

THE SUBTERRANEAN SKY

The Surrealists wanted to transform the world and liberate human creativity from the constraints of reason. They see a slumbering primordial force in the borderland between the unconscious and the conscious, between dream and wakefulness. Only by surrendering and letting go of control can we release impulses that cannot be controlled. Art and poetry are seen as key to cultivating our minds towards a truer reality and setting in motion forces that may change everything.

It is now a hundred years since the first Surrealist manifesto was written in 1924 by the French writer and pivotal figure André Breton. He agitates to bring together dream and life into a truer, absolute reality – a *sur-réalité*. A diverse group of artists, thinkers, and poets of the time gathered around the manifesto in interwar Paris. From its centre in the French capital, the ideas of Surrealism spread internationally, not least to the former colonies and other places undergoing rapid social and political change. Surrealists work across genres, experimentally and activistically, and adhere to an ideology and an approach rather than an art movement. They will break the mould of what art can be and what subjects it can address.

The Subterranean Sky seeks the historical roots of Surrealism and traces its living, diverse influence across art history, into contemporary art. The exhibition borrows its title from texts by French poets Jean Genet and Roger Gilbert-Lecomte. Moderna Museet's collection is presented in dialogue with works from other art collections, libraries and archives, with a particular focus on film, literature, and the performing arts.

AS IN A WOOD

Surrealists insist on the value of the fantastic and the imaginary – a reality beyond the physically visible. They see modern society as a soulless treadmill in which man has lost touch with his original intuitive powers. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, with its focus on repressed emotions and memories, is a crucial influence. For the Surrealists, the only possibility for human development is to free oneself from inhibited, rational thinking.

Surrealists work across genres, seeking expressions that are ephemeral and untested, in performance, dance, and sound. Experimental cinema from the 1920s to the 1940s was innovative and would influence Hollywood feature films. Filmmaker and choreographer Maya Deren emphasises the camera as a voyeuristic instrument, develops trick film techniques and plays with movement and spatiality. André Breton likened the experience of the new film medium to an excursion into unknown territory – like getting lost in a meandering forest.

In 1929, the French writer Georges Bataille launched the concept of *l'informe* – the formless – in an attack on the bourgeois elevated art object.

Artists must work without restraint and search for subjects in low and taboo areas. But what can boundless and formless art look like? A unifying feature of the Surrealists is precisely the enigmatic contradiction. Their hallucinatory imagery can be as pedantically rendered as an older allegorical painting, each individual object loaded with hidden meanings. The recurring motif of machines testifies to their fascination with new science and technology, but the constructions have no practical use. They are complex, absurd innovations created for their own sake.

Robert Rauschenberg

1925–2008

USA

***Mud Muse*, 1968–1971**

Lermusan

Borrlera i glasbassäng med ljudaktiverat tryckluftssystem och tekniskåp

Donation 1973 (New York Collection)

Robert Rauschenberg was influenced by the Dadaists and Surrealists in his early work and exhibited with them several times during his stays in Paris. Despite being well received by the movement, Rauschenberg himself developed a scepticism towards Surrealism, although he appreciated their experimental methods, such as the collage and the use of chance. Born out of a collaboration between artists, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's Art & Technology programme, and private companies, *Mud Muse* features a device that plays various high-frequency sounds in the form of compressed air pushed through valves into an open glass tank filled with a synthetic mud made of glycerine and finely ground volcanic ash. Small bubbling geysers erupt chaotically and randomly – and as the sounds pass through the clay, new sounds emerge.

Mark Lancaster

1938–2021

England

Scenografi för Sounddance, 1975

Décor for Sounddance

Koreograf/Choreographer: Merce Cunningham,
1975

Draperad sammet

Ballet de Lorraine

The progressive art school Black Mountain (1933–1957) played a key role in establishing the ideas of the European avant-garde in the US, not least in the development of neo-dada and conceptual art. This is a meeting place for influential names such as choreographer Merce Cunningham, composers John Cage and David Tudor, and Robert Rauschenberg. They see art as a zone of freedom, an experimental activity beyond market and tradition, where collaborations are a natural part. When Cunningham returned to the US in 1975 from the classical ballet in Paris, he wanted to create an explosive, physically exuberant work to Tudor's music. Artist Mark Lancaster created the scenography for *Sounddance*: an asymmetrical draped curtain through which the dancers swirl onto the stage in a complex choreography. At the

end of the performance, they seem to be drawn back, as if through a wind tunnel.

Maya Deren

1917–1961

Ukraina/Ukraine

***At Land*, 1944**

På land

16 mm film överförd till digital video

15:00 min

Inköp 2024

Maya Deren, born in Kiev, was an avant-garde filmmaker, choreographer, dancer, film theorist, poet, lecturer, writer and photographer. The 1944 experimental film *At Land* depicts a strange journey undertaken by a mysterious figure, played by Deren herself. The sea washes her ashore, a symbolic birth, and during what the artist calls “a mythological journey through the twentieth century” she encounters both other people and other versions of herself. The film explores the individual’s quest to relate to a shifting and incoherent universe, and her struggle to preserve her identity and uniqueness. Through Deren’s innovative movement techniques and seamless editing, the film constructs a captivating dream world that challenges our perception of time and space.

Francis Picabia

1879–1953

Frankrike/France

***L'Acrobate*, ca 1925**

Akrobaten

The Acrobat

Collage

Inköp 1969

Francis Picabia was one of the foremost figures in the Dada movement, which clearly distanced itself from all the classicist tendencies that had made a return in art after the First World War. Within a few years, however, the mercurial artist would come to use images borrowed from classical art itself – which he overlapped in transparent layers. These dreamy “transparent paintings”, which seem to exist in several dimensions at once, made an impression on the Surrealist movement, which he joined for a while. Picabia had experimented with double exposures in film a few years earlier, but transferring this to painting was a novel idea.

L'Acrobate is one of the few works in which Picabia also experimented with creating transparency by painting on transparent cellophane.

Francis Picabia

1879–1953

Frankrike/France

Le Vent (Déraison de la nature), 1949

Vinden (Naturens oförnuft)

The Wind (The Folly of Nature)

Olja på duk

Inköp 1986 med bidrag från Gerard Bonnier,
Pontus

Bonnier, AB Albert Bonniers Förlag, Fredrik Roos
och med medel från Gieseckes fond

During his lifetime, Francis Picabia constantly changed his artistic expression. He once wrote that the brain should be like a mirror in which we could see ourselves for a moment and then turn our backs on it two minutes later. In the last years of his life, Picabia returned to abstraction. His late dot paintings sometimes bear names referring to the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, whose nihilism and sense of life's futility could be compared to Picabia's. The title of the work refers to aphorism 202 in Nietzsche's most personal book, *The Gay Science*: "A Spendthrift. He has not yet the poverty of the rich man who has counted all his treasure, – he squanders his spirit with the irrationalness of the spendthrift Nature."

Thale Vangen

f/b 1974

Norge/Norway

Rakaflöt, 2019

Fyra skulpturer; råhud, tagel, tråd, sand

Inköp 2021 (Svenska förvärv 2021)

While they remind us of something, they are somehow different: not pupas, seed husks, or stingrays, but almost. Thale Vangen has an intuitive approach that allows her organic abstractions or life forms to evolve. She describes her method as an evolutionary force that triggers chain reactions of events in the material. The process reflects the spontaneous spawning of life in nature and her works eventually find an intrinsic form. The raw hides of these sculptures were filled with sand until they dried and could serve as their own exoskeletons. The shapes defy existing categories, and the title of the work is a made-up word:

Rakaflöt.

Wolfgang Paalen

1905–1959

Österrike/Austria

Nuage articulé, 1938

Artikulerat moln

Articulated Cloud

Tvättsvamp

Inköp 1969

The umbrella covered with sponges was presented at the first International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris in 1938, where it attracted much attention. The encounter between the masculine men's umbrella and the sponge, an object primarily associated with cleaning women's bare skin, conveyed clearly sexual undertones at the time. Paalen first made an image of the subject after being invited by André Breton to contribute an illustration to the complete literary works of the Comte de Lautréamont. There, in a poem, was the line that was so influential for the Surrealists, "as beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella". The Surrealists liked to juxtapose thoughts and objects in order to create unexpected coincidences where reason did not rule.

Jan Håfström

f/b 1937

Sverige/Sweden

Skogen, 1967–1968

The Forest

Akryl på duk

Inköp 1968

Jan Håfström has an indirect relationship with Surrealism through his interest in the subconscious, memories, and symbolism. He has alternated between figurative and abstract painting, and has made films as well as sculptures. During the 1960s, he began his artistic career by borrowing from comics and other media in the spirit of pop art. Håfström is particularly known for his recurring figures, such as Mr. Walker, a silhouette that can be interpreted as a symbol of existential loneliness and the inner search of man. Here, tree trunks wind diagonally through a dense and deep green foliage, where an almost animated presence can be sensed. By mixing the personal and the symbolic, he creates an imagery reminiscent of the Surrealists.

Alexander Calder

1898–1976

USA

The Forest Is the Best Place, 1945

Skogen är det bästa stället

Målat järn

Donation 1958 från Moderna Museets Vänner

Paris, the arena of modern art, drew American artist Alexander Calder to Europe in the mid-1920s, and there he got to know the European avant-garde. Marcel Duchamp named and defined the concept of the mobile; Piet Mondrian introduced Calder to pure abstraction, and through Joan Miró and Jean Arp, he learned about organic abstraction and the central principles of Surrealism. In the mobile *The Forest is the Best Place* the movement of the organic shapes creates a sculpture that is constantly transforming. It behaves like plants, rather than emulating them. Calder played an important role in Surrealist manifestations during the formative years of the movement, and was for example included in the tone-setting exhibition *L'Exposition surréaliste d'objets* in 1936 in Paris.

Joan Miró

1893–1983

Spanien/Spain

La Figure rouge, 1927

Den röda figuren

The Red Creature

Olja på duk

Inköp 1967 (Önskemuseet)

In the early 1920s, Joan Miró joined the circle of writers and artists who would come to be associated with the Surrealist movement. By then, he had already begun working with dreams, the unconscious, and automatism. In 1925, the year after the publication of the first Surrealist Manifesto, André Breton, the Surrealist leader, began purchasing works by Miró, which also led to his official entry into the group. The painting *The Red Figure* was in Breton's possession for many years. Miró also exhibited in the first Surrealist exhibition at Galerie Pierre, alongside Jean Arp, Max Ernst, Paul Klee, Man Ray, and Picasso in 1925. Miró continued to work with the Surrealists until 1929 when he grew tired of Breton's many restrictions. He then gradually distanced himself from the group.

Jean Arp

1887–1966

Frankrike/France

L'oiseau, ca 1922

Fågeln

The bird

Målad relief

Donation 1976 från Moderna Museets Vänner

For Jean Arp, the bird symbolised freedom and the ever-changing nature of life. He began creating wooden reliefs from painted and layered wood in 1917, working with a carpenter to create these hybrids between painting and sculpture. His organic abstractions were inspired by nature, an approach to abstraction that appealed to the Surrealists. Jean Arp was active in several 20th century avant-garde movements. It was his encounter with Wassily Kandinsky that had led him towards abstraction. In Zurich, he was one of the founders of Dadaism, and he exhibited with the Surrealists in the 1920s. However, he retained his independence and artistic freedom and was later involved in other non-figurative movements.

Joan Miró

1893–1983

Spanien/Spain

Tête de paysan catalan, 1925

Huvud av katalansk bonde

Head of Catalan Peasant

Olja på duk

Donation 1989 enligt testamente från Gerard
Bonnier

The head of this Catalan peasant is a key motif for Joan Miró that he painted in many versions. The central feature is the peasant's red Phrygian cap. This was a symbol of freedom, and the artist himself had one in his studio. The cobalt blue space dominates the pictorial surface, adorned with a black and a white star. The very small, red Phrygian cap rivals a red line along the top of the painting – which could be the glow from the peasant's pipe, a motif that figures in some of the earlier paintings on this theme. Miró worked towards ever greater abstraction in his works, the details became fewer. He called the blue shade in his paintings the colour of his dreams.

NETWORKS IN TIME AND SPACE

Surrealism is never an artistic style limited to a specific time or place, but rather a mobile cultural network where radical values are shared. From the outset, the attitude is explicitly anti-authoritarian, anti-colonial, and anti-racist. The horrors and futility of war are given themes for the Surrealists of the interwar period. Their subversive ideas emerged from anarchism and grew in parallel with a larger leftist movement of the time.

The new anthropology and psychology that interest the Surrealists is in part based on the study of cultures other than the European. Indigenous art from mainly Oceania and North America is perceived by them as more genuine and characterised by other traditions and values. Many of the ideas of Paris Surrealism thus flow back to the source when they reach the former colonies. Over time, the impulses find different expressions in increasingly influential cultural scenes internationally, such as in the Caribbean, Latin America, North Africa, East Asia, and the United States. Personal encounters are also crucial for how ideas intersect and spread further, as in the exchange between the artists Frida Kahlo and

Diego Rivera and the Russian revolution ary Lev Trotsky during his exile in Mexico.

The Surrealists are not limited by linguistic, national or even temporal boundaries. They proclaim as their predecessors the artists of previous generations who explored the fantastic and the grotesque, such as Giuseppe Arcimboldo or Hieronymus Bosch. The old masters seem to share the same burlesque and carnivalesque attitude where hierarchies are turned upside down and reason is suspended. The late 19th century symbolists, such as Odilon Redon and Edvard Munch, with their depictions of the supernaturally beautiful, dark, and bizarre, are also among the role models. But where the symbolists use high-minded mythological symbolism and want to create art that is valid for all eternity, the Surrealists, by contrast, want to work spontaneously and take the unguarded viewer by surprise.

David Alfaro Siqueiros

1896–1974

Mexiko/Mexico

***Guardián de la Paz (El nahual)*, 1940**

Nahual, Fredens väktare

The Peace Guardian

Olja på masonit

Inköp 1967 (Önskemuseet)

In Mesoamerican beliefs, a *nahual* is someone who has the ability to take the form of their spiritual guardian animal. These spirit animals stands for protection and guidance, and we are presented with a nahual who is a guardian of peace. David Alfaro Siqueiros was a Mexican artist, known for his large-scale murals that often dealt with social and political themes, particularly the struggles of the working class and revolution. During the 1930s, Siquieros led important political art workshops in New York and was a decisive influence on artists such as Jackson Pollock. Siqueiros often used innovative techniques and materials, making him a pioneer in modern art. Although he did not formally join the Surrealist movement, connections exist through his experimental style and sometimes dreamlike, expressive imagery.

Giuseppe Arcimboldo

(hans art/in the manner of)

1527–1593

Italien/Italy

Den trojanska hästen, ca 1700

The Trojan Horse

Olja på duk

Nationalmuseum

Giuseppe Arcimboldo, an Italian artist from the late Renaissance, had a significant influence on the Surrealist movement. Arcimboldo's technique of juxtaposing objects to reveal a hidden motif inspired the Surrealists who sought to explore the subconscious and the hidden aspects of the human psyche. The encounter between the familiar and the unexpected became a central aspect of Surrealism, where artists often distorted reality to create dreamlike or surprising images. Arcimboldo's works often contain symbolism related to the seasons, nature, and the forces of the elements, which spoke to the Surrealists' fascination with symbols and metamorphosis. The Surrealists strove to understand and transform the world through symbolic and often irrational means, something that Arcimboldo foreshadowed in his unique way.

Dorothea Tanning

1910–2012

USA

Don Juan's Breakfast, 1972

Don Juans frukost

Sammet, yllefanel, ylle, sågspån, metall och kartong

Donation 2006 från konstnären
(Det andra önskemuseet)

In *Don Juan's Breakfast*, the title suggests the morning after a night of love. The breakfast is a beer stein made of sensual fabrics. A velvet-covered row of buttons holds it together, and in the gaps you can see something resembling skin as the foam rises above all the boards. From the late 1920s to the early 1940s, Dorothea Tanning was a member of the Surrealist group. Her art explored the absurdity of everyday life, and her works often have a sexual undertone. Tanning did not want to be called a female Surrealist. She often said that both the forces that made her start working as an artist and those that made her continue had everything to do with being human, and nothing to do with being a woman.

Edvard Munch

1863–1944

Norge/Norway

Vampyr, 1895

Vampire

Litografi och träsnitt på papper

Donation 1921 enligt testamente från Ester Lindahl

Edvard Munch's expressive, emotional paintings and prints explored themes such as anxiety, death and existential loneliness. His focus on the inner world of man, together with a dream-like and often symbolic imagery, as well as his subjective use of color and form influenced Surrealist artists such as Salvador Dalí and Max Ernst. The motif in *Vampire*, also called *Love and Pain*, originates in a drawing from 1890 and reappears in several paintings, lithographs and woodcuts. A woman embraces a man who rests his head against her body, her red hair falling around them as she bends down against his neck. Munch wanted to portray the conflict-filled relationship between man and woman, and here there is also an element of boundary dissolution between sexuality and violence that recurs in several Surrealist works of art.

Odilon Redon

1840–1916

Frankrike/France

***L'Araignée souriante*, 1881**

Den leende spindeln

The Smiling Spider

Litografi

Nationalmuseum

Odilon Redon was a French Symbolist artist who had a profound influence on the Surrealists. With inspiration often drawn from literature and poetry, he created images filled with enigmatic and surreal motifs long before the Surrealist movement was founded. Redon's art is characterised by fantasy and a dreamlike quality where the boundary between reality and imagination is often blurred. It reflects an early attempt to visualise emotions, dreams, and fears in a non-rational way, which inspired the Surrealists. Redon himself described his work as follows: "My drawings inspire and should not be defined. They place us, like music, in the ambiguous realm of the indeterminate."

Arturo García Bustos

1926–2017

Mexiko/Mexico

David Alfaro Siqueiros in Prison, ca 1961

David Alfaro Siqueiros i fängelset

Fotografisk reproduktion

Metropolitan Museum of Art/ Art Resource/Scala,
Florence

Arturo García Bustos' lithograph depicts David Alfaro Siqueiros during his time in the Lecumberri prison in 1961, where he was serving a sentence after being accused of contributing to "social division". He expressed disappointment with Mexico's policies and saw the country as the only democracy that actively opposed and repressed trade unions and workers. This powerful image reflects the sometimes controversial Siqueiro's unwavering commitment to his revolutionary ideals, and captures the tension between his activism and the government's attempts to silence him.

José Clemente Orozco

1883–1949

Mexiko/Mexico

Retaguardia, 1929

Eftertruppen

The Rearguard

Fotografisk reproduktion efter litografi

Metropolitan Museum of Art/ Art Resource/Scala,
Florence

José Clemente Orozco created *The Rearguard* in 1929, a key work in his scenes from the Mexican Revolution revolution that captures the intense human struggle of this turbulent period. Orozco's lithograph depicts men, women and children, wrapped in ponchos and sombreros, marching forward in earnest unity, with heads bowed to symbolise collective resistance. Central to the image are the *adelitas* or *soldaderas*, women who cared for and fought alongside the soldiers, marking the important role of civilians in the struggle. The monochrome palette emphasises the hardship and captures the revolutionary spirit with a haunting elegance.

EUROPA AND THE ABSURD

Franciszka and Stefan Themerson share a lifelong creative partnership – she as an artist and set designer, he as a photographer and poet. Working in the early 1930s on innovative experimental films in Warsaw, including the film poem *Europa*, the couple soon join the Paris art scene. They volunteered for the French army at the outbreak of war in 1939 but were forced to flee the Nazi occupation. Once in London, they set up Gabberbocchus, a publishing house and salon for cultural and scientific professionals. Alongside their own projects, they play a crucial role in disseminating English translations of texts related to Surrealism and avantgarde theatre, often by Central European and French writers.

One of the most important precursors of Dada and Surrealism was the wayward French writer Alfred Jarry. His breakneck satire *King Ubu* from 1896 was the starting point for a whole new dramatic movement. The fragmentary plot describes a grotesque, debilitated, and capricious autocrat who leads his bullied subjects in a senseless rebellion against the King of Poland. The play's opening line – *Sheeyit!* – is enough to make the opening night audience lose their composure. The scandal hit is

confirmed: the performance is chaotic but still makes theatre history.

Jarry's way of mocking pompous bourgeois society and at the same time reflecting a troubled political time makes a deep impression on the Themersons. Franciszka works repeatedly with the play over the decades, including the legendary 1963 production with the Swedish Marionette Theatre. Her unconventional set design, simple screens carried by the actors, is faithful to Jarry's idea of a stripped-down stage image without illusion. A radical approach that came to herald the experimental and absurd theatre of the post-war period.

Francizka Themerson;

Stefan Themerson

1907–1988; 1910–1988

Polen/Poland

Europa, 1932

16 mm film överförd till digital video

12:00 min

Inköp 2024

Created in 1931 in Poland, the anti-fascist film *Europa* is an interpretation of Anatol Stern's 1925 futuristic poem of the same title. The work was confiscated by the Nazis during World War II and considered lost – until it was rediscovered in the German National Archives in 2019. Stern's thematic core is preserved, and the film depicts Europe's descent into chaos and self-destruction. The poem's message is conveyed through innovative techniques, reinforced by striking visual contrasts and variations in narrative pace. Using collages and photograms, they captured the moral decay of the era, creating what is now considered an avant-garde masterpiece.

Edvard Munch: *Peer Gynt* av Henrik Ibsen

Alfred Jarry: *Ubu Roi* av Alfred Jarry

Teaterprogram, Théâtre de l'Œuvre, faksimil, 1896

The Théâtre de l'Œuvre was a legendary avantgarde theatre in Paris. It mainly performed the French Symbolists, but also foreign plays by Oscar Wilde, Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg. The young Alfred Jarry worked for the theatre both on and off stage. Edvard Munch's programme for the production of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* shows the young Jarry as a troll. The next performance will be the tumultuous premiere of his own *King Ubu*, for which he designed the programme himself with illustrations inspired by medieval woodcuts. Audiences reacted with equal parts bewilderment and dismay at its absurdities and obscenities. Alfred Jarry also launched the enigmatic pataphysics – “the science of exceptions and imaginary solutions” – which inspired many Surrealists.

DADA AND THE CITY AS A STAGE

The turn of the 20th century is a time of rapid development in Europe. Despite the colonial arms race between nations and increasing tensions between social classes, persistent peace and rising prosperity allow many to dream of a different, freer world. The outbreak of the First World War therefore marks an abrupt shift, leaving shattered hopes and unimaginable destruction in its wake. Humanity has reached absolute zero and few believe in art as a positive force in society – it is difficult to see any future at all.

When Dada emerged in 1917 among artists and writers in Berlin, Zurich, and Paris, it was as an anti-art and anti-war movement. They shared a sense of the futility and absurdity of existence. Everything must be smashed to pieces in order to create new meaning, including art and language. Black humour becomes a valve, as do distance and irony. The irreverence of the Dada movement paves the way for Surrealism, but with crucial differences. If Dada stops at reflecting the fractured state of its time, Surrealism will rather insist on the possibility of human liberation and development through art.

Paris experiences an economic upswing in the 1920s and becomes a dynamic center for art, dance, film, and literature. For both Dadaists and Surrealists, the modern city is both a stage and a cabinet of curiosities, a space to discover and marvel at. They see shop goods and mannequins as art objects, *ready-mades*. Even in the trivial everyday life, there is something astonishing and desirable to be found – but it needs to be caught out of the corner of the eye, not deliberately. The ideal pastime of the Surrealists is a *dérive*, to drift aimlessly and let oneself be absorbed in the moment. Wandering between the city's cinemas, they enjoy their most important film experiences: in a series of random glimpses, without regard to the plot or genre of the films.

Luis Buñuel; Salvador Dalí

1900–1983; 1904–1989

Spanien/Spain

Un Chien Andalou, 1928–1929

Den andalusiska hunden

The Andalusian Dog

16 mm film överförd till digital video

15:45 min

Förvärv 1958

The two friends Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí needed only six days to write the script for what was to be the first Surrealist film, basing it on their own dreams. It immediately attained wide recognition on its première in 1929 at a small, legendary cinema in Paris, Studio des Ursulines, where it was accompanied by Argentine tango music played on a gramophone. The Surrealist group immediately took the film to its heart. The storyline is non-linear and dream-like, with sexual desire and frustration as its essential components. The film is famous for its sophisticated visual effects, for instance the shocking opening scene, with the close-up of what seems to be a woman's eye being slit with a razor.

René Clair

1898–1981

Frankrike/France

***Entr'acte*, 1924**

Mellanakt

Intermission

16 mm film överförd till digital video

20:00 min

Entr'acte (between acts) was screened within the astonishing dance production *Relâche* by the Ballets suédois. The film was projected at the beginning of the performance on the stage curtain, which was then drawn aside to reveal the Dada artist Picabia's radical stage design. *Entr'acte* returned in the interval between the two acts of the ballet. Picabia was also involved in making the film, which was directed by René Clair. *Entr'acte* incorporates many filmic effects: montage, double exposure, slow-motion and undercranking. Surrealistically oddities are enacted, including a strange funeral procession through Paris. The music by Erik Satie was an integral part of the film, interacting with its visual rhythm. Short sound fragments are linked without beginning or end.

Louis Feuillade

1873–1925

Frankrike/France

***Fantômas*, 1913-1914**

Les vampires

Vampyrerna

35 mm film överförd till digital video (utdrag)

GP Archives

Louis Feuillade was a feature film director, journalist and poet. His films, alongside those of Charlie Chaplin, were some of the most important inspirations for surrealist filmmakers; also Fritz Lang and Alfred Hitchcock were influenced by his work. Feuillade's popular silent film series from 1913–1916, *Fantômas* and *Les Vampires*, were fastpaced, breakneck thrillers with elements of slapstick. In both cases, the heroes are criminals – uninhibited, over-intelligent sociopaths who repeatedly escape justice. Irma Vep, the main character in *Les Vampires*, became a seminal female supervillain and continues to appear in films today.

Francis Picabia

1879–1953

Frankrike/France

Prenez garde à la peinture, ca 1919

Se upp för målningen

Watch out for the Painting

Olja, lack- och metallfärg på duk

Inköp 1964 (Önskemuseet)

Francis Picabia was born into a wealthy home and lived a life of debauchery. A substantial inheritance brought him freedom as an artist. In the 1910s, he became one of the Dadaists. They rebelled against reason and convention and claimed chance as the motor of art. The title *Beware of the Painting!* may refer to the fact that the object at the centre is a hand grenade. Picabia produced a series of “mechanomorphic” or “machine-body” paintings between 1915 and 1920. The new era was often called the “machine age”. The Futurists were impressed, but Dadaists like Picabia were sceptical to say the least. The painting thus has elements of parody while seeming to celebrate a *Dieu brouillon*, a “God of trouble”. But interpretation and retrospection were not in Picabia’s nature. He always lived in the present.

The Swedish Ballet was an innovative ballet ensemble in Paris from 1920 to 1925, under the leadership of Rolf de Maré and Jean Börlin. They collaborated with the most prominent artists of their time. Their final, most avant-garde production was the astonishing dance performance *Relâche*, created by Francis Picabia and composer Erik Satie. René Clair's absurd film *Entr'acte* was projected on the theater curtain, which was then drawn away to reveal Picabia's radical set, with hundreds of spotlights directed at the audience. The ensemble's New Year's revue, *CinésSketch*, was also a collaboration with Picabia. Marcel Duchamp and Bronia Perlmutter performed a striptease as Adam and Eve, wearing only a precious watch and a pearl necklace. It was a cheerful slap in the face to bourgeois society and a guaranteed scandalous success.

THE BUREAU OF SURREALIST ENQUIRIES

Surrealism began as a literary movement in 1920, focussing on automatic writing, a technique for freeing the creative subconscious from moral and aesthetic inhibitions. The method comes from a Freudian form of treatment for traumatised soldiers that became popular during the First World War.

From 1924 to 1926, a centre for Surrealist studies was set up at 15 rue de Grenelle in Paris. It is staffed by clerks who record the public's observations of strange coincidences, memorable dreams or forbidden desires. The aim is to collect testimonies about "the unconscious activity of the mind". The office becomes a place to experiment and discuss their art, where the Surrealists further develop the Dadaist obsession with material objects into painting, photography, and film. The group promotes itself with slogans such as: *If you love love, you will love Surrealism!* They take the agency's activities very seriously, but also believe that art can never serve a practical or political purpose. The short-lived research centre is never well attended by the public but is crucial to the movement's international impact.

Over time, the Surrealist network gains international fame and publish fiery opinion pieces on current social issues and organise exhibitions in Paris, London, and New York. It is a group in constant flux, with new members joining and others leaving. Some are abruptly expelled for offences against Surrealist values, such as the wayward Salvador Dalí in 1935. André Breton remains the movement's stable but increasingly autocratic leader. Paris-based artists such as Eric Grate and Greta Knutson-Tzara become key figures in the spread of Surrealism to Sweden. Authors and poets such as Gunnar Ekelöf and Artur Lundkvist, alongside the artists of the important Halmstad Group, are influential in Swedish Surrealism from 1930 onwards.

Constantin Brâncuși

1876–1957

Rumänien/Romania

Portrait de James Joyce, ca 1928

Porträtt av James Joyce

Portrait of James Joyce

Kartong och metall

Donation 2004 från Pontus Hultén

Constantin Brâncuși strove to express the essence, the inner quality, in all his works. In 1928, the Romanian-born artist was commissioned to portray his friend, the Irish writer James Joyce. Brâncuși chose to focus on the writer's intellect, rather than his physical appearance. The work consists of a metal spiral set against a circular sheet of cardboard. The cardboard can be seen as Joyce's head, while the spiral could represent the author's ever deeper penetration of the human mind. The work consists of several materials. The cardboard sheet gives the impression of being soft, while the metal appears more lasting. The body perishes, but thought – the essence – is immortal.

Gösta Adrian-Nilsson

1884–1965

Sverige/Sweden

Kvinna vid spegel, 1927

Woman by Mirror

Olja på papp

Inköp 1931

Gösta Adrian-Nilsson (GAN) was a trailblazer who constantly explored new expressions and was inspired by Cubism, Expressionism and Dadaism. Between 1920 and 1925 he lived in Paris and was influenced by artists such as Fernand Léger. During this period, he immersed himself in purely abstract geometric forms and wrote *The Divine Geometry* (1922), in which he explained his artistic philosophy. GAN's increasingly non-figurative style was coloured in the 1930s by his rapprochement with Surrealism. *Woman at the Mirror* reflects this blend of geometry, symbolism and abstraction and captures his transition from structured forms to expressive, emotionally powerful compositions. In Sweden, his personal contacts with the Surrealist group and brief period in Surrealist painting would prove to be a crucial influence for the Halmstad group.

Pablo Picasso

1881–1973

Spanien/Spain

Le Peintre, 1930

Målaren

The Painter

Olja på pannå

Donation 1989 enligt testamente från Gerard
Bonnier

In a black line drawing on a white background, three figures appear here in a close but contactless relationship. The motif has been interpreted as the portrayal of a personal triangle drama. Two figures tumble around in symbiosis, caught in an emotional storm. A third is watching them from the outside, with his back to us and his hand resting in the foreground. At the time, Picasso was married to the Russian ballerina Olga Khokhlova, but had been in a parallel relationship with Marie-Thérèse Walter since 1927. Around 1930–1932, the artist and his wife are described as a couple on the verge of a breakdown, locked in a destructive relationship. During the late 1920s and 1930s, Picasso's work increasingly explored the inner, irrational forces of life and was influenced by the Surrealist movement.

Kati Horna

1912–2000

Ungern/Hungary

Untitled (Remedios Varo wearing a mask by Leonora Carrington), 1962

Utan titel (Remedios Varo bär en mask av Leonora Carrington)

Bläckstråleutskrift

Museum of Modern Art, New York/ Scala,
Florence and Kati Horna Estate

In 1957, Hungarian photographer Kati Horna captured Spanish painter Remedios Varo wearing a headpiece created by British artist Leonora Carrington. This image highlights the profound bond among these three women Surrealists who found refuge in Mexico during the 1940s.

Carrington, Varo, and Horna, each fleeing the ravages of war in Europe, formed a close-knit artistic community in Mexico City. The closeness of this circle is evident in Horna's portrait of Varo. The mask by Leonora Carrington reflects their shared themes of magic, humor, and illusion, representative for Mexico's artistic environment in the 1950s.

André Breton; Valentine Hugo;

Tristan Tzara; Paul Eluard

1896–1966; 1887–1968; 1896–1963; 1895–1952

Frankrike/France; Frankrike/France;

Rumänien/Romania; Frankrike/France

***Cadavre exquis*, 1929**

Utsökt as

Exquisite Corpse

Pastell på papper

Donation 1975 från Moderna Museets Vänner

Through games and play, the Surrealists tried to organise chance into different systems in order to reach the subconscious. *Cadavre Exquis*, meaning “exquisite corpse” or “exquisite cadaver”, is the name of one such chance-based game in which each person draws a part of a picture without seeing what the others have done. In 1925, the members of the Surrealist group played a word game in which everyone contributed a word from a predetermined word class. The words formed imaginative sentences, one of which read: “The exquisite cadaver will drink the new wine.” From this, the name was then taken for the artists’ visual game and for the work *Cadavre Equis*.

Eugène Atget

1857–1927

Frankrike/France

Solförmörkelse, Paris, ca 1910/ca 1965

Solar Eclipse, Paris

Gelatinsilverfotografi monterat på kartong

Inköp 1980

On 17 April 1912, a crowd gathered at the Place de la Bastille in Paris to watch a solar eclipse. Instead of photographing the eclipse itself, Eugène Atget chose to take a picture of the spectators.

Methodically, on long walks through Paris, Atget had in 1899 begun photographing district after district, producing tens of thousands of pictures, an invaluable documentation of the Paris that was on the verge of disappearing. In 1926, Surrealist artist Man Ray used this image on the cover of *La Révolution Surréaliste*, a subversive magazine that explored the nature of existence in a pseudo-scientific format. The mysticism of the image – people looking at something invisible – suited the Surrealists' interest in the irrational. Atget was not discovered until just before he died but has posthumously come to be regarded as a pioneer of modern documentary photography.

Max Ernst

1891–1976

Tyskland/Germany

***L'évadé*, 1925**

Rymlingen

The Escapee

Frottage, blyerts på papper monterad på tunn kartong

Inköp 1932

Max Ernst, who worked as a painter, sculptor and printmaker, was an influential figure for both the Dadaists and the Surrealists. Among other things, he developed the technique of frottage – by rubbing a pencil or chalk over paper laid on top of textured surfaces such as wood, textiles, leaves and bark, he created random patterns that he later transformed into imaginative animals and landscapes. In *L'évadé*, part of his *Histoire Naturelle* series, Ernst uses frottage to produce a creature that mixes elements of fish and bird, giving the work a dreamlike, surreal quality. The technique was a way of exploring automatism, where the artist leaves reason behind to let the unconscious guide the creative process. The result is images that are both bizarre and beautiful, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy.

Lee Miller

1907–1977

USA

Portrait of space, Al Bulwayeb, near Siwa, Egypt

1937, 1937/2024

Porträtt av rymden, Al Bulwayeb, nära Siwa, Egypten

1937

Bläckstråleutskrift

Courtesy of Lee Miller Archives

Lee Miller was an American photographer who practised everything from fashion photography to art photography and later photojournalism, documenting the Second World War and the atrocities of the Holocaust as a war correspondent for *Vogue* magazine. Moving to Paris in 1929, she worked closely with Man Ray, first as his student and soon as his muse and co-creator. They rediscovered the photographic technique of solarisation – by accident, according to their own account – which fitted in well with the Surrealists' desire to make room for the unconscious and chance. *Portrait of Space*, photographed in Egypt in 1937, also expresses Surrealist imagery: in this desert landscape, seen through a torn canvas, inner and outer worlds are contrasted, echoing the

Surrealists' exploration of conscious and unconscious realms.

Marcel Duchamp

1887–1968

Frankrike/France

***Objet Dard*, 1951**

Gadd-objekt

Dart Object

Brons

Inköp 1963 med bidrag från Carl-Bertel Nathhorst

In the 1950s, Marcel Duchamp created four smallscale “erotic objects”, cast in bronze from plaster moulds. They depict various fragments of the female body, in fact leftovers from his last work, *Étant donnés* (1946–1966), in which a naked female body composed of cast parts is at the centre of the work. *Objet Dard* was created from part of the mould that formed the woman’s ribs. After Duchamp finished the mould, he broke it, and one of the broken pieces gave him the idea to use it as a work of art, in a kind of allusion to readymades. The title plays on the words *objet d’art* (art object) and *dard* (arrow) in a Dada-like way, playing on phallic visual and linguistic ambiguities.

Joseph Cornell

1903–1972

USA

Untitled (Compartmented Box), 1954–1956

Utan titel (låda med fack)

Trä, fotografi, träkulor, glas

Inköp 1980 med medel från Lovéns, Ettlers
och Personnes fonder samt med bidrag från
Gustaf Douglas

A box with twenty-five small compartments under a glass top: a small display case to hang on the wall. In each compartment is a ball and an obscure portrait of a beautiful Renaissance youth. The box is the secret, a capsule, a memory. A tradition that can be traced from the *laterna magica*, jewellery boxes, miniature portraits; from panopticons, peep shows, puppet theatre and early photography – to the cinema, advertising light boxes and why not televisions and computers. The technology is all about containment – and presentation. Inside the box, we find a universe in miniature. An enchanted world where Joseph Cornell's magic is white.

Cornell worked with Surrealist-inspired collages from the early 1930s, but he lacked the Surrealists' interest in psychology and repressed sexuality. His world is spiritual – like a fairy tale of the gods.

Man Ray

1890–1976

USA

Indestructible Object, 1923/1965

Oförstörbart objekt

Svartlackerad metronom, fotografi

Inköp 1966

Man Ray created this work in 1923, a kind of ready-made consisting of a metronome with a photograph of an eye attached to the pendulum. When the photographer Lee Miller, who had been Man Ray's assistant and partner, left him in 1932 and moved to New York, he created a new version of the work, replacing the original eye with an image of her eye. The first version of the work was titled *Object to Be Destroyed* and the new one was titled *Object of Destruction*. At an exhibition in 1957, a group of protesting intellectual and nihilist students, took Man Ray at his word and destroyed the work. For the insurance money, Man Ray created an edition of one hundred copies, which would make it difficult for anyone to destroy them all again, and the work was given the title *Indestructible Object*. Several of them can be found today in museums around the world.

Tetsumi Kudo

1935–1990

Japan

Titel saknas, 1970

No title

Tryckt bok i grön bläck med urklippt sidorna
och skulptur i obestämt material

Donation 2005 från Pontus Hultén

The Japanese, avant-garde artist Tetsumi Kudo is most often associated with sculptures and installations that are charged with political undertones. They often contain genitalia and mutilated body parts, but this untitled artist's book seems to be different. The book contains texts in Japanese, French and English and is designed like a peephole book, with cut-out holes that get larger and larger page by page. A nose, two severed fingers holding a burning cigarette and another finger gradually emerge from the holes. The book is reminiscent of Kudo's *Portrait of the Artist in Crisis* series, which featured male faces moulded in plastic, often smoking and trapped in meaningless, dull pursuits.

Yolande Fièvre

1907–1983

Frankrike/France

No title, 1965

Titel saknas

Bemålat lera, bemålat trä och glas

Donation 2005 från Pontus Hultén

Known for defying artistic categorisations and ideologies, Yolanda Fièvre emphasised spontaneity over strict academic approaches. Her oeuvre, which spans more than sixty years, includes a series of reliefs created in the 1950s and 1960s. They were constructed from carefully arranged natural objects such as driftwood, stones, shells and clay – often enclosed in small, intricate boxes. Sometimes they were populated by small figures, giving the impression of representing obscure miniature cities. With roots in both Dadaist and Surrealist practices, she sought to explore the mystical and esoteric by constructing these intimate, enclosed spaces that evoke both the fantastic and the spiritual.

Pablo Picasso

1881-1973

Spanien/Spain

***Desire Caught by the Tail*, 1941/1948**

Åtrån fångad i svansen

In the winter of 1941, in a Paris occupied by the Germans, Picasso writes his only play in French, *Le Désir attrapé par la queue*, during a three-day curfew. An absurdist trifle, it premieres in 1944 in a reading by writers Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, among others. The text will be adapted for the stage by Albert Camus. In the preface to the 1948 American edition, *Desire Caught by the Tail*, the legendary translator of French surrealism and existentialism, Bernard Frechtman, writes laconically: "In an age which has discovered man with a capital M, it is gratifying to advise the reader that Picasso has nothing to say of man, nor of the universe. This in itself is a considerable achievement.

Joseph Cornell

1903–1972

USA

Rose Hobart, 1936

16 mm film överförd till digital video

19:00 min

Inköp 1980

Joseph Cornell is best known for his collages of found objects. Here, fragments of the adventure film *Escape from Borneo* (1931) are assembled into a new stand-alone work – an avant-garde art film. Influenced by Surrealist ideas, he added new music and projected the film at a slower pace through blue glass, creating a dreamlike atmosphere. Cornell was fascinated by the exotic Borneo settings and perhaps most of all by the lead actress, Rose Hobart – his compilation film is effectively a tribute to and portrait of her. At the film's premiere, Salvador Dalí is said to have been furious that Cornell had anticipated ideas about the film collage, ideas that he himself had wanted to be the first to realise.

Hieronymus Bosch

(inventor)

ca 1450–1516

Nederländerna/The Netherlands

Den stora fisken äter de små, 1557

Big Fish Eats the Small Fish

Kopparstick av Pieter van der Heyden (ca 1530–1572) efter teckning av Pieter Bruegel d. ä. (ca 1525–1569)

Nationalmuseum

Hieronymus Bosch exerted a profound influence on the Surrealists with his dreamlike, bizarre, and often morally charged visual worlds. A Dutch Renaissance painter, Bosch is best known for his complex and imaginative scenes depicting everything from paradisiacal landscapes to chaotic and grotesque renderings of hell. Surrealist artists such as Salvador Dalí and René Magritte were deeply influenced by his multi-layered, symbolic, and enigmatic works. Max Ernst was strongly inspired by Bosch when creating his own mysterious landscapes and hybrid creatures. Bosch's visionary worlds became a significant source of inspiration, especially as Surrealism sought new ways to explore the subconscious and the irrational.

Marcel Duchamp

1887–1968

Frankrike/France

Anémic Cinéma, 1926

Anemisk film

Anemic Cinema

35 mm film överförd till digital video

8:25 min

Inköp 2012

Marcel Duchamp's only film work is considered a classic of both Dadaism and Surrealism. The film shows one of the artist's "rotoreliefs" spinning on a turntable – discs with hypnotic graphic spiral patterns. They alternate with rotating texts on which a series of enigmatic, partly indecent puns in French can be read. Duchamp experimented early on with optical phenomena, such as how negative and positive form affect vision. Here, the elements of silent film – image and text – are reduced to a minimum, as suggested by the title. In this work, Duchamp seeks a dissolution of the rational, both visually and linguistically. The film was produced in collaboration with photographer Man Ray and film director Marc Allégret, and is signed in the closing credits by Duchamp's female alter ego Rrose Sélavy.

Osamu Shiihara

1905–1974

Japan

Titel saknas, ca 1940

No title

Gelatinsilverfotografi

Inköp 1988 med medel från Gerard Bonniers
stiftelse

In 1930s Japan, Surrealism was labelled “ultrarealism” (*cho-genjitsu shugi*). The focus shifted from the exploration of the subconscious to the creation of fantasy worlds, *shuru*, meaning something separate from reality and impossible to fully understand. In this context, Osamu Shiihara became a key figure through his exploration of Surrealist themes in avant-garde photography. He had studied Western painting at the Tokyo Art Academy and later developed what he called *photo peinture*, in which he painted on glass plate negatives that were then transferred onto photographic paper. Techniques such as solarisation, double exposure and photograms became part of Shiihara’s expression, as did his choice of photographic paper, which enhances the deep shadows and reflective gloss. This emphasises light as a central element.

Louise Bourgeois

1911–2010

USA

Quilting, 1999

Vaddstickning

Rosa tyg i trä- och glasvitrin

Donation 2015 från Pontus Bonnier

Louise Bourgeois was born in France in 1911 and died in the USA in 2010. She grew up in a family working in the trade of repairing old hand-woven tapestries. For *Quilting*, she used her own cast-off clothing, thereby preserving them for posterity. We see a truncated body, a woman's torso without arms or legs. The fabric Louise Bourgeois used has a colour resembling pink skin. The stitches are visible, an integral part of the work. When she made this sculpture, she was nearly ninety years old. It conveys a sense of frailty and humanity. Louise Bourgeois worked intensely in her final thirty years, using many different materials, including textiles, marble, wood and bronze.

SEARCHING FOR THE INVISIBLE

The artists of the interwar period regard Surrealism as a discovery just as important as electricity or magnetism, rather than as an artistic movement.

The aim is to activate its redemptive power in the borderland between artistic intention and unconscious impulse. They are interested in the images produced by children and the mentally ill.

As in writing, Surrealist artists work with automatism in techniques such as free drawing, collage, and frottage. For many, leaving artistic choices to chance or strict rules becomes a way of letting go of control and getting rid of their superego. Others experiment under the influence of drugs, trance states or hypnosis. There are similarities with spiritual and occult traditions of seeking an invisible inner world. Some have likened Surrealism to a non-religious form of Sufism, a strand of Islamic mysticism whose ultimate aim is to ascend into the absolute.

Many European artists are exiled during the Second World War, including Leonora Carrington and Kati Horna, who emigrate to Mexico. André Breton, Louise Bourgeois, and Salvador Dalí work in New York in the 1940s. Here, their ideas spread to a new generation of artists seeking subjects and

expressions unencumbered by the Western tradition. Previously regarded in the United States as a decadent European movement on the margins, Surrealism's focus on the human and the irrational is now, in the shadow of war, very much of the moment. Emerging American art movements such as Abstract Expressionism and Neo-Dada were influenced by Surrealist ideas. The happenings and anti-authoritarian social engagement of 1960s and 1970s art also have roots in the Surrealists' vision, with influences from Eastern mysticism. In this spirit, the international Fluxus movement works with expressions that are idea-oriented, time-based and beyond language.

Tarik Kiswanson

f/b 1986

Sverige/Sweden

***Vestibules*, 2016**

Tre spegелverk av högpolerat stål

Inköp 2021 (Svenska förvärv 2021)

Encountering the series *Vestibules*, consisting of domed structures made of polished steel and brass, one may experience a sense of disorientation and intense self-reflection. A vestibule is a type of space that leads to other spaces, and the title of the work may allude to its use in architecture as well as in anatomy: the inner ear contains the vestibulum organ that controls the sense of balance. Drawing inspiration from Sufi practices of active meditation, these suspended works vibrate and act as portals to trance-like experiences, multiplying and fragmenting the space and the viewer through reflections. There is a parallel here between Surrealism and Sufism's embrace of automatism, the esoteric and altered states.

Henri Michaux

1899–1984

Belgien/Belgium

Dessin mescalinen, 1958

Meskalintekning

Mescaline Drawing

Tusch på papper

Donation 1975 från Gerard Bonnier

Henri Michaux's idiosyncratic practice spanned writing, painting and drawing. There are many links with Surrealism – he experimented with both language and visual expression to explore inner states – but he is not formally part of the movement. In 1922, reading Lautréamont's *Songs of Maldoror* inspired his first text, *Cas de folie circulaire* (Cases of Circular Madness), and it was the discovery of Paul Klee's work that led him to drawing, printmaking and painting in 1925. From 1955 to 1961, Michaux experimented with hallucinogens, particularly mescaline, to discover unexplored states of consciousness. His *Mescaline Drawings* capture this, translating a drug-addled mind into labyrinthine, oscillating forms.

William Anastasi

1933–2023

USA

12.6.91 2:30 PM; Jan 2 1991 5:20 PM, 1991

910612, 14:30; 2 jan 1991 17.20

Blyerts på papper

Inköp 1994

In the early 1970s, American conceptual artist William Anastasi began working on a series of blind drawings on the New York subway. At the time, he was often on his way to meet his friend and composer John Cage for a game of chess. He had a sketchbook on his lap and a pencil in each hand. He would put on large headphones and close his eyes to increase concentration and reach a meditative state. His body followed the oscillations, decelerations and accelerations of the train. Like a seismograph, Anastasi transferred the changes in her surroundings to the paper. By allowing himself to become an instrument of the movements of the car, he renounced the authorship of his drawings, thus joining the Surrealists' exploration of the unconscious. The title of the work indicates the time of its creation.

Akbar Padamsee

1928–2020

Indien/India

Syzygy, 1970

35 mm film överförd till digital video

16:34 min

Inköp 2021

Syzygy is a term used in astronomy and other fields to describe the positions of celestial bodies in relation to each other. Here, the term has given its name to an abstract line animation – a collaboration between Akbar Padamsee and animator Ram Mohan. Padamsee's expressive paintings, prints, photography, sculpture and film were crucial to the development of modernism in post-colonial India. Inspired by Paul Klee's pedagogical diagrams, the film features mathematical patterns that are hand-drawn on nearly a thousand transparent plastic sheets. It explores abstract shapes through lines, dots, letters and numbers, creating dynamic visual patterns. Starting with basic geometric shapes that gradually transform into complex mazes and networks, the film is considered a precursor to generative digital art.

Fatima Moallim

f/b 1992

Ryssland/Russia

Familjealbum, 2021

Family Album

Bläck på linoleum

Inköp 2021 (Svenska förvärv 2021)

“An abstraction of my family situation.” This is how Fatima Moallim describes the delicate drawing that embroiders its connections and nervous threads over a cracked grey linoleum floormat. The work can also be seen as an alternative to the family album that never was. The black figure in the centre of the picture is Moallim herself as a child, but the work could also be about someone else entirely. The child is caught among lines and bodies pulling in different directions – in a web of relationships, emotions and entanglements. For Fatima Moallim, drawing became a way of processing a childhood that lacked any obvious context. The linoleum floormat brings to mind public housing flats. Against its durable stone imitation, the brittle lines appear like rock carvings and hieroglyphs.

Wassily Kandinsky

1866–1944

Ryssland

Groupement, 1937

Gruppering

Grouping

Olja på duk

Inköp 1967 (Önskemuseet)

Groupement (Grouping) is a seminal work in Wassily Kandinsky's oeuvre that highlights his crucial role in the development of abstract art. Dark blue and spiky shapes dominate, but there are also vibrant reds and oranges and more rounded, organic forms. The composition evokes a sense of movement and energy, reflecting Kandinsky's belief that colour and form could convey emotions and ideas independently of recognisable objects. Painting, he believed, was deeply connected to the spiritual. Likewise, art must rise above the endeavour to be merely representational and instead speak to the human soul, as music does. The aim was to evoke pure, authentic emotion through his innovative use of bold brushstrokes, geometric shapes and vibrant colours.

DESIRE AND IDENTITY

To live as openly and transgressively as they create, is highly valued by the Surrealists, as a work in itself. The ideal is to be free of moral considerations and instead cultivate one's individuality. Sexuality, identity, object, and subject are recurring themes. The artists create enigmatic art pieces that carry a special charge, often erotically evocative: fetishes intended as keys to the closed chambers of repressed memory. Many Surrealists see desire as the most important motor of man and art.

Depicting the most forbidden is seen as an act of resistance against stifling bourgeois ideals. Many explore the dark side of the drive, the violent and sadistic, in works where women are sometimes reduced to faceless objects.

Like no other art movement in Western Europe prior to it, the Surrealist movement is characterised by the participation of female and queer artists – many in this group explicitly promote gender equality and everyone's right to their identity and orientation. Yet they do not receive the same recognition or visibility. Influential Surrealists' notion of the "irrational woman" as muse and catalyst for male creativity is at odds with the

recognition of women as individuals and artists in their own right.

Meanwhile, artists such as Toyen or Claude Cahun are hailed as role models by the Surrealists for their expression of queer identity in both life and art at a time when it is extremely dangerous. “Under this mask, another mask”, Cahun writes. “I will never stop peeling off all these faces.” Their exploration of self-image and gender as a cultural and social construct will prove crucial for future generations of artists, not least the postmodernists of the 1980s. Despite its inherent conflicts, Surrealism will help reshape the playing field of what topics can be addressed in art – as well as how, and by whom, they can be addressed.

Lotta Antonsson

f/b 1963

Sverige/Sweden

Seashell Girl No. 21 (clam).

Ur serien *Seashell Girl*, 2016

Collage från tidskriften

Das Magazin 1968–1978 med snäcka

Donation 2021 från konstnären

For three decades, Lotta Antonsson has been producing works that push the boundaries of what a photograph is and can be. Early on, and in the spirit of post-modernism, she reworked images of women into works that tended to show a *cliché* of a woman, a woman conjured up in a male controlling gaze – focussing on whose gaze is reproduced by the camera lens. In later works, Antonsson has worked with collage, an artistic method that was favoured by the Surrealists many years earlier. She often uses images from magazines from the 1960s and 1970s, a time characterised by sexual revolution and optimism about the future. Adding rocks, fossils or shells to the surface of the image creates a whole new meaning. Sometimes she also photographs the collage, thus creating a two-dimensional image.

Toyen

1902–1980

Tjeckien/Czech Republic

Débris de Rêve, 1967

Drömmens kvarlevor

Debris of Dreams

Torrnålsgravyr

Inköp 1982

Born in Prague as Marie Čermínová, Toyen adopted the gender-neutral name Toyen, an abbreviation of the French *citoyen*, “citizen”, in the 1920s. In the 1930s, the artist became acquainted with Surrealist leader André Breton and participated in activities and exhibitions in both Prague and Paris during the interwar period. Toyen was also one of the founders of a radical Surrealist group in Czechoslovakia.

Remains of the Dream is an artist book with texts by the poet and playwright Radovan Ivšić (1921–2009) and images by Toyen. As in many other Surrealist works, the motifs are derived from dreams and the subconscious. A flowery breast, fingers sensually drawn through hair, a fantasy flower resembling a woman’s sex; the images are deeply erotic, but do not necessarily follow the norm of a male gaze desiring a female body.

Meret Oppenheim

1913–1985

Schweiz/Switzerland

Ma gouvernante – My Nurse –

Mein Kindermädchen, 1936/1967

Min guvernant

Metallfat, skor, snöre, papper

Inköp 1967 med bidrag från Moderna Museets

Vänner

A pair of trussed white pumps are served on a silver plate. The heels are adorned with white paper ruffles of the kind formerly used for chicken or lamb chops at fancy dinners. In Surrealist works such as this, objects that don't "belong together" are often combined, like in dreams. The Surrealists were interested in dreams, sexuality and urges, influenced by Freud and psychoanalysis, which was new at the time. Shoes can also be seen as a fetish, an ordinary object that is charged with sexual meaning. Several of Meret Oppenheim's works concern the construction of "femininity". In that perspective, the string around the shoes can be read as a symbol of how roles are forced upon women.

Ma gouvernante – My Nurse – Mein

Kindermädchen is the artist's own title. Oppenheim

has said that the white shoes brought back memories of a childhood nanny.

Alberto Giacometti

1901–1966

Schweiz/Switzerland

***Cage*, 1930–1931**

Bur

Trä

Inköp 1964 (Önskemuseet)

The sculpture consists of a cage, a wooden structure that defines the boundary of an inner space where a number of forms interact. They are abstract but could appear to resemble leaves or insects. The two spheres can, with a little imagination, evoke a pair of breasts or eyeballs. Giacometti's interest in non-Western cultures is evident in the idiom. But *Cage* has mainly been interpreted as an expression of the artist's exploration of the relationship between man and woman, artist and model. A struggle of some sort seems to be taking place; the enclosed forms are involved in a mating act of a violent nature. Several Surrealists explored the darker aspects of sexuality as a way of getting in touch with repressed urges, and for Giacometti this interest culminated in a disturbing rape and murder fantasy published in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* in 1933.

Salvador Dalí

1904–1989

Spanien/Spain

The Grasshopper Child, 1933

Gräshoppsbarnet

Etsning

Inköp 1938

Salvador Dalí endeavoured to depict what would otherwise mostly appear in dreams or take place in our subconscious; what our rational mind tends to censor and screen out. Dalí's dream images often reflect childhood fears of various phenomena. Ants and other insects made him feel unsettled. In an essay, Dalí described his phobic relationship with the locusts that often appear in his art. In the etching, we see two figures that seem to be in an ongoing metamorphosis of sorts, between man and insect. They merge with the upward movement of the table, out towards the horizon. The naked man appears to shape or direct the movement of the table with his hands. Similar motifs in Dalí's work have been interpreted in relation to Sigmund Freud's theories of castration and fetishism – the little child's horror at the mother's lack of a phallus.

Hans Bellmer

1902–1975

Tyskland/Germany

Les Jeux de la Poupée, 1938–1949

Dockans lekar

The Games of the Doll

Gelatinsilverfotografi, handkolorerat,
monterat på kartong

Donation 2005 från Pontus Hultén

Hans Bellmer created his first articulated doll in Berlin 1933, after Hitler had taken power. His doll works have been interpreted as a protest against Nazi norms and ideals. Bellmer photographed his dolls in bizarre poses and sent the pictures to Breton, who published them in the magazine *Minotaure* the following year. The German regime declared Bellmer's art to be *entartete*, "degenerate", and he was forced to flee to Paris in 1938, where he was embraced by the Surrealists and worked for the French resistance. He shared a fascination for the grotesque and for violence with the French writer and philosopher Georges Bataille. Eggs, eyes, testicles and breasts are part of the stock imagery in Bataille's pornographic novel *Story of the Eye* (1928), which Bellmer illustrated in 1944.

Claude Cahun

1894–1954

Frankrike/France

***Aveux non Avenus*, 1930**

Avvisningar eller inställda bekännelser

Disavowals or Cancelled Confessions

Editions du Carrefour

Claude Cahun primarily used photography as a medium, through which she explored and questioned gender roles in suggestive self-portraits in the spirit of Surrealism. She was also a visual artist and writer, and in *Aveux non Avenus* (Disavowals or cancelled confessions), she brought together recorded dreams and essays with photomontages. The book was conceived as a kind of autobiography that, by pushing the boundaries of the genre, questioned the conservatism of the time with regard to both art and gender. She argues that gender depended on context and embraced a neutral, or third, gender. Cahun was a political activist and during the Second World War she and her partner Marcel Moore conducted undercover resistance activities in Jersey, where they lived in exile. They were exposed and sentenced to death by the Germans but was saved from execution with the end of the war.

THE DREAM AS RESISTANCE

The dream occupies a special position in Surrealism, as a gateway to the unconscious and a prerequisite for the construction of alternative worlds and futures. Without first imagining the seemingly impossible, the utopian, we can never work to achieve it. Early on, the movement identifies miserabilism as its counterpart and enemy – the attitude that injustice and exploitation are inherent parts of life. The call to dare to dream in order to shape one's own future makes Surrealism particularly relevant to groups fighting for their independence. From Latin America and Eastern Europe, magical realism is spreading internationally, unsettling the notion of an absolute reality.

“Always be ready for the miraculous”, urges poet and activist Suzanne Césaire. “Surrealism is the tightrope of our hope.” Césaire's group in the Caribbean island of Martinique was part of the international Négritude movement. From the 1930s and onwards they promoted an art that challenged the colonial order and embraced African spiritualism. The tropical flowers and enveloping vegetation of the jungle take on a special charge in Caribbean art as animistic landscapes between life

and dream – vibrant spaces from which to draw energy.

The radical Surrealist ideas of a fundamental revolution that begins within each of us live on into the present. Metamorphosis and transformation remain keywords, and many experiment with shamanism and magic as tools. Others are exploring speculative technologies, such as cybernetics or artificial intelligence, in the creation of alternative realities. Opening up new worlds and changing their given form – from human to animal, machine to creature, powerless to sovereign – is fully in line with the idea of an ongoing Surrealist evolution.

Anna Halprin

1920-2021

USA

Visions, 1960

Visioner

Choreographer Anna Halprin saw art as a holistic experience that should engage all the senses, while providing intellectual and emotional stimulation. Props, music, lighting, and costumes were equally important as the performance on stage. She worked closely with seminal experimental musicians such as John Cage and La Monte Young. In the performance *Visions*, the organically inspired costumes are partially padded to sculpt and transform the dancers' bodies. The same year, Halprin held her first experimental workshop outside of San Francisco, which would engage choreographers and artists like Simone Forti, Janine Antoni, and Yvonne Rainer.

Leonora Carrington

1917-2011 England

***The Hearing Trumpet*, 1974**

Hörluren

Flammarion, Paris

Konstbiblioteket, Moderna

Museet/Nationalmuseum

In British-Mexican artist and writer Leonora Carrington's debut novel, *The Hearing Trumpet*, we follow the surreal experiences of Marian Leatherby. Marian is a vivacious older woman who challenges societal norms, and when she receives a hearing trumpet as a gift from a friend, she uncovers her family's plans to leave her in a nursing home. When confined at the home, Marian is drawn into bizarre and occult intrigues, conspiracies and adventures. Through Marian's subtle and gentle humour, the novel explores timeless themes of age, faith and independence. Carrington weaves a feminist awareness into the story, particularly evident in Marian's solidarity with her fellow sisters in the nursing home. Written in the 1960s but not published until 1974, *The Hearing Trumpet* is still regarded as one of the most original, playful and visionary novels of Surrealism.

Waldemar Lorentzon

1899–1984

Sverige/Sweden

Kosmisk moder, 1935

Cosmic Mother

Blyerts på papper

Donation 1956 från donator som önskar vara
anonym

genom Bo Wennberg

Waldemar Lorentzon, born in Halmstad, travelled to Paris in 1924 with his cousin, the artist Erik Olson. Like many other northerners, he studied at Fernand Léger's Cubism-oriented painting school, Académie Moderne. But Lorentzon also encountered the art of Marc Chagall and Giorgio de Chirico, the forerunner of the Surrealists, whose paintings were of great importance to him. After returning to Sweden, he was among the artists who formed the Halmstad Group in 1929. *Cosmic Mother* from 1935 is arguably Lorentzon's bestknown painting. Here, a drawing with the same title and motif is shown. A naked figure rests safely in the arms of an all-encompassing mother. There are traces of Cubism here, but what is more important is the artist's deep interest in metaphysical and cosmic forces.

Susanna Marcus Jablonski

f/b 1985

Sverige/Sweden

***Dov*, 2020**

Deep

Ankfjädrar, pil, nylon

Inköp 2021 (Svenska förvärv 2021)

Sometimes Susanna Jablonski's sculptures remind the viewer of everyday things, while other works involve fragile materials shaped into abstract objects. Their physical construction often pushes the boundaries of what is possible. The piece *Dov* can be perceived as both real and alien at the same time. The sculpture appears as something imagined rather than depicted from reality. *Dov* consists of a basket-woven arched form, clad in a shimmering blue feather dress. Dov was the Hebrew name that Jablonski's paternal grandfather abandoned when he arrived in Sweden after the war as a holocaust survivor. In Swedish the word *dov* can mean both a subdued atmosphere or a muted tone, a sense which resonates quietly in the piece.

Constantin Brâncuși

1876–1957

Rumänien/Romania

Le Nouveau-Né II, 1919-1921

Den nyfödde II

The Newborn II

Vit marmor

Inköp 1961 med bidrag från Moderna Museets

Vänner,

Carina Ari, Gerard Bonnier, Sten Hellner, Charles Nilsson, Hildur Nordin och Ivar Philipson

Constantin Brâncuși was a groundbreaker, who renewed 20th century plastic arts. He left Romania for Paris at age twenty-eight, never belonged to any group but were in the circle of the Dadaists. He worked for a long time on the same motif, which developed in series. With each iteration he strove to reduce and simplify the forms. The head of an infant was a theme that Brâncuși worked on intermittently from 1906. The title of the eggshaped marble sculpture is indicative, as its shape is almost entirely abstract. Brâncuși himself wrote: “What is it you see when you see a newborn child? A wide-open mouth gasping for air. Every newborn baby comes into the world angry because it has been brought there against its will.”

Cecilia Germain

f/b 1974

Sverige/Sweden

Titel saknas. Ur serien *Rest and Recovery/*

Silent Resistance: Le rêve de griot, 2020

No title. From the series *Rest and Recovery/*

Silent Resistance: Le rêve de griot

Gelatinsilverfotografi

Inköp 2021 (Svenska förvärv 2021)

Using an old large-format camera, Cecilia Germain photographed black people sleeping. Several negatives are combined in the final works, giving them a unique expression, as if they were older images documenting some unknown phenomenon. Closing your eyes is an effective way of making yourself unavailable and connecting with your inner self. In an era in which productivity and consumerism are valued highly, sleep is provocatively unproductive. Germain has roots in the African diaspora that arose through the transatlantic slave trade, which gave white people rest and recovery at the expense of other people's lives. *Rest and Recovery/Silent Resistance* is about sleep as an act of resistance at many different levels.

René Magritte

1898–1967

Belgien/Belgium

Le Modèle rouge, 1935

Den röda modellen

The Red Model

Olja på duk

Inköp 1967 (Önskemuseet)

In his works, René Magritte challenges our perception of reality. He began to paint in a Surrealist style in Belgium, and moved to Paris in 1927, where he joined the French Surrealists. His paintings often feature everyday objects, which are placed in unusual, dreamlike settings. Over time, he began to paint them with more photographic precision. The realistic rendering, and the descriptive title – *The Red Model* – seem to contradict what we actually see, and thus heighten the sense of unreality. This work also reveals Magritte's interest in words and texts, which appeared early on in his artistic practice. His imagery has influenced pop art, and later on conceptualism, where the idea is the essential ingredient of the artwork.

Wifredo Lam

1902–1982

Kuba/Cuba

Tropisk växtlighet, 1945–1948

Tropical Growth

Olja på duk

Inköp 1967 (Önskemuseet)

In *Tropical Vegetation*, we see a green wall of leaves, fruits and sugar cane, with only small streaks of light showing through the vegetation. Wifredo Lam was born in Cuba into a family with origins in several different cultures. He had a Catholic upbringing but also came into contact with other religions, including Santería, a kind of local mix of African-Caribbean tradition and Catholicism. After studying art in Havana, he travelled to Europe, where he spent several years. It was here that Lam came into contact with the European avant-garde, befriended Picasso, was introduced to André Breton and joined the Surrealists. Over time, the many influences resulted in a visual language in which European Modernism, Cubism and Surrealism merged with African-Cuban formal elements.

Toyen

1902–1980

Tjeckien/Czech Republic

Mythe de la lumière, 1946

Myten om ljuset

The Myth of Light

Olja på duk

Donation 1970 från Moderna Museets Vänner

During the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, Toyen was prohibited from showing her work, but secretly published collages and drawings in which she expressed her hatred of censorship. Toyen hid her friend, the poet Jindrich Heisler, who was Jewish, in her home during the war. In this painting, a shadow in profile holding out a plant appears against one half of a double door. On the other half, white-gloved hands form the shadow image of a barking dog's head. The threat against someone's precarious existence is portrayed with the dream-like logic of collage. After the end of the war, Nazi rule was replaced by Soviet Stalinist totalitarianism. Toyen then decided to go into exile in Paris with her friend Heisler, when André Breton organised an exhibition for Toyen in Paris in 1947.

Erik Olson

1901–1986

Sverige/Sweden

Dagen genom natten, 1935

Day Through Night

Olja på duk

Donation 1936 från Egon Östlund

In this painting, shells and beach plants float in an indeterminate space where it is unclear what is outside and what is inside. The time of day also varies in the composition. The Swedish version of Surrealism was characterised by Nordic light, rocks, shells, seaweed and other things related to the sea. The Swedish Surrealists were part of the Halmstad Group and thus close to the coast of Halland. Erik Olson was a member of the group and, like the other members, had started out in an abstract spirit. But over time, the artists realised that the non-representational approach limited them. Surrealist imagery, on the other hand, could express emotions. But they did not pursue a strict depiction of physical reality. They certainly painted figuratively, but that which they “figured” was something enigmatic, born of dreams and desires.

Trinidad Carrillo

f/b 1975

Peru

Brugmansia suaveolens, Betania, Pucallpa.

Ur serien *Oneiro's Garden*, 2018

Brugmansia suaveolens, Betania, Pucallpa.

From the series *Oneiro's Garden*

Bläckstråleutskrift

Inköp 2021 (Svenska förvärv 2021)

In the *Braiding* project, which has been ongoing since 1997, the photographer Trinidad Carrillo reflects on her experience of living and working in both Peru and Sweden. She uses this rich material to compile books and create new collections of images, in large, vibrant colour photographs, often in quadrant formats. All her works have an undercurrent of magic. In a garden outside Lima, Carrillo has photographed holy trees and plants that were used in ritual contexts. Searching for mythical settings, she leads us through her personal and sensitive works into other worlds. She appears in person in some of the images, along with her daughter, family, and friends, and all the motifs have elements that render them both ordinary and dreamlike.

Claude Lalanne

1924–2019

Frankrike/France

Fauteuil-crocodile, 1987

Krokodilfåtölj

Crocodile Armchair

Patinerad brons och krokodilskinn

Donation 2005 från Pontus Hultén

Claude Lalanne was a sculptor and designer. With her husband, she formed the creative duo Les Lalannes. They socialised in the bohemian circles of Paris and their friends included Surrealists such as Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst and Constantin Brâncuși. Alongside the art world, the fashion world was fascinated by her particular style; Yves Saint Laurent initiated a collaboration with her and collected her art. Using decorative forms derived from plant and animal life, she created furniture with links to Art Nouveau and Surrealism. The crocodile was a recurring motif in tables, candlesticks or, as here, in an armchair. It is said that the model for this piece was a crocodile that had died in a zoo and the same night, in full moon, was picked up by Lalanne and the artist Niki de Saint Phalle. The crocodile's details were then cast in bronze directly from the carcass.

Graciela Iturbide

f/b 1942

Mexiko/Mexico

Mujer Angel, Sonora Desert, 1979

Kvinnlig ängel, Sonoraöknen

Female Angel

Gelatinsilverfotografi

Inköp 2002

Graciela Iturbide discovered photography in the early 1970s, working as an assistant to the celebrated Mexican photographer Manuel Álvarez Bravo (1902–2002). She was influenced by his poetic style but soon developed her own visual language. She is best known for her photographic projects in small rural communities. In 1978, when Iturbide was asked to portray the Seri people, a formerly nomadic indigenous people living in the Sonoran Desert, she spent months with the local people. Her unerring sense of capturing the decisive moment, when the subject emerges from the stream of reality, has resulted in a number of iconic images. *Mujer Angel* depicts a woman in traditional Seri clothing moving along a mountain path in the desert. With the wind in her hair, she soars through her own timeless world, while the boom box in her hand anchors her in modern times.

Agnieszka Polska

f/b 1985

Polen/Poland

The Book of Flowers, 2023

Boken om blommor

Digital video

9:30 min

Courtesy of the artist

The short film *The Book of Flowers* uses AI animation post-processed by recording it on 16 mm film. It depicts a bygone era when humans and plant species lived symbiotically for millennia. Through the voiceover, we learn that humans played an important role in pollinating very large plants. Today's much smaller flowers are the consequence of massive changes caused by human engineering and plant breeding. The video reproduces a complex fantasy world that Polska herself built up as a child. At the same time, it raises questions about environmental degradation and the effects of historical acts for today's ecological imbalance. In an artistic practice based, in Polska's own words, on manipulation and artifice, what is "real" in this work are the emotions it evokes.