

## "Lettrisme: Into the Present," art showing

**March 2, 1984**

Lettrisme, the avant-garde art movement founded during World War II by a 17-year-old Romanian youth, Isidore Isou, will have one of the first large-scale showings in the United States at the University of California, San Diego.

"Lettrisme: Into the Present," will open with a preview reception at 6 p.m. Friday, March 9, in the Mandeville Art Gallery. The exhibition will be open to the public from March 10 through Apr. 15.

Letterist Isou believed the dictionary to be a cemetery of grandiose crimes against expression. He and other Letterists were sensitive to the pivotal role of language in the conduct of most of our activities. They believed that crises in language affected human affairs just as crises in non-language affairs were ultimately traceable to the corruption of the language.

In conjunction with the March 9 reception, a film, "Un Soir au Cinema," will be presented in room 103, adjacent to the gallery. Immediately following the reception, Jean-Paul Curtay, a leading member of the Letterist movement, will read poetry of the genre.

A panel discussion on Lettrisme, moderated by UCSD visual arts professor David Antin, will be held at 4 p.m. Thursday, March 8, in the Recital Hall, at the Mandeville Center. The discussion will focus on the arts of the letter as visual form and sound form.

Dr. Stephen Foster, curator of the exhibition, will participate on the panel. Foster is associate professor of art history at the University of Iowa. Another participant, Peter Frank, is an art critic, writer and teacher from New York City.

Letterists are convinced that any conventionalized language, by itself, is insufficient. Thus, in the course of establishing as broad-based a platform as possible, they engaged in the visual arts, music, performance and theater, dance, film and even architecture.

The exhibition will be composed primarily of selections from the Marvin and Ruth Sackner Archive of Visual and Concrete Poetry, the most extensive collection of Letterist art in North America, supplemented by key works from the private collections of the Letterists themselves.

According to Foster, "The subtlety of the graphics, the complexity of the color employed and the sophistication of the photographic imagery promise to provide a definite surprise for the American art public."

The exhibition was organized by the University of Iowa where it had its premiere.

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