



## Surrealism

Surrealism was an artistic, intellectual, and literary movement led by poet André Breton from 1924 through World War II.

Its goal was to create something bizarre and disjointed, but still somehow understandable. The Surrealists sought to overthrow the oppressive rules of modern society by demolishing its backbone of rational thought. To do so, they attempted to tap into the “superior reality” of the subconscious mind. “Completely against the tide,” said Breton, “in a violent reaction against the impoverishment and sterility of thought processes that resulted from centuries of rationalism, we turned toward the marvelous and advocated it unconditionally.”

- The Surrealist circle was relatively cohesive, but the individuals within it hailed from a variety of nations, and their artistic approaches were similarly diverse. They believed that automatic drawings unlocked the contents of the subconscious mind, while hyper-real landscape paintings conjured the uncanny imagery of dreams. Incongruous combinations of found objects combined in Surrealist assemblages revealed the fraught sexual and psychological forces they believed were hidden just beneath the surface of reality.



- The Surrealists sought to channel the unconscious as a means to unlock the power of the imagination. Disdaining rationalism and literary realism, and powerfully influenced by psychoanalysis, the Surrealists believed the rational mind repressed the power of the imagination, weighing it down with taboos. Influenced also by Karl Marx, they hoped that the psyche had the power to reveal the contradictions in the everyday world and spur on revolution. Their emphasis on the power of personal imagination puts them in the tradition of [Romanticism](#), but unlike their forebears, they believed that revelations could be found on the street and in everyday life. The Surrealist impulse to tap the unconscious mind, and their interests in myth and primitivism, went on to shape many later movements, and the style remains influential to this today.

## Key Ideas & Accomplishments

- André Breton defined Surrealism as "psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express - verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner - the actual functioning of thought." What Breton is proposing is that artists bypass reason and rationality by accessing their unconscious mind. In practice, these techniques became known as automatism or automatic writing, which allowed artists to forgo conscious thought and embrace chance when creating art.



- Surrealist imagery is probably the most recognizable element of the movement, yet it is also the most elusive to categorize and define. Each artist relied on their own recurring motifs arisen through their dreams or/and unconscious mind. At its basic, the imagery is outlandish, perplexing, and even uncanny, as it is meant to jolt the viewer out of their comforting assumptions. Nature, however, is the most frequent imagery: [Max Ernst](#) was obsessed with birds and had a bird alter ego, [Salvador Dalí's](#) works often include ants or eggs, and [Joan Miró](#) relied strongly on vague [biomorphic](#) imagery.

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The Surrealist sought to channel the unconscious as a source of ideas for work of the imagination. Distorting perception and forcing nature into new forms. In this technique, the formation behind the actual form becomes the focus of the imagination, leading to their own unique influences. In this way, they argued that the psyche had the power to create the unconscious in the creative process. This was the main goal of the Surrealist. The Surrealist sought to channel the unconscious as a source of ideas for work of the imagination. Distorting perception and forcing nature into new forms. In this technique, the formation behind the actual form becomes the focus of the imagination, leading to their own unique influences. In this way, they argued that the psyche had the power to create the unconscious in the creative process. This was the main goal of the Surrealist.

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Surrealist imagery is primarily the result of the unconscious mind. It is often described as a technique used by Surrealists to channel the unconscious as a source of ideas for work of the imagination. Distorting perception and forcing nature into new forms. In this technique, the formation behind the actual form becomes the focus of the imagination, leading to their own unique influences. In this way, they argued that the psyche had the power to create the unconscious in the creative process. This was the main goal of the Surrealist.

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## Features of Surrealistic Art I

- Dream-like scenes and symbolic images
- Unexpected, illogical juxtapositions
- Bizarre assemblages of ordinary objects
- Automatism and a spirit of spontaneity
- Games and techniques to create random effects
- Personal iconography
- Visual puns
- Distorted figures and biomorphic shapes
- Primitive or child-like designs

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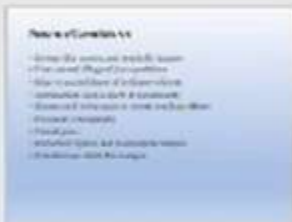
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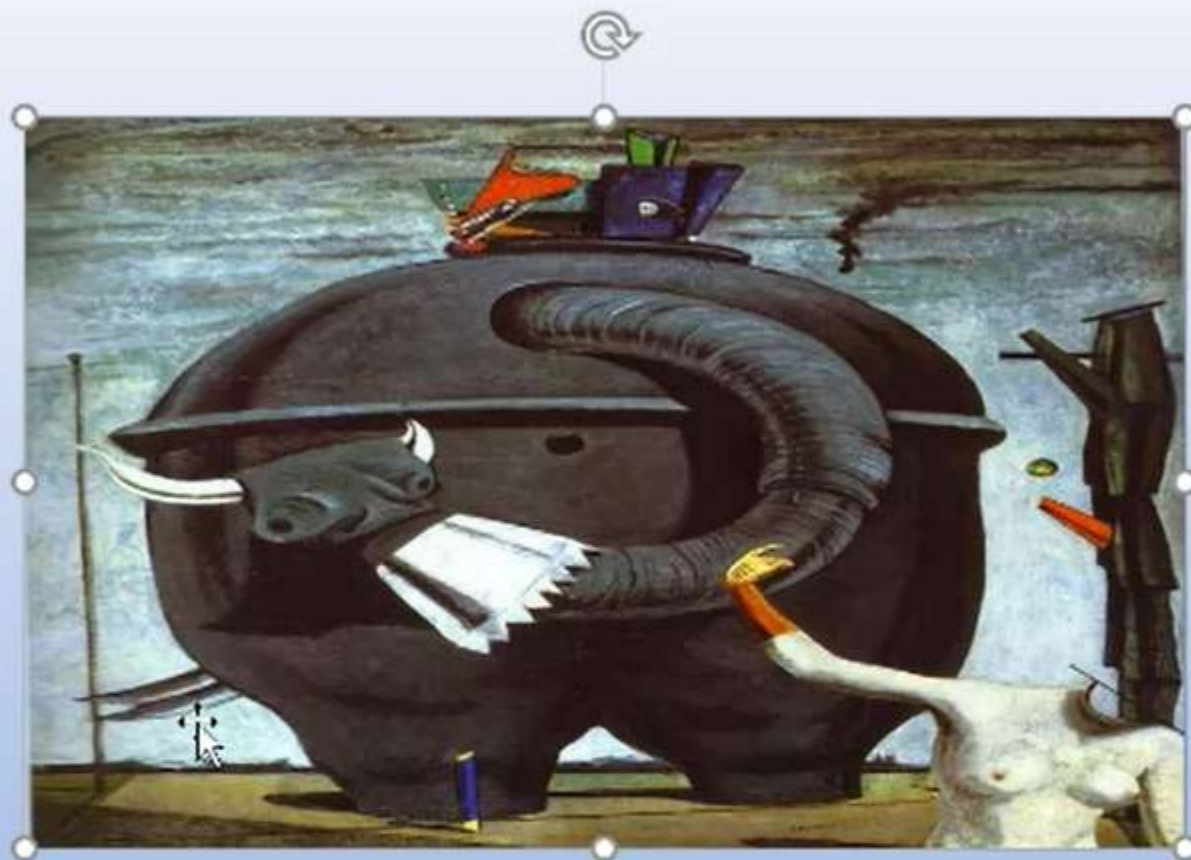
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Max Ernst, *The Elephant Celebes*, 1921

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The work of Salvador Dalí was profoundly influenced by Sigmund Freud's theories of the mind. The subconscious, or dream world, became a primary source of inspiration for Dalí's art. His paintings often depicted bizarre and dreamlike scenes that reflected his inner world and his fascination with the unconscious mind.

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Salvador Dalí's work is characterized by its surreal and dreamlike nature. He often depicted impossible scenes and objects that defied the laws of physics and logic. His art was a reflection of his inner world and his fascination with the unconscious mind.

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**Salvador Dalí: *The Persistence of Memory***  
*The Persistence of Memory*, oil on canvas by Salvador Dalí, 1931; in the Museum of Modern Art, New York City.

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• Salvador Dalí is generally the most famous of the surrealists. He is also the most skilled at combining the real with the unreal in his work. He is known for his ability to create a sense of reality in his work, but to also create a sense of the impossible. He is known for his ability to create a sense of reality in his work, but to also create a sense of the impossible. He is known for his ability to create a sense of reality in his work, but to also create a sense of the impossible.

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**André Breton**

- He was the founder of the Surrealist movement.
- He was a poet, writer, and philosopher.
- He was a member of the Surrealist group.
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Short story  
The Blue Room  
-Ottavio Foa

Notes of the text

Notes

## Questions

1. Describe the encounter between the narrator and the man on the street?
2. How does chance play a central part in the story?
3. How is the surreal atmosphere created in the story?
4. What is the significance of the title?