

# Taptoe: from Cobra to Situationism

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## Brief presentation

In the mid-1950s, in the wake of the intense experimental activity of Cobra movement (1948-1951) and the closing of the Apollo gallery of Robert Delevoy (1953), the Brussels avant-garde scene was a wasteland. This empty space would soon be filled by the Gallery Taptoe under the impulse of the poet-essayist Walter Korun, the pseudonym for Piet de Groof (1931-2014). The Taptoe gallery presented thirteen exhibitions during its year and a half of existence (late 1955 to spring 1957) and brought new life to the art scene in Brussels. While it was intended to provide a fresh impetus for Flemish artists, it had an international scope from the outset through the contribution of the Parisian group around the journal *Phases* (1954-1975) by Edouard Jaguer, who was quickly superseded by the Pierre Alechinsky-Asger Jorn duo. Young Belgian artists such as Maurice Wyckaert and Reinhoud D'Haese were also given a stage, and two poets (Hugo Claus and Paul Snoek) had their first solo exhibition there. More than an art gallery, Taptoe was a place where ex-Cobra artists encountered one another as well as the future members of the Situationist International. Thanks to its activity, key concepts of Situationism were forged or enriched, such as Ralph Rumney's "psychogeographical" exploration of cities and Guy Debord's concepts of drift ("dérive") or detour ("détournement") – concepts that the Dane Asger Jorn would apply to his paintings. Although on the periphery, Taptoe played a key role in the transition of the neo-avant-garde at the end of the 1950's. Though the city of Brussels did not play a role in situationist urbanist thinking as important as that of Copenhagen, Paris, Venice or London, the case of the Belgian capital shows how 'psychogeographical' investigation was at the core of situationist thinking. At Taptoe, this was specifically symbolised through the idea of the labyrinth.

## Developments

In mid-fifties Brussels, there was a gradually palpable artistic void. After Cobra's infatuation, Paris seemed to have regained some of its magnetism and attraction. Pierre Alechinsky evokes this migration towards the South in his text *Cobra et le bassin Parisien* (*Cobra and the Parisian Basin*, 1992). The Dutchmen Karel Appel and Corneille, two other protagonists of Cobra, decided to settle there, as well as Hugo Claus, who joined the colony of artists in the 5th arrondissement. Alechinsky settled in rue Piat, while Christian Dotremont tried to enter the prestigious *N.R.F.*-magazine thanks to Jean Paulhan and would ultimately achieve his goal to publish a novel with Gallimard, *La pierre et l'oreiller* (*The Stone and the Pillow*, 1955). After a first unsuccessful exhibition of ceramics in Denmark, Jorn spent a short time at Alechinsky's before

moving to Piedmont, where he lived in Albisola. In light of this break-up, those members of the Cobra group who remained in Belgium felt the need to create a "place of exchange" between artists that could offer a new perspective on Belgian and international art production and that would counterbalance the French-oriented museum policy defended by the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

At the beginning of 1955, the young Belgian artists Jean Raine, Serge Vandercam and Maurice Wyckaert wrote the leaflet "Right to Reply" ("Droit de Réponse"), which violently criticized the aesthetics of Jean Séaux, who defended above all the "cold" tendencies of geometric abstraction and industrial design. In this context, Vandercam, Wyckaert, Clara and Gentil Haesaert created Taptoe, taking the name from Walter Korun's literary magazine. The magazine *Taptoe* (1953-1955) earned Korun a certain reputation in Flemish artistic circles. It published eight stenciled numbers between 1953 to 1955, and presented authors such as Hugo Claus (a meditation on the concept of the experimental), Louis Paul Boon and the early poems of Paul Snoek. This magazine was freely distributed, following the same principle as Simon Vinkenoog's Dutch magazine *Blurb* (1950-1951) and Guy Debord's International Lettrist magazine *Potlach* (1954-1957). The founders of the gallery were only interested in the name, and its dual meaning as both a military parade or the signal for soldiers to go to bed. In the latter sense, it can also denote a sense of exhaustion, namely having had enough of the old. Instead of *Taptoe*, which had just ceased to exist, the Dutch-speaking Brussels literary-artistic magazine *De meridiaan* (*The Meridian*) was linked to the new gallery. The magazine was founded in 1951 by the Haesaerts, and Wyckaert was also an editor in the beginning. The title was changed to *De kunst-meridiaan* (*The Art Meridian*) in 1955, a name that reflected the content more adequately. In 1958, this magazine released a special issue devoted to Taptoe.

According to Vandercam, there was no manifesto, no theoretical reflection or community project around the Taptoe gallery: "Taptoe mounted some good exhibitions, Reinhoud, Hugo Claus, Jorn, Wyckaert, Alechinsky, etc., good things" (1992: 38). Located in the heart of Brussels in a house on the Marché aux Herbes, Taptoe established itself as a place for artistic encounter and exchange, bearing the label of "gallery" as well as that of "art centre". It was organized with an exhibition room on the ground floor, a bar and lounge area on the first floor, while the second floor was a place where artists and writers could stay during the course of an exhibition. Taptoe soon attracted artists of different orientations. We find various experimental artists from Cobra, artists from the French Phases group, and, from the second year of its activities, we find artists close to International Lettrism who would become the founding members of the Situationist International (SI). Within Belgium, the gallery had connections with the Antwerp literary magazine *gard siviik* (1955-1964) and the French speaking *Phantomas* (founded in 1953).

The different exhibitions show how Taptoe was immediately transformed from a local to an international gallery and evolved from a post-Cobra to a proto-situationist space. Under the impulse of Walter Korun, the Gallery Taptoe organized a first exhibition which opened on December 22, 1955 and presented various works of Cobra artists such as Alechinsky, Claus, Corneille, Roel D'Haese, Vandercam, alongside other Belgian artists such as René Guiette and Wyckaert, and Phases painters such as Camille Bryen, Jacques Herold and Yasse Tabushi. This exhibition was an instant success and was immediately followed by a second group exhibition which brought together five artists from the Phases group, Guy Bulke, the surrealist Jacques Lacomblez, Anders Osterlin, C.H. Pedersen, Roger Raveel and Toko Shinoda.

Following the success of the predominantly international artists presented in the first two exhibitions, Gentil Haesaert wanted to return to the initial impulse of Taptoe to promote Belgian artists. In early March 1956, the gallery organized an exhibition of the works of Wyckaert. The catalogue included a presentation of the painter by Raine in which he refers to the purity of the artist's mission and the liberty that he needs to assume in order to carry out that mission. After the first two exhibitions, the role of Jaguer significantly diminished, as Gentil Haesaert wanted to ensure that Taptoe did not become a platform that only represented the artists promoted by Phases. Korun would gather the artists of the upcoming shows. When visiting in Paris, Jaguer suggested he meet Alechinsky, through whom he discovered Jorn's first painting. The meeting with Jorn would be decisive for Taptoe, which organized an exhibition of Jorn's works from

March 24 to April 11, 1956. The catalogue presentation was written by Dotremont. It was Jorn's first solo-exhibition outside Denmark since the war and a great success. A few days later, the first exhibition of Ting opened, the American painter of Chinese origin. The exhibition catalogue included Alechinsky's poem "Night and Day".

From April 28 to May 9, 1956, the Taptoe Gallery opened its doors to the works of the Dutch Cobra-painters Anton Rooskens and Theo Wolvecamp. Then an exhibition of the works of Reinhoud D'Haese was organized at the gallery from May 19 to June 5, 1956. The catalogue was prefaced by Korun and presented various works by Reinhoud with photographs by Vandercam. Ten days later, the Claus exhibition opened from June 16 to July 3. In the summer, the Taptoe gallery hosted a group exhibition of Cobra artists, bringing together works by Alechinsky, Appel, Baj, Jorn, Rein & Roel D'Haese, Ting, Wyckaert and Dotremont. The latter had the initiative to create the invitation card which consisted of a collage of press cuttings made by Corneille Hannoset.

The following season, Korun was no longer involved (due to his departure to the Congo for a year in order to complete his military training as a pilot) and Taptoe decided to follow a more commercial track by reaching out to other aesthetic horizons. A less successful exhibition of Oceanic artefacts was organized using the collection of Jef Vander Straete, a skillful wood carver who assembled an important collection of artefacts. Such an exhibition confirmed the avant-garde interest in tribal art from Papua New Guinea, which had begun in 1913 with Apollinaire and would be pursued over the years by André Breton, who published *Océanie* in 1949 and *L'Art Magique* in 1957. The primitivism of this old avant-garde was re-enacted by the Cobra-artists.

The defining achievement of Taptoe would be the opening exhibition of the year 1957, when, thanks to Jorn, it organized the First Exhibition of psychogeography from the 2nd to the 27th of February. The show was co-organized by the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, the Letterist International and the Psychogeographical Committee of London. The Letterist International (Internationale lettriste) was a secession group created in Brussels by Debord that separated itself from the Lettrist movement of Isidor Isou's in 1952 due to a difference in their understanding of art's purpose. For Isou, this meant radically questioning traditional forms of art but in no way ending art forms. Debord's radical aesthetics sought to end art forms as we know them and to work on the fusion between life and art. This led him to publish two critical texts in the Belgian surrealist review *Les Lèvres Nues* that was edited by Marcel Mariën and Paul Nougé: "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography" ("Introduction à une critique de la géographie urbaine", September 1955) and "Theory of the Derive" ("Théorie de la Dérive", November 1956). These texts put forward the concept of psychogeography as the study of the effects that a geographical environment or milieu can have on the human behavior. This type of study can be achieved by the situationist usage of drifting ("dérive"), which is a rapid encounter with different urban ambiances where the individual moves around, mainly directed by the impressions that the milieu has on him.

The International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus was a group of experimental artists grouped around Jorn shortly after his arrival in Switzerland, in November 1953, when he met Enrico Baj and established his first contacts with the group of Nuclear Art (Arte Nucleare). It was in December 1953 that Jorn exchanged letters with Max Bill, who had the idea to create a new Bauhaus, considering the shortcomings of the Hochschule für Gestaltung. Baj invited Jorn to settle in the city of Albisola, where he first lived in the studio of Fontana. It is there that Jorn organized the first International Conference of Ceramics in the autumn of 1954. Initially, his work with ceramics led to large mural decorations (such as those he would apply to his Villa). Jorn was openly critical of the industrial functionalism developed by Bill and the New Bauhaus school, which led the Danish painter to officially conceive the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (Mouvement International pour un Bauhaus imaginiste) in September 1955. In doing so architecture was placed at the forefront of ethical discussions.

In September 1956, during the second conference of the Imaginist Bauhaus movement, Jorn asked Korun for active support and requested Dotremont's presence to counter the influence of Jaguer who was attempting to take control of the movement. Debord had sent Gil J. Wolman to represent the International Lettrist movement at that conference and made it clear that they did not want Dotremont's presence dominating the conference, considering that his publications with the *N.R.F.* made him a representative of the Parisian literary establishment. Jorn, however, succeeded in bringing together for the first time different tendencies that would lead within a year to the founding of the Situationist International (De Groof 2007: 204-205).

It is during the Taptoe exhibition in February 1957 that Rumney put forward the name "Comité psychogéographique de Londres" in order to consolidate the concept of psychogeographical investigation of cities such as Venice (a city where he moved to with his wife Pegeen in order to help her be closer to his mother-in-law, Peggy Guggenheim). This Brussels' exhibition planned to show five psychogeographic plans of the city of Paris by Debord, such as a first draft of the *Naked City* (1957), realized by cutting up the plans of a Guide Taride-Paris. It was accompanied by paintings and ceramics of Jorn, paintings of Rumney and monochromes of Yves Klein, psychogeographic drawings of the mentally ill as well as photographs by Debord's wife Michèle Bernstein and Mohamed Dahou. The exhibition would also propose a series of conferences such as "The Outsider Art of Living" ("L'art brut de vivre") by Rumney, "Industry and Fine Art: The Two Extremes of Situationist Unity" ("Industrie et beaux-arts, deux extrêmes de l'unité situationiste") by Jorn and a 'monosonor' conference by Klein. Additionally, the projection of Debord's film *Hurlement en faveur de Sade* was planned. While this exhibit was to stage the first situationist event, unfortunately Debord stated his doubts to Jorn and Rumney, who rushed to Paris to convince him to join them. When Debord missed the rendez-vous with Jorn to take the train to Brussels, he definitively withdrew his works from this show, as well as those by Bernstein and Dahou. This was known as the "affair of Brussels" and led to the conciliatory agreement in four points signed on the 2nd of April ("Accord mettant fin à l'affaire de Bruxelles"), then later in May to a collective trip to Denmark during which Jorn and Debord would create the projects *Copenhagen* and *Fin de Copenhagen*, and the publication of two other projects: *The Naked City* and *Guide psychogéographique de Paris. Discours sur les passions de l'amour*. According to Rumney, Debord's refusal to take part in this show was caused by his conviction that it would fail to launch Situationism, and it was used as a form of detour ("détournement"), an improper use of pre-established artistic elements.

The three groups – the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, the Letterist International and the Psychogeographical Committee of London – would meet again at the end of July 1957 in the city of Cosio d'Arroscia to merge their activities and create the International Situationist (SI) group. The exhibition at the Taptoe Gallery was thus the last preparatory meeting before the founding of the SI. Its psychogeographic research would pursue the interaction of urbanism and behaviour as well as the possibility of modifying these perspectives to trigger revolutionary change.

## Avant-garde thought

In the avant-garde, especially in surrealism, there was an longstanding tradition of collaboration among different artists. The concepts that we find tied to the activity of Taptoe are a continuation of collective paintings such as those put forward by the Cobra movement, that was in turn indebted to old surrealism. The gallery created a space that, beyond the normal activities of an art gallery, stimulated the practice of the situationist drift ("dérive") and detour ("détournement"). While these two concepts were at the center of the situationists radical new thoughts on urban spaces, Taptoe was the space where Debord first planned to develop a maquette of a labyrinth that symbolizes the psychogeographical investigation of urban space.

Jorn strongly encouraged collective painting. After he initiated in Cobra-time "Painting-Words" ("Peinture-mots") with Dotremont, collective painting was pursued during the Taptoe activities with the creation of a large canvas signed by Klein, Jorn and Rumney. Jorn then initiated a new type of activity with Debord upon their arrival in Copenhagen. They both cutted sentences or words from newspapers and made a collage – again a typical avant-garde technique – that referred to different areas of the city of Copenhagen. Once these collages were transferred to a lithographic plate, Jorn poured ink onto the plates in order to create a set of "supporting structures" ("structures portantes"), that suggested a network of urban connections.

Debord had already expressed the need to exhaust the idea of art via the creation of situations in his early encounter with the Lettristes of Isidor Isou. Shortly after, in his unpublished "Manifest for a Construction of Situations" ("Manifeste pour une construction de situations") written in 1953, he expressed the need for a non-utilitarian urbanism that would radically change our conception of architecture based on the construction of new forms of habitat. Such constructions would emerge from the creation of shocking situations ("situations bouleversantes"). This led Debord to texts such as "Methods of Detournement" ("Mode d'emploi du détournement") in May 1956 and "Theory of the Derive" in November 1956. "Dérive" was a concept coined by Ivan Chtcheglov (Gilles Ivain) as early as 1953 and described as a technique of a brief passage through different forms of ambiance. He defended the idea of a continuous derive through the different parts of the old city as a new form of urbanism. Debord pursued such investigations, going beyond Baudelaire's flânerie or the surrealist quest of the marvellous or the unknown. He wanted to conduct a systematic study of the urban tissue with a sociological and political aim, asking members to draft 'psychogeographical' maps of the city. Such cartographies would provide the grids and network that depict psychological behaviour through the urban tissue. They also drafted the circuits and movements that enable one to hijack the rational flow induced by modern urbanism. Jorn and Baj also applied this method of detournement or hijacking to paintings, finding old canvases and painting over them to modify the original picture.

After Debord's initial investigation of the self-built, eclectic Ideal Palace of the "Facteur Cheval" – already admired by surrealists such as Breton and Max Ernst - in 1953 and several detours in Paris that led to his first cartographical works, other cities were soon to follow. If "Methods of Detournement" and "Theory of the Derive" set the stage for the psychogeographical investigation of the urban space, the already mentioned *Naked City* illustrates the use of reshuffled maps in psychogeography, enabling the modular elements of the city to be rearticulated according to its psychological effect during the derive.

Debord also planned to build a maquette for a labyrinth for the Taptoe show in February 1957. It was while exploring the Chinese quarters during his trip to London in 1956 that he discovered a phrase from Thomas de Quincy's *Confessions of an opium eater*, which is repeated (anonymously) in "Unitary Urbanism at the end of the 1950s" ("L'urbanisme unitaire à la fin des années cinquante", *I.S.* n°3): "I suddenly entered the labyrinths of alleyways.... I could have thought sometimes that I was the first to discover some of these terrae incognitae and I doubted that they would have been indicated on modern maps of London". The theme of the labyrinth already appears in the research of surrealism but as an element of chance. The psycho-geographic approach of the situationists, however, seeks the circular and repetitive dimension of the drift, because the labyrinth is tightly linked to urban space, before it becomes an image of the world. For the Taptoe exhibition, the labyrinth was foreseen as part of a model ("maquette"). Next to texts by Bernstein and by Rumney and a survey about the Bauhaus and the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, Debord therefore wrote a "Project for an Educative Labyrinth" ("Projet pour un labyrinthe éducatif"). According to this text, which was written on December 8, 1956, this labyrinth consists of a series of identical corridors that make orientation difficult and tend to lead to the visitor's "violent disorientation" (Debord 2006: 283-285). By decorating the premises with objects, paintings, slogans written on the walls, contrast lighting, a numbering system and street signs, the labyrinth sought to imitate the city streets. This first project indicated an Asger Jorn street, a rue de la Dérive, a square of the Imaginist Bauhaus, while different views of the map of the labyrinth are placed in different places, in order to represent "the psychogeographic currents of several cities". The maze was populated by actors of

psychogeography in the corridors, as well as including books and sound effects that would all contribute to this effect of disorientation and alienation.

Jorn similarly found a great interest in the labyrinth, when in the beginning of 1957 Gustav René Hocke published his book *The World as Labyrinth (Die Welt als Labyrinth)*. This study on mannerism helped him clarify the notion of style from the tensions that he identified throughout European history (mannerism and classicism or formalism) and eventually led him to refocus after Cobra on his interest in the origins of folkloric art. The following year he published a text in response to Hocke (De Groof 2007: 235-237). For him, the world as a labyrinth expressed the perfect correspondence between the spirit of man and the world. The world as a labyrinth tied together the concepts of derive and psychogeography in an environment that could help trigger the sense of loss of orientation and create a situation. The same year, the idea of building a huge labyrinth in a public garden for the Brussels World Exhibition was put forward but never carried out (De Groof 2007: 229). The idea reappeared the following year when the Dutch section of the SI planned to build a labyrinth in the Stedelijk Museum for an exhibition on Situationism in Amsterdam, which also did not materialize. It was described in the *Internationale Situationiste* n°4, under the title “Die Welt als Labyrinth” and the construction would have had to spill over from two rooms of the museum into the centre of the city, where Constant as director of derive was to help viewers pursue the psychogeographical investigation of the centre of Amsterdam. The construction of such a labyrinth was eventually cancelled by the director of the Museum, Willem Sandberg for security reasons as well as the financial infeasibility of its construction.

The interest in the labyrinth, from its first conception during the Taptoe exhibition to its final attempt in Amsterdam, shows the importance of such an architectural construction for the SI: how it evolved from being part of a gallery exhibit to overflowing into an actual derive in the urban tissue. The derive though the labyrinth becomes a way to lose ourselves in the psychogeographical investigation of an urban situation. It is thus a cornerstone of the techniques put forward by the first situationists (Debord, Jorn, Constant) in order to change our mode of living in urban spaces. This focus on architecture and “unified urbanism” (Debord) led Constant to develop the concepts that fuelled his utopian city called New Babylon. The initial work was conducted in Alba during the first conference of the Imaginist Bauhaus. He developed a set of modular circular tents in aluminium for Gypsies before going further in the modelling of transparent structure strongly influenced by Russian constructivism. His later work evolved toward transparent plexiglass structures, where we find elements directly influenced by psychogeographical investigation, such as in the labyrinth staircase of the 1967 model of New Babylon. With the launch of Situationism, unified urbanism was proclaimed as the foundation of the construction of a new city where behaviours would be directly related to the surrounding environment.

## Avant-garde strategies

While Brussels was at the centre of Cobra's artistic and theoretical activities, the city seems not to have led to concrete psychogeographic investigations of its urban spaces and a fully documented cartography in the way that was created for other cities by early situationists. After Paris and Venice, Copenhagen and Amsterdam appear as privileged places for drifting and detour, two experimental, spatial gestures that are of vital importance for the movement and break with established thoughts on linear time and originality. The absence of Brussels will probably be compensated by the situationists' address at the 1958 Brussels world exhibition, where a map of the city is surmounted by a structure that shows how the construction of situations is linked to the unitary urbanism developed by Constant, Rumney's psychogeography, and the situationist architecture that Jorn will come to illustrate. Nevertheless, Taptoe's location obviously informed the psychogeographical exploration of urban spaces. Being located in the old city center, the property had previously been protected by the old walls of Brussels, but by 1952 the walls had been completely

destroyed during the work on the city's North-South railway connection. Taptoe consequently became a hub, the meeting point and the first drifting point that enabled different concepts to meet and that gave a theoretical basis to Situationism as a neo-avant garde movement.

A modernization of urban places was at the basis of Rumney's search for drifting and of his psycho-geographic exploration of the center of Brussels on the opening evening of the exhibition in the company of students from the Université libre de Bruxelles (Rumney 1999: 52). The *dérive* was to end with a visit to Manneken Pis (contrary to his attempt in Venice, in Brussels Rumney chose a more touristy route that ended with a session where Rumney urinated on Manneken Pis). The mixture of gothic and baroque architectural elements combined with the maze feeling of the small streets in the center of Brussels demonstrate why the idea of a constructed labyrinth first appeared in the Taptoe exhibit on psychogeography.

All this is clearly why the Taptoe show became a platform that led to the Congress of Alba at the end of July 1957, when International Situationism was created. Weeks before this meeting, Marcel Mariën published Debord's "*Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action*" ("*Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendance situationniste internationale*") that was discussed as the founding document of Situationism. On July 28, 1957, at the Conference of Cosio di Arroscia, the vote was held to found the SI by unifying the three groups that organized the psychogeographical exhibit at Taptoe. The group was approved by five votes (Debord, Jorn, Berstein, Rumney and Olmo) against one (Sismondo) and two abstentions (Verrone and Pinot-Gallizio). The last issue of the *Potlatch* journal (n°29 of November 5, 1957) opens with the result of this vote and confirms the will to unify the different groups. From then on, *Potlatch* came under the control of the SI. Future activities were announced, such as the creation of a new cultural theater of operations and new situations came up, as well as publications such as *End of Copenhagen (Fin de Copenhague)* and *Psychogeographic Guide of Paris (Guide Psychogéographique de Paris)* by Debord and Jorn, or *Psychogeography of Venice* by Rumney, for which Debord had prepared a foreword. Nine months later, the first issue of *Internationale Situationniste* was published with a silver cover proposed by Rumney. This issue contains key texts of the ideas and concepts that led to the further development of situationism, such as the preliminary problems for a construction of situations, the foundational text of Ivan's "Formulary for a New Urbanism" ("*Formulaire pour un nouvel urbanisme*"), a contribution by Jorn on situationism and automation, as well as the dismissal of Rumney from the group, who delayed his psychogeographical investigation of the city of Venice.

## Conclusion

The role that the Brussels gallery Taptoe played in the emergence and resonance of Situationism is less well known. However, it is stated that this arts centre became a catalyst for the development of art in Belgium, 'that Brussels' window on the wide world' (Ivo Michiels in Hannoset 1989). Artists such as Wyckaert and Roel D'Haese were stimulated by Jorn to work with freer direction and Taptoe became a landmark for the definitive launch of the poets Claus and Snoek as visual artists. Though it was related to literary journals such as *Taptoe* and *De Meridiaan*, the gallery had almost no impact on the field of literature. Most significant internationally, however, Taptoe represented a transitional moment in the avant-garde, a shift from Cobra artists such as Jorn or Constant toward Situationism. The legacy of Cobra was transcended in the radical social criticism by the First Exhibition of Psychogeography of February 1957 at Taptoe, co-organized by the International Movement for a Bauhaus Imaginiste, the Letterist International and the Psychographical Comitee of London. Although Debord himself was announced but not present at the Brussels psychogeographical exhibition, it is clear that his ideas on detour and drift were sharpened by the plans for a Brussels exhibition and that the fusion of the different groups was triggered by these

plans. The different investigations of the urban space through European cities departing from such concepts as detour and drift, showed how Taptoe was the springboard for the first orientation of Situationism until 1961.

Apart from the monograph by Hannoset, publications on the legacy of Cobra and a recent overview article by Stefan Wouters, relatively little attention has been paid to Taptoe. In 1979, an issue of Openbaar Kunstbezit Vlaanderen published texts by Piet de Groof and a remarkable testimonial by Chris Yperman. A form of consecration was the retrospective exhibition on Taptoe organised in 1988 in Amsterdam, accompanied by the publication of the book "Taptoe dicht", that included poems by Hugo Claus, Gust Gils, Clara Haesaert, Hugo Raes, and illustrations by Reinhoud. The published correspondence and works of Debord and the correspondence archive of De Groof, which is spread over the Letterenhuis in Antwerp and the Getty Foundation in Los Angeles, do offer the possibility to assess more accurately the significance of Taptoe for the international neo-avant-garde.

## Further reading

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