

Introduction and  
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## **Introduction**

The beginning of the twentieth century was marked by major tumultuous changes. World War 1 and the Russian Revolution greatly influenced how people understood the world. The findings of Freud and Einstein, as well as the technological innovations of the Machine Age, registered distinctively new 'modernist' modes of feeling and perception.

In cultural terms, more transformed human awareness was progressed by the publication of books that defined the modernist sensibility. The early twentieth century art movements effectively depict this new mind-set. One of these is the cultural movement called Surrealism. The French poet, Andre Breton, initiated it in 1924. This art and literary movement grew in Europe between The First World War and the Second World War. Surrealism sprang out of the previous Dada movement. It was a way of life that most artists tried to escape their disparities by adopting the Sigmund Freud theories.

## **The Beginnings and growth of Surrealism**

Dadaism developed nearly at the same time in Zurich, New York, and Paris during the First World War. It further made appearance in Germany before concentrating in France. It flourished from 1916 to 1922. With the aim of ridiculing what its adherents regarded to be the worthlessness of the modern world, it promoted anti-war and anti-art works (De la Croix and Tansey, 705). Many people joined the movement since they disputed the bourgeois nationalist and colonialist interests. This is because many of them believed they were the major causes of the First World War.

Therefore, the Dadaists conveyed their denunciation of the ideology using artistic expressions. These expressions appeared to reject the reason and logic of bourgeois capitalist society, which resulted in the First World War. In general, the Dadaists embraced chaos and irrationality. The movement of Dada was anti-art since anything for which art stood, it depicted as opposite (“ Dada and Surrealism, para. 1).

This was an attempt by the Dadaists to purify art by mocking it. This made the proponents of this movement to develop pieces that were very playful and teasing. For example, Marcel Duchamp developed a popular portrait of the Mona Lisa having a mustache. Nearly every Dada piece arouses a reaction, which was the intended objective since the movement hoped to annihilate all the traditional elements of culture and aesthetics. Despite existing for a short time, Dadaism left an enduring legacy to contemporary art, advertising and the social order, and if it were not present, it is unlikely that Surrealism and other modern art movements would have existed. Surrealism is largely considered as an outgrowth of the earlier Dada movement, but its ideas are better organized and more relevant to the real world (Klingsohr-Leroy and Grosenick, 7). Andre Breton, the founder of Surrealism, was trained in medicine and psychiatry.

During the First World War, he employed his skills in a neurological hospital where he helped soldiers who were suffering from a condition referred to as combat stress reaction or battle fatigue. In the hospital, he found Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic methods to be very helpful in treating the soldiers. When the war ended, Breton moved back to Paris where he joined the Dada

movement. While he was in France, together with his two friends, Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault, he founded the literary journal called

### **Litterature**

Thereafter, based on Sigmund Freud's theories that the unconscious was a wellspring of imagination, they started by experimenting with automatic writing in which they spontaneously noted down their thoughts without censoring them.

They then published the writings in the journal together with some accounts of dreams. Breton and Soupault continued their investigations on surrealist automatism and published *The Magnetic Fields* in 1919, which is considered by most people to be the first truly surrealist text. As they delved deeper into automatism, more and more people embraced surrealist principles since they considered them better approaches for transforming the society than Dada attack on prevailing values.

The surrealist philosophers and artists felt that Dadaism did not allow categories and labels. The proponents of surrealism perceived that ordinary and depictive expressions are essential in liberating the imagination.

However, they upheld the idea that the sense of that arrangement ought to be in full arrangement according to the Hegelian dialectic and the Marxist dialectic. The surrealists adapted the thoughts of Sigmund Freud to suit their own purposes (" Historical Origins of Surrealist, para.

7). They considered Freud's ideas as the accidental rediscovery of the power of dreams and imagination, which had been hidden for a long time under the purely rational outlook that was common during the early twentieth century.  
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The surrealists predicted that as the artists would develop perspectives that would give them the strength of freeing themselves from the control of reason, a new intellectual tendency will inevitably come up. Freud had attempted to define and illustrate the subconscious mind as a genuine phenomenon that controlled thought and behavior; therefore, the surrealists translated this understanding into an artistic and literary methodology that was based on the subconscious and the imagination. They believed that these had been repressed by rationalism, civilization, and progress. In 1924, the Surrealist movement was officially founded when Breton published the first “ Surrealist Manifesto” which defined its intentions (“ Surrealism,” para. 1). The document defined Surrealism as “ psychic automatism in its pure state by which we propose to express- verbally, in writing, or in any other manner- the real process of thought.

The dictation of thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason and outside any aesthetic or moral concerns” (Leslie, 59). This implies that surrealists advocated for nonconformity, which was not as excessive as that of the Dadaists. This is because when Dada was existing, it was considered as an art. The document gives many instances in which Surrealist thoughts can be applied to poetry and literature. However, it emphasizes that Surrealist principles are relevant in any circumstance of life. This implies that they are not limited to the artistic realm. The text outlines the vital role that the earlier Dada movement played in the Development of Surrealism (Hopkins, 17).

The manifesto highlights the essence of the dream as a reservoir of

Surrealist inspiration and details the experiences of Breton with the surreal in <https://assignbuster.com/introduction-and-aesthetics-despite-existing-for-a-short/>

a famous description of a hypnagogic state whereby a strange phrase mysteriously came into his view. The text, which was written with a great deal of absurdist humor, has references to several precursors of Surrealism that represented the Surrealist spirit before the declaration of the manifesto and the works of other Surrealists, who participated in the development of the Surrealist style, are also included. The manifesto concludes by affirming that the activities of the movement do not follow any plan or conventional pattern. Besides Breton, other renowned Surrealists, who acknowledged that they are ultimately nonconformists, signed the manifesto. After officially launching the movement, Breton and his team published the foundational issue of a journal called *La Revolution surrealiste* (Andrews, 60).

Thereafter, publications for the journal, which was considered constantly scandalous and revolutionary, continued up to 1929. The Surrealists also established the Bureau of Surrealist Research in Paris where they could play collaborative drawing games, discuss the principles of Surrealism, and develop different skills such as automatic drawing. The second Surrealist Manifesto, supervised by Breton, was issued to the public in 1930. The proclamation included anti-idealist principles, which led to the development of hybrid Surrealism. This made the surrealists to reveal the base instincts of humans. Breton was ruling the Surrealist movement like a dictator. He firmly observed the theories of surrealism.

His strong stand made many people to be expelled from the group while others simply defected. One of these is Salvador Dali who was ‘

excommunicated’ in 1937 since Breton thought that his theories were

misguided. Nonetheless, the other Surrealists, such as Paul Eluard and

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Robert Desnos, continued publishing their principles until the start of the Second World War. Even though most Surrealists were poets, others attempted prose writing, for example, Breton successfully published a novel called *Nagja*. Surrealism had a great influence in the early twentieth century.

It motivated related movements in areas such as painting, sculpture, movie production, and performance of plays. More so, it has a lasting influence on the field of creative arts as a whole.

### **The emerging of groups from surrealism**

The Surrealists eventually divided into two groups: the Automatists and the Veristic Surrealists. Ortolano explains that the “ Automatists were only interested in the artistic expression but oblivious to finding meaning to it, that is, they considered the abstract expression to be more important than analyzing it” (27). Their motto was “ No meaning, just expression.

” As implied in the earlier sections of this paper, Automatists followed Breton’s form of Surrealistic art. On the other hand, Veristic Surrealists differed from Automatists by defining the unconscious as psychiatrist Carl Jung visualized it; therefore, they endeavored to communicate deeper thoughts by analyzing the metaphoric importance of the work of art and its relationship with the universal unconscious. Veristic Surrealists held the belief that Surrealism could best express the unconscious when the images of the dreams are captured in an art form and later decoded through analysis. The universal expression of the unconscious was according to Jung’s position who maintained that every person has an inherent knowledge

and comprehension of images that are usually universal in nature and are portrayed in most literature and art.

## **Two Opposing Approaches to Art**

The theories of Salvador Dali and Pablo Picasso are the two conflicting art theories that define the direction that art should take in this century. Dali had excellent painterly skills and in the early 1930s, he developed the Paranoic-critical method in the production of paintings and artworks.

This technique requires an artist to let the images to arrive at the conscience. Thereafter, the artist is required to freeze them on a canvas so as to give consciousness ample time for grasping their full meaning. After sometime, he brought in other aspects and called the technique the Oniric – Critical Method. In this case, the artist is required to concentrate on his dreams, freeze them through art, and simultaneously evaluate them (“History of Surrealism,” para. 15). On the other hand, through embracing the scandal and chaos of Dadaism and the position of the Automatists, Picasso took a different approach to art. He refused to acknowledge the ability to become ‘ primitive.

’ Since even in his early years he exhibited a mysterious talent in art, he decided that the ingenuity of childhood should form the foundation of art and artists should paint as children, that is, become less preoccupied with the craft. However, Dali was for the idea of upholding the inquisitiveness and enthusiasm of a kid all through the life of a person, not just painting as a kid.



## **The struggle of Surrealism and its current status**

Veristic Surrealists assert that one should learn from the mystery of nature.

On the other hand, Automatists maintain that one should never become conscious of the mystery of nature. The approach to art that was promoted by Picasso is acceptable by almost everyone.

However, few people have embraced the approach that was promoted by Dali. Currently, Veristic Surrealism aim to seek for freedom and the change of man's consciousness through visual arts, literature, film, and music. From the beginning of Surrealism, renowned men have struggled with the perennial questioning of philosophy, the investigation of psychology, and the spirit of mysticism with the aim of enabling us consciously develop our full human potential.

Even though surrealism encountered difficulties during the late 20th century and was slowly substituted by the artistic philosophy of modernism, it is still evident today. Surrealist examples exist in modern art and film in an attempt to regain its once major cultural force. For example, Miyazaki's 2005 film *Howl's Moving Castle* uses aspects of Surrealism to depict the condition of the early twentieth century English towns. Several children in primary grades are instructed on self-portraiture techniques based particularly on the portraits by Picasso, and in literature, magical realism in works by writers such as Gabriel Marquez contain aspects of surrealism.

## **Future of Surrealism**

The advent of modernism has made many people to reject Surrealist principles.

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However, although it has existed in silent seclusion for about a half a century, its evolution will bring a new form of art that will be appealing to everybody. As professional interest in it will be aroused, the world will again experience the aesthetic pleasures on art. Surrealism is essential in helping us to understand the architecture of the psyche and those who have dedicated their time to analyzing the images of the subconscious can have the opportunity of educating the world on the workings of the spiritual, psychological, and the physical planes of human existence.

## **Conclusion**

Surrealism as a cultural movement of visual arts and writings borrowed some of its tenets from the earlier Dada movement. Most of the Surrealist artists had great imagination and the works of the earlier philosophers such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung influenced their Surrealistic thoughts. The publication of the Surrealist Manifesto in 1924 served as a turning point for the movement since the declaration enabled it to gain official status. As Surrealism advanced, two groups of Automatists and Veristic Surrealists emerged from it.

Although they have been in silent seclusion for sometime now, their resurgence in the future will ensure that they once again have a dialogue with the public in expressing the workings of the subconscious.

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