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Double Vision:

Germaine Krull's Photographic Relationship with Eli Lotar in Interwar Paris

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
in Art History

by

Christine Robinson

2013

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Double Vision:

Germaine Krull's Photographic Relationship with Eli Lotar in Interwar Paris

by

Christine Robinson

Master of Arts in Art History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor George Baker, Chair

The interwar period produced several important aesthetic developments significant to photography, including the New Vision in Germany, and Surrealism in France. Germaine Krull and Eli Lotar, two photographers independently associated with these two movements, converged in Paris in the late 1920s. This study considers the artists' career-defining projects in tandem: Krull's images of fragmented architecture in her series *Métal* and Lotar's "Abattoir" photographs of corporeal order in slaughterhouses. I begin with an investigation of the body in the work of Krull in order to assess her hybridization of photographic genres and methods, as seen through Rosalind Krauss's concept of the double in surrealist photography. I then turn to Krull's intimate partnership with Lotar and their shared interest in photographic projects related to the body and the machine. Their relationship, as lovers and collaborators, defies the previously

held historiographical separation between the photographers, and in turn, collapses larger art historical categories.

The thesis of Christine Robinson is approved.

Saloni Mathur

Donald McCallum

George Baker, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

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The February 1930 issue of the Belgian art magazine *Variétés* featured two photographs of artists Germaine Krull and Eli Lotar. Their portraits are placed alongside those of other luminaries of the time, including Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dalí and Florence Henri. The photographs of Krull and Lotar offer several striking distinctions from those of their peers.<sup>1</sup> First, these artists each appear with their cameras: the tool of their artistic practices. These apparatuses occupy the artists' gazes; they appear unaware of the cameras that are directed toward them. In addition, Krull and Lotar photographed each other for their portraits in *Variétés*, establishing a connection between them. These photographs provide an entry point into Krull and Lotar as a couple, for the artists were inseparable for a short but critical period at the end of the 1920s. The images that mark the beginning of this essay also signify a conclusion, as they were published the year after Krull and Lotar's relationship in both work and love had ended.

The photographs capture the artists in the process of making their own photographs, though it is unclear if they are staged scenes or merely documentation of each other's photographic processes. Lotar closely crops his horizontal photograph of Krull [Fig. 1]. In it, her face peers into the lens of a large-format view camera, while her right hand holds the lens cap to the side. The sharp focus of the lens contrasts with Krull's slightly blurred face, which appears as though it were caught in motion, or simply out of the range of Lotar's shallow depth of field. Lotar's camera is aligned at about the same height as Krull's lens, and Krull and her camera share the frame equally. Her face occupies the left side of the frame and is turned at an angle to face her camera, while the front plane and lens of the camera fill the right side of the frame, turned toward Krull.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Variétés* 2, no. 10 (February 15, 1930): n.p. Both portraits are located in the lower right corner of consecutive two-page spreads, with Lotar's photograph preceding Krull's by one page.

The dark color of her shirt collar, the angled lens cap, and her nose and tilted profile create oblique lines, which direct our attention to the glass lens and the small burst of light hitting its inner edge. Lotar's close proximity to Krull also reveals the distorted reflection of Krull's face onto her own camera lens. Her reflection fills the space of the lens and merges with it, while also blocking its view of a subject beyond herself. Krull looks at the reflection in the lens, performing a self-evaluating gaze. Krull's face and camera merge into one for a second time, where the light illuminating the right side of her face casts a shadow of her profile directly onto the front standard of the camera. This projection of Krull's profile onto her camera produces an aesthetic fusion, one of many sites of union between the machine and the body in both photographers' careers.

In comparison, Krull orients the photograph of Lotar vertically and includes his head, upper body, and hands [Fig. 2]. *Le photographe Eli Lotar* shows what appears to be a serious artist unaffected by the camera directed at him; instead, he is consumed with his own device. Lotar presses a medium-format camera close against his body with the strap around his neck, and his hands support the camera against his chest as he looks down into the viewfinder. His right hand holds the camera with one finger on the shutter release, while his left hand cups the exterior of the lens, presumably adjusting the aperture or focusing on his subject. Krull clearly distances Lotar from the background, which is brighter and blurred, with faint horizontal and vertical lines and shadows that create a tighter vertical frame around him. He wears a suit and tie, his hair groomed and coiffed. This uniform of sorts allows him to assume the role of the professional photographer at work. Krull's sharp focus and narrow aperture offer Lotar in full detail. With his hands frozen in the frame, he stands poised and ready to take the shot, or poses to look as if he is. The portrait imparts a more comprehensive view of Lotar and his camera—the two are pressed

against each other—and the body and machine fuse. His body and photographic apparatus connect again with his tensed right middle finger. The dark shade of his suit begins to blend with the black camera where they meet along his jacket lapel. Even the shadow along his right hand and thumb absorbs into the darkness. The camera almost looks as if it is growing out of Lotar's body.

The importance of Krull and Lotar's photographs lies in the fusion between the photographers and their cameras. Lotar's body envelops his camera, and Krull's projected profile coalesces with hers, connecting each photographer's body to the machine and to each other through the act of making photographs. In the two *Variétés* photographs, Krull and Lotar share in the same act of turning the camera on each other, and in turn photographing a fusion of the body and the machine. Krull's photograph differs significantly from Lotar's *Germaine Krull, photographe*, which does not impart a commensurate amount of corporeal, spatial, or technological information in its composition. Lotar's image of Krull presents us with lines and curves and spaces of light and dark. It lacks all that is seen in Krull's photograph of Lotar: to complete the whole, we must put together the fragments of her body and her camera.<sup>2</sup>

Krull and Lotar's portraits also usefully illustrate the disparate formal styles and artistic movements with which they have been associated within the history of photography. Two of the important aesthetic developments of the 1920s and 1930s—the New Vision (*Neue Sehen*) in Germany, and Surrealism in France—represent two independent disciplines of artistic production during the interwar period. In order to explore the technological advancements of the twentieth-century machine age, New Vision photographers used unusual angles and perspectives, close-ups, and montages—combining and experimenting with existing traditions in nude, architecture,

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<sup>2</sup> Both photographs recall Man Ray's *Untitled (Self-Portrait with Camera)* also from 1930, in which Man Ray faces his camera while his left hand adjusts the lens. Like Man Ray's self-portrait, the photograph of Krull illustrates an equanimity between her face and her large camera through their similarity in scale.

industry, landscape, and street photography.<sup>3</sup> Surrealism functioned more broadly across the disciplines of literature, poetry, and art. The movement focused on aesthetics based on love, desire, and various forms of psychic and social intervention, including objective chance, free association, the unconscious, and the relationship between dreams and reality. Photography, a medium less acknowledged than Surrealism's other visual forms until the 1980s, made use of techniques such as double exposure, photomontage, and combination printing, as well as a documentary approach conceptually linked to the movement's goals of social revolution.<sup>4</sup>

Art history has typically grouped interwar photographers into a single of these two categories, and in the case of Krull and Lotar, their stories are no different. Krull brought a New Vision aesthetic from Weimar Germany to Paris, where she became known for images of industry and fragmented architecture in her series *Métal*.<sup>5</sup> Lotar's association lay with Surrealism, and his notorious images of slaughterhouses in Paris were published in *Documents*, the journal associated with Georges Bataille and his dissident branch of the movement. I argue that viewing the oeuvres of Krull and Lotar together reveals the ways they blur the conventional boundaries within which the photographers have been categorized.

In this essay, I will investigate several examples of Krull's work in order to assess her hybridizing of photographic genres. My strategy for understanding Krull's modes of hybridization is to turn to the underexplored context of her relationship with Lotar. This essay

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<sup>3</sup> On the New Vision, see Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 400–438.

<sup>4</sup> On the role of photography in Surrealism, see Rosalind Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism" in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986), 87–118, and Krauss and Jane Livingston, *L'Amour Fou: Photography & Surrealism* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> Kim Sichel has written the most comprehensive biography and survey on Krull and her career to date. She also credits Krull with introducing the New Vision to France. See Sichel, *Germaine Krull: Photographer of Modernity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999), 68. For more on Krull's life and work, see Christian Bouqueret, *Germaine Krull: Photographie 1924–1936* (Arles: Musées d'Arles, Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie, 1988), and Klaus Honnef and Christoph B. Rieger, *Germaine Krull: Fotograferen 1922–1966* (Cologne: Rheinland-Verlag GmbH and Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag GmbH, 1977).

challenges traditional understandings of Krull's photographic identity by looking at the two artists in relation to each other. An expanded study would include a more comprehensive look at Lotar as well, but for the purposes of this essay I will focus on Krull. Their close partnership, founded on a mentor-student relationship (Lotar worked as Krull's photographic apprentice) developed into one of love and collaboration.<sup>6</sup> While this brief but crucial period lasted less than three years, it coincided with both of their greatest individual achievements in photography, which ranged from important magazine publications to landmark exhibitions.

Just as Krull's work existed between movements and traditions, so too did the relationship of Krull and Lotar. Their partnership reverses the conventional roles of male photographer and female apprentice prevalent throughout the history of photography, such as the relationships between Man Ray and Lee Miller and Edward Weston and Tina Modotti. While most scholarship has not considered the work of Miller without Man Ray, or Modotti without Weston, this has not been the case for Krull and Lotar.<sup>7</sup> Though neither Krull nor Lotar achieved the same level of lasting notoriety as many of their avant-garde peers, they have existed in photographic history as individuals belonging to significant, but different, historiographic groupings. The relatively small amount of material on both figures challenges a more detailed understanding of their working relationship. Krull's pre-World War II negatives disappeared during the war, resulting in an incomplete archive of her work. Lotar's work appeared lost as well, however, the recent discovery of his negatives in 1991 has resulted in more exposure,

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<sup>6</sup> On Krull and Lotar's relationship, see Annick Lionel-Marie and Alain Sayag, *Eli Lotar* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1993), 12–14, and Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, 84–85.

<sup>7</sup> This history is developing and changing through more recent scholarship on Miller and Modotti. On Modotti, for example, see Carol Armstrong, "This Photography Which Is Not One: In the Gray Zone with Tina Modotti," *October* 101 (Summer 2002): 19–52.

which includes new prints made for a solo exhibition at the Centre Pompidou in 1993.<sup>8</sup> Despite the gaps in the archives of both artists, important prints and publications survived, which offer material that traces their respective evolution and the artistic and personal shifts that occurred when they came together.

This study will also consider the strong affinities in subject matter, which were grounded in explorations of the body and the machine, already seen in their *Variétés* portraits, between the two artists. Krull and Lotar's relationship defies the previously held historiographical separation between the photographers, while further breaking down larger cultural and historical categories. To think of their work relationally requires questioning the often rigid lines between the New Vision and Surrealism, as well as other dichotomies, such as commercialism and the avant-garde, artist and subject, teacher and student, and male and female.

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Krull and Lotar met at a dinner party in Paris in late 1926 or early 1927. By the next day, Lotar became Krull's photography apprentice. They soon became lovers, commencing a partnership that would last until around 1929. At the time of their meeting, Krull had worked as a professional photographer for nearly a decade. Before beginning her photographic career in Paris, Krull had established herself as a commercial photographer in Weimar Germany. Krull received formal photographic training as a student at the rigorous Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt für Photographie in Munich from 1915 to 1917, a school deeply connected to Pictorialist photography. Pictorialism, a movement that began at the end of the nineteenth century, elevated the medium of photography to an art form rather than just a tool for replication. Reacting against the sharp and exact nature of the photographic record, Pictorialist photographers strove for

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<sup>8</sup> See Lionel-Marie and Sayag, *Eli Lotar*. The exhibition catalogue provides the most detailed account of Lotar's life and career (in French). English translations my own. See also Quentin Bajac and Clément Chéroux, *La Subversion des Images: Surréalisme, Photographie, Film* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2009).

individuality and self-expression through creative techniques, such as soft focus and hand manipulation during the printing process.<sup>9</sup> This early exposure to photography as a creative (rather than commercial) endeavor surely made an impact on Krull, who was a young student at the time.

In a self-portrait from 1916 [Fig. 3], Krull makes use of Pictorialist motifs, such as soft focus and diffused lighting. With its tight cropping, the photograph resembles a typical head-and-shoulders portrait format. Krull tilts her head back, however, creating an oblique in the small space of the image. She gazes beyond the camera with a serious expression, and wears a shirt with a white collar, which blends with the lightness of her skin. By eliminating detail in the highlights, the overexposure shifts our attention to her eyes, which carry more detail and contrast. This focus on her eyes emphasizes Krull's vision and her role as the photographer, and not simply the subject. The soft, blurry quality appears at odds with the intensity of her focused gaze, evidencing Krull's combination of experimentation and control. Krull made few self-portraits in her career, and this Pictorialist image distinguishes her role as the merging of photographer and subject. In subsequent years, her work would continue to explore Pictorialist themes in portraiture, particularly the subject of the nude female figure in nature. Krull's serious photographic education, particularly unique at this time for a woman, distinguishes her from many of her male and female peers. Krull's background speaks to her place in a predominantly male world of photography, and it signifies her preparation and tools for independence in her career.

After completing her studies, Krull opened portrait studios in Munich and Berlin, in addition to working as a freelance photographer in Holland. This period—between the beginning of her education in 1916 to the mid-1920s—marked her growing inclination to incorporate New

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<sup>9</sup> On Pictorialism, see Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography*, 297–339.



Vision techniques within her work. This gradual transition and emergence of her new hybrid aesthetic is visible when we compare the 1916 portrait to a later self-portrait that Krull made in 1925 [Fig. 4]. In it, she holds an Ikkare camera up to her face, obscuring her eyes and facial features. Sichel states that the 1925 photograph is a demonstration of Krull's transition from Pictorialism to the "abstracted, constructivist photographic style [of] the New Vision."<sup>10</sup> Calling to mind self-portraits taken by photographers with their cameras visible in their mirrored reflections, particularly by women such as Ilse Bing, Krull's was actually the first of this growing photographic trend in Weimar Germany.<sup>11</sup> Her brightly lit hands gracefully hold the dark camera that contrasts with them. The pinky ring, bracelets, cigarette, and buttons on her sleeve provide small details of the photographer behind the camera. Krull's camera replaces her face in this photograph, substituting her facial features with a machine, and her eyes with its viewfinder and lens. She controls her photographic representation not unlike the self-portrait she made as a photography student in 1916. Krull's self-portrait joins the body and machine together, with the camera superimposed over her face, as if her eye, as camera/machine, would act as a tool for photographic documentation. Symbolically, her mind and vision are conflated for the camera, and her identity is bifurcated by the line made by the edge of the camera down the middle of the frame and her face. The separation also represents a synthesis, bringing together Krull's different photographic identities. This "new woman" embodied photographic styles ranging from Pictorialism, the New Vision, and even Surrealism, and varied roles as artist, commercial photographer, teacher, and lover. In what follows, I will address three more artworks—*Freia*, a stereograph also titled *Freia*, and *Les Amies*—each of which fill out the picture of Krull's formal development between the mid-1910s and the mid-1920s.

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<sup>10</sup> Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, 68.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 313n2.

During her time in Berlin in the early 1920s, Krull made several photographs related to the German subculture *Freikörperkultur* or *Nacktkultur* (free-body movement).<sup>12</sup> Through an association of private social clubs, *Freikörperkultur* promoted nudity as a healthy lifestyle and encouraged nude outdoor activities in nature. *Freikörperkultur* uniquely embraced opposing poles of old and new, tradition and progress, and established the naked body as a site of ambiguity and hybridity. Theater and dance historian Karl Toepfer concisely describes the movement's perception of the body as a "double sign . . . on the one hand, it presents nudity as a return to an eternal primeval, and on the other hand, it regards modern identity as an unprecedented condition of nakedness."<sup>13</sup> In a 1924 photograph of Krull's friend Freia, which shows her standing alone in a wheat field, the nude woman's legs rise out of the tall grasses, her right leg completely vertical and her left leg bent at the knee [Fig. 5]. She is bent backward and assists in creating a corporeal oblique, gesturing from the bottom-right corner to the top-left corner of the frame. Freia's arms break this line as they strongly thrust forward, ending in two fists. Her head of dark short hair intersects with yet another line: a subtly skewed horizon where the field meets a dense grove of trees. This division between wheat and trees follows Freia's line of vision from her face in profile. Art historian Kim Sichel describes this photograph as an embrace of *Freikörperkultur* in its depiction of nature and nudity.<sup>14</sup> However, *Freia* suggests something more complex.

In contrast to the soft, natural light illuminating the body in a serene outdoor setting, Freia's pose and gestures depict action, confidence, and independence. These contradictory elements correlate with the cultural phenomenon of the "new woman" during the Weimar

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<sup>12</sup> Sichel made the connection between Krull's nude photographs and *Freikörperkultur*. See Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, 32. On *Nacktkultur*, see Karl Toepfer, "Nudity and Modernity in German Dance, 1910–30," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3, no. 1 (July 1992): 65.

<sup>13</sup> Toepfer, "Nudity and Modernity in German Dance," 67.

<sup>14</sup> Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, 32.

Republic years (1919–33). Women, particularly those from the urban middle class, attained more political, professional, and sexual freedom after World War I and the establishment of the Republic. Though the gains for the “new woman” were complex and far from equitable to the freedoms of their male counterparts, the opportunities afforded to women were rapidly changing.<sup>15</sup> As one of the first women in her generation to open a photography studio in Berlin, Krull offers a glimpse into Weimar’s embrace of modernity and the contribution of women artists.<sup>16</sup> Armed with a strong photographic education and liberated from tradition, Krull asserted her freedom and gained creative and financial autonomy in a male-dominated field. Her synthesis of gender roles also extended beyond her work and into her life. Krull embraced male and female roles in her lifestyle—she sometimes dressed in men’s clothing and was involved in romantic relationships with men and women.<sup>17</sup>

The subject matter and composition of Krull’s photograph of Freia demonstrate further fusions in gender identity. In presenting her body, *Freia* occupies a physical stance that is both feminine and masculine. Her androgynous appearance correlates with the concept of the “new woman.” With *Freia*, we are confronted with the period’s liberal ideals of sexual freedom and experimentation, as well as the breaking down of cultural and gender stereotypes. The photograph moves beyond a mere technical illustration of beauty or an embrace of nudity.

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<sup>15</sup> On the challenges and complexities of women’s rights in the Weimar Republic, see Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman, and Marion Kaplan, eds., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 11–13.

<sup>16</sup> On the “new woman” and photography, see Naomi Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1994), 125–127, and Mila Ganeva, “Fashion Photography and Women’s Modernity in Weimar Germany: The Case of Yva,” *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2003). See also Marsha Meskimmon and Shearer West, eds., *Visions of the “Neue Frau”: Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany* (Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1995).

<sup>17</sup> Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, xxiii–xxiv. On representations of androgyny and the construction of female identity in Weimar Germany, see Maud Lavin, “Androgyny, Spectatorship, and the Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch,” *New German Critique*, no. 51 (Autumn 1990): 62–86.

Instead, it represents a culturally specific moment of feminine revolution in the portrayal of a powerful female subject by a female author.

The term “New Vision,” coined by photographer and painter Lázsló Moholy-Nagy, refers to the strides made in visual experimentation in Europe between the wars. The New Vision, *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), and Surrealism defined avant-garde activity during this period. The New Vision embodied an abstract constructivist style of European photography, often related to advancements in technology and industry of the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> Krull’s photograph *Freia* suggests her meticulous direction of the body into a composition of abstract shapes and forms, evidencing not only a creative and conceptual shift, but a hybridization of Krull’s Pictorialist background with the formal characteristics of the New Vision. Krull’s exploration of the body through the bold and gestured lines in *Freia* blurs the distinctions between Pictorialism and the New Vision. The work is one of many moments in Krull’s life and career that exemplifies her identity shifts and hybrids.

Krull’s combination of Pictorialism and the New Vision in *Freia* continued in a stereoscopic view project in 1924—this time through a radical orientation of the body and the construct of the photograph [Fig. 6]. Here, fragmented bodies meet a quiet landscape in a set of two images. Krull again photographed *Freia*, this time paired with another woman. The two nude figures occupy the center of the frame and stand calf-high in a shallow lake or pond. They bend forward, facing each other from different directions and aligning at the same angle. Tree leaves extend down into the frame, blurry but directing focus further to where the two women’s heads meet, and down again along their two hanging arms to their hands in the water. Their bodies overlap and tangle, making it difficult to know where one body ends and the other begins. The

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<sup>18</sup> On the New Vision, see Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, 68 and 312, and Maria Morris Hambourg, *The New Vision Photography Between the World Wars* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art), 1989.

positioning of the bodies renders the arms indistinguishable, and two arms jut out from the women's joined heads. Krull's setting recalls common Pictorialist motifs, such as the nude and the landscape, and also literary and allegorical themes. In Krull's photograph, sunlight illuminates the bodies and reflects onto the water in patches of light amidst the dark, where their gazes are frozen. Their downward faces recall the Greek myth of Narcissus, which is in keeping with Pictorialism's frequent use of allegory and ancient myth as a reference point.<sup>19</sup> The tale of the boy obsessed with a reflection in the water, unaware it was his own visage, parallels Krull's image of the two women. The watery reflection here acts as a mirror, presenting a second view of a photographed scene that already functions as a copy of reality.

But the duality does not stop there. For, after all, we are looking at a stereograph. Invented during the late nineteenth century, stereographs consisted of two nearly identical photographs of the same scene, assembled to be viewed side-by-side through a binocular device called the stereoscope. The stereoscope rendered the images with three-dimensional depth in the optical fusion of two images into one. Technology essentially duplicated the photographic format to depict a more convincing depiction of reality. Produced primarily for entertainment and education purposes, the stereograph also played a significant role in the erotic and pornographic photography market.<sup>20</sup> The erotic positioning and nudity of the female bodies in Krull's photograph recall pornographic stereographs and other lesbian erotica. This could provide fertile ground for another study of the photograph, but I would argue that the bodies go further than just sexual play.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The story was also famously depicted in a sixteenth-century painting by Caravaggio, titled *Narcissus*.

<sup>20</sup> Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography*, 34–35 and 220.

<sup>21</sup> Sichel made the connection between Krull's stereograph and pornographic stereographs. See Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, 33.

Krull's female figures create a strange re-enactment of an allegory of love and self-love, doubled. Krull's photograph demands that we think about doubling, and for this we must turn to Rosalind Krauss. Krauss theorized the concept of doubling in her important studies of Surrealist photography, in which she both investigates and challenges the notion of the photograph's role as a double of reality. With regard to reality and its double, Krauss states that "it is doubling that elicits the notion that to an original has been added its copy. The double is the simulacrum, the second, the representative of the original . . . But in being seen in conjunction with the original, the double destroys the pure singularity of the first."<sup>22</sup> Through the mirrored bodies and their reflections, Krull's scene of joined bodies echoes Krauss's concept of the double. But unlike a mirror reflection, the bodies fuse and become one. This project illustrates Krauss's description that doubling "creates within the moment an experience of fission."<sup>23</sup> The double in Krull's photograph then not only signifies a fusion of two entities coming together—bodies, reflections, photographs—but also a fission, a splitting apart. This ability for the double to undergo fission implies that two elements are fundamentally one.

In addition, Krull departs from the nineteenth-century stereograph format by assembling together two identical photographs.<sup>24</sup> Krull's stereograph is not a stereograph at all. Through a technological format that signifies unity through difference, Krull playfully distorts that expectation. Krauss asserts that the double is further complicated by the manipulations of reality employed by the Surrealists, such as photomontage. Photomontage undid photography's claims of documenting reality by cutting up and reconstituting familiar photographic formats—in much the same way that Krull manipulates and undoes the familiar format of the stereograph. Her stereographs lose the ability to create a sense of depth because they are simply a repetition, rather

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<sup>22</sup> Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism" in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, 109.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Sichel explains that Krull glued two photographs together. See Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, 33.

than two slightly differing images that combine to create a new, third image. The visual duplication of the mirror also fascinated the Surrealists, and they used it to produce the double in various ways in their photographic projects. Self-portraits by Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore explored their own reflections in self-portraits, while Eugène Atget's photographs of storefront windows produced reflections of the Parisian streets around him.<sup>25</sup> Rather than document the real, the reflective tools employed by the Surrealists displaced and distorted reality through layers of doubling and redoubling. The original that is doubled, or copied, is not reality, but a social construction of the real.<sup>26</sup> Here we begin to see how Krull transcends traditional art-historical distinctions with her sophisticated use of formal strategies more typically associated with Surrealism.

It is a romantic notion for two bodies to become one. Through love or sex, an amorous or physical connection brings two bodies together. Each body depends on the other for completion, even if just momentarily. Krull's bodies are not easily defined, and they do not behave in ways we might expect. The bodies in Krull's photograph mirror each other and fuse together like two bodily organs—lungs or two chambers of the heart—that require each other for breath, for life. When viewed as one complete form, the bodies resemble the shape of the heart, or the outlines of sexualized body parts like the buttocks or vagina.

The doubling of bodies in Krull's photograph command a reading of love and desire—themes central to the Surrealist movement. Though Krull did not belong to any historical grouping of Surrealism, her 1924 stereograph coincides with its origins. Both *La Révolution Surréaliste*, the first Surrealist journal, and André Breton's first manifesto, *Le Manifeste du*

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<sup>25</sup> Raoul Ubac's *Portrait in a Mirror* from 1938 is another example of a "mirrored double," as discussed by Krauss in "Corpus Delicti" in Krauss and Livingston, *L'Amour Fou*, 78–79.

<sup>26</sup> On Krauss's writings on women and the double in surrealist photography, see Mary Ann Caws, "Seeing the Surrealist Woman: We Are A Problem" in Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli, and Gwen Raaberg, eds., *Surrealism and Women* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 21.

*Surréalisme*, were published in the same year. Beyond this synchronous connection, her stereograph embodies significant connections to Krauss's study of surrealist photography.

Krauss, who called Surrealist photographers “masters of the *informe*,” borrowing from Bataille's term for the unformed or formless, described their photographic methods (with the camera and in the darkroom) as producing a “disorientation of the body.”<sup>27</sup> This disorientation can include manipulated formations of the body and the medium itself—which we see in Krull's use of doubling, corporeal formal play and manipulations, as well as her false construction of the stereograph. The concept of the formless to Bataille “is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form.”<sup>28</sup> Similar to Krauss's description of the body in the photography of Man Ray, Krull's stereograph “redraft[s] the map of what we would have thought the most familiar of terrains.”<sup>29</sup> The body in Krull's work demonstrates a conflation of numerous dualities—among them, fusion and fission, reflection and construction.

We must reformulate our expectations of Krull's work, as they do not solely fit within Pictorialism and the New Vision—and in fact might be seen to include strategies that are proto-Surrealist, or would later come to be called Surrealist as a movement in the history of photography. Her photography provides an exploration of the body in its many distortions and unexpected hybridities as seen through love, desire, and of course through the camera.

In the series *Les Amies* from 1924, a pair of bodies complicates the arrangement of the lone female figure, creating a corporeal doubling [Fig. 7–8]. Following her earlier explorations of the nude figure, Krull moves from more academic studies rooted in her photographic

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<sup>27</sup> Krauss, “Corpus Delicti” in Krauss and Livingston, *L'Amour Fou*, 57–60.

<sup>28</sup> Bataille, Georges, “Formless” in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 31. See also Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Krauss, “Corpus Delicti” in Krauss and Livingston, *L'Amour Fou*, 60.



education to more erotic sexual relationships and interactions between the bodies of lovers. The series *Les Amies* includes eleven photographs of two women on a bed in various states of undress, from hats and coats, with high-heeled shoes both on and off, to just sheer black stockings stretched over their knees. The series unfolds like a sequence in its transition from clothed bodies engaged in foreplay to nearly nude bodies in various sexual positions. A paisley-patterned tapestry and a black-crocheted blanket drape over the quilted bedspread, the tidy organization of them coming undone as the bodies move on top of them throughout the photographs. With heads of short and dark curly hair often masking their faces, the women look nearly identical, making their identification from photograph to photograph challenging to follow. The sexual scenes show touches and embraces, with hands gripping each other, and legs bent, kneeling, intertwined, spread apart, or extended into the air.

Krull's romantic past included relationships with men and one woman, but she was involved in a heterosexual relationship at the time she made these photographs.<sup>30</sup> Though her sexual biography may indeed reveal an interesting detail of this project, something else is at stake here. These photographs represent parts of a whole—body parts in different formal organizations, identities unreadable—pairs of bodies fusing together. Throughout this series of repeated pairings, the two women form a singular body. And these bodies physically connect by making love.

But a machine also exists in this space. In *Les Amies*, Krull directs these bodies and controls movements that evoke intimacy and sexual pleasure in still black-and-white images. These movements freeze at times and blur at others. Krull's point of view and camera position clearly delineates her proximity to the two women in the room, distanced enough to reveal the entire scene but close enough to actually be a participant. This closeness creates a sense of

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<sup>30</sup> Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, 34–35.

authenticity in the details of their interactions in some images, while others feel more posed, as if the women are aware of her presence. Not quite pornographic, they no longer exist within the genre of Pictorialist or academic nude studies and are difficult to categorize.<sup>31</sup> *Les Amies* is a project of the coming together of bodies, a photographic fusion of bodies. This recalls the photographs of Krull and Lotar with their cameras in *Variétés*, where the bodies of the photographers physically fused with their cameras through light and shadows. What is at stake with *Les Amies* is this pairing and the fusion of the two figures, both formal and sexual, and their photographic relationship to Krull and her camera.

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Having now established Krull's propensity for hybridity through strategies of doubling and fusion, in the second half of this essay, I will consider Lotar to contextualize this discussion. This section will address key comparisons of two of their career-defining projects—Krull's *Métal* publication and Lotar's "Abattoir" series—to investigate their explorations of the body and the machine.<sup>32</sup> These projects arose during a period of rich collaboration and joint appearances in various formats—specifically, magazines and exhibitions—and marked the peak of both of their careers.

Not much is known about Lotar's life in France before photography and before Krull. Born in Paris but raised in Bucharest, Lotar returned to France in 1924. He appeared as an extra in a few films and worked as a mason in Nice before arriving in Paris in 1926. After Krull and Lotar met, they lived together in Montmartre. They engaged in a very social and intellectual life; they frequented nightclubs in Pigalle and were regulars at Les Deux Magots, where they

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> I will refer to Lotar's project as the "Abattoir" photographs in order to reference their illustrative function in Bataille's essay. The larger series is titled *Aux Abattoirs de la Villette* in Bois and Krauss, *Formless*, 42–44, and *La Villette Abattoir* in Dawn Ades and Simon Baker, *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and Documents* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), 106–113.

interacted with other avant-garde artists, filmmakers, writers, and thinkers. Lotar and Krull were arguably the most professionally and artistically successful during their years together. For instance, Krull's notoriety surrounding the publication of *Métal* in 1928 also coincided with their relationship.<sup>33</sup> The positive reception of the project led to the publication of her photography in various magazines, and Lotar assisted her with these editorial jobs. For the eleventh issue of the French magazine *Vu* (May 31, 1928), Krull photographed the city of Paris, with an assignment that directed her to avoid aerial views. Krull recalls the commission as an independent job that developed into a collaboration with Lotar. They encountered a door at the Eiffel Tower that warned “*Défense d’entrer,*” trespassed anyway, and found the tower's mechanical parts—the wheels, cables, pistons, and iron rods. Lotar directed her attention to certain details. She composed and captured photographs with her Ikaretté, making the series a conceptual, aesthetic, and technical collaboration.<sup>34</sup>

During this time of mentorship and partnership, Krull imparted her insights on photography to Lotar. She encouraged him to go beyond the conventional by releasing the beauty of architectural lines, for “each new angle multiplies the world by itself.”<sup>35</sup> Her guidance proved to be influential. According to Krull, Lotar learned photography quickly, and his career took off with the publication of his photographs in important visual-culture magazines, including *Jazz*, *Bifur*, and *Documents*. Though both Krull and Lotar published their work individually, they were often featured together, as seen from their portraits in *Variétés*.

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<sup>33</sup> *Métal*, dated 1927 by Krull, was most likely published in 1928. Reviews on her project, first appearing in January 1929, were featured in magazines such as *Jazz*, *L’Art Vivant*, *Europe*, and *Variétés*. See Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, 76–77 and n315–16.

<sup>34</sup> Lionel-Marie and Sayag, *Eli Lotar*, 13.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* “Fuir le conventionnel, dégager la beauté des lignes d’une architecture, car ‘chaque angle nouveau multiplie le monde par lui-même,’ sont les secrets qu’elle livre à son assistant.”

The art-and-culture magazine *Variétés*, published from 1928 to 1930, embodied many new cultural and artistic developments in visual art, film, theater, literature, poetry, dance and fashion. *Variétés* attempted to cover these diverse subjects through painting and photography and literature and poetry, in a somewhat loose presentation.<sup>36</sup> Its format included various sequences of images placed between texts, not intending to illustrate them, but rather as standalones or as contributions to a larger, issue-wide theme. The groupings featured photographs under a specific heading or with individual titles and photographer credits, though not always. Within these groupings, the sequencing created relationships between photographs—two to four per page, in spreads of two or more pages.<sup>37</sup> Its wide focus in subject matter and photographically illustrated series compared to contemporaries such as *Vu*, a news-focused magazine established in Paris at the same time. However, *Variétés* has come to play an important role in the history of Surrealism. Before the February 1930 issue, where Krull and Lotar occupied the same pages as several important Surrealist artists of the time, *Variétés* published an issue dedicated to the movement in June 1929. Titled “Le Surréalisme en 1929,” the issue was edited by André Breton (the French founder of Surrealism), and established the movement’s intentions and ideologies.<sup>38</sup>

*Variétés* prominently featured both Krull and Lotar’s editorial photographs in numerous issues. Their images often appeared in the same issue, or their work was situated together as illustrations for the same multi-author photographic essay. For example, in the January 1929 issue, Krull and Lotar’s side-by-side photographs illustrate several photographic essays,

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<sup>36</sup> See *Variétés* 1, no. 1–12 (May 15, 1928–April 15, 1929) and *Variétés* 2, no. 1–12 (May 15, 1929–April 15, 1930).

<sup>37</sup> On the format of *Variétés* (in relationship to Eugène Atget), see Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 102–108.

<sup>38</sup> Silvano Levy, “André Breton and the Belgian Connection” in Ramona Fotiade, ed., *André Breton: The Power of Language* (Exeter, UK: Elm Bank Publications, 2000), 132. Though Krull and Lotar were absent from this issue, their extensive involvement with *Variétés* and the magazine’s lasting identification with Surrealism is a connection worth noting.

including *Mains*, *Ectoplasmes*, and *Plantes d'appartement*, while also appearing independently in other series.<sup>39</sup>

In *Mains* (Hands) [Fig. 9], the top image, Krull's *La lettre*, features a woman's hands and a letter. Her left hand presses down on the paper, while her right hand holds a magnifying glass. The bottom image, Lotar's *Les mains qui lisent . . .* (The hands that read . . .), shows five pairs of hands arranged around a rectangular table, resting on open books. Both images crop the body to explore different formations of hands—touching and interacting with words on paper, fingers splayed and bent. And the two photographs communicate with each other—through the juxtaposition of hands and through the pairing of the artists. They also connect with Surrealism in their dream-like imagery, illustrating a kind of séance-like gathering in Lotar's image and a focus on the doubling of hands in both photographs.

In that same year, the magazine *L'Art vivant*, in response to the question “La Photographie est-elle un art?,” included the work of Krull and Lotar, along with that of Eugène Atget, Man Ray, and André Kertész. Art historian Ian Walker states that the photographs reproduced in the piece prioritized “radical, formalist composition, industrial subject matter and large intense close-ups, which all suggest a strong affinity with the style of Krull.”<sup>40</sup> This observation underscores Krull's New Vision influence not only on Lotar, but also on other artists working in Paris.

During the late 1920s, the New Vision carried a strong presence in many international exhibitions. The most important of these, *Film und Foto*, occurred in Stuttgart, also in 1929. Both Krull and Lotar's photographs were included in the approximately one thousand images

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<sup>39</sup> See *Variétés* 1, no. 9 (January 15, 1929): n.p.

<sup>40</sup> Ian Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams*, 130.

from Europe, the Soviet Union, and the United States.<sup>41</sup> Similar to *Variétés*, *Film und Foto* featured a wide array of photographic subjects. Significantly, the exhibition contained photographs intended for both art and commerce. Art historian Douglas Nickel attributes this combination of photographic fields to adviser Moholy-Nagy and the Bauhaus-driven desire to break down distinctions between different visual arenas.<sup>42</sup>

Krull and Lotar's inclusion in the exhibition further complicates a precise categorization for them both. Their intense public collaboration in multiple formats, namely group exhibitions like *Film und Foto* and magazine publications like *Variétés*, is one of the primary reasons their work demands to be seen together.

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It was Lotar's commission by Georges Bataille in 1929 to illustrate what would become the writer's short text "Abattoir," in *Documents*, that defined his artistic career.<sup>43</sup> *Documents* comprised fifteen issues running from 1929 to 1930. It contained written and visual material about contemporary culture with a strong emphasis on art history. As stated on its cover, its conceptual aims included "Doctrines, Archéologie, Beaux-Arts, Ethnographie," and, in later issues, "Variétés."<sup>44</sup> Each issue featured a section titled "Dictionnaire Critique"—dictionary entries for a series of seemingly random words.<sup>45</sup> Lotar's commissioned photographs accompanied the critical dictionary entry for "Abattoir" (slaughterhouse).

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<sup>41</sup> See Ute Eskildsen and Jan-Christopher Horak, *Film und Foto der Zwanziger Jahre* (Stuttgart: Württembergischer Kunstverein, 1979).

<sup>42</sup> Douglas R. Nickel, "History of Photography: State of Research," *The Art Bulletin* 83, no. 3 (September 2001): 550.

<sup>43</sup> See *Documents* (Paris: Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1991). On the history of *Documents*, see Bois and Krauss, *Formless*, and Ades and Baker, *Undercover Surrealism*. Eight photographs from the series were also featured in *Variétés* as a four-page photographic essay titled "La Viande." See *Variétés* 2, no. 12 (April 15, 1930): n.p. See also, Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams*, 134–136.

<sup>44</sup> Theory, Archaeology, Fine Art, Ethnography, and Miscellanea. Translations my own.

<sup>45</sup> On *Documents*' "critical dictionary," see Bois and Krauss, *Formless*, 16–18.

Photographed at the slaughterhouses at La Villette, Lotar's graphic images of bovine body parts and innards are arresting in their horror and beauty. *Documents* typically chose photographs to illustrate completed texts, but, in a unique inversion, Bataille finished his piece after seeing Lotar's photographs.<sup>46</sup> Like Bataille's combination of order and chaos in his text, the photographs give both near and distanced views of death and the alternate conditions of its aftermath—at times messy and gory, and at times arranged and clean.<sup>47</sup> In the most notorious photograph of the “Abattoir” spread, an array of cow hooves stand upright and lean against an exterior wall of a building [Fig. 10]. The collective height of the hooves indicate the precision with which they have been severed, and the remains are now arranged in tidy pairs, eerily placed together like a ghostly herd. The desolate area surrounding them gives no evidence of the slaughter. Instead, dismembered body parts rest between a clean cobblestone path and a dark, heavily scuffed wall. The name “Pichard,” most likely the scrawled name of the meat trader, relates to its contextual surroundings and the feet below.<sup>48</sup> The walkway leads past the wall and out to another space, deeper into the slaughterhouse property, where evidence of the acts must surely reside. Despite the photograph's depth and distanced view, Lotar does not reveal the violence that resulted in the severed parts—instead he shows a precise arrangement. Art historian Yve-Alain Bois aptly observes that it is “the banality of this very order that is sinister.”<sup>49</sup>

Scholars have placed the “Abattoir” photographs within several conceptual frameworks, including the notion of sacrifice, an important theme in the writings of Bataille. Bois observes

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<sup>46</sup> Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams*, 127. Three of Lotar's photographs were included in *Documents*.

<sup>47</sup> Walker made a similar observation. See Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams*, 134–135. On the “Abattoir” text, see Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams*, 134; Bois, “Abattoir” in Bois and Krauss, *Formless*, 43–51; and Neil Cox, “Sacrifice” in Ades and Baker, *Undercover Surrealism*, 106–116.

<sup>48</sup> Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams*, 127. The wall's markings prefigure Brassai's closely cropped photographs that would follow a few years later.

<sup>49</sup> See Bois, “Abattoir” in Bois and Krauss, *Formless*, 44.

that Lotar's photographs seem at first to contradict Bataille's text in their lack of violence, but end up functioning as an appropriate illustration.

According to Bois, there is a kind of double play in *Documents*' "critical dictionary" entries, where each term has two uses. The "double use" in Lotar's photographs embodies violence and sacrifice, horror and its mediation.<sup>50</sup> Other scholarship looks to the opposing aesthetics of the two branches of Surrealism in how the images can be viewed as crude or erotic.<sup>51</sup> This conflicting notion of Surrealism lies with the contention between André Breton, the early founder of Surrealism, and Bataille. A vocal dissident of Surrealism through his writings, Bataille berated the movement for numerous faults, ranging from the prefix of its name to its revolutionary ideals that Bataille complained were unrelated to class strife.<sup>52</sup> Bataille strongly opposed Breton's Surrealist manifestos and his "poetic" affinities, stating, "All of existence, conceived as purely literary by M. Breton, diverts him from the shabby, sinister, or inspired events occurring all around him, from what constitutes the real decomposition of an immense world."<sup>53</sup> Lotar's photographs for "Abattoir" align with this rejection of Breton's notion of "the marvelous" to instead accept reality and human experience.<sup>54</sup>

*Documents* itself has been considered as one of Bataille's means of challenging the automatism and unconscious expression idealized by Breton and the Surrealists through "strategies of de-sublimation, allowing an unblinking stare at violence, sacrifice and seduction through which art was 'brought down' to the level of other kinds of objects."<sup>55</sup> Lotar's gritty view of the interior of the slaughterhouse presents a silent violence and the very real aftermath of

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 46–47.

<sup>51</sup> Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams*, 130. See also Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), xii.

<sup>52</sup> Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, 39.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>54</sup> On his notions of "the marvelous," see André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism" in *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1972), 16.

<sup>55</sup> Ades and Fiona Bradley, "Introduction" in Ades and Baker, *Undercover Surrealism*, 11.



death that strays from Breton's notions of Surrealist love and desire. However, Lotar's photographs share the ideals of Breton. The pairings and arrangements signal relationships—both formal and bodily. They remind us of what has been lost—the phantom limbs and body parts that no longer connect to their hooves beg to be imagined. The animal bodies once existed in pairs, in relationships of the living, embodying notions of love and loss that closely align with Breton's. Lotar's photographs, like Krull's, never quite fit into one defined category.

The relationship between industry and the body also plays an important role in these photographs. Art historian Ian Walker states that the “deaths of these animals is a bureaucratic process—they are placed in a row as if on an assembly line,” and this process creates a juxtaposition of bodies and machines.<sup>56</sup> Human bodies participate in the machine-like labor and slaughter of animal bodies at the industrial site of La Villette. With monotonous labor confined within the walls of the factory, the workers too exist as cogs in the slaughterhouse machine.

Lotar's photographs reinforce the idea of body and the machine by focusing on the structure and mass production that are associated with the industrial in terms of the repetitive production process and endless repetition of slaughter. In another photograph from the series, six wrapped bundles of animal flesh or organs lie on a sidewalk [Fig. 11]. Lotar positions his camera low (almost on the ground) to get close enough to see detail, but held back enough to show us the context of the bloody piles. His approach recalls crime-scene photographs, in which the details need to be recorded in all their gory detail. Blood drips down the sidewalk toward the camera in thin, vein-like lines, running and connecting with dark liquid from the other heaps, until they stop abruptly at the crack of the sidewalk's curb. The bundles appear to expel the blood, or perhaps the liquid leaks from the dark and murky puddle gathered in the open doorway behind them. To the right, blood-marked traces implicate the movement of the piles into their current

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<sup>56</sup> Walker, *City Gorged with Dreams*, 130.

configuration. Like the hooves, these remnants of animal bodies lay arranged in pairs, with flesh positioned against flesh. The bundles obfuscate their contents—they are secured by what looks like animal skin, almost completely covering what is inside. At first, the small heaps resemble actual animals with their different-colored coats, though they are most likely the discarded viscera of cows, giving the photograph a second layer of grotesque realization.

Though the tools and machines used in the dismantling of the bodies do not appear within the frame, the organization of these sacks echo the process in which they have taken part. An assembly line of remains, these animal parts have undergone the process that has slaughtered animals before them and will certainly do the same to those after them. And the seriality present in both “Abattoir” photographs—a seriality of flesh—reinforces this mechanical relationship. Lotar’s other photographs taken at La Villette reveal more than the remains of slaughtered cattle in their industrially organized formations. Others show the laborers at work, in the process of killing the animals, or taking a break for lunch. These photographs incorporate the human body into the industrial space and signify the specific labor required to continue the serial process of slaughter.

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Krull, too, made photographs of the meat industry, through her images of the stalls and covered market at Les Halles in 1929 [Fig. 12–13]. The sepia-toned images published in her book *100 x Paris* create a serial portrait of Paris through the documentation of its monuments, boulevards, people, and architecture.<sup>57</sup> The photographs at Les Halles offer just a small piece of a larger picture of Paris, rather than a deeper, darker exploration of the meat industry. However, Krull’s project depicts an interwar Paris with evidence of the manufacture and labor involved in its history and development. Included in *100 x Paris* is the photograph *The foundation pillars of*

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<sup>57</sup> See Krull, *100 x Paris* (Berlin: Verlag der Reihe, 1929).

*the Eiffel Tower* [Fig. 14], a view of the lower section of the Eiffel Tower, a different perspective than the top iconic point most visible throughout the city. Yet the iron lattice, sweeping arch, and contextual landscape make the tower easily recognizable. The miniscule people and monuments below contrast against the grand scale of the iron tower and its curve stretching across the frame, though the photographed portion is just a small section of the larger structure. This fragmented cropping of the tower, juxtaposed against the white, hazy sky, highlights the intricate details and latticework of the steel construction in its curves and gridded lines.

Krull had photographed the Eiffel Tower previously as part of a series of abstract investigations of industrial architecture and machinery. Titled *Métal*, the portfolio of sixty-four untitled photographs comprised fragmented views of the Eiffel Tower, bridges, cranes, ports, and machines taken in France, Germany, and Holland. The photographs contain no captions or information to identify the structures, and they are not organized thematically or geographically.<sup>58</sup> Sharing an affinity with the work of photographers Moholy-Nagy and Albert Renger-Patzsch, Krull's photographs in *Métal* are described by Sichel as “celebrat[ing] the confusion, speed, and simultaneity of the industrial world.”<sup>59</sup> In the series' absence of ground and horizon line, the closely cropped details, fragments, and multiple exposures give a disorienting sensation, embodying a filmic-montage effect in both the compositions and the organization of the book.<sup>60</sup> Filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein described montage as having a “desired image [that] is not fixed or ready-made, but arises—is born . . . assembled in the spectator's

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<sup>58</sup> Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, 77.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

perception.”<sup>61</sup> In the format of a photographic book, the individual photographs seen together in their edited and serial form creates a larger idea as realized by the viewer.

On the cover of *Métal* [Fig. 15], the word “KRULL” is printed in large, white, all-capitalized letters. Each letter is a different size, and they are stacked vertically and laid over a photographed detail of the Eiffel Tower.<sup>62</sup> The letters descend down the cover, in a broken line, and interact with the architectural angles below them. This disordered typeface lends a heightened sense of motion to the angles and curves in the cropped view of industrial architecture. Though difficult to discern, the image shows the tower’s elevator wheels, and the composition’s tight focus on the tower’s operating mechanics is a reoccurring motif in the depiction of structures and machines in *Métal*. Lotar also photographed the Eiffel Tower, and his images were similarly cropped and focused on details of the iron construction. Krull and Lotar’s Eiffel Tower photographs suggest a likeness that is impossible to ignore. But the more unlikely comparison of Krull’s *Métal* series and Lotar’s “Abattoir” photographs also offer an overlap in content.

*Métal* was promoted in advertisements as “the dance of the metal nudes,” and this angle was also articulated by the publication’s subtitle, *métaux nus*.<sup>63</sup> The promotion of metal and corporeality suggests a crucial analogy when considering Krull’s oeuvre and previous projects of bodies. The duality of the body and the machine in *Métal* once more brings together formal elements associated with Pictorialism, the New Vision, and Surrealism. If, in the singular image Freia, we saw a female nude demonstrating strong, stark, dance-like gestures in contrast with her soft female form, here the female nude is entirely subsumed into the machine. We have moved

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<sup>61</sup> On Eisenstein’s montage theories, see Annette Michelson, “Reading Eisenstein Reading ‘Capital,’” *October* 2 (Summer 1976), 30. See also Peter Wollen, “Eisenstein’s Aesthetics,” *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 19–73.

<sup>62</sup> Sichel, *Germaine Krull*, 77.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

from the pastoral setting of the field into the heart of mechanical industry, and yet these corporeal parallels remain strong, and indeed the defining aspect through which Krull's work is advertised. In plate 23 [Fig. 16], four metal pipes extend upward from the bottom of a steel wall with gridded lines, up to the top of the frame. Each pair connects to a single pipe and then a duct, creating what looks like two metal bodies of torsos and legs. The pipes twist and bend, catching the hot reflections of bright lights. Though the hard, cool steel of the pipes exudes rigidity, their lines are fluid, falsely portraying softness in their winding, linear forms. Their purpose is unclear. Sichel states that "by juxtaposing so many industrial details without allowing them to function, Krull removes the machines from their immediate functions, creating instead a dance of activated industrial shapes."<sup>64</sup> And indeed, these pipes *move*.

Plate 16 from *Métal* depicts six metal gears, all of different geometric shapes and sizes [Fig. 17]. Krull hones in on the toothed gears, revealing nothing about what kind of larger machine they are a part of. The shapes of the vertical pairs oddly match, as each component would rotate and mesh with its partner, presumably at different speeds and torques. The connected gears also symbolize an eternal relationship, where one cannot exist without the other. These parts implicate movement, but they are strangely frozen without any kind of blurring of motion. In Krull's stereograph, it was the inseparable bodies, resembling two halves of a heart or lungs, which were locked in an eternal relationship of interdependence. Here, what could be seen as interdependent bodily organs of a larger body, become the interlocked cogs of the machine. The even-numbered pairs of gears also recall Lotar's pairs of cow hooves, the isolated parts of a body that supply its ability to move. And like the hooves and entrail bundles, the gears share a symbolic connection to industry and progress through the corporeal, representing mechanical hands that push and rotate to produce a cyclical output. Even in Krull's images of hard, cold

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 80.

industrial elements, pairings and partnerships exist, like those found in Lotar's "Abattoir" photographs, that imply interaction and connection.

In 1927, the same year as Krull's creation of *Métal*, Sigmund Freud published his essay "Fetishism."<sup>65</sup> In it, Freud describes his concept of the fetish as a form of substitution originating from the moment of a male child's realization of sexual difference from his mother. This substitute, standing in for his mother's lack of male genitals—which creates a fear of castration—becomes realized as a form of sexual desire. Freud explains that the "purpose of the fetish precisely is to preserve it from being lost."<sup>66</sup> In the machine age of the twentieth century, particularly from a New Vision perspective, the desire for new commodities, advanced modes of technology, and industrial expansion operated as forms of cultural fetish. In Krull's *Métal* series, the attention to curved, angular details and smooth, shiny surfaces represents a desire for the mechanical. However, Krull's photographs do not simply reflect an exploration of machines—they sexualize them. Their relationship to the concept of the fetish also corresponds with Surrealism in its exploration of constructions of both reality and sexuality.<sup>67</sup>

The dynamic, fragmented forms in Krull's photographs reflect a displacement from the real that is bodily and libidinal. In Freud's essay, he recounts a case of one patient's fetish for a "shine on the nose," demonstrating the fetish as a visual moment that constructs reality.<sup>68</sup> This bodily "shine" also manifests in Krull's images: the metallic shine of a new bridge or the gleaming sunlight on the Eiffel Tower. Though Krull's photographs depict only pieces of the whole, they provide just enough for them to operate as fetishized objects in the shiny newness of their industrial shapes and also in their resemblance to sexualized parts of the body.

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<sup>65</sup> See Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth, 1964), 21: 153–61.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Krauss, "Corpus Delicti" in Krauss and Livingston, *L'Amour Fou*, 95.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

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In conclusion, I would like to return to the two *Variétés* portraits that opened this essay, and look at them anew after exploring the careers and collaboration of Krull and Lotar. Their portraits of each other in *Variétés* create significant complications and contradictions in their artistic identifications. In Krull's photograph of Lotar, she pulls back, opening up the view of Lotar and the space around him. Lotar's portrait of Krull closes in on her, filling the frame with fragments of her body and camera. However, when considering Lotar's "Abattoir" photographs and Krull's *Métal* series in relationship to their portraits in *Variétés*, their formal elements actually operate in opposition to each other. Why do Krull and Lotar represent each other so differently? And why do they depict each other in ways that contradict the formal characteristics of their career-defining projects?

These inquiries lead to a larger question of authorship. How did each artist inform the content as subjects? Lotar straddled the two branches of Surrealism under Breton and Bataille in his "Abattoir" photographs, after emerging out of something closer to the New Vision under Krull's tutelage. Krull hybridized elements of Pictorialism, the New Vision, and Surrealism in *Métal*, and throughout her career, all while collaborating with Lotar. Their partnership and careers give reason to return to the *Variétés* images with our ideas of identification and authorship upended, and even reversed. Who has authorship in these photographs after all? Krull's representation of Lotar reflects a close relationship to his photographs of distanced, ordered space that frames the animal remains. In Lotar's view of Krull, his camera's close proximity to her body and machine does not appear so different from Krull's "dance of the metal nudes" approach in her cropped views of industry. It appears as though both Krull and Lotar

operated as authors—not merely as artists, but also as subjects. Or, alternatively, Krull and Lotar acknowledged their partners’ photographic styles as an element of their portraits.

A final set of photographs brings together these questions and suggests a model for photographic authorship as nonsingular, nor tightly bound to art movements. Lotar and Krull made two photographs around 1930, though this date is uncertain especially as it would place the taking of the photographs after the termination of their relationship.<sup>69</sup> Their authorship lies in question as well, as differing photographic credits exist either with both of their names, or simply one.<sup>70</sup> In the two images, one horizontal and one vertical, a nude woman wears only long, black leather gloves. In the horizontal photograph *Sans Titre* [Fig. 18], the frame crops her body just below the shoulders, and her skin and hair nearly touch all sides of it. Her head tilts forward and leans into her gloved hands, which cover her face and extend past her wrists at the bottom edge of the photograph. The gloves fill the center of the composition, obscuring her chin, mouth, and cheeks, and allowing her nose and forehead to come forward, opaque white against the shiny, black leather. Her right ring finger and pinky separate slightly to reveal one eye looking straight at the camera. The woman’s gloved gesture recalls the juxtaposed images of hands made by Krull and Lotar for *Variétés*, where the focus on hands eliminated the body from the frame. In Krull and Lotar’s untitled photograph, more pieces of the body reveal itself in and around the pose of the hands, despite its playful attempt at masking the subject. This image also relates to Krull’s self-portrait from 1925, in which she holds her camera to her face, conflating the

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<sup>69</sup> The photographs belong to the collection of the Centre Pompidou, Paris, which lists the date as c.1930. See Bajac and Chéroux, *La Subversion des Images*, 468, and Lionel-Marie and Alain Sayag, *Eli Lotar*, 76–77.

<sup>70</sup> The horizontal photograph, *Sans Titre* is credited to Lotar and Krull in Bajac and Chéroux, *La Subversion des Images*, 468, and to Lotar in Lionel-Marie and Alain Sayag, *Eli Lotar*, 76. The vertical image, *Nu*, is credited to Germaine Krull in Lotar’s retrospective catalogue and placed directly next to *Sans Titre*. See Lionel-Marie and Alain Sayag, *Eli Lotar*, 77. The confusing arrangement and photographic credits led me to believe in my early research that Krull was in fact the subject. The identity of the subject remains uncertain.



machine with her vision.<sup>71</sup> Here, the gloves function as a contrasting force against the nude body, suggesting duelling oppositions occurring on a singular level.

In the vertical *Nu* [Fig. 19], the frame reveals a longer expanse of the nude body. Her head tilts upward, cropping her eyes out of the frame. With one of her gloved hands, she grasps the underside of her chin and neck creating a dark horizontal line against her skin. Her left gloved arm extends diagonally across her body, pushing against her left breast, and her fingers press against the skin above her right breast. The torso and hips appear as a soft and blurred light-colored section below. Again, the photograph formally plays with light and dark, flesh and leather. These dualities also demonstrate a hybridization of the many photographic associations to which Krull and Lotar have belonged. It is difficult to gauge each artist's authorship function here, but it is certain that we are looking at a dialogue of collaboration. The couple is present but acting together on one side of the camera. Or is the subject Krull? Regardless, a fusion occurs here—the camera fuses bodies together through the taking of the photograph—the subject with the photographers, as well as the two photographers themselves. These photographs render a record of the sexualized body as much as they create one of Krull and Lotar's relationship, fittingly made through their collaborative camera. These photographs, and their portraits in *Variétés*, all from around 1930, serve as a culmination of their hybridized photographic projects, as well as their time together as collaborators and lovers.

Much like the content of the magazine *Variétés*, in which a narrow focus is difficult to categorize succinctly through its juxtapositions of varied art and cultural formats, the specific place in history for the photographic projects of Germaine Krull and Eli Lotar is also hard to define. Their work breaks down the categories of photographic history, blurring distinctions

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<sup>71</sup> The pose also recalls a portrait of Jean Cocteau made by Krull, c.1929, in which he places his left hand over his face and reveals his right eye in the space made between two of his fingers.

between art movements and associations. I argue that this happens because of a two-sided vision of coupling. The word coupling has two meanings – one, the act of two people coming together and two, a mechanical connection. In the years of their relationship, Krull and Lotar cannot be separated from each other, just as they cannot be separated from their cameras. Their physical coupling represents a double vision—resulting in a coupling of the body with the machine—seen photographically through bodies as machines, bodies constructed by machines, bodies slaughtered by machines, bodies loved through machines. This merging of the body and machine is what Krull and Lotar shared briefly in the interwar years in Paris, collapsing their history of separate identities into a hybridized narrative of the couple.

## Figures

Fig. 1. Eli Lotar, *Germaine Krull, photographe*, *Variétés* 2, no. 10 (February 15, 1930): n.p.

Fig. 2. Germaine Krull, *Le photographe Eli Lotar*, *Variétés* 2, no. 10 (February 15, 1930): n.p.

Fig. 3. Germaine Krull, *Munich*, 1916. Gelatin silver print, 13.9 x 8.8 cm. Germaine Krull Nachlass, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

Fig. 4. Germaine Krull, *Self-Portrait*, 1925. Gelatin silver print, 20.5 x 15.1 cm. Collection Ann and Jürgen Wilde, Zülpich.

Fig. 5. Germaine Krull, *Freia*, 1924. Gelatin silver print, 6.9 x 5.1 cm. Private Collection, New York.

Fig. 6. Germaine Krull, *Freia*, 1924. Stereoscopic view, gelatin silver prints, 7 x 10.7 cm. Private Collection, New York.



Fig. 7. Germaine Krull, From *Les Amies*, c. 1924. Gelatin silver print, 15.9 x 21 cm. Collection Susan Ehrens, Berkeley.

Fig. 8. Germaine Krull, From *Les Amies*, c. 1924. Gelatin silver print, 15.5 x 21.2 cm. Collection Susan Ehrens, Berkeley.

Fig. 9. Germaine Krull and Eli Lotar, *Mains, Variétés* 1, no. 9 (January 15, 1929): n.p.

Fig. 10. Eli Lotar, *La Villette Abattoir (Aux Abattoirs de la Villette)*, 1929. Silver gelatin print, 32 x 25 cm. Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de Création industrielle.

Fig. 11. Eli Lotar, *La Villette Abattoir*, 1929. Silver gelatin print, 6.5 x 9 cm. Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne – Centre de Création industrielle.

Fig. 12. Germaine Krull, *Aux Halles, pavillon de la viande*. *100 x Paris* (Berlin: Verlag der Reihe, 1929), 79.

Fig. 13. Germaine Krull, *Aux Halles. 100 x Paris* (Berlin: Verlag der Reihe, 1929), 80.

Fig. 14. Germaine Krull, *Les piliers de base de la Tour Eiffel. 100 x Paris* (Berlin: Verlag der Reihe, 1929), 41.



Fig. 15. Germaine Krull, Cover, *Métal*, 1928. Collotype, 23.5 x 17.1 cm. Germaine Krull Nachlass, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

Fig. 16. Germaine Krull, Untitled (*Métal*, Plate 23), c. 1925–28. Gelatin silver print, 22.3 x 15.9 cm. Collection A. Jammes, Paris.

Fig. 17. Germaine Krull, Untitled (*Métal*, Plate 16), 1928. Gelatin silver print, Germaine Krull Nachlass, Museum Folkwang, Essen.

Fig. 18. Eli Lotar, Germaine Krull, *Sans Titre*, c. 1930. 8.9 x 9.9 cm. Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris.

Fig. 19. Germaine Krull, *Nu*, c. 1930. 23 x 17.5 cm. Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris.

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