



## The Study of Surrealism- Salvador Dali

### Summary

Surrealism (which means 'beyond reality') began with people in the 1920s who believed that the way to find out about truth in the world was through the subconscious mind and dreams, rather than through thinking logically. Surrealists included poets and writers as well as artists and became a popular movement in France before becoming more widely popular during its peak in the 1930s. The first known Surrealist was a poet from France called André Breton who wrote The Surrealist Manifesto in 1924.

Surrealist artists explored the subconscious areas of the mind which they believed could steer behaviour and emotion. This often meant that the artwork made little sense as it was usually trying to show a dream or the random thoughts of the artist. Surrealist art can be surprising with unexpected items placed next to each other for no obvious reason.

Salvador Dalí was a famous artist from Spain who lived in the 20th century (1904-89). As a child, Dalí liked to draw and paint boats and houses and, when 17, he went to study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid, the capital of Spain. Dalí was not a good student and often got into trouble with his teachers. After leaving the academy, Dalí experimented more with art and became interested in Surrealism. He was inspired by the work of artists like René Magritte and Joan Miró and eventually became one of the most important artists of the Surrealist movement.

In 1931, Dalí painted The Persistence of Memory (see left), which is still considered by many to be the most famous painting by a Surrealist artist. His ability to shock and entertain made his paintings particularly popular. Many artists have been inspired by Dalí's work.


### Artists & Artisans:

Famous artists known for creating Surrealist art include:

- Paul Klee (1879-1940) Swiss painter
- Max Ernst (1891-1976) German painter and sculptor
- Joan Miró (1893-1983) Spanish painter and sculptor
- René Magritte (1898-1967) Belgian painter
- Alberto Giacometti (1901-66) French sculptor
- Salvador Dalí (1904-89) Spanish painter

### Vocabulary:

**subconscious:** part of your mind that affects your behaviour even though you are not aware of it  
**logically:** explained or reasoned with facts or evidence  
**crescent:** a curved shape that is wider in the middle  
**abyss:** a deep hole in the ground  
**stylised:** using unreal artistic forms to create effects  
**enigmatic:** mysterious, difficult to understand  
**emphasis:** to make something seem more important  
**automatism:** performing actions without control or without conscious knowledge  
**gesso:** a white substance mixed with glue  
**persistence:** continuing to do something even though it is difficult or other people are against it  
**Civil War:** a war fought between different groups of people who live in the same country  
**irrelevant:** not important, not connected with what is being discussed or dealt with  
**unconscious:** unaware of something, like being asleep  
**distorted:** changed from its usual or natural condition

			<b>horizon:</b> the line in the far distance where the sky seems to meet the land or sea
<b>Colour Theory:</b>	The use of colour was very important to Surrealists. Some used dull colours in the background and bright colours for their main objects to give them more emphasis. Max Ernst used colour to represent the characteristics of specific weather – such as blue for rain, red for the burning sun and yellow for a normal sunny day.	<b>Styles and Periods:</b>	N/A
<b>Media &amp; Materials:</b>	Use a combination of painting/collage and textiles to create their own surrealism inspired finished piece. Use the following link for inspiration.  <a href="https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/explore/what-is/surrealism">https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/explore/what-is/surrealism</a>	<b>Techniques:</b>	Dalí usually painted on canvas or a wood panel, although his earlier work was sometimes on cardboard. He would start by covering the surface with white paint before painting in the horizon, sky and landscape.  For the important objects and figures, Dalí used black or blue pencil. He then used tiny brushstrokes of oil paint which he believed made his work more realistic.
<b>Emotions:</b>	Dalí was famous for creating strong emotions with his artwork. In one painting, Autumnal Cannibalism, Dalí expressed his anger about the Spanish Civil War by showing a male and female form who look like they are eating each other's flesh with a knife, fork and spoon. He used this image to say something important: by fighting, the Spanish people were destroying each other.	<b>Process:</b>	As Dalí developed his style, he increasingly returned to using the same objects as symbols, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• elephants – distorted reality</li> <li>• eggs – hope and love</li> <li>• ants – death</li> <li>• locusts – waste and fear</li> <li>• snails – the human head!</li> </ul>
<b>Visual Language:</b>	The painting shown below has the title Around the Fish and was painted in 1926 by the Swiss artist Paul Klee. It is a typical example of a Surrealist painting as it seems quite random and difficult to explain. Positioned around a plate of fish are a cross, full and crescent moons, a red flag and an arrow, among other objects. The black background makes the objects appear to be hovering against a dark abyss. The arrow pointing at the form of a head possibly shows the link to the subconscious mind. Klee described his stylised and enigmatic objects as looking like they are 	<b>Effects:</b>	Some Surrealist artists used automatism to help provide the effect of chance or the release of a stream of subconscious thoughts from the mind. André Masson, for example, often used a sticky substance called gesso and let it fall onto the surface of the canvas. He then threw sand over it, letting the grains stick to the gesso. Finally, he doodled and painted around the grains.

	<p>growing to show that there is more to each item than what our knowledge of the object or shape suggests.</p> <p>Dalí's most famous painting, <i>The Persistence of Memory</i>, looks like something a person might see in a dream, rather than when they are awake – and as such is typical of Surrealist artwork. Most people believe the painting shows how the passing of time is irrelevant in the unconscious world.</p> <p>Critics have often tried to explain the meaning behind the melting clocks. Dalí himself said that the watches were inspired by Camembert cheese melting in the sun. The orange clock in the bottom left of the picture is covered in ants. Dalí often used ants in his paintings as a symbol for death.</p>		
<p><b>Key Local Links:</b></p>	<p>Explore local artists who have been inspired by surrealism:  <a href="https://artgallery.co.uk/cumbria-painting-funky-lakeside">https://artgallery.co.uk/cumbria-painting-funky-lakeside</a></p>	<p><b>Curriculum Links, Prior and future learning:</b></p>	<p>This builds on learning covered in Year 4 on abstract art. The unit of work entitled <i>Futurism</i> will build upon skills covered here</p>



	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Advancing</b>	<b>Deep</b>
<b>Effects</b>	What is the effect of using automatism in art? Why did André Masson use the substance gasso? Copy Masson's use of gasso by throwing different materials onto the paper/canvas.	What are the differences between Masson's automatist technique and the paintings of Surrealists Klee and Dalí?	Investigate why famous artists from different periods and styles might disagree with the use of an automatist technique.
<b>Visual Language</b>	Why might Paul Klee's painting Around the Fish be considered as typical of surrealism? What is the effect of Klee's use of a black background? Why is the arrow pointing to the head significant?	Compile a list of questions you would want to ask Paul Klee about his Around the Fish painting. Summarise Klee's explanation for why he wanted the objects he painted to appear as if they were growing.	Analyse the painting Around the Fish. True or false? The objects painted by Klee surrounding the plate of fish are all random and have no meaning. Give reasons to justify your answer.
<b>Artists &amp; Artisans</b>	Name some famous Surrealist artists. Who is now considered to be the first Surrealist and what was he famous for? In which decade did Surrealism begin and when was Surrealist art considered to be at its most popular?	Find out about the sculptures of Alberto Giacometti. Find out why he is considered to be the most important Surrealist sculptor. Explain to a friend why the famous Surrealists produced art that was difficult to understand.	Research René Magritte's self-portrait The Son of Man. Suggest reasons why this painting is a good example of a Surrealist style.
<b>Colour Theory</b>	How do some Surrealists give greater emphasis to the main objects painted? How did Max Ernst use colour to represent the weather? Copy Ernst's use of colour to represent the weather using a Surrealist style.	Compare and contrast the use of colour by Surrealist artists and those who were famous for producing Pop art. Experiment with the use of dull background colours and bright colours for main objects in a Surrealist painting. Evaluate the effect of emphasis.	Always, sometimes or never? The colours used for painting the background of a piece of art should be dull.



	Basic	Advancing	Deep
Visual Language	<p>Why is Dalí's The Persistence of Memory typical of the Surrealist style?</p> <p>What do many people believe the painting is trying to show?</p> <p>What does Dalí say inspired him to paint melting clocks?</p>	<p>Summarise the main features of Dalí's painting The Persistence of Memory, and explain what you think the main objects represent.</p>	<p>True or false? Dalí's painting style is the best way to show what you dream about. Justify your answer.</p>
Process	<p>Give three examples of animals that Dalí used. What do they symbolise?</p> <p>Why did Dalí often paint eggs in his artwork?</p> <p>Choose three everyday objects and describe what you would use them to symbolise and why.</p>	<p>Explain to a friend why you think Dalí's choices of objects, figures and themes led him to be considered the most significant and inspirational Surrealist painter.</p>	<p>Connect your knowledge of how love has been expressed through artwork (previously supplied) and recommend objects that could be used to symbolise love in a Surrealist style painting.</p>
Emotions	<p>Why was Dalí angry about the Spanish Civil War?</p> <p>How did Dalí show this anger in the painting Autumnal Cannibalism?</p> <p>Name two artists who inspired Dalí to show his emotions through painting.</p>	<p>Find different examples of how Dalí expressed emotion in his paintings.</p> <p>Compare and contrast the work of other Surrealist artists to show how emotions have been represented.</p>	<p>Explain why you think Dalí was inspired by the use of emotion in the art of René Magritte and Joan Miró. Justify your reasons.</p>
Techniques	<p>List three different materials that Dalí used to paint on.</p> <p>What techniques did Dalí use to start his paintings?</p> <p>How did Dalí make his artwork appear more realistic?</p>	<p>Summarise the techniques used most frequently by Dalí when painting.</p>	<p>Explore and compare the techniques of Dalí and those of an artist who painted in a more lifelike, realistic style.</p>