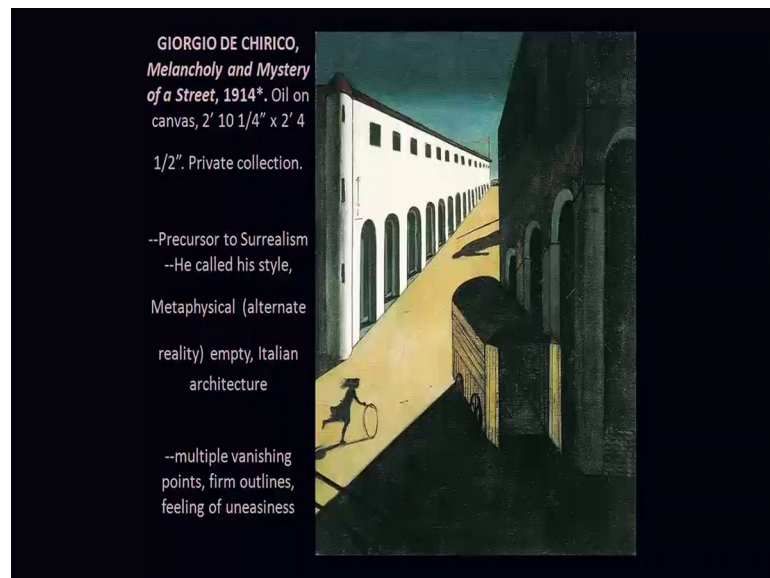


**Introducing Modern Western Art : Movements and Artists**  
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**Lecture - 09**  
**Surrealism**

Welcome viewers to MOOCs online course on Introduction to Modern Western Art. Today's topic is Surrealism and we have already mentioned that in some sense surrealism is a continuation or a fall out of Dadaism and the movements started in 1924, but before surrealism as a movement actually started.

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Way back in 1914-15 around that time an artist in Italy Giorgio, De Chirico was producing certain paintings which already anticipated a surrealist approach do art specifically to the subject matter content and also the composition of a painting.

This is one such example of a painting by Chirico; the title itself is quite suggestive because it says melancholy and mystery of a street. And it is no wanted that Chirico is consider to be the precursor of surrealism first of all procures he called his style as metaphysical, as an alternate reality or beyond the immediate reality, and if we look at his paintings not just this one, but any paintings by Chirico, even certainly fail that all his paintings all most all his paintings have an over well being sense of anxiety or more than anxiety I would say a sense of ED un can equality a sense of mystery and unknowness;

leading to certain kind of anxiety like this one and I have a feeling of a world beyond our immediate perceived reality.


Now these are all elements which would find a lot of explorations and which will certainly bloom in this realistic movement. So, Chirico happens to be a role model for surrealist painters for these very reasons.

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### The transition to Surrealism

- 1924 – *Manifeste du surrealisme*; *Poisson soluble* by Breton.
- Louis Aragon, Paul Éluard, the writers René Crevel and Philippe Soupalt – Dadaists who moved in.
- Surrealism – Productive rather than anarchic or nihilistic.
- Similarity to Dadaism – the Journal way [Surrealist Revolution, 1924]
- Rebelliousness – and deviance.

*Leave everything.  
Leave Dada.  
Leave your wife, leave your mistress.  
Leave your hopes and fears.  
Sow your children in the corner of a wood.  
Leave the substance for the shadow...  
Set out on the road*



And when actually surrealism started when actually you look at this transition from Dadaism to surrealism in 1924, and when you look at what the surrealist leaders like Andre Breton, Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard they were all a kind of the way they were conceiving the whole idea, the way there were articulating the surrealist concept. It already it is very clear that Chirico was already anticipating these elements.

Now, as oppose to Dadaism surrealism was more productive rather than anarchic or nihilistic, and the if you look at some similarity with Dadaism of course, the fact that like Dadaism surrealism was also a kind of rebel revolution against the established, and the prevalent ways of doing a painting and. Secondly, like Dadaism and more than Dadaism like Chirico's metaphysical paintings surrealist painters, and artists also looked beyond the immediate reality, surrealism beyond realism because they were convinced that reality cannot be perceived or understood from its conscious level.

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Dali- painted The Persistence of Memory in 1931. He frequently described his paintings as “hand-painted dream” photographs.

Dali- was very interested in Sigmund Freud’s writings on psychology. An Austrian psychologist writing in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, Freud revolutionized the way people think about the mind with his theory of the unconscious. The unconscious is the part of the psyche that thinks and feels without the person being aware of those thoughts and feelings.

According to Freud, dreams are coded messages from the unconscious, and Surrealist artists were interested in what could be revealed by their dreams.

We need to look at what is going on at the subconscious or even unconscious level and as a result surrealist artists were hugely dependent on the element of dream as a source of their subject matters, element of dream as a source of their visual idea.

For example when Dali painted the famous painting called the persistence of memory in 1931 he frequently described his paintings as hand painted dream. Now Dali was also very interested in Sigmund Freud’s writings on psychology. Now this is a very significant that why Salvador Dali would be so much interested in Sigmund Freud’s psychological ideas. Precisely because this Austrian psychologist writing in the late 19th and early 20th century; Freud revolutionized the way people think about the mind with his theory of the unconscious. The unconscious is the part of the psyche that things and feels without the person being aware of those thoughts and feelings.

And as an extension the unconscious may seem extremely irrational illogical and even unscientific, but for artists likes Dali and later on Magritte and others unconscious these call idea of unconscious a subconscious appear to be a treasure troop for painterly ideas, visual themes and subject matters. After all if a we follow Freud he did say that dreams are coded messages from the unconscious, and surrealist artist were interested in what could be revealed by their dreams.

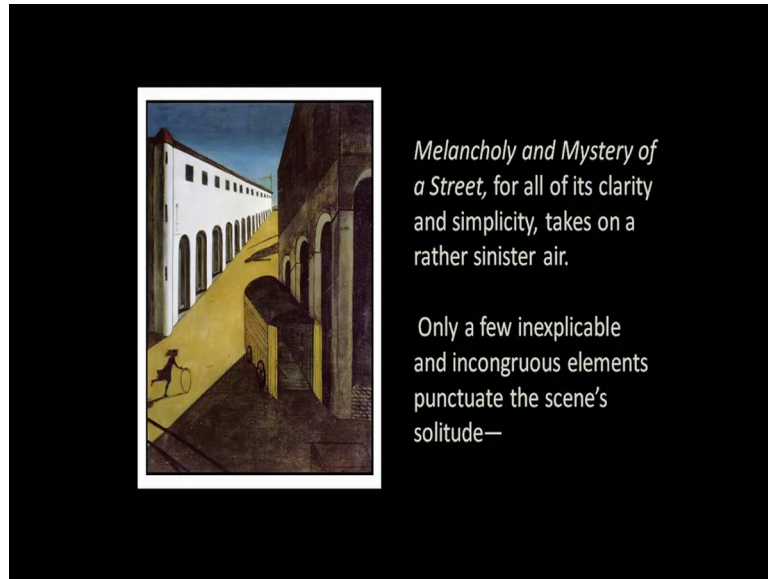
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So, if we look at surrealist painters, art works like this one the persistence of memory, a painted in 1931 by Salvador Dali, you can clearly see that the very fact that he hangs the a clocks and the watches all most likes the way we hang our clothes, in a sense he dilutes our sense of time. Because what you wants to state very clearly through these symbols is that in dream we lose our ordered sense of time. We tend to experience a fluidity of time, and also an experience of suspended time, where the clock may even stop taking, but the time will move on in its own way.

So, this elasticity of time, but experience of time that we often experience in dreams was one of the main concerns of Dali in this painting, whereas he and others surrealist painters have already been aware of the possibility of painting where some kind of a sense of a sinister atmosphere.

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Not just melancholy or mystery, but also a sense of fear can pervade and the atmosphere of a painting, and also that the fact that a painting may not have everything that is explicable, there could be elements which you cannot explain inexplicable elements or incongruous elements, elements which may not go with each other they look absolutely in contrast to each other.

Hence absurdity and absurdity often leads to some funny situation some ridiculous situations. So, all these elements will be used and explode.

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## SURREALISM

**Pre Surrealists:**  
Marc Chagall  
Giorgio de Chirico

**Surrealists:**  
Joan Miro  
Paul Klee  
Salvador Dali  
Rene Magritte

By the surrealist artists now so, we have at least two pre surrealist artists called Marc Chagall and Giorgio de Chirico Chirico's work we have seen just now, and artists who were directly a part of surrealist movements where at least some of them are Joan Miro, Paul Klee, Salvador Dali and Rene Magritte.

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- **Surrealism flourished in Europe between World Wars I and II. It grew out of the earlier Dada movement, which before World War I produced works of anti-art that deliberately defied reason; but Surrealism's emphasis was not on negation but on positive expression.**

Now, surrealism: Flourished in Europe between world wars one and two in 1994 and grew out of the earlier dada movement this is also true, and before world war one produced works of anti art that deliberately defined reason we have seen that this is what dada are did, but then surrealisms emphasis was not on negation, but on positive expression.

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- According to the major spokesman of the movement, the poet and critic André Breton, who published "The Surrealist Manifesto" in 1924, Surrealism united conscious and unconscious realms of experience so that the world of dream and fantasy would be joined to the everyday rational world in "an absolute reality, a surreality."

In fact, according to the major spokesman of the movement the poet and critic Andre Breton, who published the surrealist manifesto in 1924 surrealism, united conscious and unconscious realms of experience so that the world of dream and fantasy would be joined to the everyday rational world in an absolute reality a surreality. This is what he clearly states in this manifesto.

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- Drawing heavily on theories adapted from Sigmund Freud, (the Swiss psychiatrist) Breton saw the unconscious as the wellspring of the imagination. He defined genius in terms of accessibility to this normally untapped realm, which, he believed, could be attained by poets and painters.

And as we have already mentioned that is surrealist artists drew heavily on theories adapted from Sigmund Freud, and Breton saw this unconscious as the wellspring of the

imagination. He defined genius in terms of accessibility to this normally untapped realm which he believed could be attained by poets and painters.

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Now as unconscious or the realm of unconscious becomes the main target by the surrealist artists. So, naturally this in controveerse elements, absurdity a sense of anxiety, unknowness, asinisted feeling all these things would be there and added to that because it is a visual exercise, because we are talking about visual creativity.

So, added to that something else also happens without much pre planning, but once it happened then Salvador Dali or Rene Magritte noticed it picked it up and converted into one of their your salient features of their art work, and that is visual little or visual illusion. For example, if you look at this painting very carefully, he will find multiple images appearing from the same form. Sometimes it looks like a dog sometimes it looks like a face of a woman, sometimes it looks like something else is not it something that happens in dreams two that images figures appearances keep exchanging their identities.

So, dream is about apart from everything else it is also about an element of confusion, where we get confused because of its absurdity appearance is confuse us. and through his paintings Dali By in working the subconscious has always try to confuse the viewers with rapidly changing and rapidly overlapping visual elements.



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## The Subconscious

- Surrealism was a style of art and literature that stressed the subconscious or non rational.
- Surrealist images emerged from the practice of automatism or through the exploitation of chance effects, or unexpected juxtapositions.

Because after surrealism was a style of art and literature, that stress the subconscious or non rational and surrealist images emerged from the practice of automatism or through the exploitation of chance effects or unexpected juxtapositions as well, and this is also interesting

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## More than an art movement

- Surrealism was not only an art movement, but a philosophy that embraced literature, music, cinema, and popular culture.

And this is also interesting because it talks about a certain kind of practice of art making or even literally practice, where the entire thing may not be preconceived you allow the

chance or accident to play a role, and if your sharp enough if your alert enough we will pick that up and you will try to retain.

Because, you see they believe that even in our subconscious and dreams, there are plenty of chance elements and accidental elements that play a role and inform the experience then why not late that happen to our art work as well. So, surrealism was not just an art movement, because it was a kind of philosophy that embraced literature, music, cinema and popular culture.

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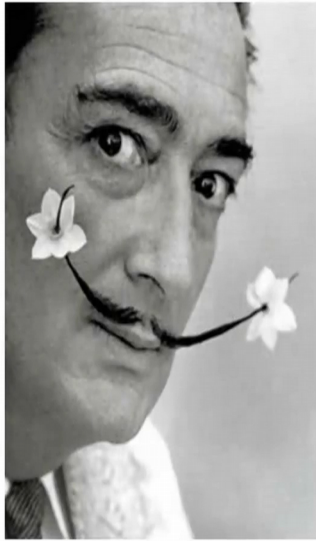
## Salvador Dali



Salvador Dali is often the first name we associate with Surrealism, but he did not join the movement until 1929, five years after its founding, and he was kicked out of the movement in 1939, because of his fascist leanings.

Now Dali; obviously, one of the most well known artists of not only surrealism, but modern art in general, now, Salvador Dali is obviously, the is often the first name we associated with surrealism, but historically speaking he did not join the movement until 1929, 5 years after its founding, but then again he was kicked out of the movement in 1939 because of his fascist leanings.

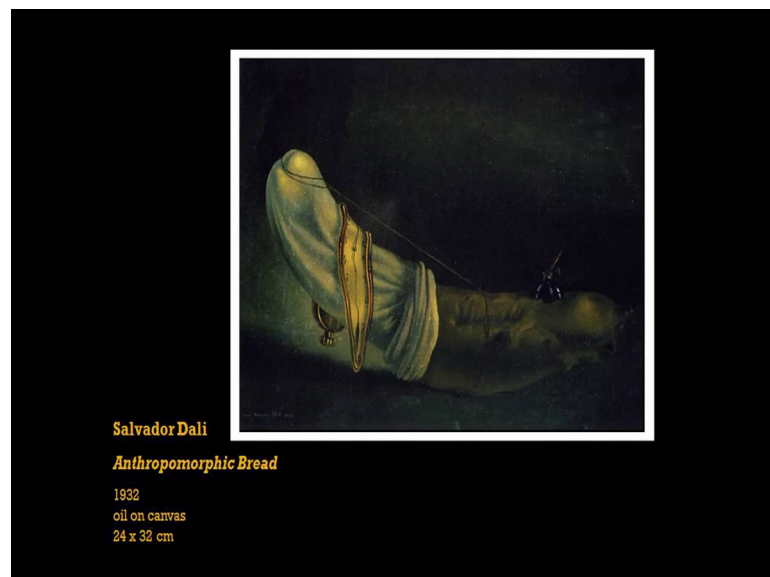
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Dali was something of an exhibitionist; he loved to gain publicity by shocking or provoking his critics. He spent the war years (WWII) in America, where he made a fortune working with advertisers and with Disney.

But anyways Dali was something like an exhibitionist he loved to gain publicity by shocking or provoking his critics he spent the war years World War two in America where he made a fortune working with advertisers and with Disney.

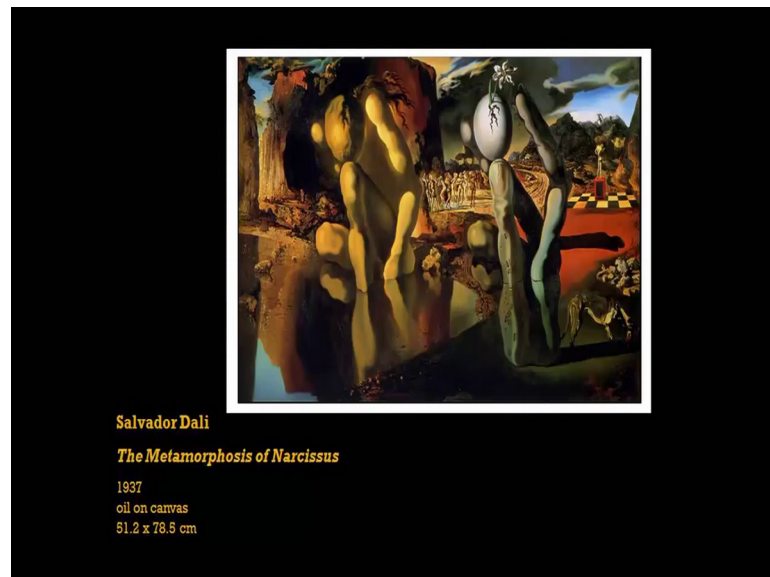
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Now all sit in done Dali created some of the most wonderful fascinating and magnificent art works which a truly upheld the notion of surrealism to a great extent.

Because Dali was able to not only conceive an image a surrealist image, but he was one extremely skillful artist's who was able to execute a surrealist image with a great amount of accuracy because of his very strong academic training.

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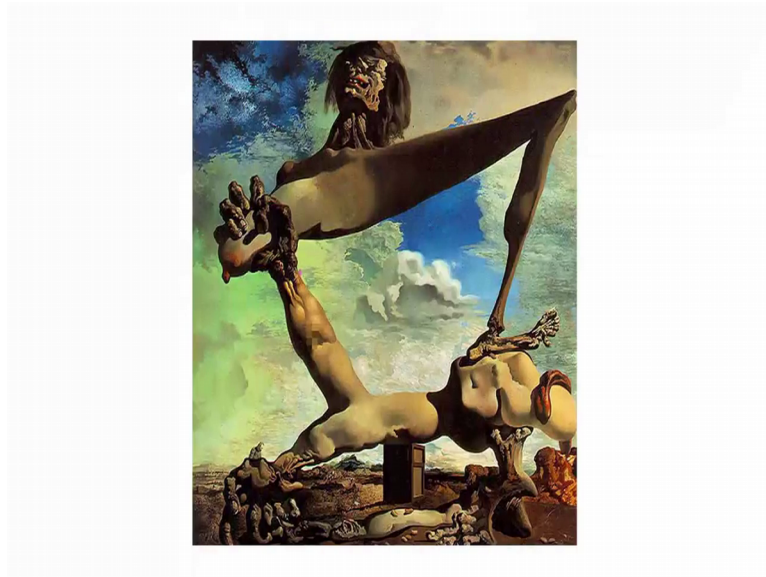


I mean look at this painting called the metamorphosis of narcissus, whatever might be the title suggesting, but when you begin to look at the painting and you keep staring at the painting for a long time even before you realize the painting begins to reveal itself to you gradually. It is like unfolding of a drama or unfolding of an experience that you had in your dreams in your subconscious.

Though in terms of its technical execution, every element that has been painted here has a crystal clear clarity, but as far as our cognitive a connection or experience with this painting is concerned nothing is revealing itself at once it is all happening over a period of time gradually. Gradually you keep discovering the elements in the painting, you keep discovering how the elements in the painting are also exchanging their identities overlapping with their identities, you keep discovering the even content of the painting the way you discover your subconscious.

So, the very experience of looking at Dali's painting and understanding Dali's painting is tantamount to looking at your inner self and exploring your subconscious.

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For example, this one also or this one once again.

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You look at this painting from distance you go back look back at the painting again come close every time you look at the painting there is a possibility that you will forget your first impression and discover something else when you look back at the painting again. So, one single painting is able to offer several views, several visions and several appearances.

Now, Dali is playing with his incredible skill of course, he is playing with this possibility of creating visual riddles or visual illusions and he does that most successfully, because he had that what we call realistic academic and technical skill of finishing a work of art to the extent that he could create an illusion and it is happening again and again in many of his paintings.

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So, right at the outset all most all the paintings of Dali are a kind of a vision or a view or a visual experience beyond this immediate world, which means Dali is continuously addressing the subconscious.

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# Rene Magritte

## 1898 - 1967

Rene Magritte was also doing the similar thing, but slightly.

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- Magritte loved to use the props of normalcy in order to upend, invert and collapse them, leading the viewer into the unknown territory where life leaves off and art begins. "The mind loves the unknown," he avowed, "it loves images whose meaning is unknown, since the meaning of the mind itself is unknown."

In a more intellectual way in the sense that Rene Magritte was of course, like Dali drawing a lot from the theory of subconscious or theory of dreams, but more than invoking the experience of dreams, Magritte was interested in provoking the paradoxes of language and particularly visual language. In fact, Magritte loved to use the props of normalcy in order to upend, invert and collapse them. Leading the viewer into the unknown territory where life leaves off and art begins because Magritte once said that

the mind loves the unknown, it loves images whose meaning is unknown since the meaning of the mind itself is unknown.

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Magritte – The Treachery of  
Images – 1928/29



And he place with this strange relationship between what is known and what is unknown and this particular painting by Magritte which a date around 1928- 29 has since then became one of the iconic images to demonstrate the problematic relationship between two kinds of languages, that is a visual language and textual language. Because in terms of its visual appearance this image represents a pipe a smoking pipe right and what is written below in French, it says that this is not a pipe. This is a pipe image of a pipe, but the text says this is not a pipe.

Now, there is nothing more problematic with the imaginary of the painting itself, but philosophically these painting is suppose to provoke and problematize questions about language itself.



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- *The Treachery of Images* is perhaps Magritte's best known work. Magritte is reminding the viewer that an image is just an image.

So, the treachery of images is perhaps Magritte's best known work and Magritte is reminding the viewer that an image is just an image, no matter what the caption you have underneath.

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- Magritte's work frequently displays a juxtaposition of ordinary objects in an unusual context, giving new meanings to familiar things.
- Magritte described his paintings as "visible images which conceal nothing; they evoke mystery and, indeed, when one sees one of my pictures, one asks oneself this simple question, 'What does that mean?'. It does not mean anything, because mystery means nothing either, it is unknowable."

And Magritte's work frequently display a juxtaposition of ordinary objects in an unusual setting or context giving new meanings to familiar things.

So, making the familiar things look unfamiliar, making the known things look unknown making the banal and common place things look very mysterious was one of the main concerns of a Magritte.

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Magritte – The Tomb of the  
Wrestlers



For example, when he paints rose image of a rose inside a room, and when he kind of a magnifies the scale of the rose to the extent that it occupies the entire room. Now this relationship becomes very absorbed as for as the identity of the rose the feel of the flower rose as for as the space that room occupies we really do not have any problem.

But the movement you see this incongruity this absurdity that you cannot have such a big rose inside a small room, either the room is too small or the rose is too big either way it is improbable impossible it is this impossibility that Magritte is trying to evokes the sense of impossibility.

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### Magritte – The False Mirror



So in fact, when you are looking at the eye of a person, what you suppose to see is the eye you are not suppose to see the sky inside the eye. So, hence Magritte calls this the falls mirror.

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In fact, he was obsessed with the image of mirror and he has done some more interesting paintings of mirror, where you can see that a person standing in front of the mirror and what is usually expected is that you will be able to see your face, but instead you see your back on the mirror.

Now, this is pretty unknowing and very scary that you stand in front of her mirror and you will never be able to see your face your front. A mirror is suppose to show your front not your back now. So, Magritte reverse is the function of the mirror and thus making the experience of looking at that painting very un can like this one, when you look at the toes it is a beautifully painted pair of feet as you look of you find a pair of boots. So, which one is true is it a pair of boots or a pair of feet. It is a kind of a visual conundrum a visual riddle and this is where these paintings actually stay they do not really often a single solution for example, this one.

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He place with a scale and also creates an observe relationship between the different objects by altering changing and playing with the individual skill as well as relative skill in terms of their size and proportion. Now this is what your suppose to appreciate and study what exactly is happening not that there is an immense amount of mystery, because Magritte's paintings in that sense are not narrative paintings they do not tell you a story, but they evoke or you can even say Magritte's paintings. Provoke you to think the cognitive about the cognitive challenges or to address the challenges that our habit of perception might often face when one encounter something like this.

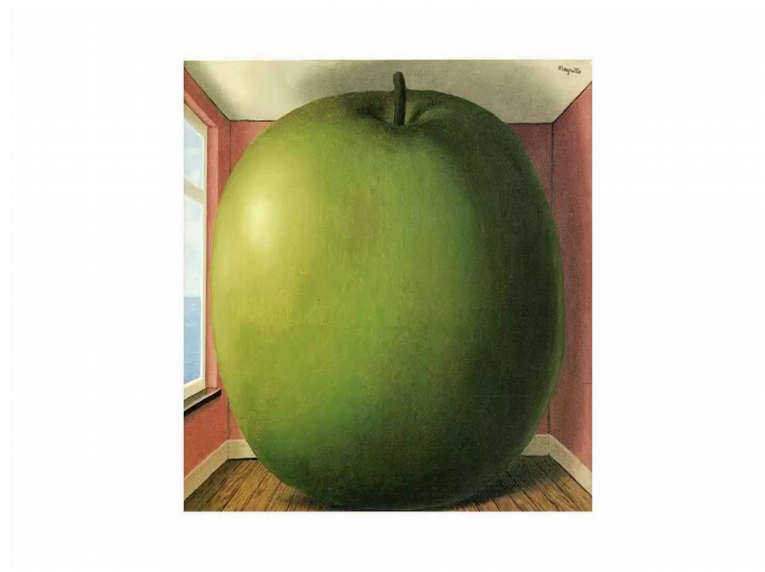
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Yes, this is the mirror that I was talking about, he is standing front of the mirror and instead of seeing your face or front, this is what you find your back is projected on the mirror.

So, he creates this impossibility by executing with an amount of a skill and dexterity which makes the image even more convincing for us.

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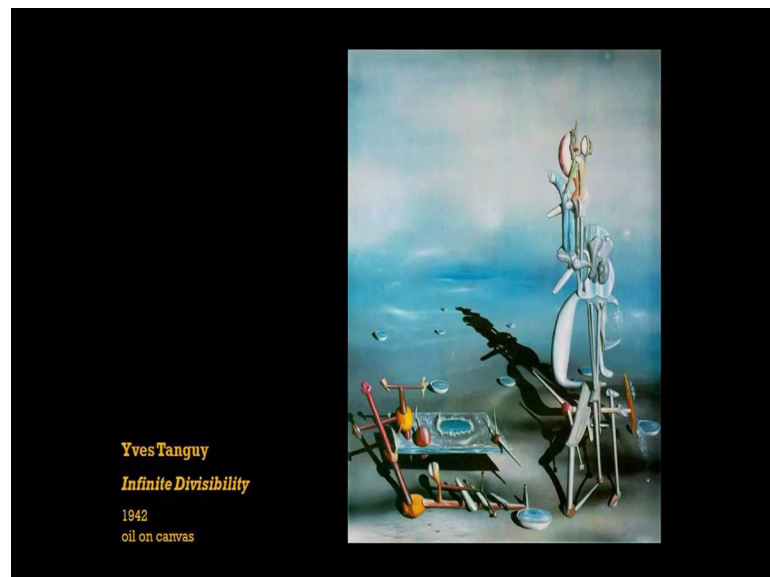
Or either it is a large size chain sized fruit or a very miniature sized room which holds the fruit it capsulate the fruit.

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Apart from Dali and Magritte we also have artists like Yves Tanguy. In his paintings we do not find anything much recognizable as elements either figures and objects or animals, but the space and the elements and the objects and the presence of light and cast shadow in his paintings evoke a sense of surrealism.

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You almost tend to feel that you have been to this place you know this place, but then the forms themselves are completely unknown to you and then this place also looks other

worldly not a part of your own general experience, now what sensed you make out of these paintings either this or that you actually cannot making sense really speaking.

And it is this lack or let us you not lack of sense, but let me put it this way it is a inability it is a deficiency of our rational conscious mind, that is what most of the surrealist painters may trying to address, that because otherwise we tend to depend and rely too much on our conscious and our rational ability.

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What surrealist artists are trying to bring up as a major serious issue, that there could be movements in life and art where rationality fails or our conscious.

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Mind fails and we have no other alternative, but to submit to the real whelm the unconscious and the irrational.

Now, to wind up not only painters, but in surrealistic strokes, we also find sculptors like Meret Oppenheim who makes fur covered cup saucer spoon or what in other terms is known as soft sculpture. The again the softness of the spoon saucer and cup creates an impossibility in terms of their functionality hence a surrealist feeling is evoked.

Now surrealism as a movement again like other movements might had an expiry date as a movement, but its impact on art, its impact on our thinking about art on our expectation of art is still extremely alive. Because surrealism is something as an idea as a philosophy may be the surrealist style has become little dated, but surrealism has an idea is still relevant. And still strong a lot of artists all over the world still find surrealism a very interesting proposition, and a very relevant and a meaningful philosophical frame work to work within.

Thank you.