

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
“Courts-circuits et visions disjonctées : œuvre et réseaux de Claude Pélieu/
Short-circuits and Fused Visions: The Works and Networks of Claude Pélieu”
University of Chicago Center Paris, June 11-12, 2020

CALL FOR PAPERS

Born in 1934 in the village of Beauchamp, near Pontoise (France), Claude Pélieu was an influential figure in a number of contemporary transatlantic artistic and literary scenes from the 1960s until his death in 2002, yet he remains relatively unknown and absent from historical narratives of the period. In the 1950s, he began drawing and experimenting with collage, and later studied painting in Fernand Leger’s atelier. He published his first poems in 1956 in the magazine *Rendez-vous avec le sol*, followed by further texts in 1959 in Henri Chopin’s *Cinquième saison*. However, after these early efforts, French readers would have to wait until 1967 to discover his collages and poetry in the Cahiers de L’Herne, in a special volume also dedicated to William Burroughs and Bob Kaufman.

In the meantime, Pélieu had spent two traumatic years in Algeria after a forced conscription into the army. After returning to Paris in 1959, he met American painter Mary Beach, who would become his lifelong collaborator. Leaving France for San Francisco in 1963, the couple became prolific translators of Beat poets and writers, among them Bob Kaufman, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Alongside their idiosyncratic ‘translation-adaptations’ for French publishers such as Christian Bourgois, they worked intensively in local scenes on the West Coast and in New York. In 1966, Mary Beach founded her own publishing house, Beach Books, while Pélieu published a variety of texts in the underground press and in *little* magazines in Europe and in the USA. Until the late 1970s, Pélieu dedicated much of his efforts to writing in French, English and *franglais*, before shifting his focus towards collage, painting, and mail art from the 1980s until the end of his life. Despite this intensive activity spanning a number of decades, recognition of Pélieu and Beach’s contribution to French and American literary and artistic history has been slow in forthcoming.

Influenced by the surrealists, the Dadaists, by Artaud, Michaux, Céline and even Prévert, Pélieu plotted a tangential and singular course through the collective adventure of the Beat Generation, practicing cut-up techniques soon after their initiation by William Burroughs and Brion Gysin and persistently exploring various forms of creation in a tireless attempt to reinvent poetry, prose, collage and painting. From the 1960s onward, he worked extensively with countless artists and poets, forming a veritable constellation of collaborators and fellow travelers.

Viscerally archeological, Pélieu sought to dig through the “dustbins of history and memory,” at the same time as he adopts what French poet Lucien Suel has called a medical and surgical approach to “mercilessly dissect a media-inflected pseudo-reality.” In an interview with writer and critic Bruno Sourdin, Pélieu defined collage as a kind of “plaster stuck on the movie of our culture and of our History.” In Pélieu’s work, creation is often a matter of chance and accident and is inscribed in a process of deconstructing logical thought in order to question higher degrees of reality through different literary, pictorial, visual and oral combinations. Operating in a singularly incandescent and scathing mode, Pélieu uses raw language, jarring juxtapositions and compound images to manipulate and fragment reality to breaking point.

This international conference is the first ever dedicated to the work of Claude Pélieu. It will seek to identify and critically consider the various aspects of the work of this Franco-American creator and *passer* — translation, poems, novels, albums, diary-collages, collages, cut-ups, and mail art (as ongoing notebook on a global scale) — whose oeuvre, as a whole, is fundamentally transatlantic and libertarian.

The conference will explore Pélieu's short-circuited writing (his surrealist influences, his variations on cut-ups, collage, etc.), his specific processes of creation, and the penetrating glance that he cast upon the modern world through his corrosive oeuvre. It will investigate Pélieu's visual works and texts, and those of others to which he contributed, by analyzing their generic (influences, deconstruction, fragmentation), political (pamphlets, manifestos, declarations), and linguistic dimensions, as well as their radical and experimental content and reception.

The conference also aims to investigate the various forms of correspondence that Pélieu maintained with other artists and writers, wherein mail art, translation, and collaborative and networked writing served as a means of instigating a rich and fertile transatlantic dialogue of avant-gardes and countercultures. Special attention could here be paid to Pélieu's work with Jeff Nuttall, Carl Weissner, and William Burroughs, as well as to the network that Pélieu constructed through dozens of poems dedicated to a whole generation of writers, laying the groundwork for a shifting poetic International (*Dernière Minute Électrifiée*, 1969; *Studio Réalité*, 1999).

The translation-adaptations that Beach and Pélieu produced of texts by Beat Generation writers also represent a unique form of collaboration and operated as dual means of modifying and disseminating subversively-tinged texts.

With this in mind, we will seek in particular to reconsider the decisive role played in Pélieu's oeuvre by Mary Beach, a prolific translator, editor, painter and collagist in her own right, and the first woman to experiment with the cut-up (*Electric Banana*, 1975). Pélieu's work is inextricably linked to his collaboration with Beach by virtue of their joint translations of Beat writers as well as her translation of Pélieu's own texts, their publishing ventures and their joint visual works created in the 1980s and 1990s. This veritable "oeuvre croisée" can also allow us to explore gendered and affective dimensions of art making, translation and literary work in the latter half of the 20th century and in countercultural milieus.

Topics for papers may include, but are not limited to:

- Cutting up and short-circuits in writing
 - o Infected language: linguistic coding and viral transmission, the dislocated word, the manipulated text, meaning and meaninglessness
 - o Forms of writing: pamphlets, manifestos, *script-vite*, poem-tracts, reportage-poems, diaries, haiku, koan, sutras, ready-made, collages, comics
 - o Writing-techniques: cut-up, concrete poetry, automatism, filiations and heritage, plural genres and intermediality, genre renewal and mutant avant-gardes
 - o Evolution of Pélieu's work in time: key texts, circulation/transfer between writing-collage-translation-editing, autoreferentiality, strategies and modes of auto-representation, autobiography
 - o Links and cross-fertilization between text, image and collage
- Themes in Pélieu's work
 - o The broken, mutilated body, the reconstructed body, the diseased body
 - o Transmission, technology, communication, science-fiction, control
 - o The ecological consciousness at work: environmental deterioration, rubbish, recycling, repairing, hybridity
 - o Reality and illusion: *ur*-reality, surreality, dreaming, spectacle
- Intersections, collaborations and resonances
 - o Mary Beach, the writer, the editor, the artist; the cross-fertilizing work of Pélieu and Beach
 - o Artistic and literary collaborations: Parisian youth; American, beat or countercultural networks

- Creating, translating, adapting: Pélieu as a transatlantic *passer*
- Pélieu and visual arts: collages, drawings, concrete and visual poetry, artistic encounters (Raymond Hains, Erró, Jeff Nuttall), comics, appropriation and misappropriation
- The Pélieu rhizome (Lucien Suel, Michel Bulteau, F.J. Ossang, Julien Blaine, Alain Jégou, Bruno Sourdin, Joël Hubaut, Bob Kaufman, Charles Plymell, Ed Sanders, Ray Bremser, Jurgen Ploog, Carl Weissner, Alex Trocchi, Jeff Nuttall) / network writing / strategy of rhizomic building through intertextuality and paratext
- Resonances of Pélieu's work in the digital age

While this conference will center on the work of Claude Pélieu, we warmly welcome research papers that explore the countercultural milieus and publications through which he passed and the trajectories of comparable figures in the 20th century art, poetry, experimental writing and translation.

Proposal guidelines:

Proposals can be made in either **French or English**, should include a 400-word abstract for an individual proposal, as well as a short academic bio and bibliography. Proposals should be sent as a single Word document before **March 7, 2020** to the organizing committee — James Horton (Institut d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, UMR 8066; ED 540, ENS), Peggy Pacini (Université de Cergy-Pontoise / EA 7392, AGORA), Frank Rynne (Université de Cergy-Pontoise/ EA 7392, AGORA) — at the following address: pelieu2020@gmail.com

Proposals will be examined by our scientific committee:

- Rémi Astruc (EA 7392, AGORA, Université de Cergy Pontoise)
- Douglas Field (University of Manchester)
- James Horton (Institut d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, UMR 8066 ; ED 540, ENS)
- Peggy Pacini (EA 7392, AGORA, Université de Cergy Pontoise)
- Pierre-Antoine Pellerin (ITT, Université de Lyon 3)
- Frank Rynne (EA 7392, AGORA, Université de Cergy Pontoise)

Deadline for sending proposals: March 7, 2020

Accepted proposals will be notified as of March 22, 2020.

Confirmed keynotes: Benoit Delaune, Jacques Donguy, Pierre Joris