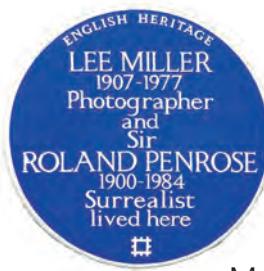
Foinet shop stamp



Lee Miller in a wheelbarrow by Oscar Dominguez  
photo by Man Wray

Thea Struve





The card was addressed to 21 Devonshire Hill in Hampstead, just near the Heath. Man Ray and other artists including Andre Breton and Max Ernst were regular visitors.

The house was an early 19th Century terrace, which is now Grade II listed. Penrose commissioned a sculpture (Mother & Child) from Henry Moore, which he displayed in the front garden, much to the chagrin of some of the neighbours, who waged a press campaign against abstract art. Lee Miller joined Penrose here in 1939 and it is her name that is given first on the English Heritage Blue Plaque that was erected in 2003. When the couple married in 1947, they moved a little down the road to number 36, where they lived until 1949, when they moved to Farley

Grange in East Sussex, which now houses the Lee Miller Archive and Penrose Collection, administered by their son Antony Penrose. Another Devonshire Hill resident was political photomontage artist John Heartfield, who lived at number 47 between 1938 and 1943, and knew Roland and Lee. I visited the road on my next trip to London.



**DOWNSHIRE HILL NW.3.**

Penrose had organised, along with Henry Moore, Paul Nash and others, the first International Exhibition of Surrealist Art, at the New Burlington Galleries in London. The show featured work from all the leading European surrealists and artists who were associated with the movement such as Picasso and Paul Klee, as well as examples of outsider art. It was the first time Man Ray's work had been shown in England. It was a great success in terms of press coverage, attendance (over 23,000) and bemusement of the general public. But it was held in June 1936 – so it wasn't the exhibition Man Ray was talking about on the postcard.



Poster and catalogue for the 1936 exhibition

THE  
INTERNATIONAL SURREALIST  
EXHIBITION

Thursday, June 11th to Saturday, July 4th, 1936

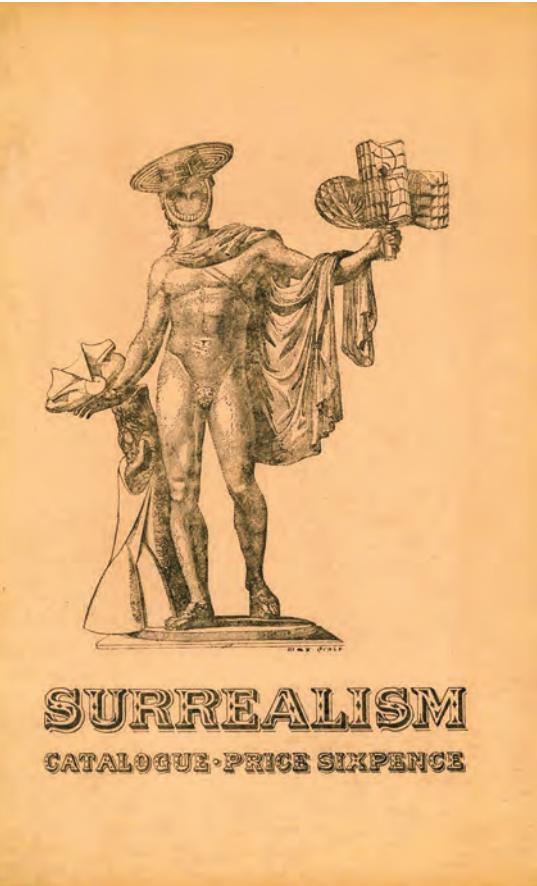
NEW BURLINGTON GALLERIES,  
Burlington Gardens, W. 1

Exemplaire de Yves Tanguy.

Fernand Beldi (signed)  
Robert Flaherty (signed)  
George Brauer (signed)  
Rupert See  
Paul Nash (signed)  
Pascal (signed)  
Marcel Ray (signed)  
Hugh Sykes Davies (signed)

CATALOGUE, PRICE SIXPENCE

(In course of Revision)



SURREALISM

CATALOGUE · PRICE SIXPENCE

Later that year, the London Gallery opened at 28 Cork Street W1, under its director, the Belgian Surrealist E.L.T. Mesens.

It was one of a number of galleries on the street that formed the centre of avantgarde art in Britain in the 1930s. It soon became the unofficial HQ for surrealism in Britain.

Looking through copies of the gallery's magazine 'London Bulletin' in the Tate's archive, I decided the exhibition Man Ray was referring to on the postcard must have been their Surrealist Objects and Poems exhibition, organised by Mesens and Penrose and held in November 1937.

In her article 'Cork Street: An Avenue For Art', Louisa Buck describes the exhibition's opening:

"There was scandalised press coverage of their Surrealist Objects and Poems exhibition of November 1937 which opened at midnight with guests, including Henry Moore, being served sausages and whiskey, whilst the artist Julian Trevelyan gave a speech dressed as a blind explorer. Among the throng was 'Surrealist Phantom' Miss Sheila Legge, who spent the evening racyly hitching up her skirt to bare a leg painted with a grinning mouth, a sailing boat and a demon figure, while Herbert Read, the leading art critic of the day, urged the increasingly inebriated gathering to appreciate the bizarre array of exhibits which included what he described as "angels of anarchy and machines for making clouds."

*Sounds like it was a good do!*



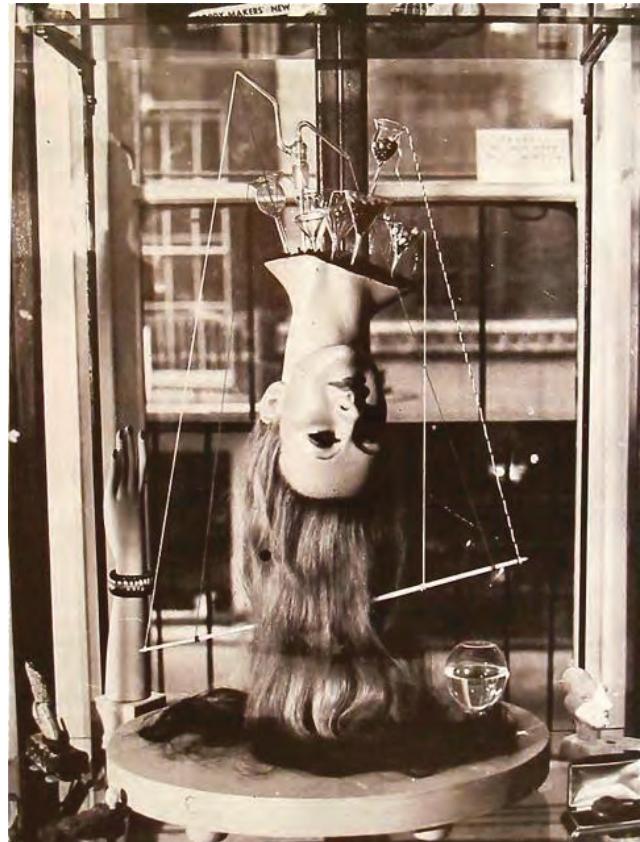
Installation shot and catalogue advertisement for 1937 exhibition  
Note Lee Miller's 'The Kiss' in centre of photograph

I 128		
THE LONDON GALLERY LTD.		
buys and sells paintings by		achète et vend des œuvres de
<i>Pablo Picasso</i>	<i>Giorgio de Chirico (1911-1917)</i>	<i>Georges Braque</i>
<i>Paul Klee</i>		<i>Juan Gris</i>
René Magritte	Man Ray	Paul Delvaux
Max Ernst	Louis Marcoussis	Joan Miró
Humphrey Jennings	Yves Tanguy	Roland Penrose
LONDON GALLERY EDITIONS		
<i>Surrealist Objects and Poems</i> with eight reproductions of Surrealist Objects, poems by E. L. T. Mesens, Herbert Read, Philip O'Connor, Arthur Sale, A. C. Sewter, R. Mednitsky, G. W. Paithorne, and David Gascoyne, with a note by Herbert Read. (Completely out of print)		
All the following books are still available at the London Gallery, 28 Cork Street, London, at 1/6 each.		
1. <i>Edvard Munch</i> by HERBERT READ, with a frontispiece portrait of the artist and twelve half-tone reproductions. 2. <i>L. Moholy-Nagy</i> by SIGFRID GIEDION, with a portrait of the artist, and ten half-tones reproductions of paintings. 3. <i>Herbert Bayer</i> by A. DORNER, with a frontispiece portrait of the artist and twelve reproductions of paintings and photo-montages.		
<i>To appear in April:</i>		
<i>Roland Penrose: THE ROAD IS WIDER THAN LONG.</i> An Image-diary from the Balkans, printed in coloured type.		
28 CORK STREET		Tel. REGent 2828
LONDON W.1		



That Summer, Roland Penrose had met and fallen in love with Lee Miller, who had been a student, model, muse and lover of Man Ray. Miller would later marry Penrose and become widely known as a war photographer. Her contribution to this exhibition was a sculpture. As she was away in Cairo, she asked Penrose to assemble the piece, which she titled 'Le Baiser' (the Kiss). She wrote to him:

"I'd like to have an object in the surrealist show if possible... you could make it for me as it is very simple. It is a beautiful wax hand, like [one in] a manicurist's window standing up from the wrist, vertically, and on it I'd like a bracelet made of false teeth mounted in particularly false pink-coloured gums."



Penrose included an object of his own, The Dew Machine. He was photographed by Thea Struve as he was constructing it.

I looked at a copy of the catalogue which accompanied the exhibition in the Tate's Archive. Exhibiting artists included an A to Z of the avant-garde, Eileen Agar, Andre Breton, Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Dora Maar, Rene Magritte, Joan Miro, Paul Nash, Pablo Picasso and John Piper.

As to the names dropped on the postcard, their contributions were:

#### E.L.T. Mesens:

- The Arid Husband (poem)
- The Cellars of the Vatican (object 25)

#### Oscar Dominguez:

- The End of an Evening (object 25)
- The Arrival of a Telegram (object 26)
- Ladies' Barrow (object 76)

#### Man Ray:

- Look and Speak (object 27)
- Musical Spoons (object 39)
- My Dream (object 73)
- Present (object 78)

#### Marcel Duchamp:

- Ready Made Object (object 38)

#### Lee Miller:

- The Kiss (object 21)

#### Roland Penrose:

- The Pilot Cutter (object 50)
- The Dew Machine (object 80)
- Guaranteed Fine Weather Suitcase (object 81)
- Camera Obscura (object 111) collage
- Man From Cannes (object 112) collage
- La Mediterranee Cetude Artistique (object 113) collage



# Surrealist Subjects & Poems

Catalogue to the exhibition

*It was only then that it occurred to me to search and see  
if the eBay seller had anything else. They did...*



A postcard from Venice posted on the exact day I was born – 17th March 1964. (I began this booklet by saying surrealists enjoyed chance.) It was from Roland Penrose to Mrs Lee Penrose – I had never thought of Lee Miller as being "Mrs Penrose". After Roland's Knighthood in 1966 she became Lady Penrose. The address was 11 Horton Street, London, W8 the flat they kept for use when ICA work, or otherwise took them to London. The postcard read:

"Monday

The first Venetian I met was Georges Bernier. We finished our work by lunch time and I'm off at dawn for Cannes. It seems we are invited for their opening 16 – 20th June. Venice is wonderful when it's empty but the museums are all closed.

Love Roland."

*Now the story is told. If you desire to add another chapter, offers in line with the market value of Man Ray's autograph will be considered.*

Antonio Canal detto il "Canaleto", 1697-1768

Venezia - Piazzetta S. Marco.

(GALLERIA NAZIONALE - ROMA)

The first Venetian Direct was  
Georges Bernier. We finished our  
work. Lunch time and then  
that down for Cannes. It  
seems we are invited for the  
opening 16-20<sup>th</sup> June. Venice is  
wonderful when it's empty  
but the museums are all  
closed. Love Roland.

~~Parigi~~ M'ACCINATEVI  
LA POLIO



Mrs Lee Purcell

14 Howton St.

London W.8

England,

MIAN RAY  
*(postcolonial)*