



Surrealism Explored through its Drawings

January 24, 2013

by Pat Rogers

DISPATCH - JAN 24, 2013 (7:05 p.m.)

NEW YORK CITY, NY-

The role drawing played in surrealism's development is revealed in a new exhibition at the Morgan Library & Museum. "Drawing Surrealism" presents a curated examination of drawings and their impact on surrealism.

"Drawing Surrealism" opens on Jan 25 and remains on view through April 23, 2013. The sprawling show presents 160 works on paper by 70 artists from 15 countries. Artist masters of surrealism in the show include Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, René Magritte, Leonora Carrington, Joan Miró and others.



"La femme 100 têtes ouvre sa manche auguste (The 100-headed Woman Opens Her August Sleeve)" by Max Ernst, 1925. Collage: cut and pasted wood engravings mounted on paper. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. The Menil Collection, Houston. Photography by Paul Hester. Courtesy of The Morgan Library & Museum.

"Drawing Surrealism" spans two of the Morgan's largest galleries.

Artwork is from the Morgan's collection and collections held by the Tate Modern, the Musée national d'art moderne at the Pompidou Center, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Menil Collection and Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Additional works were borrowed from major private collections in the United States and abroad, allowing for a rare look at drawings that aren't typically exhibited.

"Because the Morgan's collection of works on paper is of such international renown, one of the principal goals of our exhibition program is to present new insight and fresh perspectives on the medium of drawing," said William M. Griswold, director of the Morgan.

"'Drawing Surrealism' is an example of just such an exhibition," he continued. "The show breaks new art historical ground by demonstrating the fundamental importance of drawing to the surrealist movement on the worldwide stage."



“Olga” by Francis Picabia, 1930. Graphite pencil and crayon on paper. Bequest of Mme Lucienne Rosenberg 1995. CNAC/MNAM/Dist.RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Courtesy of The Morgan Library & Museum.

Surrealism emerged as a literary movement in Paris in 1924 with the publication of André Breton’s *First Manifesto of Surrealism*. Inspired by Freud’s theories of the unconscious, nineteenth-century mysticism, and Symbolist art and literature, surrealists sought to liberate the imagination by making art that included chance, dreams, the unconscious and thought as play.

Drawing, which allowed for spontaneity and immediacy, became a “...fertile medium of expression and innovation among the surrealists,” according to the Morgan. Using drawing, artists were able to detach from the conscious mind to discover new ways of seeing that painting and sculpture did not initially allow.



“Untitled” by Joseph Cornell, 1930s. Collage. © The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York. Collection of Lauren and Daniel Long, New York. Courtesy James Corcoran Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo © 2012 Museum Associates / LACMA, by Michael Bodycomb. Courtesy of The Morgan Library & Museum.

“Drawing Surrealism” presents drawings chronologically, providing insight into the ways surrealism unfolded over time. Thematic sections revealing the principle drawing techniques used by the surrealists are dispersed throughout the show. So are sections devoted to the movement’s international developments.

Drawing techniques presented include automatic drawing, collage, decalcomania, exquisite corpse and frottage.

Automatic drawing was the first graphic technique adopted by the surrealists. Drawings were made by the hand traveling across the page without conscious input from the artist.

André Masson was the first artist to develop the process. The museum credits Masson describing the technique this way: “*the hand must be fast enough, so that conscious thought cannot intervene*

and control the movement."

Taking a twist on automatic drawing, Miró, Dalí and Yves Tanguy combined happenstance with a deliberate approach to make their works.

Dream imagery was a reaction against automatic drawing. In this method, drawing techniques were used purposely to create dreamlike images and scenes of fantasy. Dalí favored detailed drawings using the academic style of the old masters for his drawings expressing "delirious phenomena" and dream imagery, according to the museum.

Frottage was favored by Ernst. He believed the technique was equivalent to automatic writing in the way images randomly appeared using graphite and pressure applied to paper that covered textured items or surfaces beneath it.

"Drawing Surrealism" includes several frottage drawings by Ernst, including "*Le Start du Châtaigner* (The Start of the Chestnut Tree)," 1925. The drawing was recently acquired by the Morgan. It is from the first series of frottage by Ernst, when he systematically explored the technique.



"La Tempête (The Storm)" by René Magritte, 1927. Graphite. © 2012 C. Herscovici, London / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Gale and Ira Drukier. Courtesy of The Morgan Library & Museum.

Decalcomania involves applying a wet medium (ink or gouache) to a sheet of paper and then pressing it against another sheet. When pulled apart, unexpected patterns appeared on the transfer image. The exhibition includes about 10 decalcomania drawings by Oscar Dominguez, Yves Tanguy, Georges Hugnet and Marcel Jean.

Collage allowed for dislocated compositions and odd juxtapositions that suggested images from disjointed dreams. The exhibition includes collages by Miró, Ernst, Ei-Kyu, Andre Breton, and Jean Arp. Exquisite corpse artworks are also on view.

Exquisite corpse is a playful way of making art involving collaboration and chance. The name is derived from a sentence created during an early parlor game where each participant wrote a word on a folded sheet of paper, without seeing the other contributions. One round created the sentence: "*The exquisite corpse will drink the new wine*" and the name 'exquisite corpse' stuck.

Eventually, exquisite corpse moved from words to visual art. "Drawing Surrealism" includes exquisite corpse artworks by Victor Brauner and Breton.



"The Poet and the Philosopher" by Giorgio de Chirico, 1913. Pencil on buff-colored paper. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome. Thaw Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York. Photography by Graham S. Haber, 2012. Courtesy of The Morgan Library & Museum.

"Drawing Surrealism" is co-organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Morgan Library & Museum. It is the first major exhibition to explore the central role of drawing in surrealism, according to the Morgan.

BASIC FACTS: "Drawing Surrealism" is on view from Jan 25 to April 21, 2013 at the Morgan Library & Museum.

Following is a select list of programs held in support of the exhibition. Check the museum's website for details and to ensure program changes have not occurred.

Gallery Talk by exhibition co-curator Isabelle Dervaux, Acquavella Curator of Modern and Contemporary Drawings, will be held on Feb 1 (Friday) at 7 p.m.

Exhibition Tours will be offered on Saturdays, Feb 2 and March 2, at 11 a.m.

The Dance Performance "Inner Landscape: Martha Graham and the Surreal" will be presented on **Feb 7 (Thursday) at 7 p.m.** The Martha Graham Dance Company will perform three of Graham's masterworks that touch on surrealism and make the workings of the mind visible in dance. Being performed are "*Every Soul is a Circus*," "*Satyrical Festival Song*," and "Moon" from "*Canticle for Innocent Comedians*." Commentary by the Company's Artistic Director, Janet Eilber, immediately follows the performance. The exhibition will open at 6 p.m. for program attendees.

Film screening of "L'Age D'Or" will take place on Feb 22 (Friday) at 7 p.m. "L'Age D'Or" (1930, 60 minutes) is an avant-garde surrealist comedy directed by Luis Buñuel and co-written with Salvador Dalí. The film features Gaston Modot, Lya Lys and Max Ernst.

The Morgan Library & Museum is located at 225 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016-3405. www.themorgan.org.