

# **Droomschaar**

**the History of an Anarchist/Surrealist Magazine**

Rik Lina, Dick Gevers

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Droomschaar: the History of an Anarchist/Surrealist Magazine

Rik Lina and Dick Gevers (Amsterdam, 1992)

English translation by Lina and Sakolsky (2019)

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The cooperation of surrealist artists and anarchists in the Netherlands is relatively recent. Only since 1965, when a new generation revolted against the established order and consumer-society, can one speak of a fusion of anarchist and dadaist/surrealist ideas. There existed no contact before between the flowering Dutch anarchist movement and surrealism. The surrealists in The Netherlands never founded an official group and never joined the international surrealist movement. They preferred to stay independent and even mutual contacts were scarce. The revolt of 1965, which lasted until 1968 and received the name Provo, left obvious traces in Dutch society. One can name the Provo-movement as anarchist because it revolted against the political system, against all forms of authority, against militarism, ecological pollution and the consumer-society: all the themes which play an important role in the anarchist movement. But different from those anarchists who stressed morality and reason and chose discussion, propaganda and demonstrative action, Provo preferred a dadaist/ surrealist form of action: the happening.

In an article about the Dutch surrealist Johannes Moesman (1909-1988), Laurens Vancrevel in 1971 rightly pointed out the correspondence between the ideas of this painter and anarchism: "To change life is before all else the reconciliation of manifestation and desire. The reformation of the world is nothing else, but only on a larger and more complex scale, the plane of mutual relations and the interaction with nature. Surrealism, just as anarchism, originates not from the reality of an existing order, but from the representation of an imagined state of anarchy". About 1970, a collaboration came to life between the surrealist magazine *Brumes Blondes* (Laurens Vancrevel and Her de Vries) and the counter-cultural "psychedelic dispatch" *Moksha* (Hans Geluk and Rik Lina), both founded in Amsterdam. This contact remained isolated by the lack of understanding which libertarian attitudes received in The Netherlands. Only in 1989, when surrealists and anarchists wanted to animate a new cultural magazine which would be a link in the chain of publications and manifestations activating both movements in the international milieu, would both worlds of ideas be joined. The surrealist artists Tony Pusey and Rik Lina met in Amsterdam and started to look around for fellow-travelers living in The Netherlands. By a special kind of magnetism, a voluntary group of individuals composed itself to start *Droomschaar*, a collaboration of anarchists and surrealists looking for a common sensibility and for a means of spontaneous expression to develop the individual self. Jose da Estevo wrote in the first issue: "Man has the means to imagine ideas, to create dreams and to give his dreams form." *Droomschaar* is an ambiguous word meaning not only "dream scissors", but also a group of people dreaming together.

Joining Lina and Pusey were the anarchist poets/publishers Jan A. Bervoets, Dick Gevers and Jose da C. Estevo, and the surrealist poets/publishers Pieter Schermer and Heinrich Kaegi, in an editorial board which united Dutch anarchists and surrealists. That this co-operation proved fertile appears not only from the magazine *Droomschaar*, and from the continuing series of exhibitions of *Droomschaar*-artists all over Europe, but also from the appearance of the anarchist magazine *De Raaf* and the founding of the "Forum for International Libertarian Culture" in Amsterdam. It seemed a communication of ideas was taking place from which an international collective of artists came to life. For more than a year they met every week (in later years every month) to research a unique way of working together. They made automatic collective paintings, drawings, etc. by working together at the same moment on one and the same work in a strictly au-

tomatic way - without any arrangement or pre-meditated idea or consideration before or during the work - and without any dominant or regulating function by any one of the artists. The only thing all had in common was the experience with automatic techniques. In the visual arts, experiments like this are rare, but not unusual on an incidental scale. These "group-improvisations", occurring just like in free-jazz, often led to chaos and cacophony, but the working-process itself was the most important and many of the results were remarkable.

As the Dutch anarchist Domela Nieuwenhuis has stated: "In the arts, in that which claims to be called so, anarchy rules." In this way for the Droomschaar artists, art is not only a source of ideas and images but becomes also an instrument exceeding all bounds, allowing for immediate communication, with the collective point of departure being a search for the unknown properties of the human mind that are waiting for discovery. To the anarchist and the surrealist this utopia is not an empty cry, but a union of life and work, of nature and culture, a collective game of poetry and surprise.

## **Postscript**

This essay originally appeared in the French publication *Pied de Grue* (Waiting with Bated Breath) (Atelier de Creation Libertaire, 1994). The magazine *Droomschaar* appeared in 5 issues during 1990-1994. A group of Droomschaar artists named themselves CAPA, Collective Automatic Painters Amsterdam, in 1997 and is still active today (2019). In *Droomschaar* #5 (1994), Rik Lina further elaborated on the anarchist basis of CAPA. An English language excerpt from that article, "Group Anarchy," is reprinted on page 30 [of *The Oystercatcher* #16, Mayday, 2019].

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