

Taipei Fine Arts Museum Press Release
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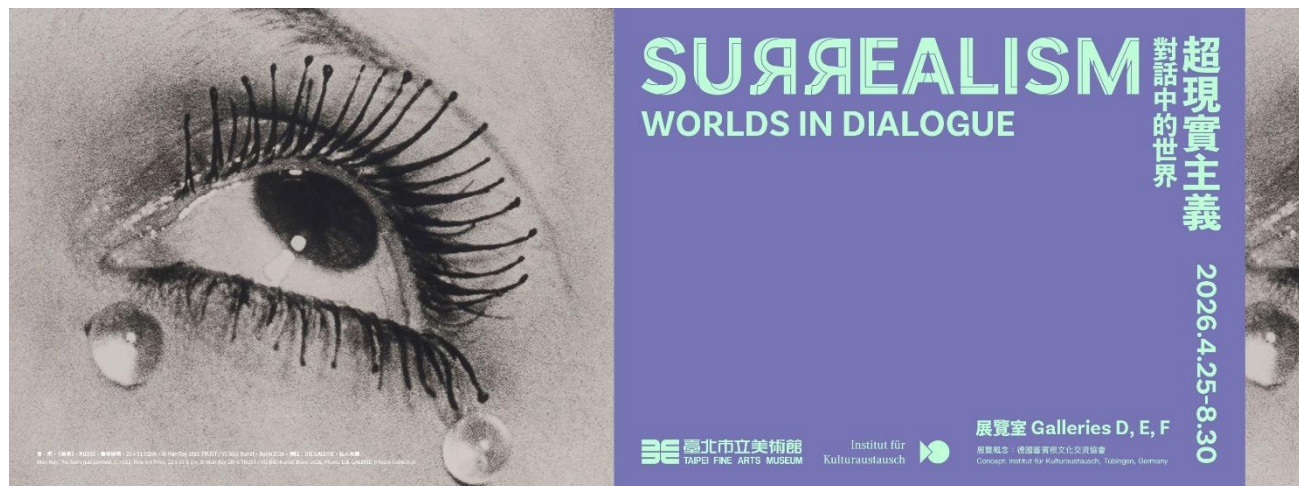
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Press Kit

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Surrealism: Worlds in Dialogue

April 25 to August 30, 2026

Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Galleries D, E, F

“There is nothing more surreal than reality itself.”

—Philippe Soupault

Continuing the avant-garde artistic dialogue initiated by the 2023 exhibition, **SUPERNATURAL: Sculptural Visions of the Body**, the **Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM)** is delighted to partner again with the **Institut für Kulturaustausch, Tübingen**, to present another major international exhibition, **Surrealism: Worlds in Dialogue**, this spring. Running from April 25 to August 30, the exhibition will be on view in TFAM’s Galleries D, E, and F on the underground level. Featuring nearly 120 key works by around 60 internationally renowned artists and directors, the exhibition spans a wide array of media, including painting, sculpture, photography, and film, and offers a comprehensive exploration of how the movement reimagines and interprets reality.

On October 15, 1924, over a century ago, André Breton published the *Manifesto of Surrealism* in Paris. This foundational text launched a new and revolutionary cultural movement. Its ideas and aesthetic practices soon spread worldwide, remaining influential today. After experiencing the trauma of World War I, Surrealist artists questioned the existing social order and traditional rational thought. Inspired by

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories and other intellectual currents, they examined key issues such as gender, technology, psychology, and identity from multiple perspectives.

This exhibition adopts a dialogical format to juxtapose works from the original Surrealist movement in the 1920s with those by later artists, foregrounding the idea that Surrealism is not merely a historical phenomenon of the past, but a dynamic force that still resonates today. The exhibition is organized into four themes: "The Collective Dream," "The Boundless Metamorphosis," "The Desired Object," and "The Playfully Irrational." These themes demonstrate how Surrealist practices have persisted across generations and continue to challenge traditional rationality and notions of reality, while also offering a critical framework for contemplating the future.



Sigmund Freud's studies of dreams and the psychoanalytic school emphasized that human behavior is shaped by the subconscious and repressed desires, which became foundations for Surrealism. For instance, René Magritte's work blends irrational, dreamlike elements with familiar scenes, using visual arrangements that defy physical reality to evoke a sense of estrangement. Yves Tanguy, through mysterious components, compositional forms, and desolate scenes, to construct his phantasmagorical imaginary landscapes. Similarly, contemporary art often features imagery of **the Collective Dream**, as in Lauren Moffatt's immersive AR project. In this work, she asks 9 women from different countries, "Every person you meet holds a world inside them. What does yours look like?" She uses a game engine to visualize the described elements and then interweaved them into a sprawling dreamscape.

In Surrealist-inspired art, **the Boundless Metamorphosis** often recurs as a theme, symbolizing the transition from one state to another. Jacob Gildor uses "metamorphosis" intuitively to translate the dreamlike subconscious into visual imagery, imbuing his works with ambiguous, polysemous qualities. In Surrealist works that challenge conventional perspectives, "metamorphosis" also aligns with the avant-garde Surrealists' focus on exploring the self and questions of identity. The most representative figure here is lesbian photographer Claude Cahun, known for her classic self-portraits that depict an androgynous, gender-fluid persona. Her pioneering work influenced artists like Cindy Sherman and ORLAN—through metamorphosis, familiar things are made strange, and stereotypes are destabilized.

Inspired by Freud's exploration of "instinct," **the Desired Object** became a key theme for avant-garde Surrealist artists, who sought to challenge the rational middle class shaped by Christian values. Man Ray often depicted models as objects with erotic implications, and isolated body parts from their usual place to foster a sense of ambiguity. His *Le Violon d'Ingres*, in which a woman's back is photographically transformed to resemble a violin with f-holes, remains his most iconic Surrealist work. On the other hand, Meret Oppenheim and Sarah Lucas have appropriated Surrealist imagery to turn the traditionally passive female "object" into a powerful, active "subject." Oppenheim's *Primeval Venus* subverts the notion that the female body must be enticing and ideally proportioned. Lucas's *Girl* uses everyday materials to create a sculpture with elongated limbs and no head, becoming a vessel that resists projections of desire.

Moreover, the Surrealists endeavored to experiment directly with their works through unconventional methods. This inclination toward **the Playfully Irrational** is evident in their creative techniques, such as frottage, grattage, decalcomania, and fumage, which serve as starting points for further image development. For example, Wolfgang Paalen used candle flames to create random smoke marks on paper. Some of these marks were left untouched, while others were further developed into imaginative compositions through painting and sketching.

Meanwhile, Surrealists often used word games like “Cadaver Exquis” (Exquisite Corpse). The name comes from a sentence created by members who randomly wrote words on paper: “Le cadavre exquis boira le vin nouveau” (The exquisite corpse shall drink the new wine)—a mix of the absurd and poetic. This inventive approach eventually expanded from wordplay to painting: each artist took turns drawing on a sheet, then folded it to hide the complete image before passing it to the next participant. Erwin Wurm’s *One Minute Sculptures* series echoes this idea, in which participants interact with pedestals displaying everyday objects, turning spontaneous actions into performative acts.



Cinema also plays a significant role in Surrealism, not only through its avant-garde visual style but also through its capacity to challenge reality through editing, superimposition, collage, and experimental techniques. The exhibition features a curated selection of segments from three influential Surrealist films: Germaine Dulac’s *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (1928), Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí’s *An Andalusian Dog* (1929), and Buñuel’s *Age of Gold* (1930). Additionally, director and artist David Lynch incorporates Surrealist imagery into his films, blending it with elements of “body horror” to highlight a narrative in which the subconscious dominates linear logic.

Examining Surrealist works through a contemporary lens reveals persistent core themes in Surrealism, such as formal transformation, the quest for identity, irrationality, and the playful manipulation of reality. A century later, we are facing another period of upheaval marked by a new reality, a shifting global order, and fluctuating value systems, all of which challenge our understanding of the world. In today’s increasingly technological and digital society, questioning our own consciousness has become central once again: What defines being human? Surrealist themes and imagery are more relevant than ever to our current reality. For more details, please visit TFAM’s official website (www.tfam.museum) or follow TFAM on Facebook and Instagram (Taipei Fine Arts Museum).