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INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ART RESEARCH

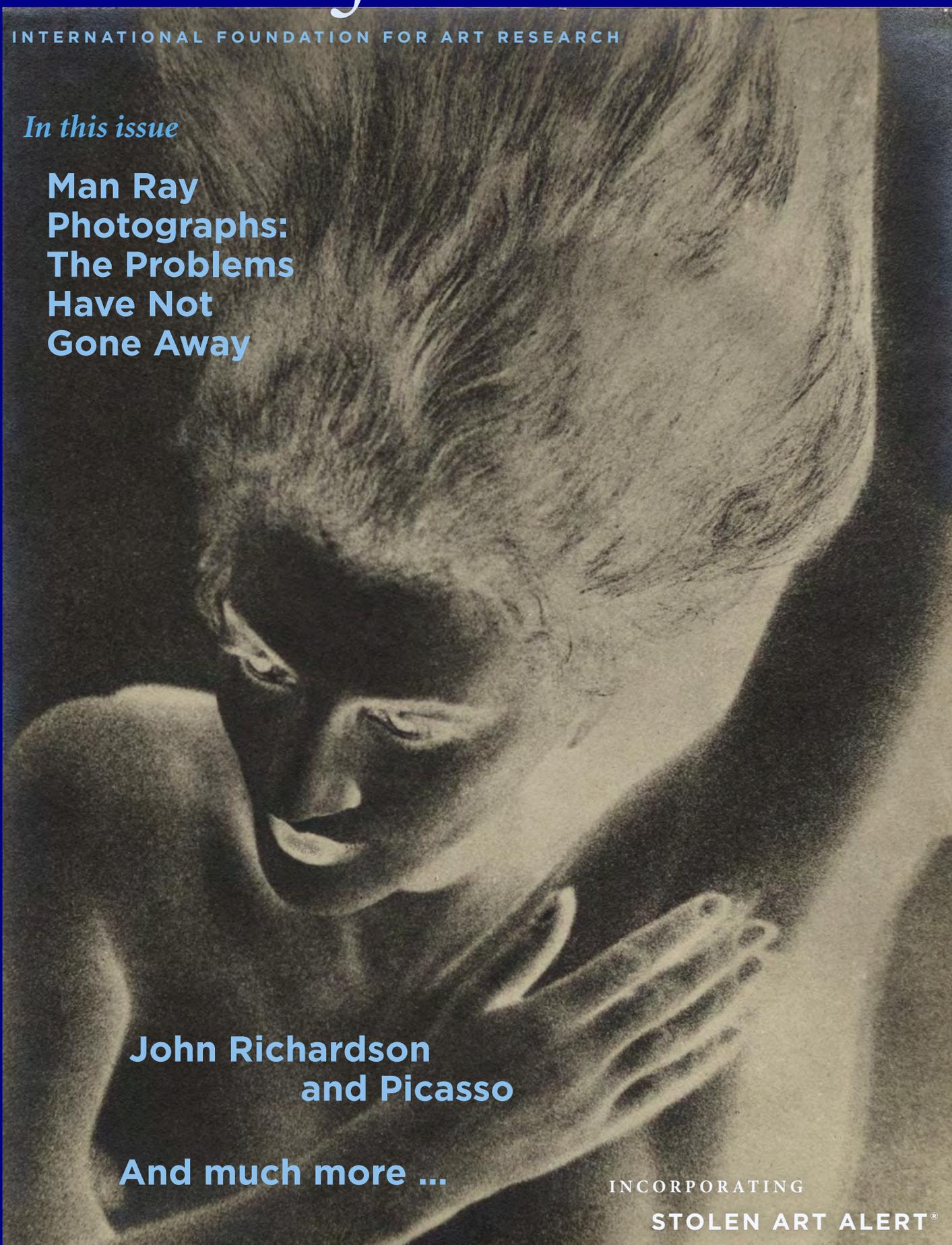
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INCORPORATING  
**STOLEN ART ALERT<sup>®</sup>**



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**COVER:** Authentic Man Ray photograph, *Jacqueline*, circa 1930 (film positive), printed between 1930-35, 29.1 x 22.4 cm (11 ½ x 8 ¾ in.). © Man Ray 2015 Trust / ARS, NY / ADAGP, Paris. See story on p. 18.

***“Twenty-plus years have elapsed since the [Bokelberg Man Ray fakes] scandal became public. Where are we now? What is striking is how little has changed.”***

## MAN RAY PHOTOGRAPHS: THE PROBLEMS HAVE NOT GONE AWAY

STEVEN MANFORD\*

This article is a *caveat emptor*, an alert about the continued existence of dubious and fake photographic prints by the celebrated 20th century photographer, painter and filmmaker, Man Ray (1890-1976). The creator of the camera-less Rayograph, his photographs are particularly sought after, with the most important works now reaching prices in



**FIGURE 1.** Cover, *Art & Auction*, February 1998, illustrating a fraudulent Man Ray image of La Marquise Casati.

the millions. Key images, such as *Le Violin d'Ingres* (1924), *Noire et blanche* (1926), and *Larmes* (1930-32), remain unique, transgressive, and iconic in the medium of photography. Remarkably, although Man Ray began making photographs a hundred years ago, these works are still regarded as provocative,

seminal, and modern, thus providing ample incentive for the ongoing trade, exhibition, and publication of misattributed, suspect, doctored, and fraudulent works.

The problem of Man Ray fakes has wrongly been thought to have been resolved in the 1990s with

the revelation of the so-called “Man Ray Bokelberg fakes.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Many works in circulation are sophisticated creations, detectable only with *bona fide* connoisseurship and scrupulous research. They are often accompanied by questionable provenance and bear either fake Man Ray stamps or an authentic stamp impression that was applied by someone in possession of an original stamp that had been purloined from the artist’s studio. The sampling of problematic works below underscores some of the recurring questions and highlights critical issues facing collectors and curators today.

**“In short, the creation of false Man Rays has been broader and more varied, has gone on for a longer period of time, and has today contaminated more collections and museums than reliance on the original reporting would have us continue to believe.”**

The complex and varied character of Man Ray’s photographs, combined with the marketplace’s strong appetite and limited published scholarship, sustain an ideal environment for exploiting both collectors and Man Ray’s legacy. The shadier aspects of the selling of Man Ray photos are common knowledge. Many photograph collectors shy away from Man Ray because of the inherent risks, among which include a seemingly endless flow of editioned late lifetime prints – many of dubious origin, and many with incorrect markings. Posthumously

\* Steven Manford is an independent scholar, photo historian, and specialist in the photographs and Rayographs of Man Ray. A Canadian, he is the author of several publications on the stamps of the Man Ray studio, and the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of the Rayographs of Man Ray.

printed photographs made by Man Ray's printer, Pierre Gassmann, are consistent sources of good faith errors and deliberate legerdemain. Gassmann's prints, some good, some not, and some vaguely marked, or not marked at all, are often incorrectly represented as lifetime prints. Problematic authentications attributed to distant family members, former assistants and friends, and the widow herself, Juliet Man Ray, who died in 1991, add even more complexity and thus opportunity for confusion at best and deception at worst.

Added to all of these concerns is the ongoing appearance of fine, never-before-seen genuine Man Ray photographs at art fairs and in galleries that lack any paper trail – no bills of sale, or verifiable provenance. Such works are said to have been purloined from the Man Ray studio and from his widow Juliet Man Ray.<sup>1</sup> Over the years, the art press has poked fun at Man Ray's troubled legacy, exploring issues of authenticity, fraud, legal title, and the seeming passivity of the Man Ray Trust towards policing such matters and pursuing title claims. Michel Guerrin, for example, wrote in *Le Monde* on October 6, 1998 (p. 28) about two *Noire et blanche* prints, under the headline "Experts français et américains divergent sur la valeur de deux Man Ray" (French and American experts disagree on the value of two Man Rays). The question was not "Were they genuine?" In this instance, they most certainly were. The real issue was "Where did these prints come from?"

**"The Bokelberg ruse occurred not because the fakes were good. It succeeded because few people could actually tell the difference between a real Man Ray object and a copy. Red flags were everywhere if you looked."**

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Kelly Devine Thomas, with Nicholas Powell, "The Surreal Legacy of Man Ray," *ARTnews*, June 2002, p. 104.

The pilfering of art from Man Ray's Paris studio on rue Férou pales in comparison to the harmful consequences of the disappearance of many of Man Ray's camera original negatives, including several masterworks. Careful examination of suspect works reveals how the appropriation of the artist's essential raw source material by one or more malefactors has facilitated the making of some of these fraudulent Man Ray photographs. The bulk of the Man Ray archive, given in 1994 as part of the estate *donation* to the Centre Georges Pompidou, numbering 12,000 negatives, became the basis of the Fonds Man Ray. That archive has been augmented by a donation in 1995 of 1,500 important negatives given by the former assistant Lucien Treillard. A group of 3,000 copy negatives (made after the fragile silver nitrate-based original camera negatives) is said to have been made, but these remain unlocated. Additional original negatives are known to exist outside of the control of the artist's estate and the Fonds Man Ray. The lack of control over the negatives during the 1970s and 1980s made the thefts and the misuse of such negatives easy.

In a cover story for the February 1998 issue of *Art & Auction* magazine (**FIG. 1**), the late Steven Vincent announced that a large number of "vintage" Man Ray photographs were in fact fakes made well after the death of the artist.<sup>2</sup> The truth was shocking: many of the photographs had only been printed six years earlier, at the latest, but the works were passed off to collectors, auction houses, and museums as having been printed during Man Ray's first Paris years, covering 1921 to 1940. The headline, placed over a reproduction of a fraudulent Man Ray image of the Marquise Casati, announced: "The Man Ray Sting. How 'vintage' prints were forged and sold to unsuspecting collectors." More to the point, the essay's title began with a single word, "DUPED," in a large bold typeface. Vincent's investigation and article remain the source for documenting what will be known forever as the "Man Ray Bokelberg fakes," so named after German collector and photographer Werner Bokelberg, who had the poor luck and bad judgment to purchase at least sixty such

<sup>2</sup> Steven Vincent, "Duped," *Art & Auction*, February 1998, Vol. XX, no. 6, p. 80ff.

fake Man Ray photographs. Twenty-plus years have elapsed since that scandal became public. Where are we now?

What is striking is how little has changed. A quarter century ago, new Man Ray photographs were being created and represented as period prints from the 1920s and 1930s. Today, fraudulent prints are still floating around; still in museums; still on collectors' walls; and still being exhibited, published, and offered by dealers and auction houses. In rereading the *Art & Auction* article, one can see that, as groundbreaking as his article was, Steven Vincent erred on three fundamental points. First, he saw the fraud as contained and relatively isolated. What chiefly got reported was a story of how Bokelberg was duped. The bulk of those problematic works were acquired by him between the years of 1994 and 1996, although related material was purchased in 1983. Specific rumors about new problems with Man Ray photographs was a subject of discussion among the trade as early as 1996, but such reporting did not begin to be published until early 1998. Vincent believed that these frauds were the deed of one or two printers, working with a few conspirators, and that the "issue" was that new prints were being passed off as Man Ray photographs made by Man Ray. Not so. Having focused my research and professional practice on the authentication and dating of Man Ray photographs for a quarter of a century, I can say that the problem was – and is – more serious. The fraud didn't end in 1998, nor did it begin with the Bokelberg scandal. Vincent got it wrong because, like most of those "duped," neither he nor the forgers fully understood the Man Ray photograph as an *effectively unique object*. Interpreting these works in terms of image alone invariably results in a misunderstanding of Man Ray's authentic oeuvre.

Fraudulent Man Rays, contrary to Vincent's article, began appearing soon after Man Ray's death, and continued to be fabricated over at least three decades. More importantly, the "Bokelberg fakes" were in fact just one group of problematic Man Ray photographs. The scams involve numerous participants working independently, some using primitive

tools, others more sophisticated. In short, the creation of false Man Rays has been broader and more varied, has gone on for a longer period of time, and has today contaminated more collections and museums than reliance on the original reporting would have us continue to believe.

**"This essay surveys nine photographs. A few might generously be described as "dubious" or "problematic." Most are fake. Each had once been represented as by Man Ray ..."**

Secondly, the opinion of the collectors, curators, auction houses, and historians, as cited by Vincent, and taken to heart by him in the *Art & Auction* essay, is that the Bokelberg fakes were first-rate imitations, as good as genuine Man Ray photographs. Quoting and paraphrasing various learned individuals, the fakes are said to have "looked superb" (p. 80); were praised as "exquisite" (p. 83); and some of them, in the opinion of one esteemed curator, were even "better than Man Ray's originals" (p. 122). The art press wholeheartedly echoed the praise for what, to this author today, appear to be clumsy modern copies. *The Art Newspaper* headline of June 1998 about the Bokelberg scandal read, "Magnificent Man Rays too good to be true."<sup>3</sup> Steve Vincent accepted the opinions of photo specialists about the quality of the Bokelberg fakes, but those opinions reveal a weak grasp of Man Ray's photography, which made the selling of fakes easier. The Bokelberg ruse occurred not because the fakes were good. It succeeded because few people could actually tell the difference between a real Man Ray object and a copy.

Red flags were everywhere if you looked. There were problems with the cropping of the images,

<sup>3</sup> Emmanuel Fessy, "Magnificent Man Rays too good to be true," *The Art Newspaper*, June 1998, p. 8.

with print quality, with the photographic paper, with inept attempts to age the paper, with an excessive toning of the paper, with unconvincing handwriting and signatures, with faked studio stamps, and with suspect provenance. There were even mistakes as to which negative was selected, and questionable choices as to which images were printed. To an experienced viewer, the majority of the fakes, including those acquired by Bokelberg, simply looked wrong. The faked photographs failed to replicate and embody the eye and the hand of Man Ray. Neither the forger nor the photo “experts” acknowledged the creative and practical decisions that Man Ray made as an artist, and as a working photographer. They were oblivious to the significance of the truths concealed in the details of the fakes.

Thirdly, and finally, Vincent’s essay offered itself as a warning, putting the photo world on alert. Vincent assessed the climate, writing that, “if anything, Bokel’s debacle is something of a wake-up call to the photography world” (p. 122). It did induce mild paranoia. I myself can recall how for a while the trade would pull blacklights out from pockets to inspect Man Rays. One would have expected a more rigorous authentication process, with greater transparency, particularly when another photo scandal arrived only two years later. Fraudulent Lewis Hine prints, entirely new photographs marked and represented as lifetime prints, had been appearing regularly for quite some time. The Hine scandal was deftly resolved behind closed doors, with lawyers engaged and financial settlements as the sole remedy. Until then, dealers had been happily selling large quantities of such Lewis Hine photographs.<sup>4</sup>

The Man Ray Bokelberg and the Hine scandals were brief wake-up calls that have gone unheeded, at least insofar as Man Ray prints go. Within the art market, the demand for authentication research of photographs remains limited. The photo market remains the Wild West. One can count on one

hand, for example, the number of catalogues raisonnés dealing with photographs. Interest in photographs has largely focused on the image. The connoisseurship and scholarship required to establish a solid foundation for understanding photographs as objects, especially Man Ray objects, is uncommon. With no criminal investigations or adoption of protocols and best practices by the market to fend off the next scandal, apart from research by paper conservators into photographic papers, it is no surprise that there has been no resolution of the larger questions and challenges surfaced by the known fakes. Certainly, these back-to-back frauds ought to have called into question the qualifications and motives of photography’s “experts.”

For the last twenty years, as a Man Ray specialist, I have regularly encountered fakes. Some were sold by dealers; some sold at auction. More than a few are in important museums; others are in private collections. Some were in the process of being sold when I was brought in for an opinion. Some sit in limbo. A few I turned back; others were removed from a sale when the proper evidence was provided. Try as one might, money has too often informed the final judgment. A few problematic Man Rays did not go to limbo or purgatory; they went to auction instead. But then, dubious works, dubious characters, and dubious activities are the norm when liabilities are limited and the reward for speaking up is even smaller.

This essay surveys nine photographs. A few might generously be described as “dubious” or “problematic.” Most are fake. Each had once been represented as by Man Ray and were largely claimed by the agents to be printed in the 1920s or 1930s. These photographs are known to have been in circulation, or in a private collection, after 1998; that is, after the Bokelberg Man Ray forgeries were public knowledge. With one exception, this author has examined each photograph and undertaken original research.

The discussion below focuses on two specific kinds of scams, and it attempts to describe the evolving practice of manufacturing fake Man Ray photographs. The first example and the more primitive

<sup>4</sup> See Paul Messier, “Materials Analysis of Photographic Paper,” *IFAR Journal*, Vol. 7, no. 2, 2004, pp. 34-41. See also other articles in this special issue of the *IFAR Journal* devoted to “Authenticity Issues in Photography,” the edited proceedings of an *IFAR Evening* on September 21, 2004.

approach began with an anonymous photograph and an unknown author, or at least where the photographer's name is not found on the photograph. Here the photograph was physically altered to reattribute it to Man Ray. To the photo, a signature and/or a Man Ray name or studio stamp is added. Typically, a vague provenance is created to provide a plausible back story, thus making the work appear authentic.

Most of these questionable Man Rays were printed from his negatives, or from copy negatives after a Man Ray camera original negative, or were printed from a digital file after a known Man Ray image. Each photograph was printed after the death of Man Ray (post 1976), but the work has been marked, manipulated, or altered in such a way as to lead the viewer to believe that the photograph was made during the lifetime of the artist, and, therefore, by Man Ray or the studio of Man Ray. The intent was to deceive; to present what appears to be an authentic, and frequently "vintage" Man Ray photograph. Sometimes the eventual fraud began innocently as a posthumous print (from the original Man Ray negative), which was subsequently reworked, marked, and repositioned. More often, the work was created solely with the intention of posing as a lifetime Man Ray print.

#### ANTONIN ARTAUD: AN ANONYMOUS PORTRAIT IMPERSONATES MAN RAY

Antonin Artaud, the poet, writer, artist, and actor sat for Man Ray in 1925 or 1926. Four related negatives are held by the Fonds Man Ray, at the Centre Pompidou. Numerous related prints are known. This undated portrait (FIG. 2) shows Artaud gazing at the camera with a cigarette in his mouth. The image is soft, lacking detail, suggesting that the film source was a small negative. The verso wet stamp impression gives the name Man Ray and the Paris studio address on rue Campagne Première. In 2011 the owner contacted me, as both the attribution and the authentication of the studio stamp were proving difficult.

While Man Ray broke rules and was open-minded in his approach to photographic processes and

materials, he was a working photographer, and as such, he professionalized his practice. There is a consistent, logical evolution to his work, in terms of film, film formats, photographic papers, and the creation of client work, such as portrait sittings and fashion magazine work. Nothing in the Artaud photograph is consistent with the practices of the studio in the 1920s and does not support the Man Ray attribution. The print size is wrong, being too large to be a typical contact print and yet too small to be a standard Man Ray enlargement. Moreover, it is a soft, flat image, a stark contrast to how Man Ray actually had photographed Artaud, whereby strong studio lighting brought out Artaud's cheekbones, rendering a theatrical, intense figure.

The fraud here is the addition of a skillfully crafted wet stamp (FIG. 11). There are no examples of the stamp in use during the lifetime of Man Ray. It is a unique and posthumous impression. I am frequently called upon because of my research on the stamps of the Man Ray studio. In 2006, I published the first small reference guide, with Paris dealer Serge Plantureux.<sup>5</sup> A second and third edition were later published, the latter in two volumes, titled *Behind the Photo: The Stamps of Man Ray*.<sup>6</sup> An expanded new edition will be published in 2020. Fake stamps are commonplace.



**FIGURE 2.** Unknown photographer (formerly represented as by Man Ray). *Portrait of Antonin Artaud*, undated, 16.5 x 11.7 cm (6 ½ x 4 ⅝ in.).

<sup>5</sup> Steven Manford, *Behind the Photo: The Stamps of Man Ray*. (Paris: Carnet de Rhinocéros jr, 2006.)

<sup>6</sup> Steven Manford, *Behind the Photo: The Stamps of Man Ray*. (Paris: Collection Clémentine, 2009.)

Claiming an anonymous work as by a famous artist is certainly not unique to Man Ray, or to photography. With the Artaud photograph, the Man Ray attribution seems plausible, thus an ideal gambit, because Man Ray knew and photographed Artaud. But after removing the false stamp, one is left with an anonymous portrait that lacks a signature, or a paper trail.

When a Man Ray is believed to be fraudulent, there are typically a number of problems. With the Artaud, the research and examination were clear: there was no extant corresponding Man Ray negative or contact print; no known close variant, nor other enlargements firmly attributed to Man Ray. Moreover, as already noted, the object itself was not consistent with a Man Ray print in the character of the paper or the size. Research suggests a number of other Paris-based photographers were likely the author, such as, Rogi André or Eli Lotar. Artaud was photographed extensively, but the reason for repositioning this photo as a Man Ray was obvious: portraits of Artaud by Man Ray were well known, and there was a demand for them. While an anonymous portrait of Artaud had value, a previously unknown portrait of Artaud by Man Ray would have been something special.

It would be a comfort to note that slapping Man Ray's name onto some flea market find and sending it to auction was a thing of the past, except it still goes on, even among the large auction houses. The buyer of the Artaud made mistakes. The chief error was that the research was undertaken after the photo was acquired. The stamp on the back, with Man Ray's name, was accepted at face value as authentication. Basic research would have given a collector pause. A wet stamp is the easiest thing to fabricate. Making a perfect copy after an authentic Man Ray studio stamp, however, is tough. Once a fake stamp is revealed, that is a red flag, and it calls the work into question. I believe the owner still owns the work.

### PARIS, RUE VALETTE: NOT MAN RAY'S PARIS

Another interesting fake is this large photograph of a Paris street corner at night after rainfall (**FIG. 3**). Based on the silvering in the shadow areas, it is of some age. Although untitled and undated, the street names are pictured. It is the corner of rue Valette and rue Laplace on the Left Bank. On the verso, in the bottom right corner, is a wet stamp impression with the name Man Ray and the Paris studio address of Val-de-Grâce (**FIG. 4A**). At the bottom left is an inventory number. There is little information attached to this work. In the same collection is a companion print of another Paris street, with the same studio stamp, and an inventory number, in the same hand. Those numbers suggest that the works were in a dealer's inventory in 1989.



**FIGURE 3.** Unknown photographer (formerly represented as by Man Ray), *Paris Street Corner (Rue Valette and Rue Laplace)*, undated, 29.8 x 24.1 cm (11 ¾ x 9 ½ in.).

When one speaks of Man Ray's "eye," we are characterizing what he looked at and how he photographed that which appealed to him. Just over half of his life was spent working and living in Paris. Man Ray knew Paris. He was no tourist. This street scene is not Man Ray's Paris. It is a beautiful image, a romantic view of old Paris with narrow streets and worn, unsteady buildings. One is seduced by the image, which is integral to the con. However, Man Ray made few pictures of Paris at night, and even fewer that document "old Paris." When he did photograph the city, he rarely made enlargements. Most of the reproductions of Man Ray photographs that one sees of Paris are in fact posthumous prints made by Pierre Gassmann, made from Man Ray's negatives.

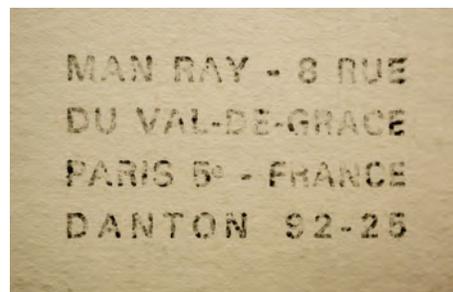
Man Ray would have avoided making a photograph of this nature, unless it was invested with Surrealism's mordant energy. It is reminiscent of the work of Eugène Atget, whom Man Ray knew. The theme of Paris at night was a subject being explored by a contemporary, Brassai, who in 1933 published the classic photo book *Paris de nuit*. Once Man Ray established a studio in Paris, he became uniquely Man Ray. While photographers drew inspiration from him, his photographs rarely drew upon the themes and styles of those around him.

**"Man Ray knew Paris.  
He was no tourist.  
This street scene  
is not Man Ray's Paris."**

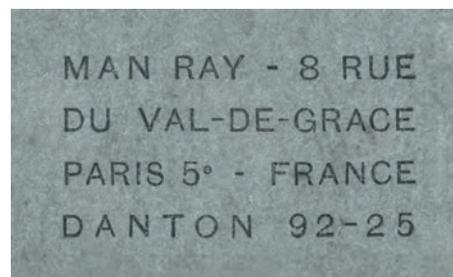
It is not instinct or even an understanding of the artist that arouses suspicion regarding this photograph. There is an accumulation of awkward details. While the paper is old, it is wrong. It is a heavy paper with a strong tint to it. Man Ray preferred a semi-matte paper with a cool neutral hue, and with the exception of client work, textured papers were avoided. Along the right edge, the margin of the negative is visible, along with

a slim, unexposed area of paper. This was not the practice of Man Ray's studio. The image would be flush to the edges, and neatly trimmed. The verso settles the question. The wet stamp in the verso corner reads: MAN RAY - 8 RUE / DU VAL-DE-GRACE / PARIS 5<sup>e</sup> - FRANCE / DANTON 92-25 (FIG. 4A). The information is correct, and in the layout, typeface, and font size the stamp appears to be an authentic stamp (catalogued as Manford M9). But, it is an imitation after the original. The layout is slightly off, and the font is thicker than Man Ray's stamp. The authentic Val-de-Grâce stamp (FIG. 4B) is illustrated next to the fraudulent wet stamp to allow for comparison. This problematic stamp appears on a number of dubious Man Rays.

The street scene was attractive on its own, but the false stamp added value in claiming it to be a Man Ray. When I researched this work, I could find no corresponding negative, or variant negative, or contact prints, or enlargements. In fact, I have never seen this type of photo paper used on any Man Ray photograph. The false stamp applied to the anonymous work, aside from being fraudulent, raises another red flag. The Val-de-Grâce address was Man Ray's studio from mid-1935 to mid-1937. Except for his contract with *Harper's Bazaar* magazine, Man Ray was doing little photography at this time, turning his attention back to drawing and



**FIGURE 4A.** Fake Man Ray stamp, giving the address of Man Ray's Val de Grâce studio, found on the verso of Figure 3.



**FIGURE 4B.** Wet stamp detail of an authentic Man Ray stamp giving the address of his Val de Grâce studio. This stamp was in use from mid 1935 to mid 1937. Fraudulent versions of the stamp are known.

painting. Such a print being made during this period is unlikely. So the date indicated by the stamp, offering a narrow two-year window, was not a good choice. Understanding the timeline, and Man Ray's career arc, should have raised these queries. The error of the collector was to accept the information conveyed, without question.

The person who had this fake stamp fabricated knew a good deal about Man Ray. The stamp dates to no later than 1989. There were no published stamp inventories at that time. The individual had to have looked at Man Ray's studio stamps. It is my belief that it was a dealer, probably in Paris, who knew enough to alter the work and craft a plausible enough story to reposition it as a Man Ray. This photograph is part of a significant Man Ray collection. I was engaged to research the collection. The owner is aware that the photograph is not by Man Ray.

### JACQUELINE: POSTHUMOUS PRINTS DRESSED UP AS VINTAGE

In 1995, at the same time when "vintage" Man Ray photographs were being minted for Werner Bokelberg and others, and while anonymous photographs were being tarted up and repositioned for sale as Man Rays, an entirely different and bolder approach to faking Man Ray photographs was going on. These new imitations were appearing with frequency on gallery walls and at auctions. And they still are.

In the photograph *Jacqueline* (FIG. 5), Man Ray's red-headed model is shown nude above the waist, her left arm raised and her right arm across her chest. Her long hair dominates the upper half of the image, which has an overall coarse grain pattern. Its tonal values are reversed, thus rendering a slightly disorienting composition akin to a large paper negative. On the verso is the wet stamp MAN RAY / PARIS.



**FIGURE 5.** A purported Man Ray *Jacqueline*, circa 1930 (film positive), printed after 1976, 30.4 x 21.1 cm (12 x 9 ½ in.). Sold to a collector as a vintage Man Ray photograph.



**FIGURE 6.** Authentic Man Ray photograph, *Jacqueline*, circa 1930 (film positive), printed between 1930-35, 29.1 x 22.4 cm (11 ½ x 8 ⅞ in.). © Man Ray 2015 Trust / ARS, NY / ADAGP, Paris.

Man Ray published the image in his classic 1934 book, *Man Ray Photographies 1920-1934 Paris*. Several period prints are known. One such print is

**“The red flag is not just  
that this print is identical to those made  
posthumously by Gassmann;  
nor is it the posthumous stamp, nor the  
unconvincing signature.  
The crucial mistake is that Gassmann printed  
from the wrong negative.”**

illustrated here (FIG. 6 and *Journal* cover). At the end of 1931, Man Ray made up small prints and sent them out as his New Year's greetings card. Among those surviving cards is one he sent to Gertrude Stein. The Fonds Man Ray, Centre Pompidou holds the camera original color positive transparency, a variant positive, and two black and white copy negatives made from the first transparency. The photograph is typically titled *Jacqueline* or *Jacqueline Goddard*, although at that time she may have been married to the artist known as Mayo, and her maiden name was Barsotti. *Jacqueline* was acquired by an American collector. In 2012 I was asked to undertake an assessment of the print, as it had passed to an estate and a valuation was needed.

Over the years, I have examined several *Jacqueline* prints, the earliest made between circa 1930 and 1935. This particular print resembled only one of those, a posthumous photograph made by the printer Pierre Gassmann, of the celebrated Paris photo lab Picto. Gassmann, as already noted, was one of the printers Man Ray used, starting around 1958. After Man Ray's death, sometimes with the blessing of his widow Juliet, other times at the direction of Man Ray's former assistant Lucien Treillard, Gassmann continued to make prints from Man Ray's negatives. These were occasionally used in Man Ray exhibitions, but they also began appearing for sale, usually at smaller auctions. By 1994 the proliferation of Gassmann Man Rays was a controversial subject. Many prints were vaguely marked, or not marked at all. Some people questioned the

legitimacy of the enterprise and the right to claim the photographs as Man Rays. In January 1995, *The Art Newspaper* opened up the debate with an article titled: “Beware your Man Ray photographs: Prints made after his death are appearing on the market” (p. 32). Gassmann made excellent prints, but not always, and on occasion he failed to duplicate Man Ray's original printed composition.

The troubling aspect was the lack of clear identification of the posthumous prints. It would in time allow for sales “puff,” legal yet in certain situations, misleading. For example, in October 2014, one of the smaller auction houses sold a print of Barbettes, the legendary female impersonator from Texas. In my opinion, it was clearly a posthumous print with a single posthumous MAN RAY / PARIS stamp on the verso. The print date was given as circa 1970s. Man Ray died in 1976, and Gassmann was making such prints from 1977 until 1995. The date range given implied that the work could have been made during the lifetime of the artist, when there was no basis for making such a conclusion. Such elision of the facts generated healthy bidding.

### REPOSITIONING THE POSTHUMOUS PRINT

Of course, the inevitable happened: posthumous Gassmann prints started to be represented as lifetime prints. They would at times be described as later-made prints from the 1960s. These sold well, attracting minimal scrutiny. Worse, other prints were claimed to be “vintage,” and, remarkably, a signature in the style of Man Ray was added, heightening the deception. The *Jacqueline* illustrated here is one such example. By and large, Gassmann prints are of well-known Man Ray images, so there was already a recognition factor, a kind of authentication in that the print had assuredly been made from an actual Man Ray negative. The very same posthumous prints were also reproduced in countless Man Ray monographs, again conferring status to them, even when Gassmann printed

an image with a different cropping than Man Ray. It was easy to be taken in when publishers were including them in books on Man Ray.

In *Jacqueline* the photograph had a signature added in the lower right corner. On the verso was the name MAN RAY and PARIS. No Gassmann stamp was added, even though two such stamps had been created specifically for marking posthumous Man Rays. There was no mention that the print was posthumous. A Swiss gallery later offering the print for sale claimed that it was the “only existing uncropped” image made from the “full negative.” What was regarded by the well known Zurich photo gallery as a unique print, was, in fact, just about the opposite. All of Man Ray’s prints of this image are exactly the same: tightly cropped, the left edge cropped to Jacqueline’s right arm, the bottom edge cropped to the breast, and the right edge to just inside her left forearm (FIG. 6). This print, on the other hand (FIG. 5), is uncropped; its maker had no sense of Man Ray’s ruthless eye and his ability to bring the essential image forward.

**“Experience suggests that if there is no provenance information or paper trail, there is a problem. The best defense when buying Man Rays is to ask questions and demand documentation.”**

The red flag is not just that this print is identical to those made posthumously by Gassmann; nor is it the posthumous stamp, nor the unconvincing signature. The crucial mistake is that Gassmann printed from the wrong negative. Once again, this malefactor’s “mistake” was not understanding Man Ray’s complicated working process. The original negative is a color positive transparency. The manufacturer has been identified as Lumichrome, but it might have been Lumière Filmcolor, an autochrome film process. It is believed that Man Ray’s intention was to produce color prints, but the results of the sitting were apparently unsatisfactory. Looking to salvage

the image, he made a copy negative using black and white film. Reversal printing was seen in the late 1920s. This must have been Man Ray’s thinking as he made a second copy negative from the first, rendering a black and white positive image. The prints Man Ray produced of *Jacqueline* came from this second copy negative, evident when comparing the copy negative to those prints. The copy negative was retouched, notably in the lips. The effect is important. In the authentic prints, the result is a more even and abstract white contour of the lips. In the Gassmann prints made from the unretouched color positive, the center of the lips is black. Examining the color transparency also explains something else peculiar about this fake. Small white flecks are visible. They are a result of the deterioration of the color film itself. This damage would not have been present in the 1930s. The print had to have been made *after* the deterioration had occurred. Therefore, the print is recent.

No one was able to provide any provenance for this work. Experience suggests that if there is no provenance information, or paper trail, there is a problem. The best defense when buying Man Rays is to ask questions and demand documentation. Collectors should look at lifetime and posthumous prints and their versos and educate themselves about the papers used. Had this been done, it would have been obvious that this print looked nothing like the accepted period prints from the 1930s, but it did look strikingly similar to the posthumous versions. All parties failed to acknowledge the MAN RAY / PARIS stamp (Manford M32 )found on the verso as posthumous.

#### **THE PRIMACY OF MATTER OVER MIND: A SUPERLATIVE MAKEOVER**

Among the most compelling of Man Ray’s solarizations, *Primacy of Matter Over Mind* (*Primat de la matière sur la pensée*) is variously dated between 1929 and 1932 (FIG. 7). The model is a nude figure stretched out on the floor of Man Ray’s Montparnasse studio, her left arm raised, her right hand resting on her breast, and eyes closed. The photo was extensively published in the 1930s, in such journals as: *Unu* (Bucharest), *Zijeme* (Prague),

*Photographie* (Paris), and *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution* (Paris). Period vintage prints are rare. The camera original negative is held by the Fonds Man Ray, at the Centre Pompidou.

In 2014, I was asked, along with a conservator, to examine a print that was in the collection of the noted photographs collector and curator Manfred Heiting. It was being sold through a well known New York photo gallery. The gallery described the work as a “vintage gelatin silver print flush mounted to vellum.” On the verso, at the center, was a wet stamp with Man Ray’s name and the Val-de-Grâce address. At the bottom was an inventory number. A pencil notation read: “Ex Collection Leon Pierre Quint.” The provenance given was curiously short. The photograph, one was to believe, went from Man Ray to a Leon Pierre-Quint, to Manfred Heiting. At the end of the day, a report was not needed. The story of this photograph quickly fell apart. The picture went back to the owner, and the money paid was returned. Disaster averted.

As a fake, upon a casual inspection, this Man Ray photograph was exceptional. It was a good print and generally consistent with the composition of the early known prints. It was even retouched, thus concealing some of the distress on the negative used. The sensual quality of the image was enhanced by the photographer’s controlled use of the sabatier process, a process carried out during the processing of the negative that creates dark



**FIGURE 7.** Purported Man Ray, *Primacy of Matter over Mind* (*Primat de la matière sur la pensée*), ca. 1929-32 (negative), printed sometime after the death of Man Ray, 20.6 x 29.2 cm (8 1/8 x 11 1/2 in.). The photograph was represented by the seller as an early print by Man Ray.

contour lines and a selective reversal of the tonal scale. The photograph was not signed or dated – here the fabricator was smart. Only Man Ray knew how to sign his name. Everyone else gets it wrong. The faker’s error, however, was in overreaching.

An initial red flag was the assembly itself: being dry mounted and affixed flush to a board was odd. The board may have been added to cover up what was on the verso of the print. One working assumption was that this was another doctored posthumous Pierre Gassmann print. The surface of the paper was not unlike that of Gassmann’s. It seemed like a recent print, in part because of the lack of silvering. It was also possible that the affixed mount was covering up the Agfa brand back stamping logo, which was found on some fakes, including many Bokelberg prints.

The Val-de-Grâce Man Ray address stamp, at first glance, looked fine. In the stamp books it is

catalogued as *Manford M9*. What one had here, it turned out, however, was an imitation of that stamp. It is the same fake stamp affixed to the photo of the rue Valette street corner (**FIG. 4A**). The intent was to make the print appear to date from the mid 1930s. Casual blacklighting of the print indicated that optical brightening agents were present in the photographic paper. This dated the paper to not before circa 1955, and further confirmed that this was a relatively recent fraudulent print or a posthumous Gassmann print.

The fake stamp and the later date of the paper, combined with the timing of Léon Pierre-Quint's death soon after in 1958, undercut the claimed provenance, despite Quint having been a publisher in Paris of Surrealist books. Using the name of the long deceased Pierre-Quint in the provenance was an inspired choice. Since it remained unclear where this particular print came from, if not Pierre-Quint as claimed, the next best step was to identify where else a Quint to Heiting provenance might be found. In 2004 The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston acquired from Manfred Heiting one of Man Ray's early portraits of Marcel Duchamp.<sup>7</sup> That provenance record describes the print as acquired from Galerie Octant in 1988 and as having come from the collection of Léon Pierre-Quint. To date, I have not examined that MFA Houston print to ascertain its similarity, if any, to the *Primacy* print. The appearance of a Pierre-Quint provenance does beg the question: If one photograph was claimed to have been the property of Léon Pierre-Quint and revealed to be neither a Man Ray, nor verified as being owned by Pierre-Quint, might it not hold true for other Man Ray prints said to have once been owned by Pierre-Quint?

To summarize: the stamp had been faked; the provenance was false and does not go back to the lifetime of the artist; the mounting of the print was anomalous; the paper did not appear "old," the paper contained optical brighteners, and the paper

did not exist before circa 1955. Nonetheless, much research still remains to be done on this photograph. To this date, it remains unclear whether the *Primacy* print was a posthumous print made by Pierre Gassmann or was made by someone else to deceive. Unfortunately, my efforts to study a large collection of Gassmann prints held in the Fonds Man Ray at the Centre Pompidou have been stymied since 2017.

There are few institutions where one can see Man Ray Gassmann prints. A few can be viewed briefly from time to time at the smaller auction houses. The Centre Pompidou has a collection of one hundred posthumous Man Ray Gassmanns. For many years, I have documented the works in the Fonds Man Ray with the full support of the artist's estate and copyright holder, as the Man Ray Trust has recognized the role object-based research plays in authentication and in the identification of problematic works. In November 2017, given the frequent appearance of altered and misrepresented Gassmann prints, my plan was to photograph this collection to create an image inventory against which dubious works could be compared, as is part of my practice in general. For unknown reasons, I was informed by the head of the Photographs Department that I would not be allowed to document the Man Ray Gassmann prints. This was an unexpected and curious turn of events given the respect previously accorded to the estate's *droit moral* inherent in its request that I be allowed to conduct the necessary object-based research and photography of the Man Ray works there.

I have yet to gain access to the Pompidou Gassmanns. What a vital resource these posthumous prints could be for curators, scholars, and collectors. In my opinion, the Pompidou is remiss in its duty as the custodian of the Fonds Man Ray. It is one thing to admonish the trade for not doing or supporting research. It is another matter entirely when a museum restricts the documentation of Man Rays paid for by the French taxpayer so as to be available to the public and to facilitate research that preserves the integrity and understanding of the artist's oeuvre. Such limitations contribute to the problem we have with Man Ray, that even

<sup>7</sup> In the early 2000s, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston purchased a collection of approximately 4,000 prints from Heiting, which have been housed in the MFAH collection since 2004. Parenthetically, in 2012, the museum purchased thousands of photography books from Heiting, about 24,000 of which were destroyed in the California wildfires that also took Heiting's home.

museums stubbornly refuse to pay close attention to the object. The *Jacqueline* print and the *Primacy* print are two small examples of how weak our eyes are. A proper dialogue with the Man Ray Gassmanns is required to understand what such prints look like. Otherwise, mistakes will continue.

Consider the following example: Many of the doctored Gassmann prints I have seen have appeared in Paris in Hôtel Drouot auction sales. Others have made their way to New York. One such print is Man Ray's *Self-Portrait With Studio Camera*, the negative dated circa 1932, and the printing date being represented as "1960s." It was to be sold at a Phillips Photographs sale, in New York, on April 1, 2014. It had one of markings of a Gassmann Man Ray and had the addition of a suspect signature. Although it appeared in the sales catalogue as Lot 70, the auction house withdrew it because of the research I made available, including images of identical Man Ray Gassmann prints. The Phillips print had previously been sold at a Drouot sale at Binoche et Godeau in 1992. It was the digitals of the related Gassmanns that made it possible to understand the true character of the *Self-Portrait*.

The *Primacy* print was returned to Manfred Heiting. The discovery of the truth about the photograph must sting. To fool the renowned eye of a collector such as Manfred Heiting attests to just how clever certain fraudsters can be. I hope that he was able to return the photograph to the dealer who had sold it to him.

#### TWO RAYOGRAPHS: EARLY MANUFACTURED FAKES

A Rayograph is a kind of a photogram. The image is typically made without a negative, with the objects to be traced by light laid upon the photographic paper, exposed, then the paper developed. Rayographs are unique unless a subsequent negative is made. The first photograph is the original Rayograph.

In the pair of Rayographs (**FIG. 8 & 9**), the first image – the presumed original Rayograph – is a simple silhouette of a hand holding a mesh coil. The second image is the same, but the values are reversed. The latter was presumably made by con-

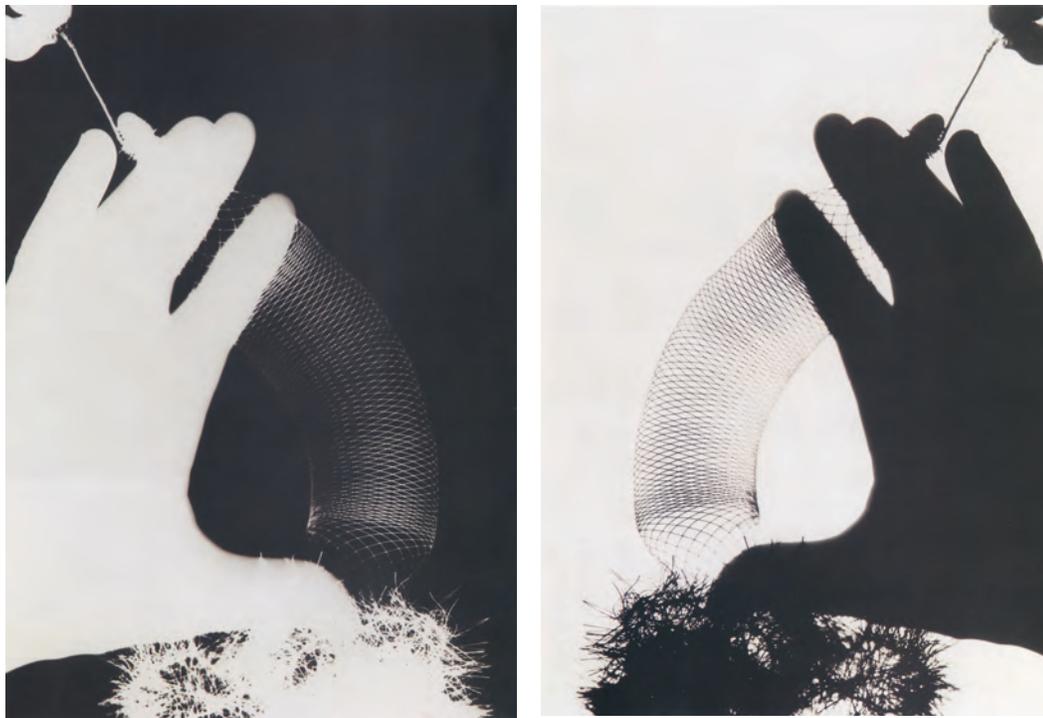
tact printing the original with a sheet of photo paper. One may assume that these were intended as a diptych. On the verso of each print, in the upper right area, is the inscription Man Ray 1922. In the bottom right of each print is a wet stamp with the name of Man Ray and the rue Campagne Première studio address.

In the early 1990s, I began preparing a catalogue raisonné of Man Ray's Rayographs. The Man Ray Trust, and Juliet Man Ray's brother, Eric Browner, signed off and supported this ongoing research. As a result, these two Rayographs were not new to me. I had made the acquaintance of their owner, Gérard Lévy (1924-2016), several times and had visited his gallery in Paris. He was involved in problematic Man Ray sales and was entangled in the Bokelberg fakes, although his role was unclear. Even he had expressed to me some doubts about these two Rayographs.

**"The issues of dating and authentication are different with Rayographs. They exist as a unique object unless a negative was made."**

After his death, his photograph collection was to be auctioned on December 20, 2016 at Millon, in Paris. The catalogue, titled: *Gérard Lévy / 17, rue de Beaune, Paris - Photographies de Collection l'Excellence d'un Regard*, was published before I arrived to look at the Man Rays. The estimate for the two Rayographs (Lot 94) was 150,000 to 200,000 euros, which was a bargain.

Nothing in the auction catalogue spoke to the question of the authenticity and uniqueness of these photographs. Gently, I raised concerns but declined to call them fakes. I had given no indication that the works would be included in the catalogue raisonné. What was evident was that no one was willing to vouch for them. I suggested that a few works should be sent to the photo conservator Paul Messier, in Boston, to have the papers examined. I proposed that fiber samples be taken by Messier



**FIGURE 8 & 9.** Two fraudulent Man Ray Rayographs (two prints, one “positive,” one “negative”), 1922, (i) 23.6 x 17.5 cm (9 5/16 x 6 7/8 in.) and (ii) 23.4 x 17.5 cm (9 1/4 x 6 7/8 in.). Formerly, Coll. Gérard Lévy. Unsold at the 2016 estate auction (Lot 94).

to address the manufacture date of the papers. The next day I sent the specialist an introduction to Messier. That was the last time I heard from anyone at the auction house. The samples were taken. The results yielded one surprise: Messier’s report on the fiber analysis was completely suppressed.

The issues of dating and authentication are different with Rayographs. They exist as a unique object unless a negative was made. The archive that one can draw upon is comparatively small. The auction catalogue entry was concerning. Exhibitions and publications were cited, but the earliest published mention of these works was left out. At least one if not both works were included in the *Man Ray Photographs* exhibition held at the Centre Georges Pompidou from December 1981 to April 1982. In the English version of the catalogue, published by Thames and Hudson in 1982, the reversal image is reproduced (p. 139). Therefore, the works existed by 1981.

Photograms were made by nearly everyone, from artists, to amateurs, to children. Were these anonymous prints that were doctored? Or were these made after the death of Man Ray? The provenance stated that the pair of works came from the collection of Jean Petithory, a “ami de Man Ray” sometime between 1960 and 1965. However, there is no evidence to support this, and the reputation of Petithory is as problematic as that of Levy himself. I deduced that the works were carefully crafted to look like Rayographs made in 1922.

Stephen Vincent cites as an early iteration of the Bokelberg forgeries a small

Drouot auction on November 16, 1983, held under the title *Précieuses Photographies de Man Ray*. The sale’s expert was Gérard Lévy. Vincent seems unaware of another Man Ray sale the previous summer at Drouot, held on July 2, 1982. That sale, *Man Ray Photographies*, featured celebrated images, such as, *La Prière*, *Coat Stand*, *Self Portrait*, and portraits of Meret Oppenheim, Lee Miller, and Pablo Picasso. These photographs were said to be fraudulent, as were those in the 1983 auction. The expert in that sale was also Gérard Levy. Going back a year, to 1981, the two Rayographs were on exhibit in the Centre Pompidou.

The works look like imitations of early Rayographs. The clue is that the photo paper dimensions are consistent with the standard paper size used by Man Ray in his early 1922 Rayographs. This is no mere coincidence. Whoever made these had studied Man Ray’s Rayographs, but the selection and arrangement of the objects as a composition is weak. Two features are missing in these Rayo-

graphs. One is the use of three-dimensional objects in the making of Rayographs, which, with Man Ray, allowed for the contours and shapes recorded to dissolve and distort – at times rendering a mysterious phantom image. These photos, by contrast, are flat silhouettes. Secondly, Man Ray typically removed various objects at some point during the exposure, thus rendering midtones and grays. Here, by contrast, we have stark graphic images made by a single exposure.

Moreover, the objects used in these works are not found in any authentic Rayographs. Where there is one Rayograph, there are normally variants. Using the same small group of objects, Man Ray might go into the darkroom and create four or five Rayographs. He would vary the objects and their relationship on the photo paper. Man Ray used metal coils and springs in his Rayographs, but in these two works, a fine mesh is used instead.

The markings on the versos of these two works are also problematic. Each work is inscribed in pencil near the top right verso corner, *Man Ray 1922*. But Man Ray did not sign and date original Rayographs in the upper corner. The handwriting is also suspect. I have seen the same markings in the same location on the verso of a modern copy print that was once falsely represented as an original Rayograph.

The auction house described the wet stamp as the “author’s stamp.” Again, not true. Enthusiasts armed with the Man Ray stamp books suggested it was the fraudulent posthumous stamp created by Lucien Treillard. Catalogued as Manford M28, that stamp is a copy after an authentic rue Campagne Première address stamp. The specialist had not noted an issue with the stamp, although, given Gérard Lévy’s long entanglement with Man Ray forgeries, including the Man Ray Bokelbergs (where he vouched for some prints), one would assume that a closer vetting was due. What is on these versos, however, is not Treillard’s stamp. These stamp impressions are actually imitations of the Treillard stamp. In this variation, the font shapes are slightly soft, notably in the “bis.” I have encountered this stamp on false Man Rays of the Bokelberg era. The person who stamped certain Man Ray Bokelberg prints also stamped these two photos.

## TWO RAYOGRAPHS: SCIENCE SUPPRESSED

When I received no replies about Paul Messier’s reports on the Rayographs, I asked friendly collectors to make the requests in their names. *They* got replies from Milon. The assistant wrote after one request: “Please find below the rectifications that we have made following extensive research on lots 93 and 94.” The creation date of the Rayographs (Lot 94) was moved from 1922 to “circa 1955.” Lot 93 was another problematic Man Ray. There was no further explanation. No one was given the opportunity to review the report. Because of his contract with the auction house, Messier could not give me his reports but said in an email to me that “there is generally no incentive to share my findings when the news isn’t good.”

It was easy to see through this behavior. On the auction house website, the entry for Lot 94 had been revised. The date was changed to circa 1950. Curiously, the Milon assistant had replied to one request for information with a revised date of circa 1955. The earlier date made little sense, but the circa 1955 date did. Based largely on Messier’s pioneering research, circa 1955 is the earliest date in which optical brightening agents begin to appear in commercial photographic papers. This leads me to believe that Messier found optical brighteners in the Rayographs.

The new dates raised serious questions, never addressed. Instead, the auction house printed a statement asserting that, “These two prints are of a unique nature and are essential to Man Ray’s work. Their importance is undeniable.” How so? If the paper dated from 1950 onward, which it did not, were they asserting that the works were copies of Rayographs, or were they claiming that they were original unique works made sometime after circa 1950? What to make of the suspect handwriting with the 1922 date? Did Man Ray get the date wrong? Man Ray would not take a later-made pair of Rayographs and date them 1922. If these were copies after the originals, why have the original unique Rayographs never been located? If they are copies, where are the negatives that would have had to have been made? No negatives are held by the Fonds Man Ray.

The December 20th sale date came. The marketplace has a way of dealing with difficult photographs and

with auction houses that cannot defend what they are selling. The estimate had been greatly reduced to 30,000 to 50,000 euros. The bidding opened at 22,000 euros, and it went to 28,000. The works were bought in.

There are lessons to be learned here. Even with science and scholarship working together, there will be those looking to manipulate facts and corrupt our understanding of what is true. When reports are prepared, be it a condition report, a conservator's treatment report, a commissioned research report, or an analysis of paper, one should demand copies and read the reports closely. If an auction house or a dealer refuses to share a report or research, simply walk away.

It is not just the trade at fault. Several museums, in London, New York and Paris, had either exhibited or published these works. This sort of validation helps to convince collectors that a photograph has been fully vetted—and is authentic. Among the monographs used to prop up these works was the book *Man Ray Rayographies*, by Emmanuelle de l'Écotais (2002). It accepted these works as unique Rayographies. It is an indictment of our museums and curators that so many made use of these fakes and none saw any problems.

#### A SAMPLING OF FAKE MAN RAY ADDRESS STAMPS

As must already be obvious, there are numerous fake Man Ray stamps. Illustrated here together are six stamps featuring Man Ray's rue Campagne Première studio address (**FIGS. 10-15**). Only one stamp is authentic (**FIG. 10**). It was used by Man Ray until he gave up that studio in mid 1935. The second stamp (**FIG. 11**), without the arrondissement (XIV), is fraudulent. It is found on the Antonin Artaud photograph (**FIG. 2**) discussed above. The third stamp (**FIG. 12**) is fraudulent. It was fabricated by Man Ray's former assistant Lucien Treillard after the artist's death, and he – and he alone – used it extensively. (Stamp Manford M28 is discussed in *Behind the Photo*.) **FIGURE 13** is an imitation Treillard stamp, which is found on some of the false Bokelberg era Man Rays. **FIGURE 14** is another, but

weaker, imitation of the Treillard stamp. Notably, the “bis” spacing is loose, and the font size is too large. **FIGURE 15** has been found on problematic photographs. Only the Treillard stamp is catalogued in the stamp books. A number of fake stamps, including name and studio stamps, will be included in the forthcoming edition of my stamp book.

#### MAN RAY OR A SELF PORTRAIT: AGFA PAPER

In 2018 I examined a large Man Ray collection. Included was a photograph of Man Ray seated by his desk in the Campagne Première studio and holding a wooden mannequin (**FIG. 16**). In the lower right corner, in pencil, was the notation Man Ray. On the verso, in the bottom right corner, was a wet stamp with the name Man Ray and the Val-de-Grâce studio address. The Fonds Man Ray holds the corresponding camera original negative. This image was unpublished during Man Ray's lifetime, and no other prints have been located. This photo entered the private collection in the 1980s or early 1990s and was included in a traveling exhibition some years later. It was published on that occasion, but no other documentation has been located.

At first, the photograph did not seem unusual. In fact, this is an impressive forgery. Previously catalogued as *Autoportrait*, I knew this to be a small mistake, as it was casually composed by another, and the exposure was made by another person. But the sitter was clearly Man Ray, and that initially made the photograph plausible. Man Ray did, at regular intervals, photograph himself, carefully burnishing his image.

What finally struck me as “off” was that Man Ray was smiling, which was not characteristic of Man Ray or his self portraits. It is rare to find a photograph of him smiling. In her unpublished memoirs, Jacqueline Goddard, Man Ray's model (in **FIG. 6**), wrote: “He always seemed to be meditating, and was seldom light-hearted. It was a great pity that he did not smile a lot. That little grin of his changed him altogether.” He wanted to be regarded as a serious artist. Man Ray simply would not have enlarged this image because it was an unflattering portrait,



**FIGURE 10.** Wet stamp, detail of an authentic Man Ray rue Campagne Première studio stamp. (See: Manford M6; *Behind the Photo*, 2009.)



**FIGURE 11.** Wet stamp, detail of a fraudulent rue Campagne Première studio stamp, found on the verso of Figure 2.



**FIGURE 12.** Wet stamp, detail of a second fraudulent rue Campagne Première studio stamp, created by Lucien Treillard after the artist's death. (See: Manford M28; *Behind the Photo*, 2009.)



**FIGURE 13.** Wet stamp, detail of a third fraudulent rue Campagne Première studio stamp; copied from the Treillard stamp.



**FIGURE 14.** Wet stamp, detail of another weak imitation after the Treillard stamp



**FIGURE 15.** Wet stamp, detail of a fifth fraudulent rue Campagne Première studio stamp, which is found on a number of problematic photographs, including works enhanced using imaging software.

inconsistent with his desired image, and it was a weak composition. Rather than being an *Autoportrait*, my opinion was that the creation of the negative was for personal use only.

There is a rigor to Man Ray's finished photographs, and this composition lacks rigor. The subject is not even in focus. Comparing the print to the camera original negative, the photo is slightly cropped. Had Man Ray printed this image, or given instructions to his assistant, the visual distractions – the furniture on the left, the desk on the right, the legs, the coat, hat, the Rayograph on the wall – would have been excised. An authentic Man Ray enlarge-

ment would focus on the sitter and the mannequin he is holding.

The print was not made long ago, as the printed image attests. The negative used is distressed; it has scratches, blemishes, stubborn dust and dirt marks. What has been printed was made from a neglected negative, as it looked after Man Ray died, and before it was acquired by the Fonds Man Ray. If the negative was made circa 1927, as proposed by the Fonds Man Ray, and printed in the 1920s or 1930s, the negative would have been in reasonably pristine condition. Another red flag is that no effort was made to clean the negative, nor retouch the print.



**FIGURE 16.** Print wrongly said to be a Man Ray *Auto-portrait (Self Portrait)*, circa 1927 (negative), 22.8 x 29.1 cm (9 x 11 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.). The location of the sitting is Man Ray's studio at 31 bis, rue Campagne Première.

The studio process would have entailed an assistant retouching the print. This photograph does not reflect the working methods and standards of Man Ray's studio.

Moreover, the autograph in the lower right corner is weak and unconvincing. As already noted, the verso features a Val-de-Grâce studio address stamp. On close inspection, it looks like stamp *Manford M9*. It is not evident whether it is the original period stamp being used posthumously or if it is an identical copy after the original. That disturbed me more than the photo that almost fooled me.

#### A NOTE ON AGFA PAPERS & THE BACK PRINTING

Also on the print verso is the back printing by the paper manufacturer Agfa (**FIG. 19**). Agfa paper of recent manufacture was the downfall of the Bokelberg Man Rays. Testing at the Agfa Bayer labs in 1997 confirmed that none of the tested Bokelberg prints could have dated from the 1920s or 1930s. The Eureka moment was short-lived, for the faint logo could easily be sanded off. The difficulty in



**FIGURE 17.** A detail of the verso of Figure 16 showing the Agfa photo paper manufacturer's logo. The faint image has been digitally enhanced here.

addressing the Agfa paper situation is that Man Ray had at least one printer, Serge Béguier, who did use Agfa papers, and so one finds perfectly authentic editioned photographs, and individual prints from the 1960s and also during the last years of Man Ray's life, printed on such papers.

The correct assessment of a questionable Man Ray photograph printed on Agfa brand paper is to measure that information against all other relevant details. In this case, there was an obvious effort to impersonate a period print. A Val-de-Grâce studio stamp should not be found on a photograph that could not exist before the 1960s (the earliest date on which a printer would have been engaged and used Agfa paper). The stamp together with the Agfa paper means it is not a later print – it is a forgery of the Bokelberg Man Ray era. There is one other red flag that the experienced connoisseur of photographs would have observed. Over time it is believed that the maker of some of the Man Ray forgeries created the “vintage” look through staining the paper. What is obvious, and is not remarked on in the Stephen Vincent article, is how prints such as this were subjected to handling and physical abuse to give the appearance of having suffered the scars of age. Here the print edges have been banged up, with even small areas of emulsion having been lost. Yet the paper base itself is white and clean.

Where did the forger, and where did the buyer, make mistakes? First, was the printing of an image that Man Ray himself had never printed. Where a period print exists, it serves as a guide for the forger, to mimic the artist's eye and the hand. In this instance, however, all that the forger had to work with was a negative, which represented only what the camera recorded. The print lacked the interpretation and the voice that a good photographer brings to the medium and the print. The buyer was lured in by the surprise of seeing Man Ray looking back at him. The collector had a passion for Man Ray, as did Bokelberg, as did others taken in. That was the problem. There was little space or time to reason through the photographs, to consider the elements that make up the object, which, in the end, did not add up.



**FIGURE 18.** Fake Man Ray *Rose Sélavy*, 1921 (negative), 22.0 x 17.6 cm (8 5/8 x 6 7/8 in.). This photograph shows Marcel Duchamp in the guise of his feminine alter-ego Rose Sélavy.

### ROSE SÉLAVY: MAN RAY FORGERIES IN THE 1990S

Man Ray's photographs of Marcel Duchamp are much sought after. This photograph (**FIG. 18**), originally created in 1921, shows Duchamp in the guise of his feminine alter ego Rose Sélavy, complete with wig and jewelry. The camera original glass plate negative is in the Fonds Man Ray. The image gained prominence when Duchamp affixed a small print to a perfume bottle, thus creating *Belle Haleine, Eau de Voilette* (**FIG. 19**).<sup>8</sup> The image of the bottle, featuring this image of *Rose Sélavy*, was reproduced on the cover of the April 1921 issue of *New York Dada*.

It is troubling that a questionable print of *Rose* has been circulating at least since 1992, when it was offered in an October 29 Christie's London Photographs auction (Lot 104). The catalogue entry said it was printed ca. 1936-40. I first saw the print in person in Paris late in 2011. The rust orange color of the print concerned me. In 2012, I saw it again



**FIGURE 19.** Authentic Man Ray photograph, *Belle Haleine, Eau de Voilette*, 1921 (negative), 11.4 x 8.9 cm (4 1/2 x 3 1/2 in.). This is Man Ray's photograph of Marcel Duchamp's *Belle Haleine*, an assisted readymade, which incorporates a small photograph of Rose Sélavy. © Man Ray 2015 Trust / ARS, NY / ADAGP, Paris.

<sup>8</sup> The *Belle Haleine* bottle broke records when it sold for 8.9 million euros at the famed Yves Saint Laurent-Pierre Bergé auction in Paris on February 25, 2009 (Lot 37).

in New York. In 2015 the work was going to be sold at Phillips in London at a May 21st sale. I expressed concerns, and after discussions the print was pulled from the auction.

As it happened, the photo shared many of the disturbing elements of the so-called Man Ray *Autoportrait (Self-Portrait)* discussed above, and it is characteristic of the fraudulent Man Rays manufactured in the 1990s. The fact that it appeared in 1992 before Bokelberg began acquiring his collection of fakes means that fakes were being made and marketed and sold well before Bokelberg took an interest.

In summary, among the many red flags, the following are key:

- It was printed from a distressed negative that showed evidence of age and wear, suggesting that it was used decades after the negative was made.
- The print needed retouching and wasn't up to Man Ray's standards.
- It was printed on the telltale Agfa paper.
- It lacked a proper provenance.
- The seemingly authentic Val-de-Grâce stamp on the verso was added posthumously.
- The print color was wrong. Authentic Man Ray prints were almost never toned, but this print was toned, and in an obvious way. No properly cared for Man Ray exhibition print from the 1920s and 1930s had such exaggerated color.

How is it possible that such an obvious fake can continue to appear—both before and after the Bokelberg scandal—in exhibitions, international fairs and at auctions? Had I not spoken up in 2015, the work would have sold and found a place in someone's collection or on a museum's walls.

#### **NOIRE ET BLANCHE: PROBABLY PRINTED IN THE 1960S**

Published initially in *French Vogue* in May 1926, *Noire et blanche* is one of Man Ray's most famous and enigmatic images, an icon in the history of photography. Since Man Ray's death, it has engendered ongoing discussions about race, identity, gender, representation, and cultural appropriation, the latter due to the striking juxtaposition of a Baule-style African mask with the dramatic white face of

Kiki of Montparnasse, the singer, model, self-taught artist, and companion of Man Ray. Understanding the related negatives and the array of prints is complex. In addition to period prints made on a handful of unusual papers, in different formats and croppings, posthumous, problematic and fraudulent prints are also known.

So sought after are prints that in 2017, when Christie's Paris offered a *Noire et blanche* (Lot 8), with a pre-sale estimate of 1 to 2 million euros, the price worked its way up in the bidding process to an extraordinary 2.7 million euros – setting a new world record for a classic photograph. A decade earlier, on October 18, 2007, a very different *Noire et blanche* print (**FIG. 20**) was offered by Christie's, in New York. The catalogue entry for Lot 354 was brief. The description read: gelatin silver print, probably printed 1960s; signed in stylus (on the recto); credit stamps (on the verso). The estimate was \$200,000 to \$300,000. The work sold for \$241,000. This work had previously been sold at Sotheby's, New York, on May 8, 1984 (Lot 217). At that time, it was given the title *Black and White*. It was described as having been: "signed by the photographer with a stylus on the image, the photographer's 'Man Ray Paris' and 'Epreuve Originale' stamps on the reverse ... printed later, probably in the 1960's." The estimate was \$3,500 to \$5,000, and the work sold for \$5,520.

I have studied the creation of *Noire et blanche* extensively—including a detailed study of the negatives and the prints. In the summer 2006 issue of the Smithsonian American Art Museum's publication *American Art*, I co-authored with Wendy Grossman "Unmasking Man Ray's *Noire et blanche*."<sup>9</sup> In the summer of 2008, the Centre Pompidou's journal *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* published a version of this essay in French, titled "Une icône démasquée: *Noire et blanche* de Man Ray." These essays have become the standard reference on the subject. When I was working on the essay, I had recently discovered, researched, and authenticated a group of large format retouched

<sup>9</sup>Wendy A. Grossman and Steven Manford, "Unmasking Man Ray's *Noire et blanche*," *American Art*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (Summer 2006), pp. 134-147.



**FIGURE 20.** A problematic print of *Noire et blanche*, 1926 (negative), 17.5 x 21.0 cm (6 7/8 x 8 1/4 in.), represented when sold as a Man Ray photograph “probably” printed in the 1960s. The work is not characteristic of a 1960s Man Ray print.



**FIGURE 23.** Authentic Man Ray photograph, *Noire et blanche*, 1926/1927 (camera original negative and retouched negatives), printed between 1927 and 1930, 21.6 x 26.0 cm (8 1/2 x 10 1/4 in.), Private Collection, New York. © Man Ray 2015 Trust / ARS, NY / ADAGP, Paris.

“working negatives” of the *Noire et blanche* created by Man Ray. These were used in the making of some of the prints.

Man Ray began to reprint negatives from his earlier career.” The paper was described as having “age.” It did have a slight color. The color alternatively may

ÉPREUVE ORIGINALE  
Atelier Man Ray  
PARIS

**FIGURE 21.** Wet stamp, detail of an authentic ÉPREUVE ORIGINALE studio stamp. This stamp was created sometime after Man Ray returned to Paris in 1951.

ÉPREUVE ORIGINALE  
Atelier Man Ray  
PARIS

**FIGURE 22.** Wet stamp, detail of a previously unknown, perhaps fraudulent, version of the ÉPREUVE ORIGINALE studio stamp. This stamp appears on the verso of the *Noire et blanche* in Fig. 20.

Christie’s opinion concerning the 2007 offering was that it was a 1960s print. I examined the print during the auction previews and asked myself, was this photograph characteristic of and consistent with a later made print of *Noire et blanche*? It did not resemble the early prints from the 1920s or the 1930s. The paper, the handwriting, the markings, the provenance, *nothing* suggested a “vintage” period print. When first offered at Sotheby’s in 1984, they took the position that it was printed “probably in the 1960’s.” It was not clear how this was arrived at. In the catalogue essay for the 2007 sale, the printing date was addressed as follows: “Because of the apparent age of the paper and the stamps on the back we can assume that it was printed sometime in the 1960s when

**“Was this photograph ... consistent with a later made print of *Noire et blanche*? It did not resemble the early prints from the 1920s or the 1930s. The paper, the handwriting, the markings, the provenance, *nothing* suggested a ‘vintage’ period print.”**

have derived not from residual chemistry altering the paper’s hue but from toning, which can mimic the appearance of age. The print did show signs of wear, suggesting age. The overall object, however, was in good condition, and there was little in the way of silver mirroring, which would further indicate a paper of some age. The presence of two stamps was a reason for determining the 1960s print date. The MAN RAY / PARIS wet stamp on the verso had left a weak inked impression. In the first edition of my stamp book, published in 2006, two nearly identical stamps were reproduced. This stamp on the verso was one of these two stamps. In the book, I noted the problem in dating them and offered no firm usage dates. By the time of the 2009 edition of my book, the facts were clear. The stamp catalogued as Manford M33 was created after Man Ray and Juliet settled in Paris in 1951. The other, catalogued as Manford M32, was fabricated after the death of Man Ray, and was typically used on posthumous prints made by Pierre Gassmann. The impression on the *Noire et blanche* is M32. Thus, the name stamp on this photograph is a posthumous stamp (not a late lifetime stamp).

The second stamp reads: ÉPREUVE ORIGINALE/ Atelier Man Ray/ PARIS. An ÉPREUVE ORIGINALE stamp is illustrated in the various stamp book editions. In the first edition, the stamp creation date is stated as sometime after 1951, but certainly in use during the 1960s (FIG. 21). It is assumed that the auction house had reviewed the first stamp book, but in the catalogue neither stamp is described, nor are the Manford stamp numbers referenced. When comparing the *Noire* ÉPREUVE stamp (FIG. 22) with the corresponding stamp in the catalogue, differences are observed. The letters in the word PARIS in the third line of the stamp, for example, are spaced differently than the let-

ters found in other examples. With the accepted authentic ÉPREUVE stamp, the letter “P” begins directly underneath the letter “I” in Atelier. On the *Noire* verso, however, the letter “P” begins directly beneath where the first letter “e” in Atelier ends. The letter “A” is in a slightly different relationship to the layout of the second line of typeface in this *Noire* version from the published stamp book version. If the conclusion was that this photograph was printed in the 1960s because of a 1960s period stamp, the impression on the *Noire et blanche* is not that stamp. Neither stamp on this photograph print can be dated to the 1960s. In fact, one stamp is previously unknown and cannot be authenticated, and the other is posthumous.

The catalogue does cite the Grossman & Manford essay mentioning that Man Ray produced copy negatives and made some prints from these, but no opinion was expressed by Christie’s as to which negative was used here. I can answer that question. The enlarged copy negatives were *not* used here. The print lacks the retouching from those negatives. The Fonds Man Ray holds a different period glass plate copy negative, which is completely unretouched. In it Kiki’s hair and eyes are slightly softened and out of focus. Therefore, this copy negative could not have been used, as the auction print is sharp throughout. The missing camera original negative was used to make the print. Although that negative is unlocated, posthumous prints are known to have been made.

Man Ray was meticulous in composing precisely the image to be printed. That composition evolved, the framing tightening around the oval head of Kiki and the mask. The earliest prints reveal more of the full negative, with more of the table surface showing. The classic composition was printed circa 1927 and over the next few years (FIG. 23). By 1934, when it was published in Man Ray’s book of photographs, the image was noticeably pared down. Where does the 2007 auction print fit in? It does not correspond to either the formative or mature 1930s prints. In the auction print, more of the forearm is included, but not enough to compare with the bulk of the known prints. It is cropped very tightly above the

top of the mask. The only other instance of this, where the composition is even more trimmed, is in the 1933 print, where it is severely trimmed on all sides. No known lifetime print matches this auction photograph. Also noteworthy, this print appears to have been cut down by hand, with visible cut marks, resulting in ever so slight irregular print dimensions. This would perhaps explain another anomaly. The print is signed Man Ray in the lower right corner. It is oddly placed, with the last letter close to the paper's right edge. Visible, but not documented in the catalogue, is a second partial signature above the first. The letter "Ma" and the beginning of the letter "n" is written in the cursive style of the Man Ray autograph.

The print was made from a weathered negative. Such blemishes are shown as white spots and flecks in the print. Along the bottom left edge of the print is a white line, the result of a scratched negative. This mark on the print has not been retouched, and there are few attempts to touch up the print. Such prints would typically be retouched with care.

Of the many photographic prints of the *Noire et blanche* I have examined, two "may" be linked to the present photograph. Beginning in 1977, soon after the death of Man Ray, Pierre Gassmann began printing the *Noire et blanche* image from the original negative in two distinct and dramatically unique croppings. The first roughly approximated the 1933-34 cropping of the image published in his 1934 book of photographs. In it, the wrist is largely excised. In the second version, one glimpses for the first time not only Kiki and the mask but the edges of the table used and the tablecloth. The fold at the left edge of the table is crisp, with the overhang falling into the shadows. The two subjects have more space around them. Most of Kiki's arm is visible. Near the bottom left is a long white line. It is a scratch on the negative. That scratch is reproduced in the Christie's print. Were one to hypothetically trim down this second Gassmann print of *Noire et blanche*, it would make for a thought-provoking comparison.

What does this tell us? For one thing, collectors and all other interested parties need to look at a lot

of Man Rays, get a sense of their quality and their characteristics made over a period of decades; get a feel for how the photographic papers change and how the markings and the handwriting evolve. They need to form their own opinion, based on contact with original photographs. On a casual viewing, this photograph looks like a later print. In examining the fine details, however, the print is not typical of a photograph made by Man Ray, or under his supervision, during the 1960s. If this is not characteristic of a 1960s print, then what is it? It was sold at the auction; I do not know who acquired it.

**"This is the future:  
fraudulent photographs for which no negative  
is required. The whole medium  
of photography is now vulnerable. The problems  
can only get worse."**

#### CONCLUSION

Those who thought that all the fake Man Rays suddenly vanished or went into the garbage bin after the Bokelberg scandal of 1998 were wrong. The photographs discussed here are but a sample of problematic Man Ray prints. One aspect of fraud that has not been explored here, because the subject itself warrants a separate chapter, are those photographs dating back as far as the Bokelberg era that were made not from negatives or copy negatives but from digital files. This is the future: fraudulent photographs for which no negative is required. The whole medium of photography is now vulnerable. The problems can only get worse. If photo historians and the trade remain disinclined to study the object, and if the tools for authenticating and dating photographs are not developed, this will be good news for the fakers. The custodians of photograph collections, of Man Ray's archives, and of his legacy must do better if further headaches are to be avoided. The potential of new technology points to unimagined problems, especially for a generation that, for the most part, no longer knows what a darkroom is and what photographic paper looks like. And we still have not cleaned up from the forgeries of the 1980s and 1990s.