



“...and so beautiful”



☛ Paris, September 1852

The under-recognized 19th century painter Anne de Cybelle, frustrated in her attempts to gain admission into The Academy, took matters into her own hands by pouring her creative passions into the garments she wore. Scavenging Belgian linen from the Parisian studios of her more famous male contemporaries, de Cybelle fashioned hair dresses, printing her own shorn locks on the purloined yardage.

It was at the Chemises du Hemp Ball given by Aurora Dupin that she first met Charles Baudelaire who commented, "Long, long, let me bite your black and heavy tresses. When I gnaw your elastic and rebellious hair I will seem to be eating memories on dresses!" Obsessed with her sublime art Baudelaire secretly dedicated his famous hair poems to Anne de Cybelle.



☛ Paris, March 1853

Anne de Cybelle looked out the window at the skyline of Paris and sighed. She knew the time had come. For years she had been making her celebrated hairdresses. Her influence on The Academy was undeniable. Now there were men who sewed and men who wore dresses. What puzzled her was the realization that The Academy always gave the men who did the "female activities" more serious recognition than to the women, who did these activities out of an energized rebellion and critique. She had her friend Ravinia in mind. Ravinia had made amazing embroideries and sewn paintings out of men's suits. Why, when a man copies her, is he given more credence?

"Oh, that Academy can make you so mad," Anne laughed with an urgency as her blood boiled. She felt hot. It was time to stop making the clothes. It was the end of that hairline. She would go into open rebellion making printed paintings and psychic performances using her traditional materials: roses, hair, and ivy. Only now she would add the newly invented rubbers, made for the men of The Academy. She could hear their popping under the pressure of her press. Anne mused at how The Academy would react to so many limp popped rubbers in these mandala paintings.

Pop! Pop! Pop!...





"...I hope that they see the gender safety crossing but maybe I will also have to smoke a cigar like my dear friend George Sand. They always need the obvious" she reflected as she hung up the last hairdress on the wall.

"To The Psychic d'Elle Arte of The Academy!" she yelled as she lifted her glass in celebration.



Paris, December 1853

Anne de Cybelle woke up from an enlightening yet restless dream. The Academy was chasing her, their faces circled in hundreds of rubbers popping, popping. Anne wore a bandana across her mouth as if she was a robber. An X print of crossed rubbers on the white silk covered her mouth as if to protest the silence of her struggle with a symbol of a kiss. Her heart throbbed so loudly it almost matched the popping of the rubbers. She ran into a mirrored room with The Academy right behind her. Suddenly they became reflected into infinity popping and popping. As she faced her pursuers the popping ceased. The sounds changed as The Academy started blowing her kisses. Each kiss made a print. The kisses filled the silvered room with endless images imprinted on the mirrors. Anne knew that the struggle was nearing end. The Academy was stopping its' corrupt practices by finally letting her in. Of course she knew that they had to, after all she had them trapped in an altered state of infinite space looking at themselves in the future.

Paris, February 1854

Anne finally had been revealed as the notorious Psychic d'Elle Arte. She was celebrated by all. Her dresses, mirrors, paintings and performances were the talk of the town. In the midst of this success an odd experience occurred. It meant nothing. She was happy to have it and able to make her work but the thoughts of love, empathy and nothingness overwhelmed her as if she was a shell flying through the waves. Maybe that was it. She was.



It was late at night, a silvery full moon reflecting in the sea. Anne de Cybelle came out of the water in a bliss state after a long day of swimming in the ancient turquoise waters of her favorite island. Her hair, salted by the sea, fell down her back in black and white strands that were reminiscent of her famous hairdresses. Happily exhausted, she was finally feeling strong again after a year of personal losses coupled with professional successes. It was time for change. The sea had a healing effect and Anne sensed that a renewal had begun.

Little did she know that The Academy had followed her to the island. As she walked towards her favorite taverna she saw that they were there. She was about to sit down when the head of The Academy refused her a seat. "Wasn't this an old story," she thought, "Why are they doing this, it is so passé." Suddenly an amazing event occurred. Anne started to hear a voice singing and she was filled with an ecstatic happiness that radiated prisms of rainbows. This joy was so intense that all she could do was smile as she moved ever so gently to the sweet sounds and whirling colors. The Academy members were perplexed. One member, a failed artist turned critic, attacked Anne, yelling that her work was a cheap illusionistic trick. As he stood up to strike her, Anne just smiled. At the same moment a gust of wind came roaring through the tavern and the critic was washed out to sea. The strong gale pushed Anne to the head of the table where she found herself sitting, chairing the meeting. The head of The Academy was kneeling at her feet serving her grapes as if she were the emperor. Now all the members could do was smile back at Anne, hypnotized by the love sounds and colors that were manifesting around her.

Anne realized that she was communicating with her friends whom she had lost that year. They were teaching her how to live just as they showed her how to die. She missed them but it was evident that they would always be with her. She could go back home. It was time to make art again, only now it would be truly sublime. Anne de Cybelle ate the grapes lovingly laughing.





In 1991 I discovered "The Art Journal," dated 1854 with loose writings on Anne de Cybelle, a Parisian artist from the nineteenth century. It occurred to me that our lives had many parallels. Could it be that time can coexist at different levels? Are we part of all that is the past, present, and future? The preceding pages are from "...and so beautiful".

Chrysanne Stathacos

September 1995

New York





Chrysanne Stathacos and Anne de Cybelle

One night, a hot July night, just two weeks ago...I was staying with Chrysanne Stathacos in her tiny Little Italy apartment in the heart of Manhattan...I was sleeping and in the midst of my sleep, in the midst of this still heat, I heard water running. It was three in the morning and Chrysanne was puffing on a cigar in the manner of her friend George Sand, feverishly filling the squat porcelain bathtub which sat steaming in the middle of her kitchen, a mere twenty feet from my head. I heard her lower herself with a groan into the lavender-scented liquid and I felt the pressure of a hyperactive spirit life as it coped with the steam, smoke and scent with which Chrysanne was forcing it from the room. The water would remove the psychic sludge which had attached itself to her, which had awakened her from her sleep to the alarm of finding the impression of another body lowering itself onto her length, clinging to her breasts, her mound of Venus, her thighs. Was this Anne de Cybelle herself melding with her twentieth century reincarnation? Was it Charles Baudelaire returning to the body of his beloved?

*Or was it more likely some sinister ectoplasm,
come to devour the delicious tresses of the celebrated
Psychic d'Elle Arte?*

In these days of heightened spirit presence, choose safety over stimulation. Unless the presence is absolutely clear and beneficent, light incense and smudge sticks, drink the juice of fresh red roses, spit water over the hair of your head, bathe in lavender oil, wave white silk scarves or white sheets over your head and around your body, stamp your feet on bare ground. For the next three days, be careful of damage to your feet. In these days of death and dying, the accumulated spirit life of centuries has been amplified by the epidemics of the twentieth century. And they are not passing to the other side. They are not passing to the other side. They remain with us still.

So I lay on my row of cushions on Chrysanne's floor, watching as the variegated fog of angry spirits was dispelled by smoke, by scent, by water. The Psychic d'Elle Arte lowered herself into the steaming bath of lavender. The ectoplasm collapsed. Anne de Cybelle was safe once more.

AA Bronson
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