

ART HISTORY SURREALISM

PROJECT

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The History of Surrealism

What is surrealism?

Surrealism is the art of self-discovery. Surrealism helps us explore our unconscious mind. Surrealism helps us to find out who we really are and how our dormant mind sees and interprets its surroundings.

History of surrealism

The art movement surrealism all began after World War 1 about a quarter of the way through the 20th century. Surrealism was intentionally meant to be the anger of the artists portrayed in art forms. It was a revolt against the horrors of the war and revolt against rationalism. The surrealist artists did this because they believed that the world did not deserve any form of beautiful art and so they did not give it to them. Instead of these beautiful drawings they got mockeries of old established art, bloodshed and ugliness. However, the victims of surrealism were not at all offended, instead of being horrified they marvelled at the new weird and wonderful drawings these surrealist artists had created. With this new reaction to the surreal paintings a new art movement was born. It was helped especially by the Dada movement.

During the beginning of surrealism two groups were brought into being. One of these was automatism and the other was veristic surrealism. These two groups were made by Jung and Freud as a purpose for personal analysis.

Automatism was a way for the artists to interpret images from the subconscious and leave them unchanged so that they could be understood through analysis.

The veristic surrealists believed in automatists but they thought that you should not be looking at them but within them to understand. This group then broke out into three more groups.

Surrealism went through many different stages as surrealists found new ways of expressing themselves in a surreal way. There were many different forms, methods and ways of doing a surrealist art piece.

The influence of Dada

Dada was one of the surreal artists that influenced surrealism and even had a movement named after her.

Dada lived through the horrors of the war and so respected the surreal artists feelings in the surreal movement. She too believed all that they were saying with their new style of art.

Dadaism was the first movement in surrealism and really started the art movement surrealism.

Dadaism was aimed against art especially academic art and the political society.

The Dadaism invented a number of procedures and new ways of art for Surrealists to use. A lot of Surrealists attended Dada meetings and published *Les Champs Magnetiques*. The surreal artists in this movement researched and studied the works of Freud, Sigmund and Jung. Other artists in the group expressed themselves in an abstract way and others, expressed themselves in a symbolic way. This just shows how Dadaism was splitting into different sub groups.

The influence of Freud

The use of imagery to create a feeling in the observer was a central point of Surrealism. It was difficult for the Surrealists to find that point where reality changes into imagination, but they managed to grasp it in many forms; painting, writing, and others. The influence of Freud is seen in the Surrealist philosophy and objectives during the beginning of the Surrealist movement. An additional impression Freud helped to create on the Surrealist movement is the understanding of the benefits of insanity and madness for arts creation. The concept of human imagination will always have powerful applications.

Freud was a psychoanalysis, and the Surrealists were highly influenced by him, especially Andre Breton. However, Freud believed the Surrealists to be "quite mad," and had appreciation only for Salvador Dali.

Inspired by Freud and trying to free themselves from rationalism, Breton and his friends looked towards dreams and automatic writing, in which unchanged, subconscious images flow freely onto the paper, automatism. Many artists joined this movement like Jean Arp, Max Ernst, André Masson, Joan Miró, and Yves Tanguy who created dream like pictures with imaginary figures and spontaneous sketches. They experimented with a wide range of techniques and forms.

Surrealist collages showed distant realities to create, as Breton said, "the beauty of the spark."

The Surrealist object involved the combination of objects to create poetic or symbolic meaning.

Photography was apparently the objective recording of reality it was used to manipulate and distort normal reality.

One surrealistist artist said that a dream is like a microscope in which we use to look into our soul. In a way this statement is true, our dreams show our most wanted desires. A dream normally shows what the subconscious is thinking about, these dreams may not always be pleasing and it might even be something, which we don't at all understand. Dreams can also show us our fears or our wild side, which can not be shown in our modern society. Surrealist painters often interpret these dreams onto a canvas. These images do not need to be changed or altered as the mind of a human thinks in a surreal way.

The idea of “systematic random composition, automatism and the role of accident” in the development of surrealist work

One of the techniques that the artists of the Surrealist and Abstract Expressionist movements developed was 'automatism'. Using automatism the artist produced spontaneous paintings or drawings by suppressing conscious control over the movements of the hand and allowing the subconscious mind to take over. Once an interesting image or form had been achieved by chance it was then developed by consciousness.

Automatism can also be achieved by writing. A surrealist would simply write down words without thinking and so forming a sort of sentence. This can also be done with a group of surrealists who take it in turn to say a word without thinking. These words could be words that the subconscious is thinking about or troubled by.

One form of surrealism is by painting with your eyes closed. By letting your hand move freely over the paper without controlling it can sometimes bring out ideas or thoughts from the subconscious mind. When you have finished painting in this manner you look at the painting and most the time you must add lines or shapes to make the painting clearer to the human eye. However, this method does not always work and most the time you are left with nothing but a scribble on a paper.

Many people know this method but what they do not know is that it is a form of surrealism linked closely to the idea of accident in the development in surrealist works. First you place some ink on a paper and then by folding the paper in half a symmetrical image can be formed. Once you open the folded paper you may notice an image. Many people may see this image in a different way as we humans have individuality and so our minds work differently. It is up to your own mind to see what you see and develop the vague image.

The idea of mocking established works. “The parody and mockery of established artists and pictures”

This idea was what surrealists created to shock the public who they thought were not worthy of art. They took famous paintings like the Mona Lisa and painted a moustache over it. They mocked many other famous art works to shock the public and give them horrible art works. However, the public it was intended to shock did not find these mocking of established works so horrible they thought quite the opposite. They loved the idea and how the surrealist movement had brought about a new form of art.



I like this picture a lot as just by looking at it you realise how strange the actual painting is. At first I thought that the bird was actually flying over the birds nest but if you look at the edge you can see the edge of the board where the picture rests behind the nest. The nest seems to be rested on top of a piece of wood and so the background does not fit with the nest. I also like how the artist has used a sky texture to colour in the bird.



I like this picture because the rose in the middle seems to be suspended in mid air. This is what gives it a very surreal look, as you would not see this anywhere else. The background landscape is also very good as it makes the rose seem very out of place. The area behind it does not seem like somewhere where you would roses. This is one of the main reasons why I like the picture because it makes the rose seem so out of place. The background itself seems very unrealistic as the light on the horizon appears to be the sun but it is not affecting the rest of the sky in any way so it makes you wonder what it is.



I like how the artist has gone through the stages to show how the face was unmasked in the drawing. The drawing itself is also very good. The colour and the shapes are semi realistic as well. However if you look closely the faces seem to be a little different. The first one on the left-hand side is bigger than the one on the right. I don't know exactly what makes this picture so surreal. I think it is the way the mask is on the face and the actual face does not look like any I have seen before, as the eyes are too big and the forehead is quite large.

The idea of installation of disassociated objects, illusions, the frozen moment and empty landscape or cityscape.

The idea of installation of disassociated objects is much like a sort of collage. You can do this with writing as well as pictures.

By taking out words from a newspaper and placing them together in a random order you should find yourself with a strange sentence. From this your brain and subconscious will interpret a meaning. This method can also be done with pictures of objects from a magazine or catalogue.

The main types of optical illusion found in surrealist art works are of a drawing that can look like two different things at the same time. One very famous surrealist art work done in this style is of a drawing where a vase can be seen but the outline of the two sides of this vase are two faces of people staring at each other.

The frozen moment in a surrealist work can be of an action moment in life frozen in time to be drawn. A surrealist painting could draw a lion or another vicious creature leaping towards a man. This idea would be shown in a surrealist painting by drawing a lion in mid air and a man standing as if waiting for the lion to approach this would be considered a surrealist frozen moment art piece.

An empty landscape or cityscape can be shown in a surrealist drawing. Normally the empty landscapes are drawn in a surrealist world with objects that seem altogether realistic yet you wouldn't see them anywhere on earth but maybe another planet similar to earth. These surrealistic landscapes are normally set in surrealistic backgrounds with a different sky colour. This gives the feeling of a very strange and unknown place making it surreal.

An empty cityscape is a very surrealistic drawing. It shows a normal street with cars, houses, high rise buildings etc. yet there are no people around to live there. This makes the viewer very concerned about where all the people have gone and if something disastrous has happened in that area even though it looks so normal.