

Man Ray and George Hodel

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September 21, 2006

The relationship between George Hodel and Man Ray and their respective partners, Dorothy Huston Hodel and Juliet Man Ray,¹ was personal and long-standing. This friendship lasted for at least seven years, from 1944 to 1951, as the following points indicate.

1. Man Ray took at least five photographs of Dorothy Hodel in 1944. These include:

A) Two photographs of Dorothy posing with an artist's easel. Prints of both images are owned by Steve Hodel. One is signed and dated recto, the other is unsigned. The signed and dated photograph is reproduced in our book, *Exquisite Corpse: Surrealism and the Black Dahlia Murder* (p. 70). It also appears in *Sotheby's Photographs: New York, Wednesday April 28th, 1999*, p.131 (Lot #231). The catalog notes for this item, published four years before Steve Hodel's *Black Dahlia Avenger*, state that "Man Ray and his wife Juliet were good friends of the Hodels, and were frequent guests at their Frank [sic] Lloyd Wright-designed home." The Sotheby's description of the print reads: "Dorothy Huston Hodel with Easel: Signed and dated by the photographer in ink on the image, tipped to a thick paper mount, signed by the photographer in pencil on the mount, 1944."

B) Two photographs of Dorothy Hodel and Juliet Man Ray posing together. In the first image, the women are seated and Juliet's arm is wrapped around Dorothy's back. A reproduction of a copyprint provided by Steve Hodel appears in *Exquisite Corpse* (p. 60). This image is also reproduced in the auction catalog *Sotheby's Photographs: New York, Wednesday April 28th, 1999*, p.131 (Lot #232). The Sotheby's description reads: "Juliet Man Ray and Dorothy Huston Hodel." The catalog notes that the print is "dated 'Nov '44' [sic], in an unidentified hand in blue pencil on the reverse, 1944." In the second image, Dorothy is seated and Juliet stands, her right arm akimbo, her left hand on Dorothy's back. A reproduction of this photograph is in the Butterfield & Dunning / Butterfield & Butterfield auction catalog *Fine Photographs: November 17, 1999, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago*, p. 22 (lot #4056). Both pictures are cited in *Exquisite Corpse* (note 13, p. 171).

C) One photograph of Dorothy Hodel with crossed arms wearing native-american jewelry. This photograph is signed and dated recto and is in the collection of Steve Hodel. It is pictured in *Exquisite Corpse* (p. 50).

2. Man Ray took at least two photographs of George and Dorothy Hodel's children in 1945.

These photographs, taken at the Hodel home, picture Kelvin, Michael and Steven Hodel. The first, composed horizontally, is signed and dated recto. It is reproduced in *Exquisite Corpse* (p. 59). The second, an unsigned vertical composition, was clearly taken on the same day. Both prints are owned by Steve Hodel.

3. Man Ray took at least three photographs of George Hodel in 1946. These include:

A) Two photographs of George Hodel sitting in front of a Chinese scroll. The first, from the collection of Steve Hodel, is a family-owned copyprint. The print shows that the original was signed recto on the mount or, perhaps, on the border of the print itself. It appears in *Exquisite Corpse* (p. 59). The second photograph is in the archives of Telimage, the Paris-based organization that represents the Man Ray Trust.

B) One photograph of George Hodel posing with a sculpture of the Buddhist deity Yamantaka. This image is pictured in *Exquisite Corpse* (p. 73).

4. Man Ray gave George and Dorothy Hodel an inscribed self-portrait in 1946.

A Butterfield & Dunning / Butterfield & Butterfield auction catalog, *Fine Photographs: May 27, 1999, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago*, describes the original print as a “Gelatin silver print, trimmed and mounted to a red board. Signed and dated in black ink lower left on the image. Inscribed in black ink recto on the mount ‘To Dorero and George — and my homage as I am pleased when I am asked for my phiz — so much more than when I am asked for a portrait of a greater celebrity. I celebrate you. Man.’” It appears on the catalog cover and on pages five and 22 (lot #3047). The catalog gives the provenance as “Gift from the artist to the present owner, 1946.” In *Exquisite Corpse* (p. 27) we include a 1963 variation of the original as a proxy and quote the entire inscription in the accompanying caption.

The original image is also reproduced in the Butterfield & Dunning / Butterfield & Butterfield auction catalog *Fine Photographs: November 17, 1999, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago*, pp. 25 and 115 (lot #4061). In the catalog for the May 27 auction, Butterfield’s specialist in charge, Amanda Doenitz, writes that the picture is “a testament to Man Ray’s joyous sense of friendship and fun.” Man Ray uses Dorothy’s pet name “Dorero” in the inscription.

5. Man Ray gave George Hodel one of his sculptures in 1948.

This work, *Objet de mon affection — “L’oculiste”* (also known as *The Oculist*), was created by Man Ray in 1944 and exhibited at the Circle Gallery (7623 Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood 46) from September 3 to September 30, 1946. Man Ray gave the work to George Hodel in 1948. A ca. 1985 photograph (photographer unknown) of George Hodel with *The Oculist* hanging on the wall behind him appears in *Exquisite Corpse* (p. 61). George Hodel’s print of this image is inscribed “(Man Ray)” recto, in Hodel’s handwriting, and an arrow has been drawn between those words and the image of the *The Oculist*. A reproduction of *The Oculist* is in the Butterfield & Butterfield auction catalog *Modern, Contemporary, and Latin American Art, October 26 & 27, 1999, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago*, p. 10. That catalog notes that Juliet Man Ray confirmed the work’s authenticity via photo-certificate in 1980, gives its provenance as “Gift from the artist, 1948,” and states that it “was exhibited at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York.” The description of the object in this catalog, lot #1014, reads, “Fragments of lead and a rubber sink stopper (replacement) on a curved piece of wood mounted on board.” *The Oculist* is listed in the checklist for the 1946 show at the Circle Gallery.

6. Statements by Tamar Hodel verify George Hodel's relationship to the artist in 1947, 1948, and 1949.

In an interview conducted by the authors on August 16, 2005, Tamar Hodel stated:

- A) That Man Ray was “often around our house” during the times she lived at her father’s house on Franklin Avenue.
- B) That Man Ray and Juliet Man Ray picked her up at the Franklin Avenue House, took her to Man Ray’s studio and that Man Ray took nude photographs of her there.
- C) That “Although he did nothing inappropriate,” Tamar was “uncomfortable with the way he and Juliet looked at me. This caused me to categorize him as another dirty old man . . . someone to be careful of.”

7. Man Ray gave George Hodel a copy of his book *Man Ray: Photographs 1920–1934* in 1949.

This book is inscribed by Man Ray on the title page: “To George Hodel from Man Ray 1949.” PBA Galleries (133 Kearny Street, San Francisco, CA 94108) sold this book at live auction on September 14, 2006 for a realized price of \$4,600. PBA’s listing for this book (auction item #175326) describes: “[6] pp. + 104 gravure plates and 2 additional leaves of text. (4to) 12 x 9 1/2, somewhat later red buckram with gilt spine title, original glossy pictorial wrappers bound in. Text in English and French. Second Edition. . . . Inscribed by Man Ray on title page: ‘To George Hodel from Man Ray 1949.’ Cliché-verre silverprint book-plate: ‘1948 Greetings from Juliet and Man Ray’ to front pastedown.” PBA describes the book condition as follows: “Buckram covers and original wrappers a bit scuffed; minor wear overall to pages, but about very good [sic].”

8. The Man Rays remained friendly with George Hodel after their return to Paris in 1951.

A postcard sent to George Hodel by the Man Rays reads: “Dear George, so nice to hear from you. We’re settled here indefinitely, shall we meet again some time? Send us a couple of pounds of smoky tea!² What do you want from Paris besides a cocotte? Love, Julie & Man.”³ This postcard, and a typeset version of the inscription on the back, is reproduced in the Butterfield & Dunning / Butterfield & Butterfield auction catalog *Fine Photographs: November 17, 1999, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago*, p. 22 (lot #4056).

1. Dorothy Jeanne Harvey married John Huston on October 17, 1926, and they divorced in 1933. She married George Hodel on December 7, 1940. Though the Hodels divorced in 1944, they reconciled on several occasions and sometimes lived together, remaining in close contact until 1950, when George Hodel left Los Angeles for Hawaii. After Dorothy and George Hodel divorced, Dorothy resumed using Dorothy Huston. Juliet Browner married Man Ray on October 24, 1946, and thereafter used the name Juliet Man Ray.

2. George Hodel marketed “Five Dynasty Tea” to high-end department stores in 1949 and 1950 as a side venture. An article about Hodel’s tea business, entitled “Farmers Market Today ... with Neill (Mrs. Beck),” ran in the *Los Angeles Times* on October 1, 1949, five days before Hodel was indicted on morals charges.

3. The return address written on this postcard is 2 bis rue Ferou (6) Paris 19. The Man Rays occupied this residence after they moved to France in 1951.