

**Our Own Desires Build the Revolution** (*excerpt*)

*Written by Constant published in Cobra #4 1949*

*Translation and excerpt by Lucy Lippard*

For those of us whose artistic, sexual, social and other desires are farsighted, experiment is a necessary tool for the knowledge of our ambitions – their sources, goals, possibilities and limitations.

But what can be the purpose of going from one extreme to the other, like man, and of surmounting even those barriers erected by morals, aesthetics, and philosophy? What is the reason for this need to break the bonds which have kept us within the social system for hundreds of years and thanks to which we have been able to think, live, create? Is our culture incapable of prolonging itself and of leading us one day to the satisfaction of our desires?

In fact, this culture has never been capable of satisfying anyone, neither a slave, nor a master who has every reason to believe himself happy in a luxury, a lust, where all the individual's creative potential is centred.

When we say desire in the twentieth century, we mean the unknown, for all we know of the realm of desires is that it continuously reverts to one immeasurable desire for freedom. As a basic task we propose liberation of social life, which will open the way to the new world – a world where all the cultural aspects and inner relationships of our ordinary lives will take on new meaning.

*It is impossible to know a desire other than by satisfying it, and the satisfaction of our basic desire is revolution.* Therefore, any real creative activity -- that is, cultural activity, in the twentieth century – must have its roots in revolution. Revolution alone will enable us to make known our desires, even those of 1949. The revolution submits to no definition! Dialectical materialism has taught us that conscience depends upon social circumstances, and when these prevent us from being satisfied, *our needs impel us to discover our desires.* This results in experiment, or the release of knowledge. Experiment is not only an instrument of knowledge, it is the very condition of knowledge in a period when our needs no longer correspond to the cultural conditions which should provide an outlet for them. [...]

...being free is like being strong; freedom appears only in creation or in strife – and these have the same goal at heart – fulfillment of life.

Life demands creation and beauty is life!

*So if society turns against us and against our works, reproaching us for being practically 'incomprehensible,' we reply:*

- 1. That humanity in 1949 is incapable of understanding anything but the necessary struggle for freedom.*
- 2. That we do not want to be 'understood' either, but to be freed, and that we are condemned to experiment by the same causes that drive the world into war.*
- 3. That we could not be creators in a passive world, and that today's strife sustains our inventiveness.*
- 4. Finally, that humanity, once it has become creative, will have no choice but to discard aesthetic and ethical conceptions whose only goal has been the restraint of creation -- those conceptions responsible for man's present lack of understanding for experiment.*

*Therefore, understanding is nothing more than recreating something born of the same desire.*

*Humanity (us included) is on the verge of discovering its own desires, and by satisfying them we shall make them known.*