



## BOOK CLUB KIT



Two Artists Who  
Risked Their Lives  
to Defy the Nazis

# PAPER BULLETS

"Every page is gripping.  
A brilliant book for the ages!"

—DOUGLAS BRINKLEY,  
bestselling author of  
*American Moonshot*



JEFFREY H. JACKSON





## A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

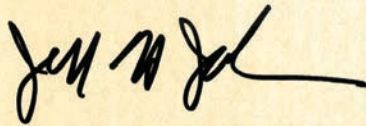
I initially encountered Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe through their photographs. My wife, an art historian, was the first one to show me work by Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, the artistic names that Lucy and Suzanne adopted. Many of their contemporaries found the work shocking, and some still do today. A friend told me they thought the pictures were “ugly” and wondered why I wanted to write about these women. Yet their intimate, provocative images inspired me.

As Cahun and Moore, they pushed against gender norms and expectations about what it meant to look like—or to be—a man or a woman. Many people are drawn to Lucy and Suzanne’s photographs because the images make us rethink what is “beautiful” and “normal,” and some queer and transgender people see Lucy and Suzanne as kindred spirits from decades ago.

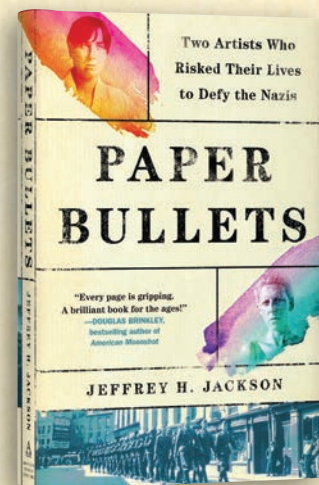
Studying Lucy and Suzanne’s anti-Nazi resistance also showed me how anyone can fight against injustice and oppression. Their counterpropaganda efforts were quiet, patient, and focused, but in some ways more successful than a big, daring act. The judge who issued their death sentence compared them to guerrilla fighters, claiming that their words were more dangerous than bullets.

Today, there are those who want to find ways of expressing their feelings about what’s happening in the world, but don’t want to march in the street. Lucy and Suzanne show a way to do so. Lucy called her vision of resistance “indirect action.” A thoughtful poem, provocative story, or surprising photograph—even a phrase like “Black Lives Matter”—can burrow inside another’s mind and germinate into new and valuable perspectives.

As you read *Paper Bullets*, I hope the story of Lucy and Suzanne will inspire you as much as it inspired me. Thank you for reading.



Jeffrey H. Jackson





## MEET SUZANNE MALHERBE AND LUCY SCHWOB



Suzanne Malherbe and Lucy Schwob grew up as the daughters of wealthy and prominent residents of the western French city of Nantes. Lucy's mother's family was Catholic, and her father, a newspaper publisher, was Jewish; Suzanne's father was a highly respected doctor and medical educator. The two girls met in 1900 when Lucy was six and Suzanne eight, and fell in love when they were teenagers. They had been lovers for several years by the time Lucy's divorced father married Suzanne's widowed mother in 1917, making them stepsisters as well.

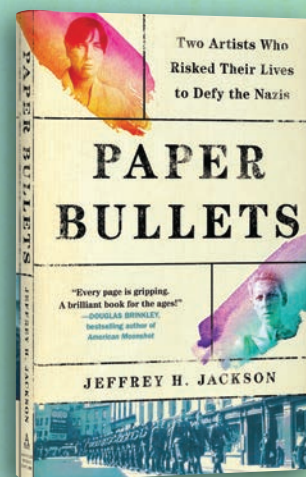
Lucy was a talented writer, and Suzanne demonstrated artistic abilities from an early age, enrolling in art school to study painting, wood engraving, and illustration. Working in tandem, the two created pieces that appeared first in Lucy's father's newspaper and later in other publications, with Lucy writing the text and Suzanne providing the illustrations.



Throughout the 1920s, Lucy and Suzanne found success as artists in Paris in the cutting-edge world of the avant-garde. Adopting the gender-ambiguous artistic pseudonyms Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, respectively, they collaborated on experimental photography and photomontage, producing sometimes-alarming images that challenged conventional notions of beauty, art, and expectations about how women were supposed to look.

During that time, Lucy and Suzanne also befriended communists, immersing themselves in intense political debates about the fate of Europe. But by the 1930s, Paris had become a city roiling in the turmoil of the Great Depression and radical politics, as right-wing groups chanted anti-Semitic slogans and fought with left-wingers in the streets. The mounting tensions in the bitterly divided capital, in addition to Lucy's struggles with her health, led the two women in 1937 to move to the Channel island of Jersey, which they both knew well from vacations throughout their youth.

The two women bought a farmhouse called La Roquaise and presented themselves as sisters while keeping their romantic relationship a secret. But the specter of anti-Semitism was close by, as news of Kristallnacht reached Jersey on November 10, 1938, and Britain and France declared war on Germany less than a year later, setting the stage for the Nazi occupation of the island—and Suzanne and Lucy's courageous acts of resistance.



ALGONQUIN BOOKS



# PAPER BULLETS: A HISTORICAL TIMELINE

**JULY 19, 1892:** Suzanne Malherbe is born in Nantes, France.

**OCTOBER 25, 1894:** Lucy Schwob is born in Nantes to a Jewish father and a Catholic mother.

**CIRCA 1900:** The two girls meet.

**1908:** Lucy and Suzanne fall in love after Lucy returns from boarding school.

**1917:** Lucy begins exclusively using the artistic pseudonym Claude Cahun.

**1920:** Lucy and Suzanne move to Paris together and become involved in the Parisian avant-garde art scene.

**1937:** Lucy and Suzanne move to the island of Jersey.

**JUNE 1940:** Thousands of residents evacuate the Channel Islands.

**JUNE 28, 1940:** Germans drop bombs on Jersey, occupying it two days later.

**1940–1944:** Lucy and Suzanne conduct their campaign to demoralize German troops and undermine the occupation of Jersey.

**SEPTEMBER 1942–FEBRUARY 1943:** Several rounds of deportations from Jersey to German prison camps take place.

**JULY 25, 1944:** Lucy and Suzanne are arrested and taken to the prison in St. Helier, Jersey.

**NOVEMBER 16, 1944:** Lucy and Suzanne are tried and sentenced to death.

**MAY 8, 1945:** Lucy and Suzanne are released from prison.

**DECEMBER 8, 1954:** Lucy dies at the age of 60.

**FEBRUARY 19, 1972:** Suzanne dies at the age of 79.

**1892**

**1894–1906:** Dreyfus Affair deeply polarizes French politics and society over questions of anti-Semitism, the role of the military, and individual conscience.

**1894**

**1900**

**1908**

**1914**

**1914–1918:** World War I engulfs all of Europe.

**1917**

**1920**

**JANUARY 30, 1933:** Adolf Hitler is named Chancellor of Germany.

**1933**

**1937**

**SEPTEMBER 1, 1939:** Germany invades Poland, starting World War II.

**SEPTEMBER 3, 1939:** Great Britain and France declare war on Germany.

**1939**

**1940**

**JUNE 14, 1940:** Paris falls to the Nazis.

**1942**

**1944**

**JUNE 6, 1944, D-DAY:** Allied naval forces invade northern France.

**DECEMBER 16, 1944:** Germany launches a final offensive in Western Europe.

**MAY 7, 1945:** Germany surrenders to the Soviets.

**MAY 9, 1945:** Germany fully surrenders to the Allied forces.

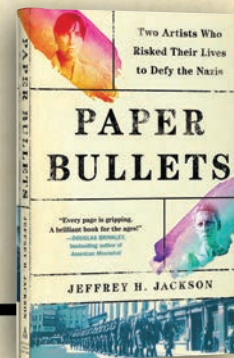
**AUGUST 6 & 9, 1945:** US drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

**SEPTEMBER 2, 1945:** Japan surrenders, ending World War II.

**1945**

**1954**

**1972**



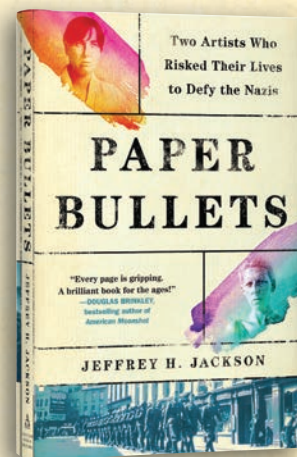




## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PAPER BULLETS



1. Although Lucy and Suzanne found community among other same-sex couples in Paris, they often saw themselves as outsiders from mainstream society because of their sexual orientation. How did their sexuality inform their resistance?
2. How is *Paper Bullets* a love story? How important was the relationship between Lucy and Suzanne in their decision to resist the German occupation?
3. How did the combination of Lucy's Jewish identity and her queer identity affect how she thought about the Nazis? How did these parts of her identity help give her the ability and willingness to act?
4. What does Lucy and Suzanne's story suggest about why and how people chose to resist German occupation? In the same situation, we all like to think we would do the same, but in reality, we would most likely not. What made Lucy and Suzanne different? What gave them the power to put themselves at great personal risk, especially given their privileged backgrounds?
5. As the war went on, Lucy and Suzanne escalated their actions, even as the German occupation dug in. Why do you think they became bolder in their resistance?
6. What does *Paper Bullets* suggest about how art and life inform each other? How important was Lucy and Suzanne's work as artists to their decision to resist?
7. Lucy and Suzanne crossed gender boundaries to become the Soldier with No Name. How important was the idea of transgression to their story?
8. Unlike so many World War II stories, this one involves German soldiers who were relatively kind, at least to Lucy and Suzanne, if not to those whom they saw as deserters from the army. What allowed Lucy and Suzanne to empathize with some of the occupiers?
9. Lucy and Suzanne's notes infiltrated the "private transcript" of the German occupation forces. What "public" and "private" transcripts do you experience in your life? How might you react if someone got "inside your head" in the way that Lucy and Suzanne did?
10. What does *Paper Bullets* suggest about the importance of who controls information and how it can shape our perceptions of reality? Does Lucy's "indirect effect" help explain the ways in which information flow today can work its way into our consciousness?
11. Why do you think Suzanne has largely been forgotten in the story of their lives together?
12. Why would residents of Jersey want to repress the experience of resistance after the war?
13. How can Lucy and Suzanne inspire people today to stand up for their beliefs?





# PAPER BULLETS TODAY:

## FIVE ACTS OF CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC RESISTANCE

### Black Lives Matter artists

In the wake of the killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests throughout the summer of 2020, artists have taken to social media, blank walls, and the streets themselves to intervene with messages of hope, beauty, and rage throughout America's public spaces. Dozens of artists are revealing the emotions and expectations of the Black community unfamiliar to too many Americans. Some of these visions, especially the mural of George Floyd by **Greta McLain**, **Xena Goldman**, and **Cadex Herrera** at the site of Floyd's death in Minneapolis, have resonated around the world.

Black artist **Dread Scott** (whose name is a play on Dred Scott, the enslaved Black man who unsuccessfully sued for freedom in 1857) creates provocative installations and performances in public spaces that confront viewers with their own prejudices and make them rethink what it means to be free. One of his works led to a landmark Supreme Court ruling about flag desecration. In another, he stood in the streets of New York wearing a sign reading I AM NOT A MAN, inviting viewers to consider questions of race and humanity.

### Dread Scott

### Zanele Muholi

South African artist **Zanele Muholi** documents the lives of transgender women with what they call "mobile studios" by breaking down the barriers between artistic space and the street. Allowing subjects to pose in familiar surroundings enables Muholi to capture the realities of life for the women they meet, and empowers them to help tell their own story. For the opening of *Brave Beauties*, the show of Muholi's documentary work, they invited those who had posed for photos to write their own stories on an "activist wall" inside the gallery space.

Photographer and performer **Haley Morris-Cafiero's** series *Wait Watchers* challenges assumptions about gender and bodies. Positioning herself in public spaces, Morris-Cafiero captured images of people as they secretly ogled, grimaced, or stared at the photographer herself. Doing so allows those who see her photographs to watch the watchers, and asks us to consider how we look at other people and think about their physical appearance.

### Haley Morris-Cafiero

### Krzysztof Wodiczko

Polish installation artist **Krzysztof Wodiczko** projects images and videos onto buildings and monuments in public spaces, often stopping passers-by in their tracks. His work provokes emotional responses in viewers about war, trauma, and memory. For example, in his "Abraham Lincoln: War Veteran Projection," Wodiczko projected video of former soldiers onto the statue of Abraham Lincoln in Union Square Park in New York. The flickering images made the statue seem to come to life, with new faces and voices who talked about the damaging effects of armed conflict on their lives.