Surrealism of Salvador Dalí and René Magritte

Essay Portfolio

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Introduction

In this essay I will be looking at looking at the Surrealism movement, Sigmund Freud the man that had the biggest influence on the movement and his book and theories of dreams. Aswell as using semiotic analysis and comparing two of the most know artists when exploring surrealism, Salvador Dalí and René Magritte.

The Surrealism Movement

About the movement

In the year 1929, the visual arts started to play a significant role in the Surrealism movement, especially between I and II World Wars. Surrealism has been influenced and has branched out of the Dada movement, however unlike the Dada movement that focused on anti-art that disregarded reason, Surrealism prioritised on the positive expression[1]. *"Surrealist believed the world was 'dying from rationalism[2]'"*[3], this is the principle of basing one's opinions and actions through their reason over their emotions. The reason Surrealist had such a belief was caused by the effects rationalism had on their culture and politics, which lead to the start and post- I & II World Wars. This led to artist developing many techniques like *"automatic writing; the merging of dream and reality"*[4], this is a method used by surrealist artist, where they would suppress their consciousness over the creative/making process of their art and create the art with their unconsciousness, making the staple of the surrealist art. Other techniques used where *"the merging of dreams and reality; the embrace of chance… and discussions on taboo subjects"*[5], these were used to help people understand and think in an emotional and less logical manner.[6]

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[1] (Encyclopædia Britannica)
[2](André, p.189)
[3](Betty,) p.3
[4](Betty, p.4)
[5](Betty, p.4)
[6] (Mary)

Sigmund Freud

Who was he?

Famous Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud popularised the ideas of psychoanalysis and the subconscious. Considering he established the foundation for how modern culture understands the subconscious mind, Freud is referred to be the "father of psychoanalysis." The subconscious mind can access emotions and memories that were established when the person was a child. Freud believed that dreams provide a window into the processing of information and emotion occurring in the subconscious mind, which may not be available to the conscious consciousness. Freud used dream analysis in this way to identify a patient's psychological problems, which some psychoanalytic use to this day[7].

How he Influenced Art

Using Freud's psychoanalysis theory, he had influenced the Surrealist movement to investigate the psyche. This helped Surrealist to fight against rationalism by delving past logic or reason, and use the subconscious mind to convey emotion and thought[8]. The Surrealists emphasised the deep psyche over the rational intellect and logic as a source for subject matter, using dreams as a powerful method for inspiration.

Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams

[7] (GoodTherapy)
[8] (Research Schools, Degrees & Careers)

In 1900, Freud's Interpretation of Dreams was a seminal piece that is now regarded as a significant work of the twentieth century. The literature describes the subconscious mind and the dynamic unconscious notion that guides the human mind. "The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind,"[9] Freud claims in the book. Freud's impact on psychology discourse was enormous, altering the landscape of mental disease talks.

Dreams, according to Freud, have two forms of significance. Manifest the specifics that the dreamer remembers - the dream's narrative. The dream's underlying content is its subliminal meaning. The study of visible and latent content entails determining the meaning of symbols and images in dreams. Similarly, while analysing a crime, the investigation was now related to any subconscious concerns the offender may have had as a child. If a patient dream of an elephant trapping them in a closet, Freud would argue that the manifest content is an elephant trapping them in a closet. The latent content, on the other hand, may indicate that the patient is going through something in their life that makes them feel restricted or uncomfortable.[10]

[9] (Freud)
[10] (Research Schools, Degrees & Careers)

Dalí & Magritte Semiotic Analysis

When talking about surrealism through art, and the way it makes you question yourself on a deeper level. It's important to talk about some of the prominent artist that have shown up, been influenced and have influenced the surrealism movement:

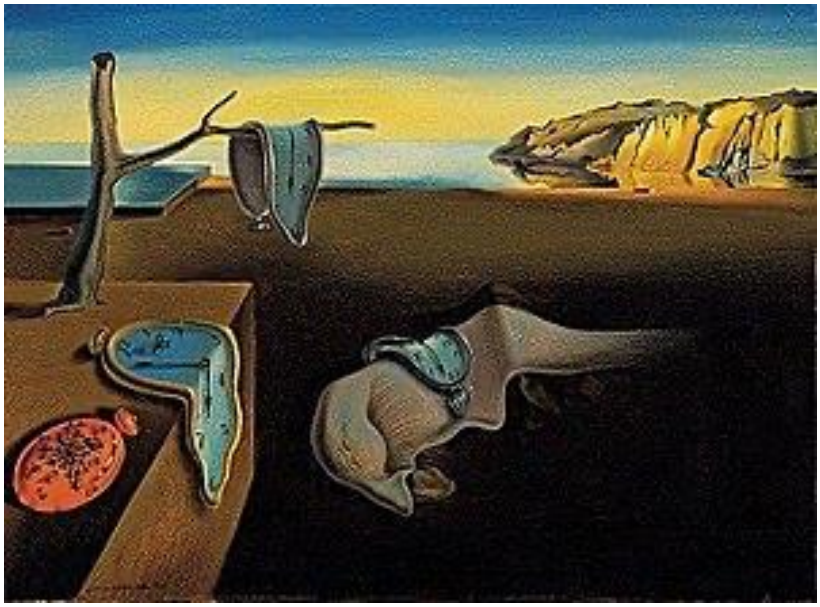
René Magritte

René Magritte- The Treachery of Images, 1928

Magritte is known for his surrealist art of a man wearing a bowler hat with his face never shown, although Magritte's most know piece of art is *"The Treachery of Images".* This piece of work portraits an icon pipe and the symbol of text stating "This is not a pipe". This shows great contrast in one image as both the icon and the symbol of this piece defy one another, which makes the viewer question themselves and ask, "Is it a pipe?", "Is it not a pipe" or is it just an image of a pipe. If we wanted to go even further with Magritte's thinking and ask, is this *The Treachery of Images*? Or is it an image of *The Treachery of Images?* As the name suggest The Treachery of Images is the "betrayal of our trust" on what we think is art. With this Magritte as created a somewhat of a paradox, which can be perceived differently from person to

person as they would have to choose what they believe is the truth. It’s a simple but effective way for people to experience surrealism What's fiction and what's reality?

Salvidor Dalí



Salvidor Dalí- *The Persistence of Memory*,1931

When speaking about surrealism one of the notable artists that people associate it with, is with Salvidor Dalí. “The Persistence of Memory” is one of Dalí’s famous paintings as there are many meanings and interpretations that can be extracted from this piece of art. Dalí’s Persistence of Memory shows symbols some of the symbols include: the four watches, a mirror, a somewhat dead tree, flies/ants and something being covered by a cloth. With all these objects seemingly misplaced in a senary of a beach, this makes it feel like you're looking into the dreams of Dalí. The melting pocket watches literally and figuratively symbolise the passage of time. On the other hand, the four watches symbolise the journey through life, as each watch is telling a different time signifying the past, present and future, but the last one is closed with either ants or fly's on representing a closed coffin, decomposing or even death.

Similarities and Differences

Dalí and Magritte have a few similarities between their work, as both challenge people's perception of their work. They make the viewer of their art think in way they wouldn't expect and makes them question logic. As well as this they both combat rationalism by going beyond logic or reason and using the subconscious mind to express emotion and ideas. They valued the inner psyche over the logical brain and reasoning as a source of subject matter, and they drew inspiration from dreams.

However, their differences are quite clear as Dalí uses the unconscious and dream to bring emotion and make the person feel the lack of logic and rationality, but Magritte's art makes the person themselves try and figure out the challenge of his work. It also feels like Dalí's work is more personal as the work is coming from his dreams and ideas making it seem quite disconnecting as some people might not understand its meaning, but Magritte's adds his views on the world which people could relate to easily. As the example of The Treachery of Images, it is a simple concept but effective in what he is trying to say and make us understand.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I think that the movement of surrealism is very interesting as it challenges that mind to think in more creative. This also includes the theories of Freuds, which were basically the origins of the movement itself. And most of all I feel like Magritte does a better job at creating this challenge as he relates it to anyone, whereas Dalí's work is more personal. Throughout the research going into this essay, I have been more interested in Magritte and I would not mind researching about him again or trying to incorporate his work into my own

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Extra materials

The Treachery of Images:

The treachery of images (this is not a pipe) (la trahison des images [ceci n'est pas une pipe]) (no date) *The Treachery of Images (This is Not a Pipe) (La trahison des images [Ceci n'est pas une pipe]) | LACMA Collections*. Available at: https://collections.lacma.org/node/239578 (Accessed: December 13, 2022).

***T*he Persistence of Memory:**

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