

# 30 November 1938 to early 1940, part 1

## FACTS

Date:  
30 November 1938 to early 1940, part  
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Diary location:  
Danish National Gallery

Creator/key person:  
Ernest Mancoba

General comments:  
Rules of transcription:  
Spelling errors kept, followed by  
correction as [sic: corrected spelling]  
Necessary insertion of missing  
punctuation marks added as [,]  
Necessary paragraph breakage as [/P]  
Illegible words indicated with  
[illegible]  
Scratched out letters and words not  
transcribed

Mentioned people:  
Lippy Lipshitz  
Christian Poulsen  
Auguste Rodin

## SUMMARY

This Mancoba diary covers Mancoba's first months in Paris. He is enrolled at L'École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Rue d'Ulm. He has befriended the Danish ceramicist Christian Poulsen whom he abbreviates as "Xtian" and various other students whom he variously identifies as "Pultzer/Pulzer/Bulzer", "the Algerian", "Chargo/Chago" and "Roser" (amongst others). He has a visit with a South African identified as "Mall". The diary likely ends at the end of December 1938 or January 1939.

## TRANSCRIPTION

30 Nov –

The students talk about the 'grève' [sic: strike]<sup>1</sup> and not seriously – laugh about as if nothing –

I get again 12 Marks for my work [,] I am disgusted it is not good and blue streaks on it [,] Paul does something to it [,] I stop him – The Egyptian is fussy – he gets 14 pts [sic: points] – I can't stand him – He is an ox – Xtian [Christian Poulsen] is a [illegible] potter [,] no artist<sup>2</sup>–

In the afternoon we go to the drawing school at ---- [,] We find a woman posing [,] she is beautiful in the European way, lips red hair black – She has a beautiful body and I am thrilled [,] I draw as if possessed – It must be a strain to pose [,] she looks at the people as if to despise them [,] her personality dominates - & I [illegible] [,] I respect her and feel she is more human than them all – pretty girls [,] old men – young men and chinese [sic: Chinese] [,] She looks at me and I wonder what she is thinking – The studio is warm [,] there is a stove to warm her – I wonder what they would think in South Africa – a white woman exposing herself to the view of niggers and chinese [sic: Chinese] etc etc [,] the Dutch reformed Ch [sic: Dutch Reformed Church] would have something to say no doubt. A man looks at me and wonder if he is not a Nazi – I wonder if the other women do not envy her for her beauty [,] but they have money, position etc etc – She rests for some [illegible] & Algerian –

[/P] Xtian [Christian Poulsen] and I go to Le Dome for cigs [sic: cigarettes] – I am happy to be in their company [,] I like the Algerian [,] short fellow – He says one must teach oneself to be an artist [,] I wish I were a Frenchman & he [,] free – I think of the letter from Jones & I am unhappy – I walk as if I were French –

Return to find model talking to a young man & I feel the model will take her place one day beside Greta Garbo<sup>3</sup> [,] it will be great to speak to her – She has been despised but she will take her place one day – She poses again & we are intent drawing & drawing –

Woman beside me works hard & man only left clever but limited by tradition – ([illegible] shows another room) – Another model [,] short & energetic [,] Short poses and it is wonderful how long she stands – humourous [,] smiles at the painted girl who smiles back in condescending fashion – Old man shouts “Change” after every 5 minutes [,] Xtian [Christian Poulsen] goes to next room – He likes long poses –

The room has a few paintings on the walls, a plaster male figure in plaster showing muscles –

At 7 [sic: 7 o'clock] we go away & pay – Xtian [Christian Poulsen] goes to search for [illegible name] – They eat together –

After supper I go to look for Russo Rosso [,] Bd Edgar Quintet [sic: Boulevard Edgar Quinet], I find him eating his supper [illegible] Studio - For the first time I feel I am face to face with a great artist – He reads Lippy [Lippy Lipshitz] letter & apologises for eating alone – He laughs says still the same old Lippy – asks about CapeTown – Produces a book [,] English [,] & says he has begun to learn English – I show him a few things & he laughs when he read correctly – we go to Le Dome [sic: Le Dôme café] & the artists stand in a corner & shows me to other [,] they are good fellows [,] most grey haired energetic fellows – They talk and a group walks through [illegible] & points at one or the other & they laugh. Rosso asks if Lippy is married – We take coffee & go down Bd Monparnasse [sic: Boulevard Montparnasse] talking [,] He tells me he has been 30 years in Paris [,] Le Dome [sic: Le Le Dôme] used to be the home of the artist but now too many Bourgeois Select & ( ) & ----- were little place in those days when Lippy was there [,]

[/P] We part company [,] I am V [sic: very] happy [,] I go to Select & meet Xtian [Christian Poulsen] with Pelzie & white Danes – We sit & talk & go at 11. Pelzie was in Spain at the beginning of the Revolution<sup>4</sup> & discuss the possibilities of the Strike tomorrow & I feel Daladier [Prime Minister of France, Édouard Daladier<sup>5</sup>] – might go & if not [,] a dictatorship in France.

[note in margin:] Read English papers Daily Mail [newspaper] Continental

I go to school and soldiers (Garde Mobile) at every street corner – At Prefecture [,] armed soldiers as I pass – I don't know what to feel – At school all is normal – the buses are running and no indications of grève [French: strike] – Make a Grecian decoration [,] a skull [illegible] & fellows think it is foolish –

Dinner & I go with Xtian [Christian Poulsen] & buys potatoes & does not go back to school

Afternoon I work on relief & Algerian makes a bust of me – afterwards we go to Cafoulade & have a wine - & then to his rooms [,] he is friendly – He shows me his work and copies of Rodin [Auguste Rodin]<sup>6</sup> & Maillol [Aristide Maillol]<sup>7</sup> – He draws & paints & go home & eat – No excitement

[/P] People buy the papers & I speak for the first time with man reading an English book – been to Cambridge – thinks the English student practical but agrees not logical – good fellows –

Meet Chago<sup>8</sup> – Sad his brother dead – we look for paper - & back to bed – He speaks little & say 15yrs [sic: 15 years] ago he saw his mother

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<sup>1</sup> W. Sze: On 30 November 1938, a general strike was called by the French Communist party to protest against government policy

<sup>2</sup> W.Sze: Christian Poulsen (1911-1991, Denmark), ceramicist. He met Mancoba at L'École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (Paris) where they were both studying.

<sup>3</sup> W. Sze: Greta Garbo (1905-1990, Sweden/New York), actress

<sup>4</sup> W. Sze: Spanish Revolution of 1936

<sup>5</sup> W. Sze: Édouard Daladier, Prime Minister of France from 1933 to 1934 and from 1938 to 1940

<sup>6</sup> W. Sze: Auguste Rodin (1840-1917, France), artist

<sup>7</sup> W. Sze: Aristide Maillol (1861-1944, France), artist

<sup>8</sup> W.Sze: through the diary, Mancoba refers to this person alternatively as Chago and Chargo

30 Nov.

The students talk about the 'Gæve'  
and not seriously - laugh about  
as if nothing -

I get again 12 marks for my  
work I am disgusted it is not  
good and blue streaks on it  
Paul does something to it I skip  
him - The Egyptian is fussy -

He gets 14 pts - I can't stand  
him - He is an ox - Klean is a  
men potter no artist -

In the afternoon we go to  
the drawing school at - - -

We find a woman posing she is  
beautiful & the European say lips  
red hair black - She has a  
beautiful body and I am thrilled  
I draw as if possessed - It must  
be a strain to pose she looks  
at the people as if to despise them  
her personality dominates - I grabbed  
I respect her and feel she is more  
human than than all - prett girls  
old men young men and children  
She looks at me and I wonder



what she is thinking - The studio  
in Paris there is a stove for warm  
her - I wonder what the world  
think a South Africa - a white  
woman exposing herself to the view  
of negroes and Chinese etc etc  
The Butler reported she would have  
something to say no doubt. A man  
looks at me and wonder if I  
is not a Nizi - I wonder if the  
other bones do not say that  
for her beauty - but they have  
money, position etc etc - She  
change, nests for some months +  
Algiers - Ed Khan and I go to  
Le Dou for Ags - I am happy  
to be in her company like the Algiers  
Mist fellows - He says we must  
teach myself to be an artist  
I wish I were a French man the  
free - I think of the letter for  
Dore + I am unhappy - I walk as  
if I were French.

Return + my model sitting to a  
young man + feel the model bell  
take her place one day beside

Queta Sobro it will be great to speak  
to her - She has been despised but  
she will take her place one day -  
She poses again & we are interested  
drawing & drawing -

None beside the parks hard & narrow  
on a left corner but haunted by  
tradition - (Afferia says another room) -

Another model short & energetic  
short poses and it is hard to get her  
long she stands - humorous. Smiles  
at the painted girl who smile back  
in undecadent fashion - Old man  
shows "change" after every 5 minutes  
After goes to next room - He likes  
long poses -

The room has a few paintings on the  
wall, a plaster male figure & plaster  
showy muscles -

So at 4 we go away again - The  
retro goes to search for Poutyke - They  
eat together -

After supper I go to look for Rocio  
Rocio Red Sagar Quintet. I find her  
early in supper in studio - For the  
first time I feel I am face to face with

KILDER TIL  
DANSK  
KUNSTHISTORIE

NY CARLSBERGFONDET

a great artist - He reads Lipp's letter +  
apologise for caty alone - He laughs  
says shall we see old Lipp - Asks  
about Capetan - Produces a book  
right + says he has begun to learn  
English - Shows her a few things  
+ she laughs when he read something  
begs to do + the artists stand  
a corner + shows her to the the are  
good fellows most grey haired dejected  
fellows - they talk and a girl looks  
through the door + points out one or  
the other + she laughs - Rosso asks  
if Lipp is married - We take coffee  
+ go down Bd Marpanasse talks  
he tells he has been 30 years King  
to be used to be the home of the  
artist but now too many bourgeois  
select + - - - here little  
place - How days the Lipp boy  
there he part company I and Lipp  
go to select + meet + then with  
Pelje + with the Dang - We sit +  
talk + go at 11. Pelje says  
Spier at the begin of the school +  
discuss the possibilities of the strike

Read.  
English  
Papers.  
Daily Mail  
Contrasts



Knows I feel Dadaism might go  
+ if not a dictatorship - France -  
I go to school and soldiers (Garde  
Mobile) at every street corner - at  
Prefecture armed soldiers as I pass - I don't  
know what to feel - at school all  
is normal - the buses are running and  
no indication of grave - Make of German  
decoration a medal & fellows think it is  
foolish -  
1958  
1923  
Dinner + go with Khan + buy potatoes  
do not go back to school  
Afternoon drink on relief + Belgian makes  
a history of me - afterwards we go to Capoulade  
I had a wine + the room he is  
friendly - He shows me his work and  
copies of Rodin + Maillol - He draws  
+ paints + go home + eat - No exhibit  
people by the papers + I speak for the  
first time with pan reading an  
English book - been to Cambridge - thinks  
the English student practical but agrees  
not logical - good fellows -  
meet Chagall - said he wrote the dead  
we look for paper - at touch  
bed - He speaks little + say 15 yrs  
ago he saw his brother