

Surreal films essay sample



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La Cloche (The Church Bell) (Jean L'Hote, France, 1964)

This film shows surrealist objects in action. It is about a man who is accidentally trapped beneath a church bell but as it is about to be installed he walks off with the bell. The bell then moves through the streets of Paris, creating a surreal object by simply displacing it from its customary surroundings.

Eaten Horizons (Spiste Horisonter) (Wilhelm Freddie, Denmark, 1950)

Two men are using the back-side of a woman as their table, they eat a loaf of bread and then proceed to cut a hole in the woman's body and eat her insides.

An Eater (Kazutomo Fuzino, Japan, 1963)

A waitress falls into a dream where a chef is operating on her. He removes gurgling fluids, spaghetti, an eye, and a man whose nose he cuts off. This dish is then served to eaters who devour it. She then awakens and vomits an endless string which envelopes all the eaters.

Finger Exercise (Robert Schaer, Switzerland, 1969)

This short film plays on suspense. There is a well groomed eater hovering above a severed hand which is also well groomed, with nail varnish and a wedding ring. The very white plate and the impending dissection of the finger make this a very unsettling piece.

Le Cadeau (The Gift) (Jacques Vasseur & Dick Roberts, France, 1961)

This is a cartoon which uses misplaced sounds to shock its audience. It features a cow that honks, a horn that moos, and a baby that hollers marches. In this film the sound instead of the object is taken from its usual surroundings. This is one of the few examples of aural surrealism.

8 x 8 (Hans Richter, USA, 1957)

This is a chess film in which Arp, Tanguy, Duchamp, and others perform as the chess pieces.

The Lead Shoes (Sidney Peterson, USA, 1949)

“ The most accomplished work of America’s foremost surrealist filmmaker. This is a hypnotic, obsessive nightmare of parricide and compulsive attempts to undo the deed.

The basic images — the blood, the knife, the bread voraciously attacked — shock by their atavistic simplicity. The hallucinatory effect is reinforced by the extraordinary soundtrack, an enigmatic exploration of two old English ballads, scrambled

in jam session style and interwoven with experimental sound.”

(www.subcin.com/surrealism.html)

The World of Paul Delvaux (Henri Storck, Belgium, 1947)

This is a film about the painter’s works. The camera glides in a dream-like way from painting to painting, but their content is unrecognizable. It is a disturbing journey through the world of the Belgium surrealist painter.

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Luis Bunuel

L'Age D'Or (Luis Bunuel, France, 1930)

The surrealist believed that nothing could counteract the burden of institutions and establishment except irrational, anarchic, wild love. This is film which is devoted to these ideas. A frustrated and sexually aroused woman passionately sucks on the toe of a statue displaying foot fetishism.

“ Unexpected and unacceptable combinations of thoroughly familiar elements introduce a feeling of marvel and unrest, opening the subconscious to new possibilities and hence, potential freedom. The cow is very large indeed; the bed very sensuous; the man in a swoon or stupor; in any case, brutal reality has supervened in the sanctuary of the bourgeois — his bedroom.”

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The Seven Samurai (1954)