

Surrealism, a type of art where peoples dreams are brought to life in paintings, drawings or any other technique used in fine art.

It is the unusual images which are expressed by surrealist artists which caught my eye. I decided to use surrealism as my project because of these unusual images, as they are a lot different to other types of art that I have witnessed.

This type of art was brought to life by Andre Breton in 1924 and since then there have been many artists following the path of Breton including Max Ernst, Joan Miro, Giorgio De Chirico and the most well-known Surrealist Salvador Dali.

Surrealist art can be described as an attempt to express the workings of the subconscious mind. The images expressed in surrealist art are usually fantasy and do not agree with reality. Animals, objects, backgrounds and even forces on earth that would never occur in reality would be seen in a surrealist painting. There are many other techniques used in surrealist art which make the art different from reality. This could include using different patterns and colours to disfiguring shapes and changing backgrounds. These will be investigated further on.

There are many types of surrealism, not all of surrealist art includes fantasy. Many surrealist pieces of art can look like real environments. The shapes of objects don't need to be changed at all and objects do not need to be added or moved. The main property surrealist art has is the unusual juxtaposition of objects. The piece of art may be about an environment which is real but the properties in the art are unusual e.g. the shadows or vanishing points. Many pieces of surrealist art usually show a lot of difference from reality as this makes the work more unusual and unfamiliar. This makes the work more interesting to the

viewer as it is different to what they usually see in realist paintings.

In order to clarify these concepts, I will explain the properties used in this surrealist painting by Max Ursnt.

In this painting (Oil on canvas), the animal shown is clearly imaginary, however it is made up from animals which do exist in reality e.g The head resembles a bird, and the left foot resembles a horses hoof.

A major unrealistic factor in the painting is the sheer size of the animal. If the painting was given to a scientist, that scientist would explain many reasons why the animal could never grow to that size. The major reason is the earths gravity pulling down on the animal. Gravity is to strong on earth for any land animal, which the creature in the painting clearly is, to grow larger than the size of a giraffe or elephant. As gravity is not as strong in the sea larger animals can grow. An example is the blue whale which is the largest animal in the world. This fact proves gravity is stopping larger land mammals from existing. So the painting does not agree with forces on earth which makes it unusual.

There are also many other features which resemble a surrealist painting such as the variation of colours used. Also the animal is wearing a piece of clothing that is different on each side yet looks like a single piece of clothing. The disfigurement of the animal including the two extra limbs on the left side of the animal, resembles a surrealist painting as it disagrees with reality. In reality the animal would not be able to survive.

To explain how a surrealist idea develop, I will need to investigate the work of a variety of surrealist artists.

## André Breton (February 18, 1896 – September 28, 1966)

André Breton is best known as the founder of surrealism. At first his main profession was not as an artist but as a doctor. He worked in a neurological ward during World War 1. He met a soldier of war, Jacques Vaché. It was his anti-social attitude and resentment for established artistic tradition which influenced Breton considerably into the surrealist ideas.

Breton was very political and was part of a French communist group in 1927 before being forced to leave in 1933. He was also pacifist, and having lived through both World War 1 and 2 he had strong feelings and strong a fear of any type of war. His famous book, Arcane 17, explains this. It was his political mind and his feeling of war that was expressed in his art.

Because of Breton, surrealism became famous in Europe and influenced all domains of art. It questioned the origin of human understanding and also human perceptions of certain events and objects on earth. Breton questioned the human perception of war, asking why such a terrible event was allowed to happen. These idea helped him develop his surrealist art which created his wide variety of surrealist paintings.

## Max Ernst (April 2, 1891 - April 1,1976)

Max Ernst was a German surrealist poet, who later became a self-taught surrealist artist. There is a great variety of ideas shown in his work as he did not concentrate on one type of. Like Breton, many of his ideas came to him during The First World War. However unlike Breton, he actually served in the war as a soldier not as a doctor so his ideas varied to Bretons. Like Breton he witnessed the excessive number of deaths, however he had a much clearer image of the destruction of the war.

One of his paintings which really emphasizes his ideas was 'Europe after the rain' which was painted between 1940-1942. It shows many famous building such as the leaning tower of

Pisa destroyed. It is clearly fantasy as famous buildings from around the world are put near to each other in the painting and the colour of the wreckage is not realistic. The colour is meant to contrast the wreckage which contains dark or grayish prime colours to the bright sky at the top. This explains the interpretation that areas are safe where humans cannot reach which is why the sky remains bright. The buildings have obviously been ravished by war. It is The Second World War which is being referred to in the paintings as Ernst moved from Europe during the war and returned to France after the war, when many cities in France were ruined from war.

Ernst created the method frottage. This is where sketching paper is put over a surface while a pencil is sketched over the top using rubber-like movements. This then makes an image on the paper of the texture from the surface. It is very effective as a successful attempt at the technique is easy to gain. This is why it is now a major surrealist technique. The image can be kept on its own, however many surrealists just like to use it as a background for a piece of art, which is what Ernst has done in a lot of his work.

Ernst created this idea in 1925. He thought of the technique after he was inspired by an ancient wooden floor. The floor had gone through a lot of abuse from human activity and had mainly weathered away due to continuous scrubbing. He wanted to re-create the patterns from the floor exactly as they were on to a piece of sketching paper. This led him to the development of frottage.

After Ernst created the technique, he started creating his major surrealist works. His ideas not only came from events which occurred in the war, but after the creation of frottage, many of his ideas came to him during present events. An example is his

painting called 'The Kiss' (oil on canvas). He had created the painting after marrying his young wife Marie-Berthe Aurenche in 1927.

The major composition lines on the painting were not logically thought of, but were actually made by dropping pieces of string onto the canvas while using a co-ordinate grid. The co-ordinate grid was used to make sure the lines were not too random, therefore making sure that the painting would not be too hard to understand. The technique produces undulating rhythms. It could resemble waves, and due to the sandy colour used at the bottom of the painting, the setting could be a beach. This would emphasize the feeling of love in the painting as a beach is usually seen as a beautiful and wonderful environment which expresses the moment between the two figures in the painting.

One of Ernst's major ideas, used in many of his paintings, was to mix objects and animals together. He especially liked to mix humans with other animals. A great example is the painting 'The Elephant Celebes' (oil on canvas, painted in 1921). The major object in the painting resembles a hovercraft, but looks like an elephant. The tube on the hovercraft looks like the elephant's tail and the two sharp objects at the left side of the hovercraft resemble tusks. The hovercraft has legs which makes it resemble an elephant. The human figure at the right of the painting has a paintbrush as an arm so it looks like it is painting the hovercraft/elephant. However it still looks like a piece of art itself as the figure looks like it is posing and does not have a head. This makes the painting look more unusual.

This is an excellent example of surrealism as the painting completely disagrees with reality yet it is familiar in some way and is understandable. People will know what the objects in the

painting look like in reality and so can work out the painting.

Salvador Dalí (May 11, 1904 - January 23, 1989)

Salvador Dalí was a Catalan-Spanish artist who was also a skilled craftsman. His work can be said to be striking, bizarre and dreamlike. Apart from art, he was also involved in photography, sculpture and film. He had a great imagination and was known for the bizarre images used in his work.

He did not start out as a surrealist artist. He tried many types of art before finding out surrealism was his style. At one time he tried cubism but did not fully understand this type of art. There were not many sources on cubism at the time.

He had gone through a lot in his life, including the death of his brother and mother, going through many art schools and he had also lived through World War 2. He had met some very famous artists such as Pablo Picasso and Joan Miro who was a surrealist artist. These events affected him very much, and due to this and his own natural personality he managed to create his extraordinary paintings. A lot of his work is to do with dreams and how they can be represented.

One of his most famous paintings is 'The persistence of memory' (oil on canvas, 1931). The main surrealist image in the painting is the watches. Most of the painting is realistic but the watches are not as they are soft and melting. This shows that not all surrealists like to make the whole painting unrealistic. The watches give a message, that time is not solid and cannot be determined in a dream. It is, in my opinion, meant to represent the strange warping of time when we enter a dream. The realistic background makes the watches stand out as they are unnatural and unrealistic. This makes this a great surrealist

image even though most of the painting is realistic. With the emphasis on the watches the painting looks bizarre and apart from reality.

The stretched face on the floor is said to be Dali himself and represents the fading away from reality when people sleep and then enter their dreams.

Another painting, 'Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bumblebee around a Pomegranate a Second Before Awakening' (oil on canvas, 1944), really shows Dali's imaginative mind as the whole painting is in a surrealist style. There are many explanations about what the painting is about.

In my opinion, the images coming from the pomegranate represent the bumblebee getting closer to the woman, as the name of painting explains there is a bee around a pomegranate a second before the woman will wake. In the next second the bee flies over and stings the woman. The ferocious tigers and the striking fish represent the bees anger and aggressiveness, and the bayonet represents the pain of the sting caused by the bee. The calm colours and the picturesque background along with the elephant, which is seen as a loving animal, represents the enjoyment the woman gets from the dream. The elephant has unusual long legs and a pyramid shaped object on his back to emphasize the image is mythical and the woman is in a dream. The woman floating slightly on a piece of land which is floating on water also emphasizes the idea. Along with the lions, fish and large pomegranate, the idea is the woman gets a strong, harsh and painful awakening.

In many of Dali's paintings supports are used to hold up objects or animals. This helps to emphasize the size of them, or how high they are. He wants the sky to be filled with large beasts or

machinery and the supports keep them up. If wings were used on beasts, they would have to be used on machinery to match the rest of the paintings. This would look strange on the machinery so wings are not used. However the supports look fragile and are obviously too thin to hold the mass of the figures which looks unreal.

The fish is used to express how reality can affect a dream. The bumblebee flying towards the woman would need to be expressed in the dream. As the woman is near the sea, a fish could be used, as it fits into the dream. The tigers come out of the fishes mouth now as they would not have been able to come straight out into the sea, as tigers do not live in the sea. A bayonet can then be used in the painting as it is near land where bayonets occur and is used to harm humans, like it is doing in the painting. A bayonet coming straight from the sea would not make sense.

Another idea, not mine, of what the painting represents is the evolution of man in a surrealist style. The idea states that every organism starts as a plant, then a fish then to a land animal to a human. However I disagree with this as the elephant in the background would not have a point in the painting if the painting was about evolution.

Similarly the painting 'Sleep' (Oil on canvas, 1937) involves the idea of sleeping and waking up. The head which is hung up by poles looks like a statue being held up in place. The poles support would not be a good support for holding up the 'statue head' and so the support is very fragile. If one of the poles were to break or move by something in the surrounding environment then the 'statue head' would surely fall to the icy ground and break.



This represents a person sleeping. When people sleep, they could be easily woken up by a change in their surrounding. This could be a sound such as something falling to the floor or something physical such as an object falling on the person. Even if it is small humans can get woken up easily by this. If this happens they will leave their dream and return to reality. The poles represent the support the dream has. A change in surrounding would break one or more of the poles. The 'statue head' crashing down and breaking represents a person breaking out of a dream.

This is, in my opinion, a very clever representation of a somebody sleeping, as it is true, very accurate yet unrealistic.

Joan Miro (April 20, 1893 - December 25 1983)

Joan Miro was a Catalan-Spanish painter who, like Dalí, was also a skilled sculptor. He was born in Barcelona, Spain, and that is where his gallery lies now. A lot of his work represents the mind of a small child or the subconscious mind. He was influenced in Paris, by surrealist poets and writers. Many of his paintings were visual analogues of surrealist poetry. This led to his work becoming surrealist, however his work is very unique compared to other surrealist painters. They are very imaginative and spiritual, and the objects in his paintings look much different to what they are in reality, more so than in other surrealist paintings.

He used one of Bretons techniques to think of his ideas for a lot of his paintings. The technique was to starve yourself or to stop yourself from getting sleep. Sometimes even drugs were taken. This technique would have stopped their mind from working probably, which is as close to a subconscious mind as they will get without actually being subconscious (or they wouldn't be

able to paint). Miro admitted that his painting 'Harlequin's Carnival' was painted under these circumstances. Here is quote from one of his speeches: "How did I think up my drawings and my ideas for painting? Well I'd come home to my Paris studio in Rue Blomet at night, I'd go to bed, and sometimes I hadn't any supper. I saw things, and I jotted them down in a notebook. I saw shapes on the ceiling..."

With the help of Max Ernst, Miro also created the surrealist technique called 'grattage' in which paint is scraped off canvas. This technique helps to emphasize different textures and areas of the painting.

The main reason for his art looking so much different to other surrealist artists is that he was more flexible with his work. Many other surrealist artists joined groups, and to stay within the group they didn't produce art which nobody else in the group disliked. If they did, they could be ejected from the group. Therefore Miro allowed himself to experiment more freely with his art and constantly change his technique.

Miro started using fauve colours and made the lines around the objects imprecise. Even though he liked this technique, he didn't want to stay using the same technique all his life, so he started using darker colours in some of his later paintings and used more precise lines. He used more precise lines mainly in the paintings which had many objects in them. This helped the objects to stand out more from each other. This was not needed in paintings with more objects.

His paintings were also very humorous. In them he distorted animal shapes, had strange geometrical shapes, and also twisted organic shapes. A lot of the objects were surrounded by lines, circles or large dots. These were often against a neutral

background usually with the colours red, blue, green, yellow and black. All these together produced a dream like image, as none of it seemed to make any sense like most dreams don't. Dreams can be about anything which explains some random work on his paintings. They also explain the subconscious mind, as the mind would be distorted.

The painting 'Dutch interior 1' shows a person playing an instrument which looks like a guitar or another string instrument. The person is playing the instrument in a room with many other items in it. Miro transformed this image in into a very surrealist image. The shape of the figure playing the instrument is changed to a circular shape and the bodies detail has all been taken away. The head, which would have had many features on it, still does show many features but they are very hard to recognize as the shapes have been twisted and distorted and some changed completely. The dog, which is on the floor, has had its shape exaggerated e.g. a part lower on the dogs body appears very low and a part high on the dogs body appear very high. This still makes the dog recognizable. This is true for many of the other items whose shapes have also been distorted and twisted.

However, even through the objects have all been changed dramatically, they are still recognizable in some way which makes the painting seem like a dream. If the objects were not recognizable at all the painting would not make much sense, as a dream consists of organisms and objects from reality. The bright colours really give the painting a bizarre effect, making all the objects stand out from each other and making them look so much different from the colours in reality.

Surrealist techniques

As well as frottage and grottage, there are many techniques used by surrealist artists to get the results needed.

### Aerography

This is when a 3D object is used as a stencil. Spray paint is used to make the image. The image produced can often be distorted or changed which works well in surrealist paintings.

### Bulletism

This is when ink from a pen (fountain pen is best) is shot at a blank piece of paper. The patterns produced can be used as an outline for a real object, like a dot to dot drawing. While trying to follow the actual outline of a real object, the shape will have to be changed from trying to follow the dots on the paper. This often leads to a very imaginative piece of art about the real object.

### Collage

A collage is the reassembling of different forms of material to create one new whole form. For example a magazine which contains a lot of colour can be used to create an image of a real object. Colours on the object may match or be similar to a colour in a magazine so that part of a magazine is stuck to a piece of paper usually containing the image of the object. This process continues until the whole of the image is covered by bits of magazine. This creates a very creative piece of art, in which every part of the image looks different but still matches with the other parts. This is due to the great variety of colours in a magazine.

Sometimes an image does not have to be produced but it could be a random assortment of articles or sometimes pictures put together. Usually the pictures are related in some way.

## Coulage

This technique uses cold water and molten material, which can be metal but usually wax or chocolate is used as it is easier to attain in its molten state. The molten material is put into cold water and this usually produces a random sculpture depending on the physical properties of the material. The artist may like to add to the disfiguration of the sculpture to create a less random sculpture.

## Cubomania

The method is another type of collage. A picture is cut up into shapes which are the same shape and size. They are assorted randomly next to each other and the shapes can be turned upside down or turned sideways. This technique was created by the surrealist Gherism Luca.

This technique works well as the overall image produced looks creative and works well as the shapes all relate to each other. This means that the real image can be vaguely worked out.

## Decalcomania

This technique involves spreading thick paint onto a canvas so it won't dry quickly, and then adding different sorts of material onto the paint. This could include paper, metal and carpet or any other favorable material. The material is removed before the paint dries and the patterns on the material are re-created on the paint. Usually a variety of different material is used on the painting so a variety of different patterns can be created. Max Ernst used and employed this technique in a lot of his work as it made the paintings more interesting with the added texture. It also made the painting look more like a dream as the paintings seem more unrealistic and strange.

### Entoptic graphomania

This method is used on a black sheet of paper. Where there are impurities on the sheet of paper dots are put on. The dots are then joined together by lines which produces random patterns. This idea was invented by Dolfi Trost.

### Fumage

This is when smoke from a candle or a kerosene lamp produces an image onto a piece of paper. This is very useful in surrealist work, especially if the painting is about a dream. Dreams are not usually remembered well and some are not even remembered at all. The smoke effect from fumage adds a foggy effect which emphasizes the fact that it is a dream world being painted, as fog usually stops people from seeing a clear image in front of them. It is used mostly in the background of surrealist paintings as it gives the idea of an unknown world. This idea can be used to create clouds in skies.

### Movement of liquid down a vertical surface

As the name suggests this technique does involves moving a volume of liquid, usually a small volume down a vertical surface. A line is drawn on a piece of paper the direction the water flows all the way down to the bottom of the medium. The paper is usually the same size as the medium for more accurate results.

### Paranoiac-critical method

This is when the active processes of the mind help to visual images from a picture to create a final product. This includes

doubling an image or doubling or multiplying a certain object in an image. This method shows how objects can be interpreted in different ways.

### Outagraphy

This is a very simple method in which the main object in an image is cut out of the image. This creates a mysterious atmosphere in the picture as something which should be in the picture is not there. This idea can be used in films, and has been used in many horror films e.g. a murderer could have been known to be in a picture but the face of the murderer could be missing.

### Parsemage

This surrealist technique involves chalk or charcoal being put into a body of water. The chalk is usually coloured. The colours in the water produced by the chalk and charcoal is then captured onto a stiff piece of paper or cardboard which is skimmed over the top of the water. This technique can capture the wave-like movements the water produces while different colourations can be produced at the same time.

### Heatage

This technique uses film from a camera. This film is heated from below, and the emulsion from the heat will distort the image on the film in a random way. This can help give ideas for a surrealist painter or it can be used as an actual image used in a surrealist painting.

These techniques usually only account for a small part of a painting or are not the main attraction of the painting. It is the

actual ideas and the personality of the artists which usually determines how a surrealist painting will turn out. If surrealist paintings were all down to chance, and the artists did not contribute their own ideas to the surrealist painting then there would not be as much variety in pieces of art and many pieces would just not work at all.

Some surrealist paintings do not show any of these techniques but the ideas come from the artist, this is true for many surrealists artists like Dali.

### Giorgio de Chirico (July 10, 1888 - November 20, 1978)

Giorgio de Chirico was a Greek - Italian painter born in Volos - Greece. He strongly influenced the surrealist movement and received praise from many famous surrealist artists such as Max Ernst and Salvador Dalí, and he also influenced them. Like many surrealist artists, many of his ideas came from joining a war. He was enlisted in the Italian army. 1909 to 1919 was known as his metaphysical period. During this period, Chirico produced his most famous paintings, the paintings that he got praised for. These paintings are memorable for their haunting mood.

Many of his paintings refer to the bright Mediterranean cities around Greece. He mainly looked at older and historical building for his paintings. Some of his later paintings were about small and damaged rooms which contained mannequin figures. His earlier paintings therefore were brighter than his later paintings, even if some of his later paintings were about some quite bright rooms.

Chirico was a well educated artist. He studied in Athens and Florence and in 1906 he entered the Academy of Fine Arts in



Munich. He started painting in 1909 where he returned to Italy. In 1910 he moved to Milan and started painting the first of his 'Metaphysical Town Square' paintings. Turin was one of his favorite areas for his paintings due to the metaphysical aspect of the architecture there especially in the city of Nietzsche. He liked the ancient look of the archways and the Piazzas.

Chirico's later paintings (After 1919) did not get the same praise that his earlier paintings got. This is due to his change in technique as he started doing more realistic paintings. The reason why he did not get the same recognition for these more realistic paintings was because he had already become famous for his surrealist paintings that he was expected to carry on with his unique style.

One of his most famous paintings 'Piazza d'Italia' (1913, Oil on canvas) featured the piazza Vittorio Veneto. The piazza is surrounded on three sides by plain and deeply shadowed arcades. Chirico loved this unique landscape and emphasized the difference in shadowing on the buildings. To do this he uses mostly block colours on the buildings where there is more shadowing, there is a clear contrast between a brighter area. This makes it very clear where the sun is shining. The colours of the buildings do not vary much, and they usually consist of either, or a mix of yellow ochre, orange and red. This makes the buildings seem older and ancient. Without the varying colours used, more attention to the architecture of the buildings is given, which is what Chirico wanted people to see.

The surrealist feel given in his early metaphysical paintings, is by the colours used in his paintings, objects used and also the area he painted. Because he painted areas which were very unique, they were not usually seen in other paintings. The main thing about his paintings which made his paintings seem like

dreams was that they were usually deserted. This made them seem unreal, and with the colour technique, made the areas seem like they were not from earth. The colours all match very well together which gives a calm affect in his paintings. This was especially true for his earlier paintings. The architecture is well made and looks undamaged which also makes the area seem uninhabited and not from earth. This is especially true for 'Piazza d' Italia'. Having only two figures in the painting makes the area seem like a secretive place, and the train in the background adds an element of beauty.

In some of his later metaphysical paintings, with the unusual object in the pictures, the colours are more dark than his earlier painting which adds to the uninhabited and unreal feel to the image. As I have said, it gives a haunting affect, especially with the objects. The later paintings shows a typical surrealist style of painting strange objects. This can be seen in 'The Disquieting Muses' (1918, Oil on Canvas).

The statue in the middle of the other statues is made clearly to look in a depressed state. The two other statues, one in front and one behind are surrounding the statue in the middle, so it looks like the statue in the middle is restricted, and the two other statues are looking down on the statue in the middle. The background gives an uneasy feeling. In my opinion, the objects next to the middle statue are meant to represent bags, and the pole is meant to represent a walking stick. So the idea of the painting is that the middle statue is being told to leave. The large building in the background is what the middle statue must leave from.

The reason that statues are used in many of his paintings is that they are not alive. This makes the situation in a painting such as 'The Disquieting muses' seem strange, as it is like the statues

are alive which is usual. The fact that one of the statues in the paintings does not have a statue head, but what looks like a boxing speed ball, adds to the strange feeling as the feature emphasizes the figures are not human or alive, yet the situation in the painting makes it seem as though they are.

René Magritte (November 21, 1898 - August 15, 1967)

René Magritte was a Belgian surrealist artist, born in Lessines . He was famous for his amusing images produced in his paintings. The paintings had some very strange images, and also some very strange meanings. He had studied art in Brussels for two years, this was his only real art education. This was at the Royal Academy of Arts in Brussels

One of the main images that stayed with Magritte was of his mothers death. In 1912 his mother committed suicide in the river Sombre and he was present when her corpse was fished out of the river. Her dress was covering her face. This would turn out to be a key image in his art series called Amant. This series included paintings of people with their faces covered.

Before being an artist he had worked in a wallpaper factory. The many images on the wallpapers could have added to his ideas in his surrealist art. When working there he was a poster and advertisement designer. He managed to become a full time artist when he got a contract with the Galerie la Centaure in Brussels. This helped him start to paint his most famous paintings.

He had produced his first surrealist painting in 1926, called the lost jockey, but he was slammed by critics for his painting. Due to his failure, he went to Paris where he met the creator of surrealism, Andre Breton and they studied surrealism together.

After his contract ended he had to move back to Brussels where he worked in advertising again. With his brother he formed an agency which earned him his major income. He had to remain in Brussels due to World War 2. This caused his break with Breton.

Magritte's work can be said to be filled with riddles, as many people find them very hard to understand. He explores the mysteries around the unexpected juxtaposition of everyday things. Therefore, his paintings, though complicated can be worked out by anybody, not just people with certain qualities. Also many of his paintings contain certain symbols or myths which are quite well-known.

His paintings are not supposed to represent dreams and many are not meant to be unrealistic. Many of the paintings are actually very realistic. All the objects in his paintings are clear. His art is more representational surrealism, as the portrayal of his images and the way he represents his images is unusual. It is how objects are put together which also makes his paintings unusual. Many of his paintings are still discussed, as there are many different opinions of what the meanings of paintings are.

There are many anatomical surprises in his paintings. These include a hand which has a wrist which is a woman's face. Also a stone bird flying over a rocky shoreline. Also there are mysterious occurrences in his paintings such as an open door opening showing some unusual view. He also likes to animate objects which in reality would never be animated. This includes a shoe which has toes on the end of it. One of his most famous features is corresponding related words into one image (One of the words is usually an animal) e.g. A mountain eagle, which is a mountain with an eagle's features

Magritte often gave familiar things new meanings in his artwork and often confused people with what he wrote on his paintings. For example the paintings 'The Treachery of Images' (1928, Oil on Canvas) shows a pipe with, in French, some writing saying this is not a pipe. This confused people because the image was of a pipe, but actually what he said was true, because it was an image not something real. As he said himself 'try to stuff it with tobacco!'.

Another one of his paintings which is quite hard to understand is the painting 'The Lovers 1' (Oil on canvas) which shows two figures with their face covered with a blanket of some sort. After finding out about Magritte's early tragic life, the painting is more clear. The haunting image of his dead mother with her face covered with her dress clearly gives the idea for the paintings. The painting is quite haunting which expresses Magritte's thoughts. In my opinion the painting shows his mother and father. They both died at an early stage of his life and he probably didn't get to know them very well.

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