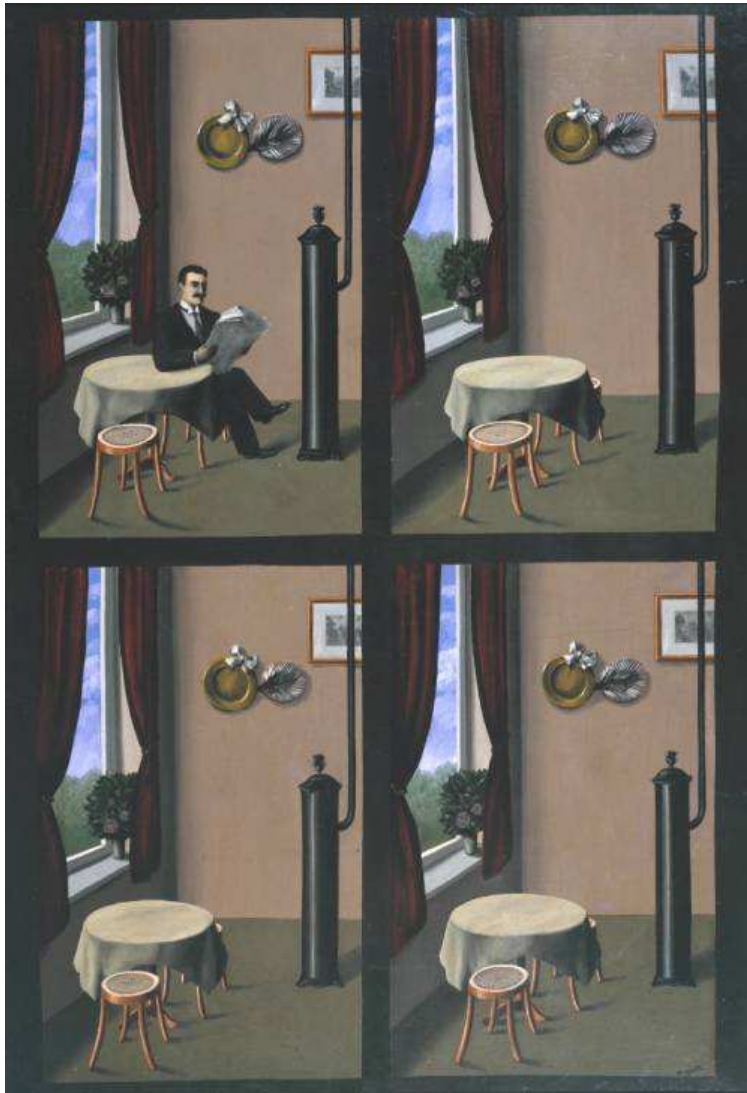


Educators'Pack

René Magritte: The Pleasure Principle

Tate Liverpool 24 June – 16 October 2011



René Magritte *Man with a Newspaper* 1928 © ADAGP, Paris 2011

Introduction to the exhibition and aims of this pack

- *René Magritte: The Pleasure Principle* features a substantial number emblematic Surrealist works from one of the most revered and important artists of the 20th century
- Taking a thematic approach, the exhibition examines key concerns in the artist's work
- The exhibition aims to shed new light on Magritte's life and artistic preoccupations

This pack is designed to support educators in the planning, execution and following up to a visit to *René Magritte: the Pleasure Principle*. It is intended as an introduction to the exhibition with a collection of ideas, workshops and points for discussion. The activities are suitable for all ages and can be adapted to your needs.

Visiting *René Magritte: the Pleasure Principle* at Tate Liverpool

- The exhibition runs from 24 June to 16 October 2011.
- Tate Liverpool's opening hours are Tuesday to Sunday 10.00 to 17.50.
- Pupils receive a discounted admission fee at £4
- To book your school or college visit to *René Magritte: the Pleasure Principle* please call one of our visitor services team on 0151 702 7400.

Catalogue to the exhibition available in the Tate Shop: *A-Z Magritte, Christoph Grunenberg (ed), Tate Publishing, London, 2011*

Tate Liverpool has a dedicated schools team that offers a range of services to support schools and teachers, including programmed and bespoke training. If you would like any more information about our programmes or an informal chat about bespoke training please contact Deborah Riding, Programme Manager: Schools and Families on 0151 702 7452, or Abigail Christenson, Learning Curator on 0151 702 7457 or e-mail abigail.christenson@tate.org.uk

To subscribe to our free monthly Schools and Teachers e-bulletins, please visit:

<http://www.tate.org.uk/bulletins/>

To receive the most up to date information about Tate Liverpool, sign up for our ebulletin – www.tate.org.uk/liverpool

And join our Facebook page [facebook.com/tateliverpool](https://www.facebook.com/tateliverpool) and follow us on Twitter @tateliverpool

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Introduction to Tate Liverpool

Tate Liverpool is one of the largest galleries of modern and contemporary art outside London. Each year we welcome over 22,000 school children to our gallery.

Our gallery space and the opportunity it provides to engage with art first-hand offers a rich resource to enhance learning and develop deeper cultural understanding. With plenty of scope for cross-curricular work, our gallery offers a safe environment in which to explore and experiment.

This educators' pack is designed to support educators in the planning, execution and following up of a self directed visit to *René Magritte: The Pleasure Principle* at Tate Liverpool. This pack includes activities that are suitable for all ages that can be adapted to your group's needs.

Should you require additional support when visiting our gallery we offer a wide range of introductory talks, in-depth workshops and other learning programmes to assist your visit. More information can be found at www.tate.org.uk/liverpool in our Schools Programme section.

We hope you will join the many satisfied groups that visit Tate Liverpool each year, and look forward to welcoming you to our gallery.

How to book a school visit

To book call 0151 702 7400

Please book in advance of your visit as this helps us to ensure that you have the best possible experience of our exhibitions. At busy times, groups who have not booked in advance may have to wait for admission.

When making a booking, please have ready:

- A range of dates for your visit

- A full address and telephone number
- Group size and age of pupils (see below)
- Whether you want to book a lunch slot and a place to store coats and bags

Group sizes for self-directed visits

Maximum size 60 pupils. Larger groups can stagger the timings of their visit.

Supervision

Adult supervision is required at all times – accompanying adults are always responsible for students. Please meet the following adult to student ratios:

- Age under 5 1:5
- Age 6-11 1:10
- Age 12-16 1:15
- Over 16 1:20

Preliminary visits

We strongly advise you to check that the content of galleries is appropriate before your visit. Art works can be taken off display at short notice and for unforeseen reasons, so it is wise to include a variety of works in your planning. To check whether a specific work is on display, call 0151 702 7400

Alternatively you can view most works on display online at www.tate.org.uk

Lunch Room

We have a room available for lunch and as a breakout space. This must be booked before your visit as availability is limited.

Admission Fees

Entry to *René Magritte: The Pleasure Principle* is £9 for adults and £7 for concessions. Pupils receive a discounted rate of £4. Groups of ten or more receive discounted rates when booking at least two weeks before their visit. Teachers can make a research visit to any exhibition free of charge by prior arrangement.

Booking confirmation

To confirm your booking, we will send you important guidelines and a health and safety statement. Please fully brief all responsible adults and visiting students and ensure the guidelines

are observed throughout. You will need to sign that you have read and understood the guidelines on your arrival at the reception desk.

Getting here and useful information

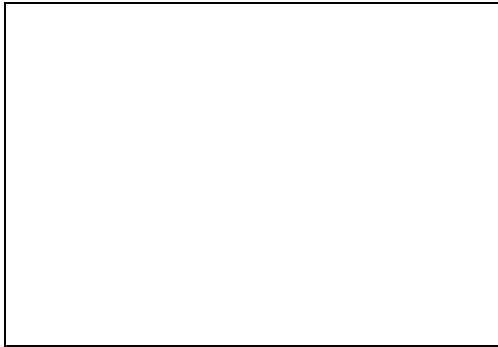
Address

Albert Dock

Liverpool

L3 4BB

0151 702 7400



Opening Hours

September – May

Open Tuesday – Sunday 10.00-17.50

Closed Mondays (except Bank Holiday Mondays)

Closed on Good Friday and 24-26 December

Parking

Coach parking is available at the Kings Dock Car and Coach Park

Multi-storey car parking is available at Kings Dock or at Q-Park Liverpool with 2000 underground spaces

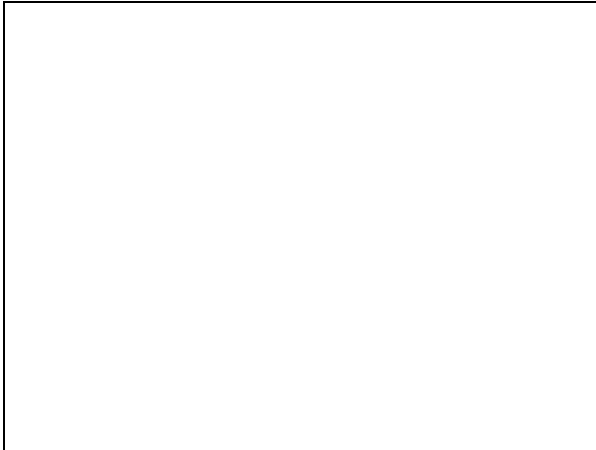
Limited (pay & display) parking is available at the Albert Dock

For the most up to date information about Tate and its education and schools programme visit www.tate.org.uk. You can also sign up to receive our teachers and schools ebulletin.

Magritte A-Z: an Educator's Guide

Learning Aims:

- To discuss some of the themes from the exhibition
- To find out about individual works and how they relate to these exhibition themes.



René Magritte *Golconda* 1953 The Menil Collection, Houston © ADAGP, Paris 2011.

In keeping with the exhibition catalogue, (*Magritte A-Z*, Christoph Grunenberg (ed), Tate Publishing, 2011) this section is arranged alphabetically to provide a guide to Magritte's art and selected themes from the exhibition for educators. It also focuses on key works that are on display and suggests points for discussion with related activities for both gallery visits and the classroom.

Appropriation

Appropriation is the conscious and intentional use of borrowed elements in order to create a new work. Magritte appropriated many images from external sources in his art, such as the mysterious leathery turtle or sphargis flying above the sportsmen in *The Secret Player* which was copied from an illustration in a Larousse encyclopedia. Another example can be found in *Man with a Newspaper* 1928 where the image of the seated figure, repeated in comic strip manner, was based on an illustration from a popular health manual, *The Natural Method of Healing* by F E Bilz, 1898.

His most direct use of appropriation was in *The Flame Rekindled* 1943 where the whole image has been transposed from the cover of a Fantômas novel by Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain.

Magritte's only change to the original illustration was to substitute a rose for a dagger in the hand of the arch criminal

Appropriate an image from a magazine or comic, either as a direct transposition or in altered form as part of a painting or drawing.

Find other examples of appropriation in art (eg Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Marcel Duchamp). Discuss how they use borrowed images in their work.

Discuss appropriation in other media. How do sculptors appropriate? Can sound be appropriated? What is the difference between appropriation and copying?

Appropriate other materials for a collage or assemblage work. For example, labels, newspaper cuttings, photographs, greetings cards, fabrics, wallpaper, found objects, natural objects such as shells, pebbles, feathers etc

Bilboquets

The 'bilboquet' is an invented object which features in Magritte's paintings in a range of scales and forms. The name was originally associated with a wooden toy consisting of a ball and a baton. In Magritte's art they resemble decorative wood turned objects such as balusters, table-legs, chessmen or mannequins, often appearing as surrogate trees (eg *The Lost Jockey* 1926) or people (*The Encounter* 1926). The forms were possibly inspired by Giorgio De Chirico's mannequins that play on the idea of inanimate objects coming to life. In *The Encounter* 1926 the bilboquets create a compelling human drama and are arranged as two identical groups in eye-to-eye confrontation.

Another of Magritte's invented motifs is the 'grelot', a silver sphere with a slit which resembles an eye or a bell. Like the bilboquets, they impart an unsettling presence in compositions such as *The Annunciation* 1924



René Magritte *The Annunciation* 1930 © ADAGP Paris 2011

Invent an object, make up a name for it and use it in a composition of your own. You could make a stencil of your invented motif in order to obtain uniformity. It could be used in place of a person, or simply to create an area of pattern or an abstract work.

Look for bilboquets and grelots in Magritte's works. Describe their functions in different images – what mood do they create? What do they remind you of?

Imagine that you are a bilboquet or grelot in one of Magritte's paintings (eg *The Lost Jockey* or *The Secret Player*). Describe your experience - what you see and hear around you. How do you feel?

Commercial Art

Magritte's activities as a commercial artist spanned almost fifty years and encompassed advertising and wallpaper designs, propaganda posters as well as fashion illustration. Often undertaking projects out of financial necessity, his relationship to commercial art practice was ambiguous, once describing it as 'idiotic work'. Yet at the same time, he felt sufficiently proud of his commercial work to show it to other Surrealists such as Andre Breton and Louis Aragon.

Discuss the relationship between art and popular culture, advertising and the mass media. Examine the works of pop artists such as Roy Lichtenstein, Peter Blake, Andy Warhol.

Design a cd cover, football shirt, chocolate wrapper or an advertisement for household goods in the style of Magritte.

Print a Magritte inspired image onto a poster using silk-screen or on a t-shirt using an 'iron-on' transfer using your pc and printer.

Distribute reproductions of Magritte paintings to your students and ask them to imagine that their image is to be used for an advertisement for an unknown product. What could that product be? Make up the advertisement as a poster and add text.

Display

The Cabinet of Curiosities was an encyclopedic collection of uncategorised scientific and ethnographic specimens in Renaissance Europe and a precursor to the museum. Magritte was interested in the random display methods of these collections which invited unexpected dialogues between seemingly unrelated items.

In One Night Museum 1927, Magritte has quartered the canvas in order to create pictorial compartments for displaying a selection of objects. In this painting, the fourth section is blocked out by a paper grille which negates the illusion of three-dimensional space and also arouses the viewer's curiosity as to what may be hidden behind the screen.

Discuss other examples of object display in Magritte's work (eg *The Interpretation of Dreams* 1930, *The Empty Mask* 1928, *This is a Piece of Cheese* 1963-64 etc)

Visit a museum and make notes on how objects are shown (lighting, labeling, plinth, vitrine, cabinet etc) How does the display method affect your responses to the object. Can you think of other ways of showing specimens in museums? Should you be allowed to touch the objects? Why are some items placed behind glass?

Talk about the way Tate Liverpool has displayed the Magritte works. Are different methods used for paintings, sculptures and photographs? What other items are displayed and how are they presented? Visit the other displays at Tate Liverpool and see how they show their artworks.

Elective Affinities

The 'chance encounter' or surprise meeting between incomparable objects plays an important part in Surrealism. Sometimes, seemingly unrelated objects find an obscure affinity in the subconscious mind or in the sense of dislocation often experienced after dreaming. Magritte described such an encounter in 1936: 'I awoke in a room in which a cage and a bird sleeping in it had been placed. A magnificent error caused me to see an egg instead of the bird. I then grasped a new and astonishing poetic secret, because the shock I had experienced had been provoked precisely by the affinity of the two objects, the cage and the egg'.

In his works, Magritte explored combinations of objects that would produce this same poetic effect. See, for example the combination of train and fireplace in *Time Transfixed* 1938 or bird and clouds in *The Great Family* 1963.

Draw a still life composition of seemingly unrelated objects and explore possible relationships eg an umbrella and a glass of water, a pebble and an hourglass, a window and a painting etc.

Pick objects at random and challenge each other to find possible connections or affinities between them.

Fantômas

The arch-criminal Fantômas was a master of disguise with special powers that allowed him to defy the establishment and continually evade the law. Created by Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain in 1911, he appeared in 32 volumes of the popular pulp fiction series which was brought to the cinema screen by Louis Feuillade between 1912 and 1914. He inspired a number of works by Magritte who was a great fan of the villain. *The Flame Rekindled* 1943, for example, is copied from the cover of a Fantômas novel (see Appropriation)

Criminals were admired as anarchists and rule-breakers by the Surrealists. In *The Murderer Threatened* 1927, Magritte appears to sympathise with the villain who is about to be ambushed by two lawmen in bowler hats. The scene, set out like a film storyboard, draws upon a number of sources including the Fantomas movies. Magritte could also have been referring to the impassive real life murderer Henry Landru and a poem by Paul Nougé of 1927 with the same title which poetically describes a murderer delayed by gramophone music.

Write a detective story based on Magritte's *The Murderer Threatened* 1927

Read Paul Nougé's poem *The Murderer Threatened* and discuss how closely related Magritte's painting is.

Copy a book cover or a page from a comic featuring a fictional hero or criminal. You could then design your own cover or make up a detective, super-hero or arch-villain.



René Magritte *The Flame Rekindled* 1943 © ADAGP, Paris 2011

Georgette

Magritte married his childhood sweetheart, Georgette Berber in 1922 and she remained his muse and constant companion throughout his life. Many of the women in Magritte's art were based on Georgette. In *The Spirit of Geometry* 1936, her head is displaced with that of a baby. After two miscarriages, the couple decided against having children and perhaps in this painting he was alluding to their marriage.

Discuss the Muse in art history and the relationship between the artist and model (eg Salvador Dali and Gala, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Lizzie Siddal, Picasso and Dora Maar etc)

Watch the 1984 video of Paul Simon's tribute to the couple: *Rene and Georgette Magritte with their Dog after the War*, by Joan Logue or listen to the song.

Discuss *Magritte's different representations of Georgette. Are they portraits of her specifically or does he use her as a vehicle for some other form of expression?*

Hats

The man in the bowler hat is one of Magritte's most famous motifs. It is often interpreted as a form of self-reference for unlike some of the flamboyant characters associated with the Surrealist circle, Magritte shunned publicity and had a very conventional lifestyle.

Perhaps the most famous of Magritte's 'bowler hat' paintings is *Golconda* 1953. The name was suggested by his poet friend, Louis Scutenaire whose likeness appears in the face of one of the men who are similarly dressed with subtle. The effect of multiplication of bland figures set against a regimented backdrop is to emphasise the ordinariness of everyday existence. *Golconda* is the name of a ruined city in India, which was originally the site of a diamond mine and synonymous with wealth. The exotic associations of the title contrast with the mundane image of uniformity.

Paint a hat, or another item of clothing in the style of Magritte

Research the history of the bowler hat. Why is it synonymous with everyday life? List any famous bowler-hatted men (eg Sir Winston Churchill, Mr Benn, Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, The Riddler, Herge's Thompson and Thompson etc) Can you think of any other hats which represent particular people?

Create your own version of *Golconda* 1953 replacing the men in bowler hats with other stereotypical figures and choose a different background for your work.

Hold a Mad Hatters Tea Party! Make your own hats for the occasion. Visit the *Alice in Wonderland* exhibition at Tate Liverpool 4 November to 29 January. For further information see:

www.tate.org.uk/liverpool/exhibitions/aliceinwonderland/default.shtm

Influences

In 1922, Magritte first saw a reproduction of De Chirico's painting, *The Song of Love* 1914-18 and was moved to tears by its poetic qualities. He wrote in a letter of 1959: 'He is actually the first painter to have thought of making painting speak of something other than painting.' De Chirico inspired Magritte to make his works visual equivalents of poetry and he began to paint in a similar style, choosing strange combinations of ordinary objects as his subject matter.

The collages of Max Ernst also had an impact on Magritte's work. He introduced materials such as sheet music into paintings such as *The Lost Jockey* which allowed him to explore the relationship between the real and illusionary in art. He also created the effect of collage in works such as *The Annunciation* 1930. With reference to his preoccupation with surface pattern and artifice, Ernst actually described the Belgian's art as 'collages painted entirely by hand'. The landscape of the *Annunciation* appears to be constructed from layers of prefabricated materials that have been cut out and placed upright in an Old Masters' wilderness.

Other influences on Magritte's art are Dada (particularly Marcel Duchamp; cinema (see *Fantomas*); the traditional art of his homeland, particularly Flemish trompe l'oeil painting with its high degree of realism.

Research Magritte's 'Vache' period where he painted in the style of other artists

Compare the art of Giorgio De Chirico with that of Magritte and discuss the techniques and strategies adopted by each artist in order to create mysterious and unsettling scenes.

Make a collage with different textured and patterned paper. Then make a 'painted collage' by copying your work in paint.

James

Salvador Dali introduced Magritte to the English poet, patron and collector Edward James. He was close to many of the Surrealist artists and financially supported the Surrealist journal *Minotaure* which was published in the 1930s. He invited Magritte to stay at his London home in order to carry out a number of commissioned works and is featured in two of the artist's paintings, *The Pleasure Principle* 1937 and *Not to be Reproduced* 1937. The former was based on a photograph of James by Man Ray. The title refers to the Freudian concept which claims that people seek pleasure and avoid pain in order to gratify their physical and psychological needs. The pleasure principle is also responsible for the feeling of satisfaction experienced by the grasping of an idea. The glowing light which replaces the head of Edward James could suggest that he is experiencing this sensation of enlightenment. At the same time, however, by obscuring the subject matter, Magritte literally keeps the viewer in the dark.

James also commissioned one of Magritte's iconic paintings, *Time Transfixed* 1938 which was displayed above his own fireplace. Magritte explained the motives behind this work: 'I decided to paint the image of a locomotive... in order for its mystery to be evoked, another immediately

familiar image without mystery – the image of a dining room fireplace – was joined.’ It is the disconcerting combination and the shift in scale of these ordinary, yet unrelated objects that gives this image its potency.

Another work that originally belonged to Edward James, Salvador Dali’s *Lobster Telephone* is currently on display as part of the DLA Piper Series This is Sculpture at Tate Liverpool.

Find out more about Edward James and his collection

<http://www.westdean.org.uk/CollegeChannel/College/History/TheEdwardJamesFoundation.aspx>

Kitsch

Kitsch is the German word for trash and is generally applied to cheap, vulgar and sentimental forms of popular and commercial art. Magritte consciously appropriated kitsch in his work. During the 1940s he painted a number of still lifes of flowers (eg *Forethought* 1943) and sentimental images such as *Pure Reason* 1948. In the painterly works of his so-called Renoir Period, he upset art critics by aping the style of the popular Impressionist artist. These works represent a deliberate assault on good taste, transgressing the barriers between popular and fine art.

Find examples of artists who use kitsch in their art (eg Jeff Koons, Peter Blake, Patrick Caulfield, Eduardo Paolozzi etc). Discuss how and why they have appropriated it.

Talk about kitsch – what is it? Make a list of examples of kitsch. Find examples in magazines and advertisements.

Collect kitsch objects from charity shops or car-boot sales and use them to create artworks either by drawing, painting them or making an assemblage or installation work.

Legacy

Numerous artists have been influenced by Magritte. The young Jasper Johns encountered his work at an exhibition in New York, *Les Mots et les Choses*, in New York 1954. His ‘soft’ sculptures were inspired by Magritte’s paintings of everyday objects in altered scale, materials and substance. The relationship between object, word and representation was explored by conceptual artists such as Marcel Boodthaers.

Although Magritte distanced himself from Pop Art, his use of clearly defined graphics and imagery appropriated from commercial art certainly influenced artists such as Andy Warhol, Peter Blake, Roy Lichtenstein etc.

During the 1960s, Magritte’s work became familiar to a wider audience through reproduction on book covers, posters and album covers. Jackson Browne, Alan Hull and the Jeff Beck Group all used Magritte-inspired images for their album covers. *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* animator and illustrator, Terry Gilliam based many of his ideas on Magritte paintings. Paul McCartney, a great admirer and collector of Magritte’s art, claimed that the name and logo for Apple Records was inspired by the artist’s works.

Numerous films have drawn upon Magritte's imagery, including *The Go-Between*, 1970, *A Clockwork Orange* 1971, *Toys* 1992, *The Thomas Crowne Affair* 1999, *Ryan* 2004. Tom Stoppard wrote a surrealist play entitled *After Magritte* 1970 and Paul Simon's song, *Rene and Georgette Magritte after the War*, 1983 was inspired by a photograph of the couple.

Research artists listed above and discuss how their art might have been influenced by Magritte.

Write a poem based on a painting in the exhibition or a photograph of Magritte

Magritte Family

Magritte's parents, Leopold a salesman, Régina a milliner were both from well established families in Hainault, a province of Belgium. Leopold later established his own successful edible oil business which enabled the family to move to a large house in Châtelet. Régina committed suicide, leaving the house one night and throwing herself into the nearby River Sambre. Her body was later recovered a kilometer downstream with her clothes covering her face and it is thought that the recurring motif of masked or veiled faces in Magritte's work could be due to childhood recollections of his mother's death.

The family moved to Brussels when Leopold started his own stock cube factory. Magritte had two younger brothers: Raymond, who followed his father as a businessman and Paul who became a pianist and composer of popular songs.

See also Veils, Youth

Nougé

Paul Nougé was the undisputed leader of the Belgian Surrealist Group. The incisive character of the poet and philosopher is evoked in Magritte's *Portrait of Paul Nougé* 1927. Its split screen composition, reminiscent of stereo photography, lends the image an uncanny episodic quality.

Nougé often supplied titles for Magritte's paintings and several of his works, including the *Murderer Threatened* 1927 are believed to have been inspired by lines from his poetry. Nougé originally trained as a biochemist and his scientific mind is possibly alluded to in the cellular pattern of the background.

Create a double or multiple portrait by tracing a photograph and repeating the image using a stencil.

Look for other examples of repetition and multiplication in Magritte's art and discuss the effect of duplicating an image in an artwork.

Research Belgian Surrealism. Discuss its relationship to the Surrealist Movement based in Paris. Who were the key artists? What did they paint?

Objects

The power of Magritte's art stems from his ability to disorientate and disrupt our understanding of the world, through changes in name, substance, scale or context of everyday objects (see also Knowledge). The Duchampian sculpture, *This is a Piece of Cheese* 1963-4 is a counterpart to Magritte's famous 'pipe' paintings. Just as the artist could claim that a painting of a pipe was not a pipe, so he can assert that a picture of a portion of cheese displayed in a real glass dome is a piece of cheese. The dome around the object functions in the same way as a frame around a painting. The title seems paradoxical, but for the artist this is a piece of cheese simply because it takes the place of real camembert inside a ready-made cheese container.

Another ready-made object used by Magritte for creating sculpture is a glass bottle. Using glass paint, he transformed ordinary bottles into figures, or disguised their material with patterns such as clouds (eg *Seascape with Sky-Bird* 1961).

The Future of Statues also incorporates a ready-made object. He is known to have made at least five plaster casts from a copy of Napoleon's death mask which he bought from an artist's materials shop. Magritte often spoke of death as 'nothingness' and he used sky and cloud patterns in many of his works to suggest infinity or to evoke dreamlike settings.

Research the 'ready-made' in art. You can find examples of art made from everyday objects in the DLA Piper Series, *This is Sculpture* display at Tate Liverpool.

Make your own sculpture combining images and everyday objects

Cast a mask from a face using plaster and paint it with clouds or a design of your own. Find instructions for casting at: www.instructables.com/id/How-To-Cast-a-Face-in-Plaster/

Paint a bottle in the style of Magritte. You can find instructions at: www.ehow.com/how_4813460_paint-glass-bottles.html

Pictures

The painted picture appears in many of Magritte's works where its function is to demonstrate ambiguities in the relationship between the real and the represented. A series of works, including *The Human Condition* 1933, play on the Renaissance concept of a painting as a 'window on reality'. In Magritte's work there is seemingly no difference between the 'depicted' and 'real' space as the picture on the easel appears to replace part of the landscape behind it. The situation is further complicated for the viewer by the fact that the painting itself has of course been fabricated.

The Key to the Fields 1936 is another variation of the picture within a picture theme which also deals with the mental phenomena of 'inside' and 'outside'. The landscape outside has been duplicated onto the inside of the window pane which has been shattered, allowing painted shards

to fall into the interior. In Magritte's words, the landscape 'existed for the spectator...simultaneously in his mind, as both inside the room and outside in the real landscape.

The artifice of painting was a major preoccupation of Magritte's. Many of his works explore the relationship between reality and illusion through the use of tromp l'oeil, stage settings, curtains, frames, mirrors, patterned surfaces (such as clouds) and even transgressing the frame and implying that the painting continues outside it (*The Eternally Obvious* 1948)

In *Blood Letting* 1938-9, Magritte exposes the artifice of both the painting and the frame which traditionally acts as a barrier between the real world and the illusion of reality created within its borders. In this painting, the artist creates an illusion, not of space but of the bare brick wall which is normally hidden by the painting.

Find out about fixed point perspective and how Renaissance artists invented a means for depicting illusionary space. How have artists traditionally created 'a window on reality'?

Look at other artists who have transgressed the frame in their art. Eg Howard Hodgkin

Create your own picture within a picture or use a frame as a starting point for a work of art. You could either use a real frame or make your own..or paint an illusionary one

Quotes

Magritte provided a wealth of quotes throughout his career which offer an insight to the ideas behind his work. Artist's statements are useful starting points for discussions and gallery workshops. The following quotes could be distributed amongst students and they could be asked to find specific works in the exhibition that they feel the artist may have been referring to. This encourages the student to think about possible ideas behind artworks and allows them to express personal responses.

An object can imply that there are other objects behind it

Sometimes the name of an object takes the place of an image

The intelligence of exactitude does not prevent the pleasure of inexactitude

The titles of my paintings accompany them like the names attached to objects without illustrating or explaining them

A truly poetic canvas is an awakened dream

My painting is 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.

Rock

Referring to *Castle in the Pyrenees*, Magritte wrote:

'By confronting us with a massive rock in midair – something we know cannot happen- we are somehow forced to wonder *why* doesn't the rock come plunging down into the sea? We know, of course, that it should. But *why* should it? What fails to happen in the painting reminds us of the mystery of what actually does happen in the real world.'

In this painting and a similar work, *The Glass Key* 1962, Magritte upsets our understanding of the natural world on a grand scale by freeing a massive boulder from the effects of gravity. The viewer's ability to conceptualise this phenomenon is heightened by the artist's realistic rendering of the scene and the entirely nondescript character of the subject matter.

Magritte was not only interested in the weight and mass of rock, but also the process of petrification itself which he applied to a wide range of subjects, including still life, landscape and interiors. In his series of works on the theme of petrification, he exploits the natural properties of stone in order to transform living matter into something more static and monumental. The technique of grisaille used for works such as *Memory of a Journey III* 1951, recalls the Flemish artistic tradition of trompe l'oeil representations of sculptural reliefs for church altarpieces. The title of this work alludes, perhaps to the nature of memory – fixed, as in stone yet at the same time unfathomable.

The process of petrification was also applied to language in a number of Magritte's works which share the title, *The Art of Conversation*. In the 1950 work featured in the exhibition, the word 'reve' or 'dream' has been carved in roughly hewn blocks of granite that is reminiscent of prehistoric monuments. Paradoxically, this monumental construction endows the dream with permanence and timelessness and also gives a material form to the written or spoken word. The image also parodies popular culture such as advertising and Hollywood film iconography, in particular the posters produced for epic motion pictures.

Make a detailed study of a piece of rock in pencil. Try to capture the texture, its density and mass. Then make a drawing of an everyday object or a still life composition. Make a third drawing combining the outline of the object with the texture of rock.

'Petrify' a famous painting – make a copy in grisaille. Discuss the effect of changing texture and colour in a painting. You could try creating different effects with tracings of the same image – clouds, water, moss, wood, fur etc

'Petrify' an everyday object by casting it in plaster and painting the surface to resemble rock. You could use the same technique and paint clouds or waves on the object to 'transform' its material into something different.

Surrealism

The movement was launched in Paris in 1924 by the French poet André Breton with the publication of his Manifesto of Surrealism. Influenced greatly by the theories of Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, the aim of Surrealism was to reveal the unconscious and to reconcile it with rational life, through art and literature, though it was also aimed at social and political revolution and had a huge influence on cinema. There was no single style for Surrealist art and it encompassed the collages of Max Ernst, dream-like paintings of Salvador Dalí and the automatism of Miro. Freud's technique of free-association, used to reveal the unconscious mind of his patients also had a great influence on artists such as Dalí and Magritte.

Belgian Surrealism emerged in 1924 with the publication of the periodical *Correspondance* which featured critiques of many of the French Surrealists. The key members besides Magritte were E L T Messens, Louis Scutenaire Marcel Lecomte and their leader, Paul Nougé. Although the two parties often collaborated, Magritte often felt marginalized by the Parisian artists. He poked fun at his French counterparts in a series of paintings where he appropriated the works of masters such as David and Manet (eg *Perspective: Manet's Balcony* 1950) and in his versions replaced people with coffins. Besides implying that French art is lifeless, the caskets are a reference to Belgian artist Antoine Wiertz, whose painting *L'Inhumation précipitée* 1854 features an man attempting to escape from a coffin that he has been mistakenly placed in.

Research Surrealism. Who were the key artists? What did they do? Were there any British Surrealists? What is the 'Surrealist object'? How did Surrealism influence advertising and commercials?

You can see works by Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí and Man Ray in DLA *Piper's This is Sculpture* at Tate Liverpool.

Titles

Magritte believed that titles should never be merely descriptive but should operate autonomously from the image: 'The poetic title has nothing to teach us,' he stated, 'instead it should surprise and enchant us.' In the same way that elements of his paintings maintain a 'mysterious rapport', the name given to a work should also evoke mystery.

Magritte's titles were derived from a number of sources. Many of his images are known to have been taken from literary works. For example, *The Interpretation of Dreams* was taken from Sigmund Freud's *Traumdeutung* 1900 and *The Murderer Threatened* was a poem by Paul Nougé. *The Glass Key* 1962 was originally titled *The Keystone* by Magritte, a name which he found 'fairly apt but a bit heavy'. He found the appropriate title in a mystery novel by Dashiell Hammet

Discuss Magritte's use of titles. How does the name affect your interpretation or response to a work?

Rename Magritte's works. Without reading its title, study an image and think up your own name for the work.

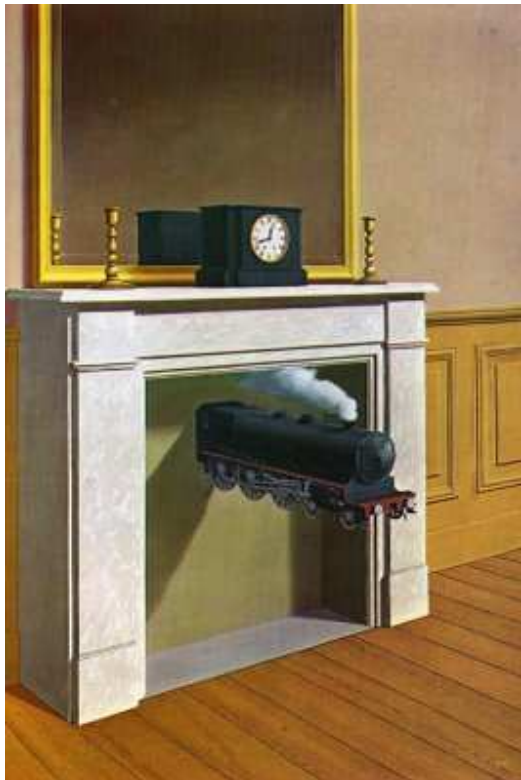
Distribute titles from poems, quotes, lines from songs etc to your students and ask them to create an image in media of choice suggested by the words.

Uncanny

The Uncanny is a Freudian concept where something can be familiar yet alien at the same time. Magritte combined common everyday objects in such a way as to evoke something unfamiliar. His images are painted with detachment, devoid of emotion and their power to disturb the viewer lies in their resemblance to ordinary objects, phenomena or situations, painted with a high degree of realism.

Write a horror story based on one of Magritte's 'uncanny' images.

Paint toes onto an old pair of boots or shoes as in *The Red Model* 1935 (for instructions, see: http://www.ehow.com/how_7796644_paint-leather-boots.html)



René Magritte *Time Transfixed* 1938 © ADAGP, Paris 2011

Veil

Shrouded heads in the paintings of Magritte have often been interpreted as subconscious recollections of his mother's drowned body which was recovered with her nightclothes veiling her face. However, an alternative source for the recurring images of masked faces is the pulp fiction of Nick Carter which the artist read avidly. The cover of one of these books features a dead woman with her features obscured by a sheet.

For Magritte, the veil often suggests a hidden or enigmatic reality and his most famous painting of shrouded figures is *The Lovers* 1928. Despite their composition, resembling a romantic cinematic couple, the covered faces are a means to express unfathomable dislocation despite their intimate embrace.

A similar artistic device in Magritte's work is the curtain which is used to reveal as well as to hide. Red drapes frame paintings such as *The Lost Jockey* and *The Secret Player*, creating an artificial or theatrical atmosphere.

Discuss veiling and revelation in the paintings of Magritte. How many examples can you find? What effect does the veil, mask or curtain have on the scene depicted?

Find examples of masked figures in popular culture. Why are masks associated with villains?

Make a Magritte mask decorated appropriately with Magritte patterns or designs.

Words and Images

Magritte's essay *Words and Images* 1929 investigates the problems of pictorial and linguistic systems of representation. Magritte continued to analyse the inadequacies and ambiguities of language in his word and image paintings, a number of which feature in the exhibition.

In *Swift Hope* 1927, Magritte provides the viewer with the minimum information necessary in order for the image to be read as a landscape. Five biomorphic forms emerge from darkness and are assigned identities. The blobs, although devoid of definition, correspond with the names of objects that could plausibly be located in those positions. In *Words and Images*, Magritte explained that 'sometimes an object takes the place of an image', just as 'a word can take the place of an object in reality'.

(Biomorphs with Words) La Pipe 1928 features Magritte's most famous motif. The pipe is one of his repertoire of commonplace objects which were depicted repeated and obsessively as a means of examining the relationship between object, representation and meaning. From 1927, Magritte produced a series of paintings which combined words with semi-abstract forms. This work illustrates his proposition that 'a non-descript form can replace the object' when the artist provides an appropriate label such as 'la pipe'.

and yet Freud contradicts this by listing typical dream symbols. Magritte's works exploit the irrationality of dreams and defy interpretation. He often confounds the viewer by placing typical Freudian symbols such as keys and candles alongside objects from his own visual repertoire such as the bowler hat or pipe.

Magritte was also interested in the irrationality of dreams and the subconscious mind. He said, 'A truly poetic canvas is an awakened dream' and 'If the dream is a translation of waking life, waking life is also a translation of the dream.'

Find examples of Magritte's work that could have been inspired by dreams and sleep (eg *The Reckless Sleeper* 1928 or *The Interpretation of Dreams* 1952).

Keep a dream diary. Make a list of things that appear in your dreams and attempt to make a painting in the style of Magritte which includes them.

Further Resources

Fiona Bradley, *Surrealism* (Movements in Modern Art Series), Tate Publishing, 1997

Nicola Coleby, *A Surreal Life: Edward James*, Phillip Wilson Publishers Ltd, 1998

Christoph Grunenberg(ed), *A-Z Magritte*, Tate Publishing, 2011

Suzi Gablik, *Magritte (World of Art)*, Thames and Hudson, 1985

Marcel Paquet, *Magritte (Basic Art Album)*, Taschen, 2000

David Sylvester and Michel Draguet, *Magritte*, Mercatorfonds, 2009

Online Resources:

<http://www.tate.org.uk/collection/>

<http://www.mattesonart.com/paul-nouge.aspx>

<http://www.musee-magritte-museum.be/Typo3/index.php?id=accueil&L=0>

http://www.musee-magritte-museum.be/Typo3/fileadmin/user_upload/MagritteA3-EN.pdf

<http://www.mattesonart.com/1926-1930-surrealism-paris-years.aspx>

http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/citi/resources/Rsrc_001110.pdf

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