The Morgan Celebrates the Iconoclast Alfred Jarry

*Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being*
January 24 through May 10, 2020

*Exhibition extended through September 13, 2020*

New York, NY (December 12, 2019) – The Morgan Library & Museum is pleased to announce the first major U.S. museum exhibition exploring the iconoclastic works and personality of the French writer Alfred Jarry (1873–1907). Opening January 24 and running through May 10, 2020, *Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being* considers the author’s seminal role in the radical upheaval in the arts more than a century ago. An inspiration for Dada and Surrealism and a touchstone for the Theatre of the Absurd, Jarry is best-known today for his revolutionary play *Ubu roi* (1896) and for his invention of pataphysics—a “science of imaginary solutions.” Jarry was also a puppeteer, a critic, a novelist, an artist, and a bicycle fanatic. His works suggested that technology, popular imagery, and the performance of everyday life could constitute works of art. Jarry’s statement that “living is the carnival of being” embodies his anti-authoritarianism and subversive theatricality, expressed in a life of excess, wordplay, alter egos, and the unfettered imagination. Since his death in 1907, Jarry’s eclectic works and ideas have continued to resonate for figures of the twentieth- and twenty-first century avant-gardes.
Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being celebrates the gift to the Morgan Library & Museum of the books and manuscripts in the Robert J. and Linda Klieger Stillman Pataphysics Collection. The exhibition considers some of Jarry’s many innovations by exploring his engagement with printed matter and the graphic arts. One of the first writers to experiment with visual typography, Jarry forged new relationships between image and text in his experimental approaches to book and magazine design. His use of assembling, anachronism, collage, and appropriation are bellwethers of modern and contemporary practices. Drawing primarily on the Stillmans’ collection, the installation is contextualized with other objects in the Morgan’s collections as well as loans from private and institutional lenders, comprising manuscripts, drawings, photographs, and ephemera. Paintings and prints by figures in Jarry’s circle, such as Henri Rousseau, Pierre Bonnard, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, are also featured. The final portion of the exhibition points to ways in which Jarry’s writings have inspired pataphysical organizations and visual artists at particular historical moments, featuring works by Marcel Duchamp, Mary Reynolds, Joan Miró, Dora Maar, Max Ernst, Thomas Chimes, and William Kentridge, among others.

Colin B. Bailey, Director of the Morgan, said, “We are thrilled to be able to explore Alfred Jarry’s seminal role in the development of modernism as a consequence of the Stillmans’ generous donation. One of the finest and most complete Jarry collections in private hands, the Stillmans were keenly attentive to specific attributes in books—bindings, special papers, corrected proofs, and provenance—qualities that are consonant with the values that have defined the Morgan’s holdings for more than a century.”

Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being is organized by Sheelagh Bevan, the Morgan Library & Museum’s Andrew W. Mellon Associate Curator of Printed Books and Bindings.
The exhibition Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being is accompanied by a catalogue with more than 140 illustrations and textual contributions by Sheelagh Bevan, Linda Klieger Stillman, Jennifer Johnson, and Julien Schuh, with an Afterword by Paul D. Miller a.k.a. DJ Spooky.

Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being

January 24 through May 10, 2020
The Morgan Library & Museum
225 Madison Avenue at 36th Street
New York, NY 10016

For more information about the exhibition, hours, and admission, please visit www.themorgan.org.

Related Programming

SPECIAL EVENT

A Surrealist Soiree

Join us for an evening exploring the unconventional, imaginary worlds of Parisians Jean-Jacques Lequeu and Alfred Jarry. During a series of brief gallery talks, curators will delve into a selection of fantastic and humorous works in the exhibitions Jean-Jacques Lequeu: Visionary Architect and Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being. In the Gilbert Court, you can participate in the surrealist drawing game Exquisite Corpse, relax with a prix fixe French wine and cheese tasting, and enjoy French-inspired music.

Friday, February 7, 6–8:30 PM
Free from 6 to 8:30 PM. Advanced registration required. Food and drink available for purchase.

GALLERY TALKS

Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being
Sheelagh Bevan, Andrew W. Mellon Associate Curator of Printed Books and Bindings

Friday, February 7, 6 & 8PM
Friday, April 17, 1 PM
Free with Museum admission.

READINGS AND PERFORMANCES

Inspired by Alfred Jarry: Performances by DJ Spooky, Tony Torn, Julie Atlas Muz, and special guests

Celebrate Jarry’s influence on art and ideas in an evening of performances inspired by his work. Tony Torn and Julie Atlas Muz, veteran interpreters of Ubu roi, will perform excerpts from Jarry’s play. The evening also features a sound-and-word collaboration between multimedia artist DJ Spooky and special guests, followed by DJ Spooky’s live scoring of scenes from Jarry’s revolutionary work on film.
**Friday, February 28, 7 PM**  
**Tickets:** $25; $20 for Morgan Members; $10 for students with a valid ID  
* The exhibition *Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being* will be open at 6 PM for program attendees.

**The 2020 Kenneth A. Lohf Poetry Reading: Charles Bernstein**  
Charles Bernstein, member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the winner of the 2019 Bollingen Prize for American Poetry for lifetime achievement, will give the 2020 annual Kenneth A. Lohf Poetry Reading. Bernstein is the author of books including *Near/Miss, Pitch of Poetry, Recalculating,* and *Attack of the Difficult Poems: Essays and Inventions.* He recently retired from the University of Pennsylvania, where he was Donald T. Regan Professor of English and Comparative Literature. The reading, followed by a reception, will take place in J. Pierpont Morgan’s library.

**Thursday, April 2, 6:30 PM**  
**Tickets:** $20; $15 for Morgan Members; free for students with a valid ID. Seating is limited.  
* The exhibition *Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being* will be open at 5:30 PM for program attendees.

**SYMPOSIUM**

**Alfred Jarry: Pataphysicist and Prophet**  
Organized in conjunction with the exhibition *Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being,* this day-long symposium brings together an international group of scholars and cultural figures in tribute to the French writer-provocateur and his philosophy of pataphysics. Speakers will address Jarry’s career in theater and puppetry, literature, politics, graphic art, as well as the legacy of pataphysics in counterculture and its potential applications to the present and future. Participants include Jill Fell, Birkbeck, University of London; Julien Schuh, Université Paris Nanterre; Jennifer Johnson, St. John’s College, Oxford; Rainer Ganahl, artist; Xavier Filliol, digital music pioneer, producer, online media expert; and Linda Klieger Stillman, independent scholar, collector.

**Saturday, April 25, 11AM–5:30PM**  
**Tickets:** $20; $15 for Morgan Members; free for students with a valid ID  
* The exhibition *Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being* will be open to program attendees from 10am to 6pm.

**Organization and Sponsorship**

*Alfred Jarry: The Carnival of Being* is made possible by major support from Beatrice Stern, the Sherman Fairchild Fund for Exhibitions, Robert J. and Linda Klieger Stillman, and the Franklin Jasper Walls Lecture Fund.

The programs of the Morgan Library & Museum are made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.
About the Morgan Library & Museum

A museum and independent research library located in the heart of New York City, the Morgan Library & Museum began as the personal library of financier, collector, and cultural benefactor Pierpont Morgan. The Morgan offers visitors close encounters with great works of human accomplishment in a setting treasured for its intimate scale and historic significance. Its collection of manuscripts, rare books, music, drawings, and works of art comprises a unique and dynamic record of civilization, as well as an incomparable repository of ideas and of the creative process from 4000 BC to the present.

The Morgan Library & Museum | 225 Madison Avenue | 212.685.0008 | themorgan.org