

SURREAL! Imagining New Realities

A special exhibition of the Sigmund Freud Museum with works from the Klewan Collection
May 5 to October 16, 2022

100 works from the Klewan Collection by more than 50 artists and numerous writings highlight the tense relationship between Surrealism and psychoanalysis. Berggasse 19 in Vienna serves as a pivotal point of this relationship: for André Breton and Salvador Dalí, the origin of psychoanalysis represented a place of longing. Commonalities and differences between Surrealist and psychoanalytical views become visible in the exhibition as well as the manifold references of the artistic avant-garde to Freud's science of the unconscious – with works by Herbert Bayer, Hans Bellmer, Victor Brauner, Salvador Dalí, Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, Conroy Maddox, André Masson, Meret Oppenheim, Pablo Picasso, Alberto Savinio, Toyen (Marie Čermínová) and Dorothea Tanning, among others.

The Sigmund Freud Museum's comprehensive and multi-layered examination of Surrealism is made possible by the generous loan of Helmut Klewan and supplemented by a selection of Surrealist publications from other lenders.

Helmut Klewan has been active as a collector, gallerist, and author since the early 1960s; Surrealism and its continuation in the German and Austrian Fantastic Realism have a special significance within his collection. The Sigmund Freud Museum is grateful for this collaboration and especially for Helmut Klewan's donation of Hermann Struck's 1914 portrait of Sigmund Freud.

Surrealism and Psychoanalysis

“I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream, and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality“ – this is André Breton's famous confession, which he put down in his *Manifeste du Surréalisme* in 1924, two years after having visited Sigmund Freud. Breton called for the expansion of the reason-based approach to human life's realities to include the unconscious as well as a rapturous, libidinal, and dreamlike experience. In fact, Freud's insights into the functions of the "psychic apparatus" gained importance in the works of the Surrealists from the mid-1920s onward. The interest in the dream, which, like surrealist art, suspends familiar rules or logic, represents a significant commonality. Sexuality, desire, and love soon formed the central canon of themes in Surrealism, which developed into an international movement even before the outbreak of World War II drove many of its members into exile.

Although the influence of Sigmund Freud's "Revolution of the Inner World" on André Breton and the entire Surrealist movement cannot be overestimated, the founders of psychoanalysis and Surrealism differed considerably in their objectives. For Freud, the incompatibility between his own and the Surrealist positions became apparent soon, however, he remained in loose contact with Breton for more than 15 years and followed the development of the Surrealist movement from a distance. Regardless of all the divergences, shifts, and productive misunderstandings, Surrealism played a significant role in the dissemination of psychoanalytical ideas in France.

Thematic Focus of the Presentation

Surrealistic Image Worlds

The compilation of selected works from Helmut Klewan's Surrealist collection traces the manifold relationships between psychoanalysis and Surrealism and makes it possible to track down essential aspects of Surrealist thought and production methods.

Topics like **Desire and Melancholy** are highlighted in Freud's psychoanalytic writings as well as in Surrealism and are in the center of the works by **Hans Bellmer** and **Kurt Seligmann**.

Salvador Dalí's artistic experiment called "**Paranoiac Critique**" is based on the artist's intensive study of Sigmund Freud's writings and the more recent findings of the French analyst Jacques Lacan.

Automatism in Painting and Drawing focuses on the method of automatic drawing which characterizes André Masson's work and can be understood as an equivalent of "free association" in psychoanalysis.

Empty Imagery is the title for the part of the exhibition dedicated to the works of the brothers Giorgio de Chirico and Alberto Savinio, especially Giorgio de Chirico's Surrealist city views.

The Magical Gaze of Paul Delvaux is examined in a separate section: The dream symbolism as described by Freud can be recognized in his scenic representations, as does the view of the female body, which advances to become a carrier of psychic states.

Yves Tanguy's visual descriptions of inner states are "**In the Heart of the Concrete**": Alienated realities are depicted with shadowy accentuated figures that are more connected to actual experience than to abstract thought.

The Reality of Irrational Objects: Sculptures by Meret Oppenheim and Alberto Giacometti illustrate the transformation of objects into pure fantasy objects representing inner experiences.

Painted Irritations, which are characteristic of the works of René Magritte and Otto Tschumi, stimulate the viewer's imagination, allowing the surreal visual effect to unfold to its fullest extent.

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Picasso – Realer than Real is dedicated to Pablo Picasso's close connection to surrealism. Today, the Spanish artist is regarded as a vanguardist of the Surrealist movement, of which he was an active member for more than a decade.

Giving Space to Hallucination can be seen as the common ground of the works by Conroy Maddox, Victor Brauner and Toyen (Marie Čermínová), who throughout their lives took a stand against National Socialism and anti-Semitism with their poetic works.

Paris – New York – and Back with Max Ernst, Dorothea Tanning and Roberto Matta, illustrates the artistic exchange between the European and American avant-garde, which had a lasting influence on the New York art scene after 1942, when many artists fled National Socialism.

Man Ray – Before and After invites visitors to explore the photographic and graphic work of Man Ray, who moved from New York to Paris as early as 1921 and had a substantial influence on the development of Surrealism.

Satire is devoted to Marcel Jean's and Maurice Henry's humorous depictions, which are not only characteristic of Surrealism, but also ensured the dissemination of Surrealist concerns as caricatures in magazines.

Photography – a Tool of Poetization shows works by the Austrian Herbert Bayer and the alienating photographic art of Raoul Ubac, who significantly enriched the Surrealist formal vocabulary with innovative methods of photo development.

Disassembled Realities Newly Constituted focuses on collage, which was used to deconstruct established views by questioning gender identity and sexuality by artists such as Wilhelm Freddie, Pierre Molinier, Juro Kubinek, and Marcel Marien.

With works by Mac Zimmermann, Edgar Jené, Kurt Regschek, Fritz Janschka, and Heinz Stangl, the **Collector's Corner** conveys an impression of the continuation of Surreal pictorial inventions as found in German and Austrian Fantastic Realism from the 1950s on.

Surrealist Publications

Surrealism is characterized by its rejection of the idea of an autonomous art that exists aloof from real life. Art is understood as a revolutionary practice, a lifestyle, and a collective enterprise. The collective ambition of Surrealism was particularly manifest in the interplay between text, illustration, and layout to be found in Surrealist journals. Texts by or about Freud occasionally featured in these journals, one issue of "La Révolution surréaliste" contained excerpts from Freud's paper *The Question of Lay Analysis*, each with an illustration by Giorgio de Chirico and Yves Tanguy. Two co-written dictionaries published in the context of the Surrealist group exhibitions of 1938 and 1959 both include entries on "FREUD, Sigmund".

Freud, Breton, and Surrealism

In the early 1920s, a circle of young authors including Louis Aragon, Paul Éluard, Philippe Soupault, and Benjamin Péret formed in Paris around writer André Breton. When Breton published his *Manifeste du Surréalisme* in 1924, he could already look back on his abandoned medical studies, work in neuro-psychiatric institutions and a fond knowledge of psychoanalytical writings. He could also boast a personal meeting with Freud in Vienna.

From the beginning, Surrealists sought exhilaration, contingency, and scandal. They celebrated especially the dream and the man who was trying to scientifically decipher its meaning. They studied Freud's works or, like Georges Bataille, René Crével, Raymond Queneau, and Michel Leiris, underwent analysis. And they revealed their admiration: In 1930, Freud received Breton's works as well as a signed edition from René Char which included the dedication "with deep admiration and the greatest respect".

André Breton regarded Freud as his unchallenged "master of thought". Whether it was the access Freud provides to the unconscious, his conception of man as an instinct-driven being, acknowledgement of human sexuality, or interest in dreams – which like Surrealist art, suspends familiar rules or logic – the insights of the founder of psychoanalysis exercised a decisive influence on the founder of Surrealism. That notwithstanding, the respective aims were markedly different: While Breton rebelled against reason and aimed for the liberation of the unconscious itself, Freud – and this is why he studied the unconscious – aimed for the expansion of the rule of reason over the irrational. While Breton considered the utter satisfaction of desire worth striving for, Freud viewed it impossible or forbidden. There are also considerable differences between Freud's methodological procedure of free association applied in psychoanalytical treatment and Breton's "automatic writing." While Freud used free association as a means of exploring the unconscious (which in his opinion was inevitably disfigured and disguised) by means of interpretation, Breton considered automatic writing the ultimate goal and an end in itself.

The only meeting between Breton and Freud took place in the rooms of Berggasse 19 in October 1921, while Breton was in Vienna on his honeymoon. The encounter was relatively meaningless. Breton sent a copy of the first *Manifeste du surréalisme* to Berggasse and he kept sending his publications to Freud in the years after. Upon the release of Freud's study on *Gradiva* in a French translation by Marie Bonaparte, *Gradiva* – the woman who walks – proceeded to become a Surrealist muse, and Breton examined Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* in his essay novel *Les vases communicants* (*Communicating Vessels*). Therein, he accused its author of suppressing a textual source and of excessive caution with regard to sexual matters in the interpretation of his own dreams. After receiving a copy, Freud sent Breton no less than three letters in German in December 1932 refuting the criticism. The following year, Breton published those letters, along with a rejoinder in which he once again expressed his unassailable admiration of Freud, in the

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journal he edited entitled *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, and in the subsequent editions of *Les vases communicants*.

In 1937, Breton invited Freud to contribute to an omnibus volume of dream-themed texts and illustrations. The latter justified his reply in the negative in an extensive letter. Not only did he have nothing new to say about the dream, what is more, Freud could not endorse the suspension of the difference between latent and manifest forms and contents of the dream that Breton wished to attempt. Once more, Breton would include Freud's correspondence in his volume. The fact that Breton repeatedly published the letters Freud addressed to him can be understood as a need for scientific legitimation and elevation.

The exhibition was **curated** by Monika Pessler and Daniela Finzi (Sigmund Freud Museum)

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www.freud-museum.at

Opening Hours:

Wed to Mon and holidays 10-18 h

Tue closed