

Keywords: Dreams, Anime and Surrealism
Student Name: Claudio Wong
Student Number 1802546
Programme of Study: BA (Hons) Illustration
Module: Research in Practice (ADAD5004)
Tutor: Louise Burston
Word Count: 2,398

An Independent Research Document Proposal

A short context of this writing is to explore three keywords supported by a minimum of three images, in combination with three visual artists/illustrators. From this research I will attempt to link the three keywords of Dreams, Surreal and Anime to develop some form of question for my independent research document. From these keywords, I will construct a basic idea of how surrealism is used in art (anime art in particular), the philosophy within the topic of Dreams, and how it manifests in surreal illustration. In my studies I will also find out if surrealism is appropriate today, particularly in illustration. These keywords will relate to historical and contemporary artists and philosophers, including – Sigmund Freud (Dreams), Salvador Dali (Dreams/Surrealism), Kelogsloops (Anime) and Leonora Carrington (Surrealism).

Dreams

“Dream Art is any form of art directly based on material from dreams, or which employs dream-like imagery.” – (HiSour, <https://www.hisour.com> N.D)

Wikipedia (N.D) notes that the term ‘Dream Art’ is considered a visual art genre. It was first known in the 12th century but didn’t come into use until the 19th and 20th century, when symbolism and expressionism introduced the theme’s imagery into visual art. The invention of film, animation and comic has somewhat revolutionised the imagery and narrative of ‘dream art’ by bringing vivid depiction of non-realistic events.

Psychologically, the definition of ‘dreams’ goes by a series of images, thoughts and sensations occurring in a person’s mind. Subconsciously, dreams are your thought’s manifestations but with independent meanings. Your dreams convey your most deeply guarded secrets, or they may give you some hidden hints about inherent dangers. More often than not, your dreams reflect what is happening in your life right now.

“The Interpretation of Dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities in the mind.” – (Freud, <https://www.freud.org.uk> N.D)

Many surreal artists like Salvador Dali, has been influenced by Sigmund Freud’s theory of the unconscious. The manifesto defined surrealism as psychic “automatism”, a process that encouraged a freeing of the mind from rational and utilitarian thinking and constraints as well as moral and aesthetic judgement.

André Breton, a French poet who launched the surreal movement in 1921 with the publication of the 'Manifesto of Surrealism', was very much influenced by Freud's idea of the unconscious mind. Breton defined surrealism as –

Pure psychic automatism ... the dictation of thought in the absence of all control exercised by reason and outside all moral or aesthetic concerns' – (Breton, <https://www.tate.org.uk> 2018)

Dali, who was a devoted follower of Freud, claimed his images were open to multiple interpretations, which in return made him one of the leading members of the Surrealistic group. Though when the pair met for the first time in 1938, according to Dali the meeting was a failure. –

"He hoped his paintings would win Freud's approval. Freud apparently commented that "In classic paintings I look for the unconscious, but in your paintings, I look for the conscious," which Dali took to be criticism." – (Marianski, <https://www.freud.org.uk> 2019)

Many surreal artists were deeply interested in interpreting dreams as conduits for unspoken feelings and desires. Antonin Artaud, a French dramatist and poet once mentioned that "Surrealism is not a style... It is the cry of a mind turning back on itself." This presents that a lot of artists open their mind in developing new ideas and it could be a reminder that the past has given.

As an artist, inspiration comes from a variety of sources: nature, people, other works of art, a piece of music etc, it can come from anywhere, even dreams. An example of turning dreams into an art can be seen from Salvador Dali.

Salvador Dali, is a Spanish surrealist artist who interpreted dreams in his paintings in myriad ways, but it's his 1944 work Dream Caused by the Fight of a Bee Around a Pomegranate a Second Before Waking, that takes on both the act of dreaming and its results in the same picture.



Figure 1: Dream Caused by the Fight of a Bee Around a Pomegranate a Second Before Waking – Salvador Dali (<https://www.dalipaintings.com/> N.D)

While living in America, the artist painted a sleeping figure of Gala, Dali's wife and muse, floating above a rock in tranquil marine landscape. Gala's dream, prompted by the buzzing of bees, manifests in the top half of the canvas where two ferocious tigers and a rifle leap towards the resting figure from the mouth of a fish, which in turn emerges from a bursting pomegranate. As the title suggests, moments later Gala will wake from her restful sleep after the onslaught of the dream.

"It asks the question, when we fall asleep, where do we go? Dali, the Surrealist and their artistic forebears, understood the interpretive possibility of dreams as avenues for self-exploration. More importantly, Dali, took full advantage of that question, relishing the creative freedom of the imaginative dreamscape." – (Wolkoff, <https://www.artsy.net> 2020)

Anime

Even though anime may seem like a modern invention, it has actually been originated in the early 1900's with a long history in Japan and has flourished, increasingly getting popular between the generations. It's now become a part of everyday life. There are hundreds of series and movies, giving people around Japan a huge quality of stories to explore and enjoy and wide range of genres to choose from.

Since anime first appeared in 1917, it has been radically evolved over the years and has grown as both a commercial industry and art form. Anime began with cut-out animation and silent short films then moved towards longer, more creative works influenced by Disney, one of or the most world-renowned animation picture studios.

As anime increasingly grew more popular, its connection with the audience became more powerful. –

“What truly makes an anime memorable to me is usually the journey and the bonding that I can feel characters have with each other. An anime show that usually shows someone who goes through personal growth and/or character development are shows that attracts me the most.” – (Phoenix, <https://www.quora.com> 2018)

The anime art form is unlike any other animation cartoon industry. The reason it is so popular and loved from people around the world comes from its consistent unique ability to grow with the viewers from its unique narrative storytelling and memorable journey with the characters within the anime series.

Watching anime allows to transport oneself into worlds like nothing has ever been seen before and tell stories that couldn't be found anywhere else. Anime and Manga are a very huge part of Japanese culture and it has swept the world. Some anime series reflects Japanese culture, some of it reflects elements of Japanese culture and some is just fiction.

Anime art has influenced many young aspiring artists to create and develop their own style of anime. One particular artist who has taken a big influence from anime, most notably 'Sailor Moon' is Australian artist Hieu, who goes by the alias Kelogsloops.

Kelogsloops (N.D) notes that he is a self-taught contemporary artist who specialises in both digital and watercolour paintings, often depicting female portraiture as his preferred subject matter of choice. His work blends abstract and surreal art styles with anime influences from his upbringing. He paints with the intention of capturing fleeting and intangible feelings, portraying his figures suspended in times. Hieu currently exhibits his work in galleries, whilst also maintaining a presence on social media, specifically Instagram and YouTube.

The work of Kelogsloops comes from influences of a lot of introspection, whether it would be from the sound of music he hears, the people he meets on his travels or from past experiences.



Figure 2: Shelter – Kelogsloops (<https://beinart.org> 2019)

In an interview with Beinart Gallery for his beautiful moving solo exhibition 'Breath', he explained: -

"In each of the paintings I wanted to create, these "spaces of rest" for the figures to exist and I imagined that these familiars were something akin to guardians. Protectors of some sort, that watch over that safe haven and keep it from being broken. They're familiars that recognised as symbols of strength, for example in some East-Asian cultures the tiger is generally synonymous with strength and resilience.

I think subconsciously those animals were representative of what my friends and family are to me – my support systems. They're symbols of strength to me because they were able to metaphorically create these spaces for me to breath and continue to operate in. Without them, I don't think those spaces of rest would exist." (Hieu, <https://beinart.org> 2019)

Kelogsloops also corresponds to my previous keyword 'Dreams'. Since the beginning of his artistic career, he adopted and lived by his motto. "Be Right Back, Chasing Dreams."

In a frequently asked question on his personal art page, he explained –

"#brbchasingdreams, is this little mantra I made for myself in 2014, during a time that I found quite pivotal to me. In ways, it was the beginning of my art journey.

#brbchasingdreams is a reminder. It's a reminder for me to draw, learn and challenge myself every single day and work towards my dream.

It's a reminder for me to pause the crap and focus on what's important to me.

It's a reminder that every day I am still chasing my dreams, with no intention of stopping." – (Kelogsloops, <https://kelogsloops.com> 2017)

This is clearly reflected in his work in the way it seems to display these dream-like scenarios.

Surrealism

"A twentieth-century literary, philosophical and artistic movement that explored the workings of the mind, championing the irrational, the poetic and the revolutionary." (Tate Gallery, <https://www.tate.org.uk> N.D)

"Surrealism is more than an artistic style, it's an artistic movement. Unlike other creative movements, which can be characterised by themes of imagery, colour choices, or techniques, surrealism is explored. From unconscious mind as a way of creating art, resulting dreamlike." – (Park West Gallery, <https://www.parkwestgallery> 2018)

Surrealist artists such as Salvador Dali, who I have talked about previously, used drawings or writing to unlock ideas and a lot of times bizarre imagery from the mind's deepest thought and would utilise various mediums to create his iconic dreamlike, hallucinatory visuals including painting, etching and lithography.

French writer, Andre Breton described Dali's art as –

"A retrograde craft with the most extreme inventions of modern culture." –

Highlighting Dali's emblematic, artistic style that provoked his viewers to explore literature, religious concepts, and more.

One other key member of the surrealist group who also worked alongside the likes of Salvador Dali was a British-born Mexican contemporary painter and novelist Leonora Carrington. Although she rejected being labelled as a surrealist, there's no denying that her

paintings were filled with strange figures of the women's body which shifted and combined between plants, animals, human, objects and everything in between.

Carrington wasn't interested in the 'conscious' and 'subconscious' idea of Sigmund Freud and instead used autobiographical detail and symbolism as the subject of her paintings, along with presenting female sexuality as something she has experienced, rather than as that of male surrealist's characterisation of female sexuality. An example of that statement, in Self-Portrait (1938) –



Figure 3: Self-Portrait – Leonora Carrington – (<https://www.metmuseum.org> (N.D))

“Carrington offers her own interpretation of female sexuality by looking toward her own sexuality rather than theorising on the subject, as was custom by other surrealist in the movement.” (Wikipedia, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org> N.D)

My focal point with the keyword Surrealism is how it fuses within the anime art form. It's an unusual combination, it's not common to have the surreal movement in anime. It's weird mixture of reality and fantasy' a dream you could almost tell it was real, but something felt off or wrong about it. When it came to many of my favourite's anime, they love to blend believable aspects with the unreal and/or absurd. Whether it may be the visuals, characters, the setting or theme; something there will be fantastical and dreamscape-like, while other aspects will feel more organic and non-fictional...this is what's known as surreal.



Figure 4: Cover of Japanese anime 'Paprika' – (<https://manga.tokyo> 2006)

I watch many different anime series/movies, none of which are considered under the surrealism art movement. From an online anime review, I came across a brilliant, yet so freakishly surreal example of an anime-thriller film titled – 'Paprika'.

A group of inventors create a device that allows them to journey through the conscious and subconscious, entering the world of people's dreams that collides with reality, overriding and merges as one. Scientists Atsuko Chiba becomes the free-spirited Paprika in the dream world, and her character arc tries to reconcile who she wants to be with what society expects her to be.

Behind this psychedelic sci-fi is a film that uses dreams and surrealism to explore the concept of identity.

Paprika Synopsis:

"In the near future, psychotherapy treatment has reached a new level. Machines were used to monitor and record patients dreams, but a revolutionary invention created by Doctor Kosaku Tokita progressed that even further... the DC-mini: a device that allows the user to enter the dream of another human, enabling the therapist to guide and counsel the patient through his visions. After the theft of three prototype devices, the odd behaviour of Chief Torataro Shima, and the disappearance of a researcher, Himuro, one of the head researchers, Atsuko Chiba, takes matters into her own hands. The Journey to find the missing devices and solving the mystery behind it has just began..." – (Simis, <https://manga.tokyo> N.D)

“One of Freud’s central achievements was to demonstrate how unacceptable thoughts and feelings are repressed into the unconscious, from where they continue to exert a decisive influence over our lives” – (Freud Museum London, <https://www.freud.org.uk> N.D)

After exploring and gathering detailed information for each of the three keywords it has led me to several questions in relation to the experiences of the artists I have researched and written about.

There is a strong relationship between my chosen keywords, particularly surrealism and dream, there’s a clear connection as they are both in association with the theme of conscious and subconscious.

After exploring the theme of dreams and discovering that it can convey your most deeply guarded secrets, do we as people have this self-sabotaging habit that prevents us from exploring signs of our consciousness and subconsciousness? Such as our beliefs, our questions we want answered etc.

The working research of Freud’s interpretation of Dreams and Dali’s oil painting of Dreams Caused by the Flight of a Bee Around a Pomegranate a Second Before Wakening’ identified that the artist has interpreted his painting from dreams of his own subconscious. The question within that is whether someone of the creative mind takes advantage of their own conscious/subconscious by turning dreams into somewhat a reality and if so, can it make an impact? What impact can it bring to you, the audience and the world.

If we do present our dreams in a creative manner, how may this affect the audience’s interpretation of the art, as it may be showcasing something that the audience had only dreamt of visualising and comprehending.

Bibliography

HiSoUR. (N.D). *Dream Art*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.hisour.com/dream-art-21042/> [Accessed 14 February 2020]

Wikipedia. (N.D) *Dream Art History*. [online]. Available at: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dream_art [Accessed 14 February 2020]

Freud Museum London. (N.D). *The Interpretation of Dreams* [online]. <https://www.freud.org.uk/learn/discover-psychoanalysis/the-interpretation-of-dreams/> [Accessed 14 February 2020].

Tate. (2018). *Automatism* [online]. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/automatism> [Accessed 14 February 2020].

Freud Museum London. (N.D). *When Dalí met Freud* [online]. Available at: <https://www.freud.org.uk/2019/02/04/when-dali-met-freud/> [Accessed 17 February 2020].

Dali Paintings (N.D) *Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around Pomegranate a Second before Waking* [image]. Available at: <https://www.dalipaintings.com/dream-caused-by-the-flight-of-a-bee-around-a-pomegranate-one-second-before-awakening.jsp> [Accessed 17 February 2020].

Wolkoff, J. (2020). *Art History's Iconic Depictions of Dreams, from the Renaissance to Surrealism*. [blog]. 8 July. Available at: <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-art-historys-iconic-depictions-dreams-renaissance-surrealism/amp> [Accessed 20 February 2020].

Phoenix, T.A. (2018). *What makes an anime season memorable for you?* [online]. 25 October. Available at: <https://www.quora.com/What-makes-an-anime-season-memorable-for-you> [Accessed 21 February 2020].

Kelogsloops. (N.A). About Me. [online]. Available at: <https://kelogsloops.com/about> [Accessed 27 February 2020]

Beinart Gallery. (2019). *Shelter - Watercolour, gouache, ink, pencil and gold leaf on Arches paper 50.8 x 40.6 cm (20"x16")* [image]. Available at: <https://beinart.org/blogs/articles/interview-with-kelogsloops> [Accessed 28 February 2020].

Beinart Gallery. (2019). *Interview with Kelogsloops*. [online]. April 26. Available at: <https://beinart.org/blogs/articles/interview-with-kelogsloops> [Accessed 28 February 2020].

Kelogsloops. (2017). *Frequently Asked Questions*. [online]. Available at: <https://kelogsloops.com/faq> [Accessed 6 April 2020].

Tate. (N.D). *Surrealism* [online]. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/surrealism> [Accessed 11 April 2020].

Park West Gallery. (2018). *What is Surrealism? How Art Illustrates the Unconscious*. [online]. 28 November. Available at: <https://www.parkwestgallery.com/what-is-surrealism-art/> [Accessed 19 April 2020].

Wikipedia. (N.D) *Leonora Carrington, Themes and Major Works*. [online]. Available at: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonora_Carrington [Accessed 13 May 2020]

The Met Museum (N.D). Self-Portrait. [image]. Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/492697> [Accessed 13 May 2020]

Simis, P. (N.D). *Paprika Movie Review*. [online]. Available at: <https://manga.tokyo/anime-review/paprika-movie-review/amp/> [Accessed 8 May 2020].

Freud Museum London. (N.D). *The Unconscious: Frequently Asked Questions*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.freud.org.uk/learn/discover-psychoanalysis/what-is-the-unconscious/the-unconscious-frequently-asked-questions/> [Accessed: 12 May 2020]