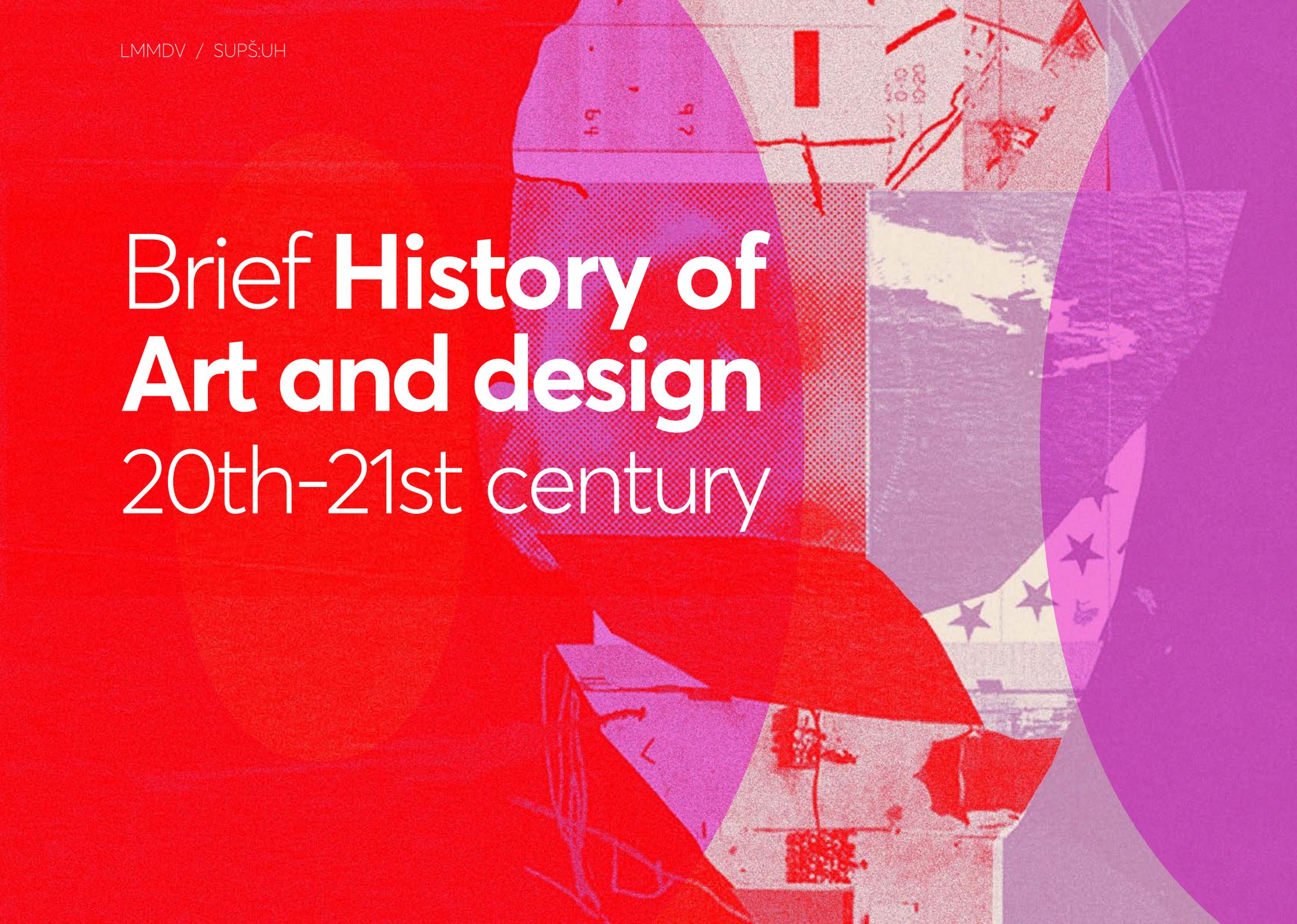


Brief **History of Art and design** 20th-21st century



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BRITISH HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN 20TH CENTURY

Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism

(1930–1960)

**"EVERYTHING WE SEE HIDES ANOTHER THING,
WE ALWAYS WANT TO SEE WHAT IS HIDDEN BY
WHAT WE SEE."**

René Magritte

Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism

(1930–1960)



Co-funded by
the European Union



LIEPĀJAS MŪZIKAS,
MĀKSLAS un DIZAINA
VIDUSSKOLA



SUPŠ:UH



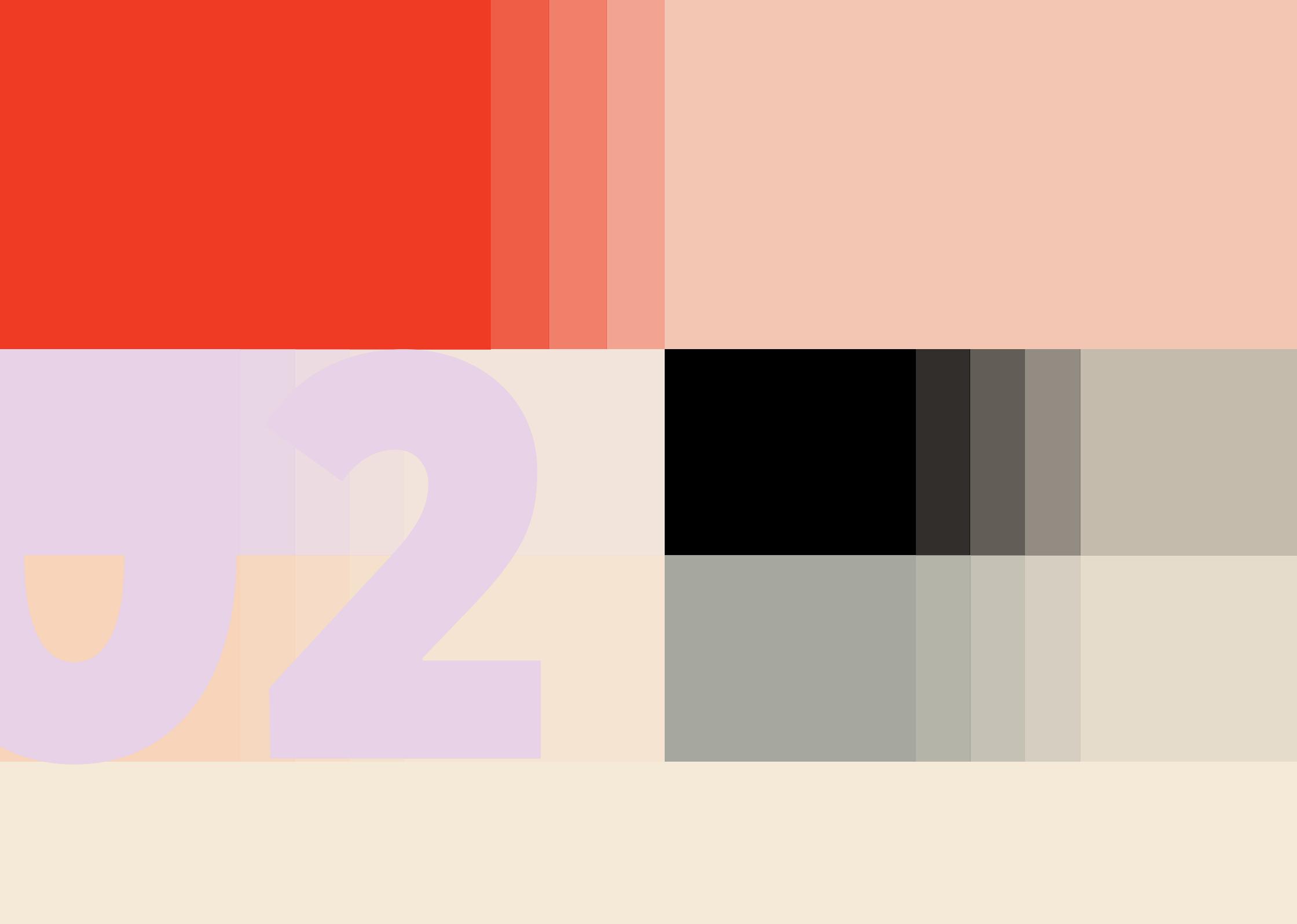
Materials created within Erasmus+ Small-scale partnership project "EmpowerED: Fostering Employability, Cultural Understanding, and Digital Resilience in VET Education" No 2023-2-LV01-KA210-VET-000178458 Implemented from 1.04.2024. till 31.03.2026. by coordinator MIKC "Liepājas Mūzikas, mākslas un dizaina vidusskola" (Latvia) and project partner Střední umělecko průmyslová škola Uherské Hradiště (Czech Republic), total project budget is 60 000 euro.

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Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism

Surrealism

Surrealism, one of the most influential art movements of the 20th century, emerged in the early 1920s. Rooted in the aftermath of World War I, it was inspired by the Dada movement and aimed to challenge conventional ideas about reality, logic, and reason. Surrealism sought to explore the unconscious mind, dreams, and the irrational, often blurring the line between reality and imagination.

Origins and Influences

Surrealism was officially launched in 1924 when French poet André Breton published the "Surrealist Manifesto". Breton defined surrealism as "pure psychic automatism," advocating for the liberation of thought from rational control. He was influenced by the ideas of Sigmund Freud, particularly Freud's theories on the unconsciousness, dreams, and psychoanalysis.

The movement was deeply tied to literary roots, but visual artists quickly adopted surrealist principles, producing works that depicted dreamlike scenes, strange juxtapositions, and distorted realities.

Legacy

Surrealism had a profound impact on various forms of art, including literature, theater, film, and photography. Its influence extended far beyond the movement itself, shaping later 20th-century movements such as abstract expressionism and pop art. Filmmakers like Luis Buñuel (*Un Chien Andalou*, 1929) and contemporary artists continue to draw on surrealist themes, particularly in exploring the

unconscious and the dreamlike nature of reality.

The movement also helped break down traditional hierarchies in art by encouraging new approaches to creativity and imagination. Its focus on the irrational, spontaneous, and fantastical resonates with a wide range of cultural and artistic expressions to this day.

Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism in Art and Design

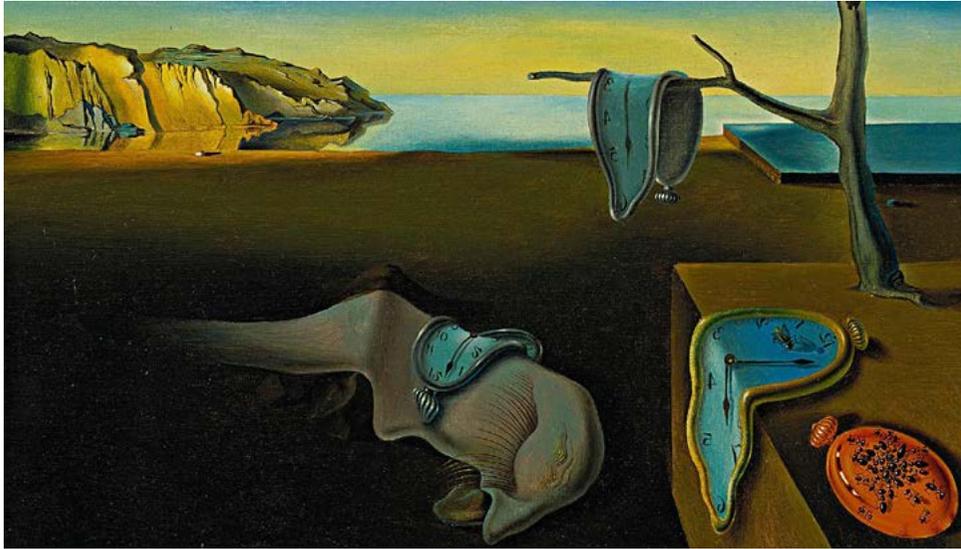
Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism are two distinct artistic movements, each with significant influence on design across various fields, such as graphic design, fashion, interior design, and digital media. Both movements allowed designers to break free from conventional styles, encouraging bold and innovative approaches. Here is a closer look on how these movements have impacted design.

Emerging in the 1920s, Surrealism aimed to unlock the power of the unconscious mind, focusing on dreamlike imagery, unexpected juxtapositions, and the absurd. Surrealist art challenges reality and explores themes of fantasy, illusion, and paradox.

Key Characteristics

Dreamlike Imagery: Surrealist design often incorporates elements that feel otherworldly or dreamlike. This can include floating objects, distorted perspectives, or impossible landscapes. For example, Salvador Dalí's "The Persistence of Memory," with its melting clocks, showcases the fluidity and bizarre nature of time, a concept often used in advertising and digital media to create striking visuals. Surrealists sought to express the unconscious mind through art, often portraying scenes that resembled dreams or nightmares. These images were illogical, fantastical, or bizarre, challenging the boundaries of what could be considered "real."

Example: Salvador Dalí's "The Persistence of Memory" melting clocks is a prime example of how surreal art influences design. This technique is often used in advertising or digital design to create arresting visuals that challenge reality.



Salvador Dalí "The Persistence of Memory" 1931
Another source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHY9mBvIRec&t=113s>

Juxtapositions and Collage: Surrealism frequently places unrelated objects together, creating unexpected and thought-provoking combinations. In design, this technique is used to evoke emotion or curiosity. Graphic designers often employ collages of unrelated images to produce bold, surprising contrasts. Surrealist works often combined unrelated objects or figures in unexpected ways, leading to strange or whimsical compositions. This juxtaposition was meant to surprise or provoke the viewer, breaking down conventional ways of seeing.

Illusion and Paradox: Playing with optical illusions and paradoxes subverts the viewer's expectations. Surrealist design in architecture and interiors might include impossible structures or *Escher-like visual tricks*—referring to the work of **Maurits Cornelis Escher**, a Dutch graphic artist known for his mathematically inspired images of impossible constructions, infinite staircases, and interlocking forms that challenge spatial logic. These elements create a sense of wonder and disbelief. This technique involved creating art without conscious planning or control, allowing the subconsciousness to guide the hand and mind. It was a way to tap into unconscious thoughts and feelings.

Fantasy and Absurdity: In product and fashion design, Surrealism can take the form of fantastical or whimsical shapes. Dalí's "Lobster Telephone" and the "Mae West Lips Sofa" are iconic examples of surrealist objects that merge art with design in unexpected ways, provoking thought and conversation. Familiar objects were often distorted, exaggerated, or placed in unusual contexts, transforming everyday reality into something strange and mysterious.



Georges Hugnet
"L'Énergie Moderne" 1938 (FR)
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/265177>

Salvador Dali "Lobster Telephone" 1938

Lobster Telephone is an unexpected combination of objects. Dalí believed bringing them together could reveal secret desires. For him, both lobsters and telephones were connected with sex. This work is a classic example of a surrealist object. The surrealists promoted the idea that art could reflect the mysteries of the unconscious mind.



Salvador Dali "Lobster Telephone" 1938

Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/dali-lobster-telephone-t03257>

Salvador Dali and Edward James "Mae West Lips Sofa" 1935

A bright red sofa shaped like a pair of lips, inspired by the actress Mae West, is one of his most famous pieces of surrealist furniture.



Salvador Dali and Edward James "Mae West Lips Sofa" 1935

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/a-surrealist-sofa-by-salvador-dal%C3%AD-and-edward-james>

Notable Artists

Salvador Dalí

One of the most famous surrealists, Dalí is known for his meticulous painting technique and bizarre dreamlike imagery. His works, such as *The Persistence of Memory* (1931), are filled with melting clocks, strange landscapes, and distorted figures.

René Magritte

Magritte's surrealism was more cerebral, focusing on the ambiguity of perception and reality. His famous works, such as *The Son of Man* (1964) and *The Treachery of Images* (1929), feature ordinary objects rendered in enigmatic ways.

Max Ernst

A key figure in both Dada and surrealism, Ernst used techniques like frottage (rubbing) and collage to create strange, dreamlike compositions. His work often explored the unconsciousness through fantastical, grotesque images.

Joan Miró

While his early works were rooted in cubism and abstraction, Miró later became associated with surrealism. His paintings, filled with biomorphic forms and playful abstraction, evoke a sense of childlike wonder and imagination.

Man Ray

An American artist closely associated with the movement, Man Ray is known for his innovative photographic techniques and use of surreal imagery in photography.

Elsa Schiaparelli

Elsa Schiaparelli, an Italian fashion designer, was one of the most notable figures who brought Surrealism into the fashion world. Collaborating with Surrealist artists like Salvador Dalí and Jean Cocteau, Schiaparelli's designs were full of playful, dreamlike elements.

The Lobster Dress (in collaboration with Salvador Dalí) featured a large lobster printed on the front, combining art and fashion in a surreal way.



Elsa Schiaparelli
"The lobster dinner dress" 1937

The **Shoe Hat** (in collaboration with Salvador Dalí) Schiaparelli designed a hat that resembled an upside-down shoe, blending humor and surrealist absurdity into fashion.



Elsa Schiaparelli
"The shoe hat" 1937

Italian designer **Elsa Schiaparelli** collaborated with Surrealist artists like Dalí, creating iconic pieces such as the *Lobster Dress* and *the Shoe Hat*. These designs introduced dreamlike and absurd elements to the world of fashion, showcasing the playful and imaginative potential of Surrealism in wearable art.

Abstract Expressionism in Design

Abstract Expressionism, which emerged in the mid-20th century, emphasized spontaneity, emotion, and the use of color and gesture to convey meaning, focusing more on the process of creation than on literal representations. In design, this movement's influence is seen in the following ways:

Bold, Expressive Use of Colour: Abstract Expressionism encouraged designers to embrace vibrant, bold color palettes to evoke strong emotions and make powerful statements. This influence is seen in graphic design posters that use large swaths of color, dynamic brush strokes, and irregular shapes, aiming to create an emotional impact rather than convey a specific message.

Gestural Mark-Making: Designers use spontaneous, hand-drawn marks, irregular patterns, or painterly textures to add a sense of rawness and energy. This is inspired by the gestural brushstrokes of Abstract Expressionist painters like Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, whose works emphasize the physical act of painting. This approach translates into designs that feature spontaneous-looking brush strokes or splatters, often seen in posters, websites, or book covers.

Non-Representational Forms: Abstract Expressionism in design rejects clearly defined shapes in favor of organic, fluid, and unpredictable forms. Furniture design, for example, may forego symmetry and linearity in favor of flowing, amorphous shapes that evoke a sense of movement and freedom.

Emotion-Driven Design: Designs inspired by Abstract Expressionism aim to evoke strong emotional reactions through their visual intensity rather than through specific imagery. This approach is evident in album covers or digital artwork, where chaotic, swirling compositions reflect the intensity of the music or the emotions behind it.

Abstract Expressionism in Art

Abstract Expressionism was a revolutionary movement that emerged in post-World War II America, emphasizing emotional expression, spontaneity, and a departure from traditional representational forms. **Jackson Pollock**, **Willem de Kooning**, and **Mark Rothko** were three of the most influential artists within this movement, each bringing a unique approach to the exploration of emotion, form, and color. Their works not only shaped Abstract Expressionism but also had a lasting impact on modern art and design.

Jackson Pollock (1912–1956)

Jackson Pollock is widely recognized for his innovative drip painting technique, which involved dripping or splattering paint onto a canvas laid on the ground. His method, often referred to as action painting, emphasized the physical act of painting itself, transforming the process into a performance of expression and movement.

Key Techniques: Pollock's action painting style involved spontaneous gestures and fluid, rapid movements, creating complex layers of paint. His technique was influenced by Surrealist automatic drawing, which encouraged artists to release control and let subconscious impulses guide their work.

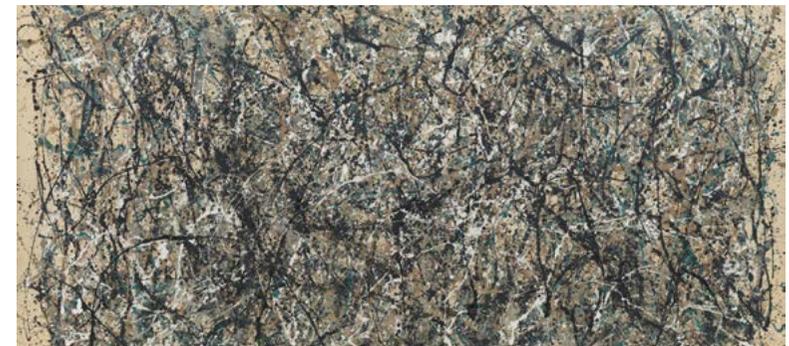
Famous Works: One: Number 31, 1950 is one of Pollock's most iconic pieces, embodying the chaotic energy and layered complexity that defined his style.

Artistic Philosophy: Pollock saw his art as a way to connect with primal, unconscious impulses. He believed that the act of painting was an expression of the artist's inner world and emotions.

Legacy: Pollock's style broke away from traditional painting and laid the groundwork for more experimental, process-oriented approaches in art. His influence extends to graphic design and visual arts, particularly in areas where gestural mark-making and spontaneous abstraction are used to evoke intense emotions.



Untitled, Jackson Pollock, ca. 1948–49, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/482447>



Jackson Pollock. One: Number 31, 1950, New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)
<https://www.moma.org/artists/4675>

Willem de Kooning (1904–1997)

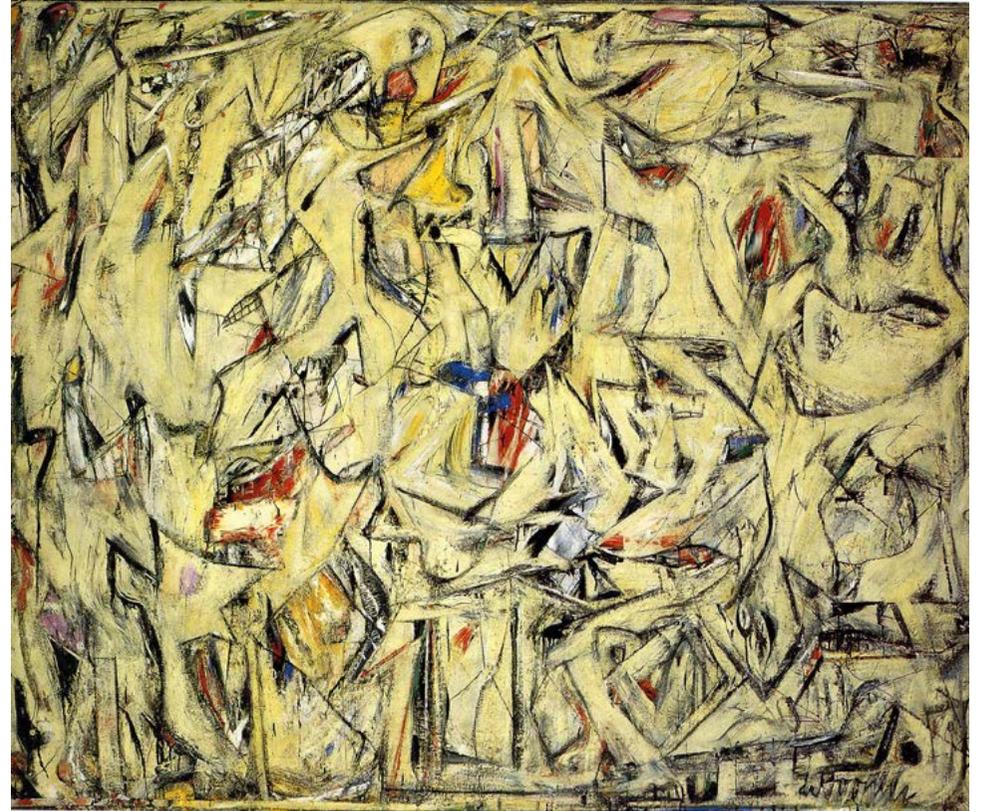
Willem de Kooning was known for his expressive, gestural brushwork and his dynamic exploration of the human form. Unlike Pollock, de Kooning often incorporated recognizable figures into his work, particularly in his famous Women series, which blended figuration with abstraction.

Key Techniques: De Kooning's works are characterized by thick, aggressive brushstrokes and a rough, textured surface. His use of vivid, layered colors and frenetic energy gives his paintings a sense of movement and raw emotion.

Famous Works: Excavation (1950) and Woman I (1950–52) are celebrated examples of his style, with Woman I depicting a distorted, powerful female figure rendered in a flurry of intense brushstrokes.

Artistic Philosophy: De Kooning embraced unpredictability, often reworking his paintings multiple times. He believed in allowing forms and emotions to evolve on canvas, making his creative process highly intuitive.

Legacy: De Kooning's work blurs the boundaries between abstract and figurative art, influencing artists and designers who explore organic forms and fluidity. His bold use of color and form continues to inspire in fields like fashion and interior design, where de Kooning's influence is seen in dynamic, asymmetrical compositions.



Willem de Kooning, Excavation, 1950, Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/76244/excavation>

Mark Rothko (1903–1970)

Mark Rothko brought a different approach to Abstract Expressionism, focusing on color and form rather than movement and gesture. Rothko's works are known for their color field paintings—large, rectangular blocks of color that appear to float on the canvas. His minimalist approach aimed to evoke deep emotional responses, using color as a direct path to the viewer's feelings.

Key Techniques: Rothko's technique involved layering soft, hazy rectangles of color, creating an immersive and meditative effect. His paintings are noted for their color saturation and lack of defined edges, which encourage viewers to experience the work as an enveloping field of color.

Famous Works: His works such as No. 61 (Rust and Blue) (1953) and the Seagram Murals (1958–59) are celebrated examples, displaying his exploration of color as a language of emotion. The Seagram Murals, for example, consist of deep, dark hues intended to create a somber, contemplative space.

Artistic Philosophy: Rothko believed that his paintings should be "experiences" rather than objects to be admired from a distance. He saw color as a means to communicate existential themes of tragedy, ecstasy, and doom. Rothko famously stated, "I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions."

Legacy: Rothko's focus on color fields has had a profound impact on modern art and design. His influence is evident in interior design and architecture, particularly in spaces that use color to create atmosphere and emotion. Rothko's work also paved the way for minimalist art and color field painting, encouraging designers to explore the psychological effects of color and simplicity.



Mark Rothko, Orange and Tan, 1954, Washington, National Gallery of Art
<https://www.nga.gov/features/mark-rothko.html>

Conclusion

Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism are two significant art movements that have had a profound impact on contemporary art. Surrealism challenges the boundaries of reality, using dreamlike, fantastical, and bizarre compositions to explore the unconscious, emotions, and intangible human experiences. In contrast, Abstract Expressionism focuses on forms, color, and composition, freeing art from traditional representations and instead emphasizing pure expression and the inner world of the artist.

Although these movements differ in their approaches and objectives, both offer new possibilities for creative expression, expanding the meaning and boundaries of art. Surrealism reveals the unconscious and dreams, while Abstract Expressionism conveys the artist's subjective feelings and emotions through pure form and color. These movements have played a key role in transforming the art world, opening doors to new ways of perceiving the world and expressing human experience.



How the CIA Secretly Used Jackson Pollock to Fight the Cold War –
<https://youtu.be/lCeM4NOoegs?si=77m0duqWzg3K7lGn>

SURREALISM

Surrealism in Latvian Fine Art of the 20th Century

Surrealism in Latvian art did not develop in the 1920s and 1930s, but its features appeared in the works of several artists in the 1970s and 1980s.

Surrealism in Latvia can be mentioned starting from the 1970s. **Ludolfs Liberts** created two portraits in 1923, both of which are male portraits in which small surrealistic features appear. However, these are accidental and experimental.



Cover of the art album *Ludolfs Liberts*.

These are just episodes for individual artists. During this time, Latvian artists were more interested in Cubism and Expressionism. These were the main artistic directions for our artists.

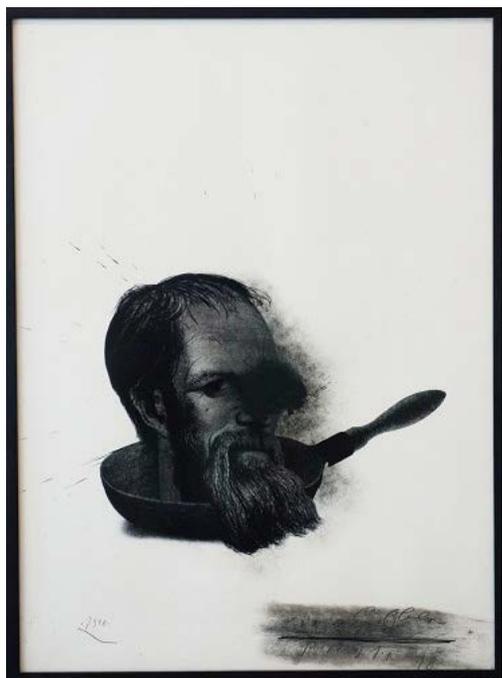
During the Soviet era, in the 1950s and 1960s, this word could not be used, but surrealism was categorized under Western ideology, right before abstract art. At the same time, there was the theme of science in art, and with the beginning of space exploration, this theme appeared in art.

In 1975, the first exhibition "Science and Science Fiction" was held at the planetarium, which is now the Orthodox Cathedral, and at this exhibition, it can truly be said that surrealism in art exploded, blooming, especially in graphics. There were three such exhibitions in total – in 1975, 1977, and 1979. It can be said that the theme of science aligned very well with the Soviet theme, of course, Soviet scientific achievements and space exploration, but artists also included in their works what they personally wanted.

Latvian surrealism, starting from the 1970s, could be called a gentle surrealism, where artists used form more specifically: realistic depictions were shown in impossible combinations, some figures were multiplied, and metamorphoses of images were created. There were many artists who worked in surrealist graphics in the 1970s.

Ilmārs Blumbergs developed a more existential feeling, and the human figure often appeared in his works without a face, human - mountain, human - wave, human - bird, with transformations of forms in his art. In **Lolita Zitmane's** works, there is a lot of space, and there is also a sense of strange, mystical sensations in her series. **Māra Rikmane** has also used surrealist expression techniques. **Artūrs Ņikitins** has quite a few still lifes that turn into fantastic biomorphic, biological forms, and **Māris Ārgalis** is the key name that should be mentioned when talking about surrealism in Latvian art.

Māris Ārgailis stood out with his dreamlike, psychologically charged compositions, blending reality with fantastical elements.



Self-portrait. 1978, paper, lithograph, pencil, charcoal, 85x63 cm



Māris Ārgailis
Graphics 1, 1980. Paper, silkscreen. 20x30 cm

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Origins of Czech Surrealism

Czech surrealism is a unique and important part of the broader surrealist movement in Europe, with a rich tradition that emerged in the early 20th century. Czech surrealists engaged deeply with the ideas of the international surrealist movement, while also reflecting the distinctive social, political, and cultural environment of Czechoslovakia. Surrealism in the Czech context, especially in the 1930s and after World War II, was not just an artistic expression but also a form of intellectual and political resistance.

Surrealism was introduced to Czechoslovakia in the 1930s, a time when the country was experiencing rapid modernization, political instability, and the rise of authoritarianism across Europe. The surrealist movement in Czechoslovakia gained momentum after the publication of André Breton's "Manifesto of Surrealism", and Czech artists and intellectuals began corresponding with Breton and other surrealists in Paris. This connection helped to establish surrealism as an influential movement in Czech culture.

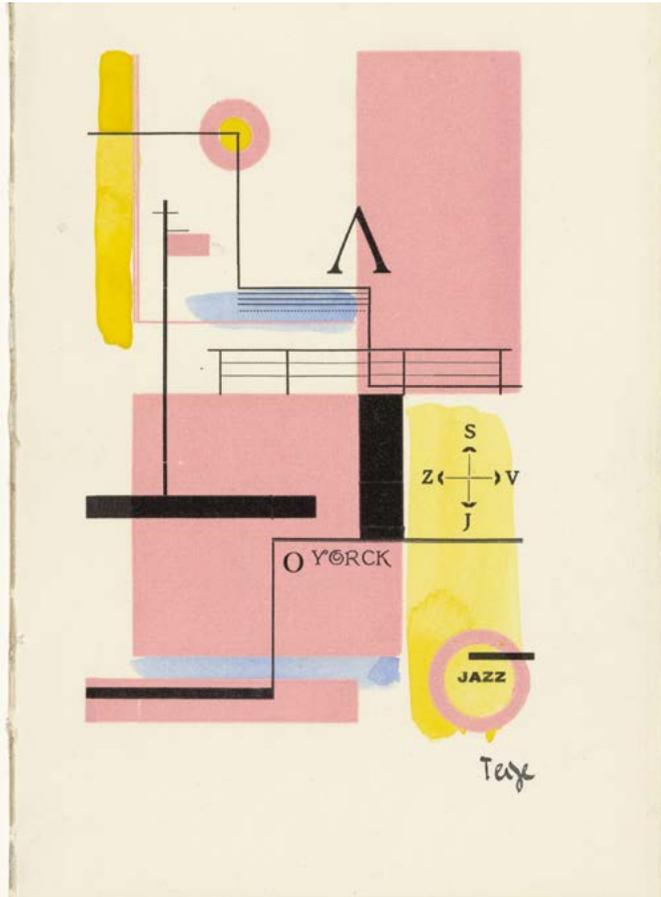
Founding Figures and Groups

Devětsil and Poetism (Predecessors to Surrealism)

Before surrealism took hold in Czechoslovakia, a group called Devětsil (founded in 1920) was influential in introducing avant-garde ideas to Czech art. Poetism, a specifically Czech artistic movement closely related to surrealism, focused on creating a joyful and liberating art of imagination, spontaneity, and playfulness. It was a precursor to surrealism in the region, blending poetry, visual art, and performance.

Karel Teige (1900–1951)

Teige was a pivotal figure in Czech surrealism and the avant-garde. He was a theorist, critic, and artist who helped bring surrealist ideas into Czech art and culture. Teige was closely aligned with the Paris surrealist movement and had a profound influence on the development of Czech surrealist thought. His work explored the intersections of architecture, poetry, and visual art.



Karel Teige, Composition with typographic elements (1928) (MoMA)
<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/75086>

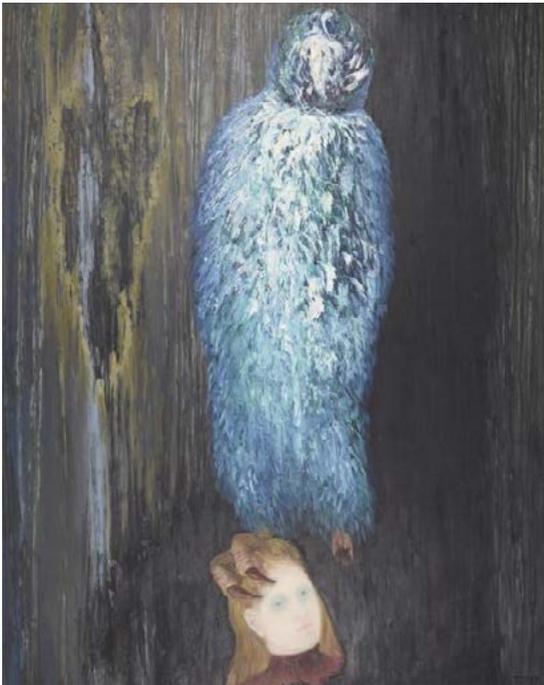
Czech Surrealist Group (1934)

Officially founded in 1934, the Czech Surrealist Group became the heart of the surrealist movement in the country. The group included visual artists, writers, poets, and intellectuals who shared a commitment to surrealism's exploration of the unconsciousness, the irrational, and the dreamlike. The leading figures in this group were **Toyen**, **Jindřich Štyrský**, and **Vítězslav Nezval**.

Major Czech Surrealist Artists

Toyen (Marie Čermínová, 1902–1980)

One of the most important surrealist artists in Czechoslovakia, Toyen's work is characterized by its mysterious and often erotic content. Toyen's gender-fluid identity and innovative visual language made her a unique voice in the surrealist movement. Her paintings, such as *The Message of the Forest* (1936), often feature dreamlike landscapes and haunting, surrealist imagery.

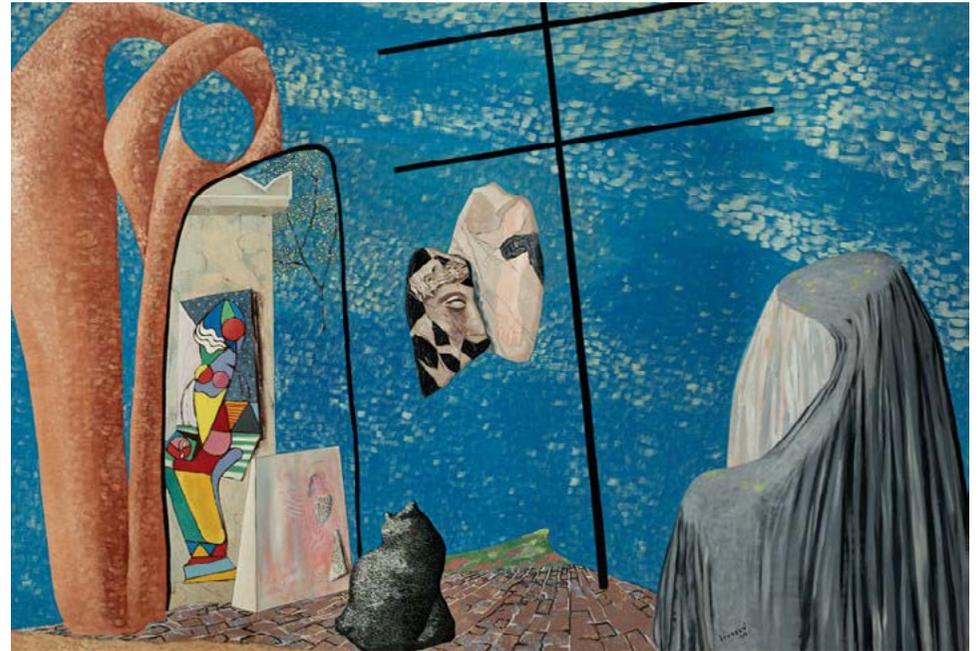


Toyen, *The Message of the Forest* (1936)

<https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/156267>

Jindřich Štyrský (1899–1942)

A painter, poet, and photographer, Štyrský played a key role in introducing surrealism to Czech art. Alongside Toyen, he developed the concept of artificialism, which blended abstraction and surrealist thought. His work was deeply influenced by dreams, eroticism, and the exploration of inner psychological states.



Jindřich Štyrský, *From My diary* (1933)

https://sbirky.ngprague.cz/en/dielo/CZE:NG.O_3500

Vítězslav Nezval (1900–1958)

Nezval was a poet and co-founder of the Czech Surrealist Group. He was instrumental in popularizing surrealism in Czechoslovakia, especially through his poetry, which often blended political commentary with surrealist aesthetics. Nezval corresponded with André Breton and was an important figure in connecting the Czech surrealists with their French counterparts.

Emil Filla (1882–1953)

Although initially associated with cubism, Filla was influenced by surrealist ideas, especially in his later works. His art often combined abstract forms with symbolic and mythological content, embodying surrealist ideals of the unconscious and the irrational.



Emil Filla, Still life with a Mandoline (1932)
<https://www.galeriekodl.cz/en/polozka/3965/>

Themes and Characteristics in Czech Surrealist Art

Czech surrealism shared many of the broader movement's core themes—dreams, the unconscious, and irrational juxtapositions—yet it also developed its own distinct character:

Political Resistance

In the context of Czechoslovakia's turbulent political history, including the rise of fascism in the 1930s, Nazi occupation during World War II, and the later imposition of communist rule, surrealism often became a form of political resistance. Czech surrealists used dream imagery and irrationality to comment on the absurdities of authoritarian regimes and express their opposition to political oppression.

Eroticism and the Body

Czech surrealists often explored themes of sexuality and eroticism in their work, drawing on the Freudian influence that was central to surrealism. Toyen and Štyrský, in particular, were known for creating works that dealt with the erotic and the subconscious desires that animate human behavior.

Poetry and Visual Art

Czech surrealism was notable for its close connection between poetry and visual art. Many surrealists were both poets and painters, and they often combined these disciplines to create multimedia works that defied traditional artistic boundaries. This blending of forms was particularly evident in the artificialism movement founded by Štyrský and Toyen.

Czech Mythology and Folklore

Czech surrealist artists were also influenced by their local folklore and mythology, incorporating themes from these sources into their dreamlike works. This gave their art a uniquely Czech character, distinct from the more urban-focused works of the French surrealists.

Impact and Legacy of Czech Surrealism

Surrealism and Communist Censorship

After World War II and the establishment of communist rule in Czechoslovakia in 1948, the Czech surrealist movement was heavily suppressed. Socialist realism became the official art style, and many surrealist artists were marginalized or censored. However, Czech surrealism survived underground, and its ideas continued to influence dissident intellectuals and artists.

Post-War and Contemporary Influence

In the later 20th century, Czech surrealism re-emerged as a vital force in the country's cultural resistance to Soviet-style communism. Artists like Jan Švankmajer, a filmmaker and visual artist, became internationally renowned for his surrealist films and animations that combined dark humor, absurdity, and dreamlike sequences.

Jan Švankmajer

Perhaps the most famous contemporary figure connected with Czech surrealism, Švankmajer's work—particularly his animated films—explores themes of the grotesque, dreams, and the subconscious. His works, such as *Alice* (1988) and *Conspirators of Pleasure* (1996), are noted for their surreal, tactile visuals and their darkly absurdist sensibility.

Conclusion

Czech surrealism is a vital part of 20th-century surrealist art, distinguished by its deep connection to poetry, its resistance to authoritarianism, and its unique blend of eroticism, folklore, and dreamlike imagery. Despite the political challenges faced by the movement, Czech surrealists like Toyen, Štyrský, and later Jan Švankmajer helped establish a lasting tradition of surrealist art that continues to inspire and resonate today.

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Students' Tasks

1. Creative Writing: Surrealist Storytelling

Task: Students are asked to write a short surrealist story inspired by the principles of Surrealism. Encourage them to incorporate dreamlike imagery, unexpected juxtapositions, and elements of fantasy.

Exercise:

Provide students with surrealist artworks (such as Salvador Dalí's "The Persistence of Memory") and ask them to create a narrative that explains the scene or the emotions it evokes.

Use automatic writing (a surrealist technique) to encourage students to free-write for 10 minutes without stopping, capturing spontaneous thoughts and images.

Goal: Enhance creativity and vocabulary while learning how to break away from conventional storytelling forms.

2. Design Your Own Surreal Object

Task: Students will design a surreal object (like Dalí's "Lobster Telephone") and write a description of how it challenges function or reality.

Exercise:

Ask students to sketch a surreal object by combining two unrelated items (e.g., a chair with wings, a clock made of clouds).

Have them write a 200-word explanation about the object's purpose and what it symbolizes, drawing inspiration from the surrealist technique of combining unexpected elements.

Goal: Encourage descriptive writing and creative thinking while exploring the intersection of art and function.

3. Debate: Surrealism vs. Abstract Expressionism

Task: Divide the class into two groups—one representing Surrealism and the other Abstract Expressionism. Students will debate which movement has had a greater impact on modern design.

Exercise:

Each group will research their assigned movement, focusing on key characteristics, famous works, and influence on design and culture.

During the debate, students will practice making arguments, counterarguments, and summarizing their points using formal language structures.

Goal: Improve speaking, listening, and persuasive language skills while deepening understanding of the two movements.

4. Art Critique Exercise

Task: Students will analyze both Surrealist and Abstract Expressionist artworks and compare them in terms of themes, color use, and emotional impact.

Exercise:

Provide students with images of artworks from both movements (e.g., Dalí's "The Persistence of Memory" and Pollock's "No. 5").

Ask students to write a comparative essay, focusing on how each movement expresses ideas about reality, emotion, or the subconscious mind.

Goal: Develop critical thinking, essay writing, and comparative analysis skills.

5. Surrealist Collage and Description

Task: In groups, students create a surrealist collage from magazine cutouts, mixing unrelated objects to create something bizarre and dreamlike. Then, they write a collaborative description of the artwork.

Exercise:

After creating the collage, each group writes a surrealist-style poem or a descriptive passage about the meaning of their artwork, including metaphors and symbolic language.

Presentations can follow, with each group reading their description aloud while showcasing their collage.

Goal: Foster collaboration, creative writing, and interpretation of symbolic language.

6. Exploring Emotions Through Abstract Expressionism

Task: Students create a piece of writing that expresses an emotion (e.g., anger, joy, confusion) using the techniques of Abstract Expressionism—focusing on expressive, emotional language rather than literal description.

Exercise:

Begin by showing examples of Abstract Expressionist works and discussing how emotions are conveyed through color and form.

Ask students to write a poem or a short passage using abstract language and vivid metaphors to express an emotion, avoiding direct references to the emotion itself.

Goal: Encourage students to explore abstract language, metaphor, and the use of sensory details to convey feelings.

7. Design an Advertising Campaign Using Surrealism

Task: Students design an advertising campaign that uses surrealist principles to promote a product (e.g., a smartphone, a piece of furniture, or a fashion item).

Exercise:

Have students brainstorm how they could use surrealist techniques like bizarre juxtapositions, fantasy, and optical illusions in their ad.

Students write a tagline and a 300-word pitch explaining how the surrealist elements in their design will grab attention and convey the message.

Goal: Combine creative and persuasive writing while teaching students about visual and verbal communication in marketing.

8. Analyzing Famous Fashion Designs: Schiaparelli and Surrealism

Task: Students research Elsa Schiaparelli's collaboration with Surrealist artists (e.g., the Lobster Dress) and write a report on how Surrealism influenced fashion.

Exercise:

Provide students with examples of Schiaparelli's surrealist fashion pieces. They write a short research report analyzing how Surrealist art principles (absurdity, fantasy, dreamlike imagery) are applied in her designs.

Ask students to present their findings in class, explaining how art and fashion intersect in her work.

Goal: Teach students how to conduct research, synthesize information, and present their findings in both written and spoken form.

9. Surrealist or Abstract? Interactive Presentation

Task: In groups, students create a presentation that teaches the rest of the class about the key differences between Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism in design.

Exercise:

Each group prepares a multimedia presentation that includes images, videos, and examples of design (posters, interiors, fashion, etc.) influenced by both movements.

The presentation should end with an interactive quiz or activity where classmates have to identify whether certain designs or artworks belong to Surrealism or Abstract Expressionism.

Goal: Enhance collaboration, research, and public speaking skills, while reinforcing students' understanding of both art movements.

These activities not only engage students with the topics of Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism but also help them develop important skills in writing, speaking, analysis, and creativity.

