

FAQ 19

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Q: A new book, *Exquisite Corpse: Surrealism and the Black Dahlia Murder*, has just been published. It seems to go along with your theory that Man Ray and surrealists knew or were involved in the murder. Do you think they were?

Your question has two parts. Let me address the second part, first. Do I believe that Man Ray or others were as you put it, “involved in the murder?” **NO!** There is no evidence to suggest that Man Ray or anyone else (other than possibly my father’s close friend and accomplice in other crimes, Fred Sexton), was involved in the actual murder.

That said, I do believe that MAN RAY and other of George Hodel’s “inner-circle” of artist friends, including JOHN HUSTON and BEN HECHT--- DID KNOW OR EVENTUALLY LEARN THAT HE WAS THE BLACK DAHLIA KILLER.

As to the first part of your question, was there a surrealist connection? ABSOLUTELY! Surrealism was my father’s signature on the body and explains HOW AND WHY IT WAS POSED AT THE VACANT LOT.

In, 2003, in *Black Dahlia Avenger: A Genius for Murder*, chapter 19, *The Final Connections: Man Ray Thoughtprints*, after comparing two of Man Ray’s most famous works; *Les Amoureux* and *The Minotaur*, to the crimes scene photographs, I wrote. (page 241):

The killer had to make her death extraordinary both in planning and execution. In his role as a surreal artist, he determined that his work would be a masterpiece of the macabre, a crime so shocking and horrible it would endure, be immortalized through the annals of crime lore. As avenger, he would use her body as his canvas, and his surgeon’s scalpel as his paintbrush!

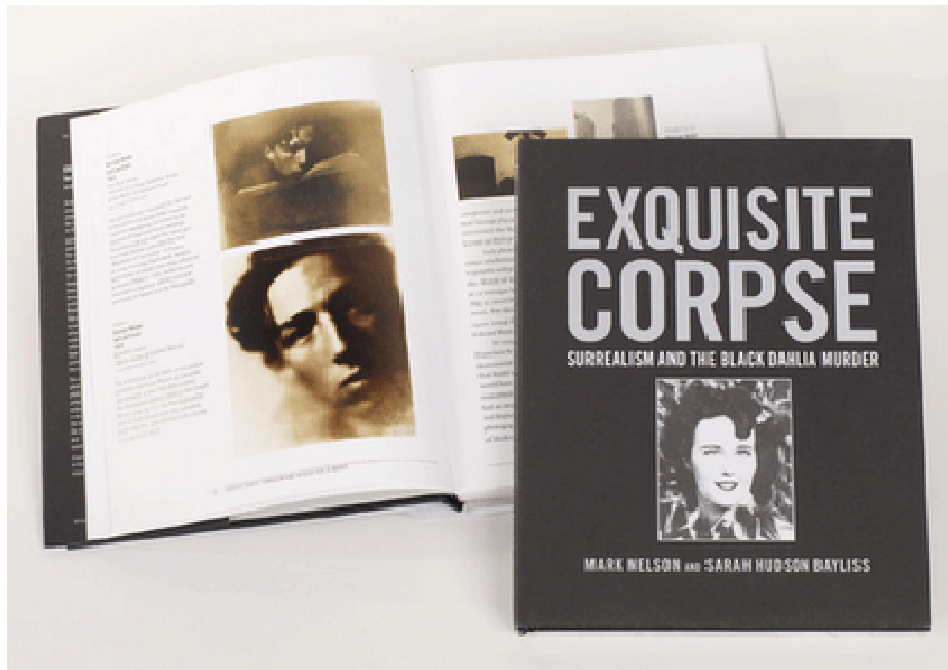
Much as I wanted to deny it to myself or to look for other possible explanations, I now realized the facts were undeniable. George Hodel, through the homage he consciously paid to Man Ray, was provocatively revealing himself to be the murderer of Elizabeth Short. Her body, and the way she was posed, was Dr. George Hodel’s signature—both artistic and psychological—on his own surreal masterpiece, in which he *juxtaposed the unexpected* in a “still death” tribute to his master, *using human body parts!* The premeditated and deliberate use of these two photographs—one symbolizing my father and Elizabeth as the lovers in *Les Amoureux*, and another my father as the avenger, the Minotaur himself, the bull-headed beast consuming and destroying the young maiden, Elizabeth, in sacrifice—is my father’s grisly message of his and Man Ray’s shared vision of violent sexual fantasy. Given George Hodel’s megalomaniacal ego, it was also a dash of one-upmanship.

I then went on to list four additional links that my father made to surrealist references and connections (1)The Black Dahlia Avenger’s copying of the Juliet Man Ray stocking mask, 2) George Hodel’s commissioning of the *Modesto Lovers*, with the bleeding lips, and erotic symbolism, which he hand delivered to Juliet Man Ray in Paris in 1987, 3) his

Parable of the Sparrows letter to me referencing Man Ray's *Enigma or Riddle*, and finally 4) George Hodel's references to surrealists dreams (posing his photographic subjects with eyes shut) and his "dream confession" as relates to the incest charges.

As to the new book you reference, ***EXQUISITE CORPSE: SURREALISM AND THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER***, yes, it has just being released (September 18, 2006) and was written by Mark Nelson and Sarah Hudson Bayliss, two New York authors and art researchers. .

Here in their own words, is what they have to say about their book:



Exquisite Corpse: Surrealism and the Black Dahlia Murder by [Mark Nelson](#) and [Sarah Hudson Bayliss](#)

Bridging the worlds of high art and true crime, *Exquisite Corpse* presents a unique perspective on the most notorious unsolved murder case of the twentieth century—the bizarre 1947 killing of Elizabeth Short, better known as the Black Dahlia murder.

Unlike previous books on the Black Dahlia, *Exquisite Corpse* provides a detailed and compelling explanation for the unusual nature of this gruesome killing. *Exquisite Corpse* reveals, through visual comparisons and historical research, what seem to be profound connections between surrealist art and the Black Dahlia case—both before and after the murder.

The evidence includes startling crime-scene and autopsy photographs of Elizabeth Short, rarely seen photographs by Man Ray, and surprising comparisons with a wide range of surrealist artworks. A "web of connections" indicates a direct link or one degree of separation between the alleged killer and a host of influential people in the arts and film industry in Los Angeles in the 1930s and 40s. A timeline provides a revealing chronology of events surrounding the murder.

Exquisite Corpse is a must-read for anyone interested in true crime, art history, Hollywood noir, and the infamous Black Dahlia case.

From the introduction, A Death and Its Aftermath pg. 9:

This book is a hypothesis, built from a wealth of visual and factual material. Unlike others who have preceded us, we make no definitive claim to resolve one of the most notorious unsolved crimes of the twentieth century, the so-called Black Dahlia murder of 1947. We do suggest that answers to key questions about this crime may have been hiding, for decades in plain sight.

...

Bridging the worlds of art and crime, *Exquisite Corpse* shows that Elizabeth Short's body and the killer's crime-scene signatures bear a startling resemblance to elements in works by leading surrealist artists of the time. We posit that the killing may have been directly linked to surrealist art and ideas--in particular, the movement's many representations of beautiful but fragmented and anatomically distorted women.

In its origins, our theory is indebted to ideas in the book *Black Dahlia Avenger* (2003), by Steve Hodel, a former LAPD homicide detective. That book asserts that the authors own father, George Hodel a physician, took Elizabeth Short's life. Though substantiating Steve Hodel's claims is not our primary goal, we believe that much of the evidence he presents is credible. Some of Hodel's charges are given further weight by our findings.

AS RELATES TO THE NELSON/BAYLISS **EXQUISITE CORPSE**, I WOULD SIMPLY LIKE TO ADD MY HEARTFELT APPRECIATION AND HIGH PRAISE FOR THEIR RESEARCH, DEDICATION AND DOCUMENTATION. I BELIEVE THEIR INDEPENDENT AND ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION, ADDS MOUNTAINS OF EVIDENCE TO MY ORIGINAL LAY/FOUNDATIONAL THESIS THAT SUGGESTED SURREALISM AND ITS ART WERE THE KEY TO MY FATHER'S CRIME SIGNATURES. MARK NELSON AND SARAH BAYLISS HAVE "CONNECTED THE DOTS AND THE PEOPLE" AND PRESENTED THEM FOR ALL OF US TO SEE. THEY HAVE TAKEN THE LONG SILENT VOICES OF THOSE WHO KNEW, AND BY HOLDING UP THEIR WORKS (RIDDLES WRAPPED IN MYSTERIES) -- HAVE MADE THEM SPEAK!

<http://exquisitecorpsebook.blogspot.com>