

Salvador Dalí's Purloined Imagery

-Caveat Emptor!-

© Frank Hunter, April 2009

c. 1945

Salvador Dalí receives his second commission from the New York publisher *Doubleday*, this one to provide illustrations for *Shakespeare's "Macbeth"*. He completes thirteen illustrations, most of them pen and ink on paper. The book is published in 1946.

The following illustration, titled *Les Chevaux de Duncan, roi d'Écosse* [The Horses of Duncan, King of Scotland] is a reproduction of the Dalí illustration from the Doubleday book.

The illustrations no doubt remained the property of Dalí. The copyrights were automatically transferred to the *Salvador Dalí Foundation* upon his death.

Macbeth, Act II, Scene IV. [Pen and ink on paper, 25.9 x 19.5cm]



Les chevaux de Duncan, roi d' „Écosse“
(Die Pferde Duncan's, König von Schottland), 1946
Tuschfederzeichnung, recht unten signiert: Dalí 1946, Illustration zu „Macbeth“ von Shakespeare,
Akt II, Szene IV, New York (Doubleday) 1946, S. 53; 25,5 x 19,5 cm

Fifty years hence – c. 1990s

A person or persons, most probably in France or Italy, discovers the Dalí illustrated Macbeth and decides the illustrations would make for good prints.... *Never mind copyright; never mind Dalí's approval – he's dead; never mind a legitimate signature – easily reproduced; never mind documentation (provenance, etc.) – very easy to create...* And so it goes – speculation? Yes, but the end product exists, copies are on the market and somehow they came to be.

The prints were titled *Les Chevaux Surrealistes* (Surrealist Horses). Examples have been seen only on Japon paper, numbered in Roman /CXLV [145]. Why Japon? This paper cannot be accurately dated, unlike other fine art print papers, Arches and Rives, for example.

Three possible scenarios exist for the creation of these prints:

- 1) Someone photographs the Doubleday book illustration, has it blown up, and gives it to a printer to fashion a printing plate; both the mane and tail of the horses are modified.
- 2) The original Dalí drawing is somehow obtained, photographed and a plate is made for printing purposes; mane and tail of the horses are modified.
- 3) An artisan copies Dalí's original illustration, making slight modifications.

We are told the publisher was *Les Heures Claires* (Paris), and that it was published in 1975. That the publisher was *Les Heures Claires* may or may not be true. That the date of publication was 1975 cannot be true, for the following reasons:

1. It never appeared on the market – galleries, auctions, sales catalogues, etc.
2. It was never catalogued in any of the hundreds of Dalí exhibitions held in galleries and museums.
3. It never appeared in literature – advertisements, brochures, etc.
4. It never appeared in any of the Dalí catalogues raisonnés.
5. It was never sent to the *Salvador Dalí Archives* for authentication until many years later.

A publisher is in business to make money. When an edition is printed and signed by the artist, huge sums of money are tied up. The publisher will market his product and attempt to recoup his investment with a profit even before the date of publication.

So why is it that this print has not been seen by anyone until the 90s? Some would have it that the publisher “held it” as an investment. Nonsense!! No publisher will hold onto an entire edition by a famous artist for decades.

The following illustration, given the title *Les Chevaux Surrealistes*, is an example from the illegal print edition, marketed as being “*a hand-colored etching by Dalí, with an original pencil signature*”. It is essentially a reproduction of a reproduction, modified and colored by artisans, and signed by an unknown hand.

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Read more about Salvador Dalí Fakes at www.salvadordalifakes.com