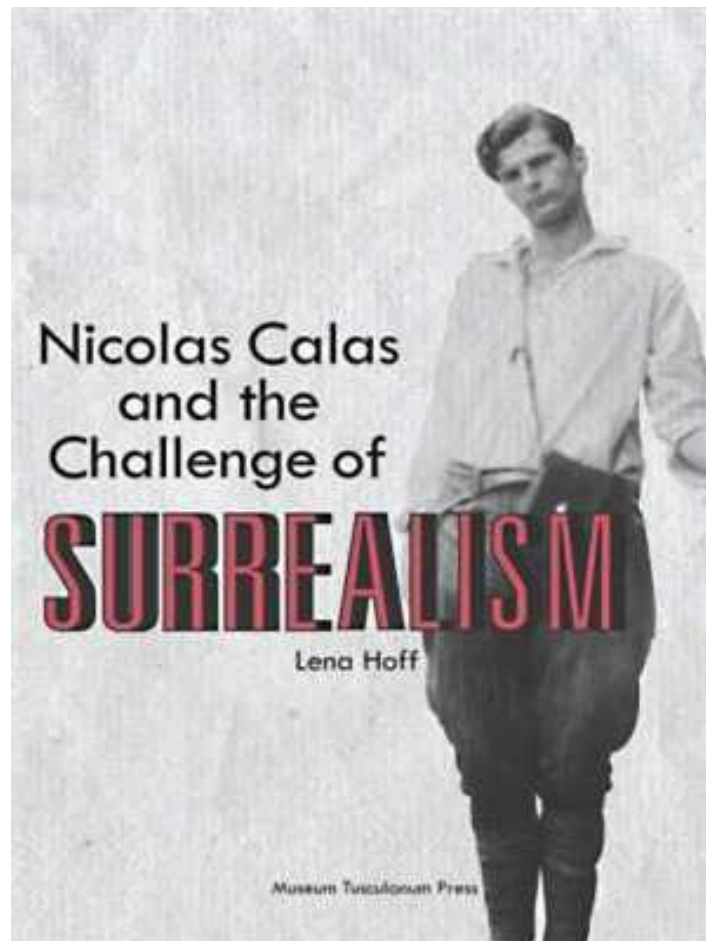


Nicolas Calas and the Challenge of Surrealism PDF

Lena Hoff



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BESKRIVELSE

This is the first intellectual biography of the Greek-American surrealist poet and art critic Nicolas Calas (1907–1988). Emerging on the scene in a vital period in Greek literary history – a period that would yield the so-called “Generation of the Thirties” and the two Nobel laureates George Seferis and Odysseas Elytis – Calas would be an important forerunner of surrealism in Greece in the early 1930s, fusing avant-garde poetics with Trotskyism and Freudo-Marxist principles. With a growing sense of isolation – reflected in his opposition to both the aesthetic and ideological dogmas of the Left as well as the Greek conservative cultural establishment – and further disappointed by some of the negative critical reception of his poems and his ideological differences with the other Greek surrealists, Calas decided to move to Paris in the mid-1930s, becoming a part of the circle around André Breton. On the eve of World War II Calas would become one of the first émigré surrealists to settle in New York, helping to pave the way for several of his French colleagues, such as Breton, Ernst, and Tanguy, and he would be an instrumental figure in the dissemination of surrealism in the United States, writing catalogues and contributing to important publications such as *VVV* and *View*. During the 1960–70s – now an established and well-respected art critic for journals such as *Village Voice*, *Art International*, *Arts Magazine* and *Artforum* – Calas continued to champion surrealist ideals in the United States, but he also wrote extensively on Pop Art, which put him in opposition to most other surrealists of the time. His poetry likewise reflected his restless spirit as the poems move freely between different genres, such as futurism, surrealism and satire, and are characterized by his polemical stance as well as his sharp, playful and intellectual wit. A highly enigmatic poet and intellectual who continuously put forward challenging questions and radical ideas in his work – which included essays, reviews, translations, polemics and poetry in Greek, French and English – Calas occupies an important place as the first truly avant-garde poet in Greece and his French theoretical work and American art criticism remain culturally relevant through their emphasis on raising important questions. This venturesome book-length study of Nicolas Calas – the first of its kind – will be of great interest to students, scholars and general readers interested in the many fields and disciplines that Calas would traverse – art criticism, surrealism, philosophy, poetry to name but a few – in the service of the avant-garde. Lena Hoff, Ph.D. in Modern Greek Studies, University of Birmingham.

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