

Week 2 – Formalizing the Unconscious: Surrealism

- I. Roots and Routes of Surrealism: out of the “Unconscious” key decade: 1930s
- A) Surrealism emerges after WW1
 - 1) in the wake of Dadaism (Euro-American, 1918-1920s)
 - 2) formally organized under Int’l Surrealist Manifesto (Breton), 1924
 - 3) early influences: Picasso, Duchamp (Freud, Jung)
 - B) Exiled by fascism:
 - 1) André Masson (French, to NY 1940)
 - 2) Roberto Matta y Echaurren, “Matta” (Chilean, to NY 1939)
 - 3) Yves Tanguy (French, to NY in 30s)
 - 4) Max Ernst (German, to France in ‘20s, then to NY in 1941)
- II. Formal Issues in Surrealism, continuities with postwar art
- A) Two types of Surrealism (formal characteristics, not named as such)
 - Landscape/ dreamscape (Matta, Tanguy, Dali) versus
 - Automatism (*automatisme*) and “all-over” painting (Masson, Miró)
 - B) In the background (literally): the Cubist Grid
 - Cubism’s key years were:
 - 1910-1911 for Analytic Cubism, largely monochrome and characterized by an implied grid that organized the paintings’ brushstrokes and lines
 - 1913-1920 for Synthetic Cubism with bigger shapes and colors, “biomorphic” curves, more expressive and decorative
 - C) Commonalities for both landscape and all-over surrealism: Sex and psyche
 - D) What US didn’t embrace were erotic themes (a lingering Puritanism?) or programmatic and clubby tendencies. Brief overview of American take:
 - 1. source of imagery in unconscious
 - 2. tendency towards abstraction rather than representation
 - 3. automatism (drawing or painting generated “automatically” as if by trance)
 - 4. all-overness (forms distributed equally over the canvas, no “horizon line”)
- III. Surrealist Sculpture:
- 1. Precursors: Arp, Miro, Giacometti
 - 2. Alexander Calder (1898-1976)
 - 3. Henry Moore (1898 -1986)
 - 4. Isamu Noguchi (1904 -1988)
 - 5. Joseph Cornell (1903 -1972)
- IV. “Hidden Surrealists” Frida Kahlo (German-Mexican 1907-1954),
Louise Bourgeois (French-American, 1911-2010)
Louise Nevelson (Russian-American, 1899 - 1988)

see verso for image list

MIT 4.651 ART SINCE 1940

LECTURE NOTES

Caroline A. Jones

(key images only)

Picasso, Woman in Slip 1913

Picasso, Guernica 1937

Duchamp Nude Descending Staircase #2 1912

Duchamp Mariée (Bride) 1912

Ernst Elephant von Celebes 1921

Ernst (exile painting) Europe After the Rain 1940-42

Masson Automatic Drawing 1924*

** same date as Surrealist Manifesto*

Masson (exile painting) Iroquois Landscape 1943

Matta inscape (Psychological morphology) 39

Matta The Earth is a Man 1942

Tanguy, Through birds, through fire, but not through glass, 1943

Miró, Harlequin's Carneval, 1924*

Miró, Beautiful Bird Reveals the Unknown to a Pair of Lovers... 1941

Calder, Standing Mobile, 1937

Moore, Recumbent Figure, (wood) 1935-38

Giacometti, Woman with her Throat Cut, 1932

Noguchi, Kouros, 1944

Dali, Soft Construction with Baked Beans (Premonition of Civil War), 1936

Cornell, Hotel Eden, 1945

Miró, Poetic Object, 1936

Kahlo, Frida and Diego Rivera 1931

Kahlo, Henry Ford Hospital 1932

Bourgeois, Quarantania, 1941

Nevelson, Sky Cathedral, 1958

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

4.651 Art Since 1940
Fall 2010

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.