

# RENÉ MAGRITTE

THE REVEALING IMAGE  
PHOTOS AND FILMS

EDUCATION RESOURCE



# EDUCATION RESOURCE

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# WELCOME

## TO THE WONDERFUL WORLDS OF MAGRITTE

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It is our hope that this information pack will bring you closer to the life and times of this celebrated artist and major figure in the history of western art. René Magritte painted some of the most mysterious and enchanting images of the 20th century, and Latrobe Regional Gallery is delighted to present photos and films from his archive.

Working in collaboration with the Magritte Foundation Belgium, this exhibition of seeks to shed new light on Magritte's work processes, attitudes, paintings, family and his circle of friends. These photos and film works have not been seen in Australia before and will not be seen here again, once the exhibition leaves Morwell, to start a global tour into Asia, the Americas and Europe.

Latrobe Regional Gallery is proud to act as the only exhibiting venue in the Australia/NZ region for this rarest of opportunities and welcomes you to *René Magritte: The Revealing Image, Photos and Films*.

# RENÉ

# MAGRITTE

THE REVEALING IMAGE  
PHOTOS AND FILMS

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ABOUT

# ABOUT

## HOW TO USE THIS EDUCATION RESOURCE

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This education resource is intended as a starting point for generating ideas and classroom activities before, during and after visiting to *René Magritte: The Revealing Image, Photos and Films* and is intended to complement and be used in additional information provided in the exhibition catalogue and gallery wall texts. The resource includes an introduction to the exhibition, suggesting points for discussion and practical activities for junior and senior students.

### PRE-VIEWING PLANNING

Before visiting *René Magritte: The Revealing Image, Photos and Films* it is suggested that you contact the gallery staff to determine the following:

- Suitability of exhibition content and subject matter for the year level you plan to bring
- Staff availability to give an introductory talk or tour
- Opening hours, transport and parking options, cloakroom facilities and if admission fees apply
- Education and public programs, directors talks etc. that coincide with the exhibition

### CURRICULUM LINKS AND CONNECTIONS

Teachers are encouraged to adapt the curriculum links given in the list below to suit the relevant state curricula. Use this list to generate ideas, activities and points for discussion, and where suitable contact Education staff at Latrobe Regional Gallery (LRG) for further ideas and suggestions.

### VISUAL/CREATIVE/STUDIO ARTS

- Artist's practice: ideas and inspiration
- The role of the artist: artist as social commentator, artist as storyteller
- The use of symbolism and development of personal iconography/mythologies
- The relationship between the artist, subject, artwork, art museum/gallery and audience
- The diversity and range of media, materials and techniques used by the artist
- Responding to artworks: analyses and interpretation using appropriate language

### ENGLISH AND MEDIA STUDIES

- Responding verbally to visual images
- Creative writing and responding
- Analysis of narrative in artworks
- Critical essays, responses and reviews
- Examination of the recurring patterns, motifs and archetypes

### STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- The role of artworks in providing commentary about interconnectedness between humans, society and environment
- Social issues that are present in the artworks including environmental sustainability, identity, gender issues, migration and cultural displacement
- Visual arts as a reflection of ideas and beliefs in contemporary culture and society

### HISTORY

- European cultures and histories
- Oral history traditions

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INTRODUCTION

# FROM THE CURATOR

XAVIER CANONNE

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The photographs and films of René Magritte were discovered in the mid-1970s, more than ten years after the painter's death. Their evaluation and study have made it possible to gain access to a sort of family album, an informal Magritte, irrespective of the biographical elements unearthed from his archives and those of the people close to him. Their discovery also led to an examination of the relationship Magritte maintained with these 'other images' he executed or posed for, his affinity for the mediums of photography and cinema, and the role he assigned to them in his painting, whether in creating or recreating.

While the Surrealists made considerable use of photography (some, like Man Ray, Raoul Ubac and Jacques-André Boiffard, even devoted themselves to it wholly), Magritte, like his Brussels colleagues, never thought of himself as a 'photographer' but earmarked the practice for particular moments and specific uses: family photographs; photographs of the Brussels Surrealists; exemplars for paintings and commercial art, circumventing the need for live models; photographs of paintings in progress; and scenes improvised with his friends, like those he later made with a home-movie camera.

This great variety of uses nevertheless excluded any notion of exhibition, for painting remained the sole object of his research. All the same, Magritte was not indifferent to photography – this 'poor material', this mechanical and industrial process accessible to all, usable by all. Here, these glossy images – smooth as his brushstroke and, like it, reproducible – present a tangible, apparent reality and provide a perfect example of the shift from 'document' to 'artwork', so pervaded are they with the spirit of Magritte, which makes them inseparable from his paintings.

Xavier Canonne

PhD in Art History

Director, Musée de la Photographie Charleroi, Belgium



**Image Credit:** Shunk Kender: René Magritte in front of *Le sens de réalité* (detail), 1960 Collection: Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

### SURREALISM AND RENÉ MAGRITTE

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#### WHAT IS SURREALISM?

Surrealism was the first international art movement to actively include women - this from a time when T Model Ford was still on the roads. Surrealism was a particular way of thinking about creativity that developed in Paris in the mid-1920s. It was not a style of art; rather it promoted a turnaround view of the source of human imagination – it looked inward rather than outward. For all Surrealists “true” art came from the factory of the mental world. In order to create one must first imagine and in order to imagine one must allow oneself the opportunity to look within.

Importantly, Surrealism is neither invented fantasy nor dreamy escape – it unzips the inner world of personal thought rather than settles for the outer world of fact. The human imagination and fertility of the mind should know no bounds - ask Einstein, Brain Cox or Leonardo. We all possess a mind and for the Surrealists the inner world of the perceiver is richer in creative potential than the outer world of that which is perceived. Certainly, humans exist and act in an external objective world but they live and feel in an inner subjective state – Surrealism points to this hidden universe within all, male and female alike.

#### WHO WAS MAGRITTE?

René Magritte (21 November 1898-15 August 1967) was a Belgian artist who was welcomed into the Surrealists’ prestigious art circle in Paris in 1928. He became immensely famous for his oddly witty and mentally perplexing paintings and his imagery has influenced much subsequent art, film, literature and photography; likewise, posters, music album covers and advertising are often crammed with images prised from Magritte’s works – the most famous being The Beatles’ Apple company logo of 1968. Magritte’s works are represented in all the world’s major art galleries and held in many significant international private collections, including those of Paul McCartney and David Bowie.

In 1998, as a national tribute to celebrate the centenary of his birth, Magritte’s image and signature were printed on Belgium’s 500-franc note – the most recent auction (8 March 2017, Christies, London) of one of his paintings fetched a record price of \$22,833,000.



**Image Credit:** *La Coquetterie René Magritte Paris, Le Jardin des Plantes, EPS (detail). 1928. 5 x 3,7 cm. Collection Isy Brachot.*

# THE INFLUENCE OF MAGRITTE

KEN WACH

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René Magritte's very rare photographs and films allow entry into the private realm of one of Surrealism's most intriguing artists – the fame of his mysterious mind equals that of his close friend Salvador Dali. Thought flourishes when it feeds upon connections – that's exactly the thing that makes Magritte so central to Surrealism. Magritte came closest to the idea of art as a "brain fact" – an art that is thought into existence and attempts to create the new rather than re-create the old.

Magritte's photographs and films show him at work and at play – and sometimes they seem to show nothing. In other words, they often attempt to capture that which cannot be photographed – feelings, thoughts, sensations, jokes, memories and the like. So often what we see is the hinting shadow of something rather than the thing itself. So often, it's about using photography to refer to something other than itself - no mentions of technique, no f-stops and no camera brands. There is just that smudge of light and shade that we call photography - that wonderfully informal passing glimpse of what it was to be Magritte, the magician of imagery.

Ken Wach  
Associate Professor  
The University of Melbourne

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A FAMILY ALBUM

# EXTRACT FROM *RENÉ MAGRITTE: THE REVEALING IMAGE*

XAVIER CANONNE

The photographs in this section, arranged chronologically, are devoted to Magritte's family life: snaps taken with his parents and brothers, his military service, the early years of his marriage to Georgette, their period of residence at Perreux-sur-Marne near Paris, their life in Brussels, all revealing the daily life of René Magritte.



**Image Credit Top:** *Régina Bertinchamps, René Magritte's mother* Collection: Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels

**Bottom:** Left to right: *Paul, Raymond and René Magritte, about 1905* Collection: Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels

René-François-Ghislain Magritte was born in Lessines, in the southern Belgian province of Hainaut, on 21 November 1898. His father, Léopold, was a merchant tailor. His mother, Régina Bertinchamps, was a milliner. René had two younger brothers: Raymond, born in 1900, and Paul, born in 1902.

In 1904, the family moved to Châtelet, a town not far from Charleroi. René took his first painting classes in 1910. The Magritte brothers were remembered in the neighbourhood as rascals given to playing mean tricks.

One night in February 1912, Régina left the house and threw herself into the nearby river. Her body was not recovered for two weeks.

*'The only feeling Magritte remembers about this event – or thinks he remembers – is a keen pride at the thought of being the pitiable centre of a drama.'*  
- Louis Scutenaire, *René Magritte*, 1948

It was at the town fair in Charleroi that René Magritte, aged fifteen, first saw the girl he would marry, Georgette Berger, whose parents were merchants. He left Charleroi and enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, where he absorbed the theories of the modern aesthetic. While strolling in the Brussels Botanical Garden, he met Georgette again. He married her in June 1922, after fulfilling his military service. To earn a living, René worked at creating patterns in a wallpaper factory and designed advertisements, sheet music covers and cinema posters.



**Image credit Top:** *The Bouquet (Le Bouquet)* (detail), 1937. Georgette and René Magritte, Rue Essegheem, Brussels. Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels.  
**Bottom:** René Magritte, *The Lovers* (detail), 1928. © 2017 Charly Herscovici c/o SABAM

# A FAMILY ALBUM

## THE BOUQUET AND THE LOVERS

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### PRIMARY

#### Questions

- What does this artwork make you think of?
- Does the title change your initial ideas about the artwork?
- What story do you think the painting is telling?
- Does the photograph communicate the same story or a completely different one?

#### Classroom activity

Find a photograph in the gallery that you like.

On a piece of paper collect this information

- Name:
- Title:
- Date of artwork:
- What do you enjoy about this artwork?
- What story or idea could this artwork be expressing?

### SECONDARY

#### Questions

- What is the most important art element in this painting? (line, shape, colour, tone etc.)
- What do you like most, and the least, about Magritte's *The Bouquet*?
- The story in *The Lovers* is about loss; What can you find in the painting that shows it?

#### Classroom activity

Select one everyday object, one animal and a landscape (the stranger the better). Construct your own self-portrait. Work slowly, observing and recording your own features with the help of a mirror. Experiment with adding the imagery that you selected to create a Surrealist style image.

### VCE

#### Questions

- Discuss how art elements, colour, shape, line, tone, form and texture, have been used in the photograph. How do they create an effective artwork?
- Look at both artworks, what elements are most prominent in the composition of each?
- How would you describe the style of these artworks? Is the style similar between mediums?
- Can you see evidence of the photographic work in the painting? Where? Describe what you think the artists process was in creating the final painted artwork.

#### Classroom activity

Discuss possible meanings behind Magritte's painting *The Lovers*. Complete research to see if you can confirm your ideas behind the meaning of the artwork.

Artists often create artworks in response to an experience that has happened in their life. Find three artworks by different artists and discuss how the artist has managed to express their personal feelings and desires. Reference the art elements and principles in your answer.

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A FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

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# EXTRACT FROM *RENÉ MAGRITTE: THE REVEALING IMAGE*

XAVIER CANONNE

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Organised chronologically, this section brings together photographs representing René Magritte's other "family", the Brussels Surrealist group with which the painter threw in his lot in 1926: Paul Nougé, Marcel Lecomte, Louis Scutenaire, Irène Hamoir, Paul Colinet, Marcel Mariën, Camille Goemans and Marthe Beauvoisin are some of the characters who feature in these compositions, in many cases improvised "photographic tableaux" bearing witness to the intimate relationship between René Magritte and his immediate circle.



**Image Credit Top:** *The Thousand-and-First Street (La mille et unième rue)*, 1939. Left to right: Paul Magritte, Marthe Beauvoisin, René Magritte, Georgette Magritte and Paul Nougé (from behind), Sonian Forest, Brussels Collection; Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels  
**Bottom:** *The Hunters' Gathering (Le rendez-vous de chasse)*, 1934. Left to right: E. L. T. Mesens, René Magritte, Louis Scutenaire, André Souris and Paul Nougé. Seated: Irène Hamoir, Marthe Beauvoisin and Georgette Magritte. Studio Jos Rentmeesters Collection Charly Herscovici, Europe.

In January 1920, in an exhibition he shared with Pierre-Louis Flouquet, René Magritte exhibited a series of paintings conveying the various influences to which he had been exposed since studying at the Academy: Cubism, Futurism and abstraction.

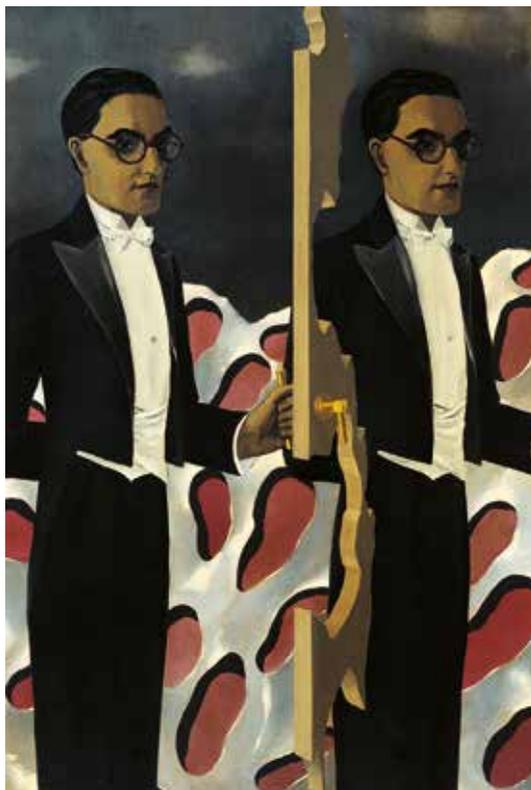
He met the seventeen-year-old musician E. L. T. Mesens and, in 1922, the poet Marcel Lecomte, who showed him a reproduction of a painting by Giorgio de Chirico, *The Song of Love* (1914).

*'Lecomte showed Magritte a photograph of a painting by de Chirico, The Song of Love, and the painter could not hold back his tears.'*

- René Magritte, *Esquisse autobiographique*, 1954

Other decisive acquaintanceships were with the poet Camille Goemans, who became his dealer in Paris, and in 1924, Paul Nougé, who established himself as the leader of the Brussels Surrealist group. Magritte made his first Surrealist works in 1925 under the influence of not only de Chirico but also the collages of Max Ernst. In 1927, he met Louis Scutenaire, who became a fast friend and regular collector.

Intellectual affinities and collaboration on various publications notwithstanding, the Brussels group maintained a certain independence of spirit vis-a-vis André Breton's Surrealist group in Paris, rejecting its emphasis on dreams and automatism.



**Image Credit Top:** *The Hunters' Gathering (Le rendez-vous de chasse)*, 1934. Left to right: E. L. T. Mesens, René Magritte, Louis Scutenaire, André Souris and Paul Nougé. Seated: Irène Hamoir, Marthe Beauvoisin and Georgette Magritte. Studio Jos Rentmeesters. Collection Charly Herscovici, Europe.  
**Bottom:** *Portrait of Paul Nougé (detail)*, 1927. © 2017 Charly Herscovici c/o SABAM

## A FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

### THE CORRESPONDANCE GROUP: PAUL NOUGÉ, MARCEL LECOMTE AND CAMILLE GOEMANS AND PORTRAIT OF PAUL NOUGÉ

*Paul Nougé always drew Magritte's attention to the value of feelings, respect for feelings, which require rigour of thought.*

- René Magritte

#### PRIMARY

##### Questions

- Can you find the man from the painting in the photo? How can you tell it is him?
- What does the background in the painting look like to you? Why?
- Do you think the painting could be a reflection in a mirror? Why? Give evidence from the artwork.

##### Classroom activity

Look at the photo, what do you think is happening in it? As a class, discuss what you think might happen next. You may like to invent a story or cartoon strip reflecting these ideas.

#### SECONDARY

##### Questions

- Do Magritte's photographs give any evidence of his relationship to Paul Nougé?
- Look at Magritte's painting of Nougé. Why do you think Magritte presented his painting in this way?
- Can you find a links between Magritte's work and that of another surrealist artist?

##### Classroom activity

Discuss the painting *Portrait of Paul Nougé*. What art movements could have influenced the style of Magritte's painting? Dot point your answers and give evidence from the painting.

#### VCE

##### Questions

- How does this style of painting relate to the style of any other contemporary artists? Find examples and annotate the similarities.
- Does the artist have a distinctive style in his photos or paintings? Give reasons for your answer.
- How has the artist used design principles, repetition, focal point, balance, harmony, variety and contrast, in the final composition of the painting?
- Describe how the mood of the photograph contrasts with that of the painting.

##### Classroom activity

Research and discuss the history of artists referencing photos or *camera obscura* in paintings. Do you consider this practice 'cheating'? Why?

Compare and contrast *Portrait of Paul Nougé* with a painting by Salvador Dali. Discuss the similarities and differences in subject matter, composition and technique.

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RESEMBLING A PAINTER

# EXTRACT FROM *RENÉ MAGRITTE: THE REVEALING IMAGE*

XAVIER CANONNE

This third section of the exhibition consists of photographs of René Magritte at his easel, covering the years from 1917 to 1965. They show the painter with works from different periods, taken impromptu or when posing, generally while wearing a suit, in the succession of houses where he lived. As working documents or staged photographs, they show how Magritte often tended to parody his work as a painter.



**Image Credit Top:** René Magritte painting *Attempting the Impossible (La tentative de l'impossible)*, Le Perreux-sur-Marne, 1928 Collection: Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels

**Bottom:** Charles Leirens: René Magritte, 1959 Collection of the Musée de la Photographie de Charleroi

In none of the houses that Magritte occupied in Brussels or Paris did he set up a proper studio. He preferred to paint by the light of a window in a corner of the dining room. This says something about how he viewed painting. For him, the act of painting was the result of a poetic or philosophical thought process rather than an aesthetic motivation. It was also a way for Magritte both to avoid looking at painting as a job and to distinguish himself from other painters, in whom he showed little interest.

*'His material is very modest: an easel, a paintbox, a palette, a dozen brushes, one or two sheets of blank paper in a box, an eraser, a stump, a pair of sewing scissors, a scrap of charcoal and an old black pencil. And the painter occupies only a corner of the dining room, where he carries out his task without luxury or ceremony.'*

- Louis Scutenaire, *René Magritte*, 1948.

Photographs showing Magritte at his easel convey his rejection of the traditional artist's pose. With an ascot at his neck and a pipe in his mouth, he parodies a criminal from the cinema. He also used photographs as models for his paintings, as in *Attempting the Impossible* (1928). Elsewhere, in *Magritte Painting Clairvoyance* (1936), he created a *mise en abyme* by having himself photographed in a pose identical to the one he was painting, taking the image beyond what would otherwise have simply been a documentary photo. In other photos, he incorporated himself physically into the painting, as if entering the space of the canvas.



**Image Credits Top:** René Magritte painting *Clairvoyance*, Brussels, 4 October 1936 Collection: Collection Charly Herscovici, Europe.  
**Bottom:** *Clairvoyance*, 1936. © 2017 Charly Herscovici c/o SABAM

# RESEMBLING A PAINTER

## RENÉ MAGRITTE PAINTING CLAIRVOYANCE AND CLAIRVOYANCE

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### PRIMARY

#### Questions

- What objects do you see?
- How many people are in the photo?
- Do you think this is a self-portrait? if so, why do you think that?
- In the photograph, what is the painter looking at?

#### Classroom activity

Using mirrors, draw a self portrait of you drawing.

### SECONDARY

#### Questions

- Why do you think that Magritte choose the props of a bird and an egg to create his artworks? What could they symbolize?
- Describe how Magritte's painting uses symbols, objects or subjects differently to his photograph.
- What messages or ideas are communicated to you in the photo and painting? Are they different?

#### Classroom activity

Create a *mise en abyme* - a self-reflection or introspection, using mirrors to create a picture within a picture.

### VCE

#### Questions

- What sort of setting do you think the artist intended the works to be seen in? How might this setting contribute to the meaning of the works?
- What meanings and messages are communicated in these artworks?
- How has the artist used the subject matter to convey this meaning?

#### Classroom activity

Identify an artwork by a contemporary artist who you believe has appropriated or been directly influenced by Magritte. Discuss.

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THE REVEALING IMAGE  
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PHOTOGRAPHY ENHANCED

# EXTRACT FROM *RENÉ MAGRITTE: THE REVEALING IMAGE*

XAVIER CANONNE

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The fourth section of the exhibition comprises photographs of paintings by Magritte that have been placed on his easel or that form the background of portraits of him and his wife. Although some of these paintings have since been lost, they provide the painter with a stage set into which he projects himself with his wife, thereby going beyond documentary photography.

This section also includes a series of photographs that served as models for Magritte's paintings. Featuring the artist and Georgette Magritte, along with Louis Scutenaire and various close friends, these photographs directly connect with his works, which are presented in the form of reproductions. Magritte used the same procedure in the short films he made between 1940 and 1960. Extracts of these are shown alongside the original photographs.



**Image Credit:** Shunk Kender: René Magritte painting *The Well of Truth (Le puits de vérité)*, Rue des Mimosas, Brussels, 1962 Collection: Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels

Magritte did not experiment with the photographic process. He adopted the same neutrality with the camera as that which he demonstrated at the easel. His photographs evince a form of improvisation that is a compromise between being a portrait of those around him and a reproduction of his own paintings, effecting a merger of both. Some of the photographs express the same concerns as his paintings; for example *The Shadow and Its Shadow* (1932), which deals with the theme of the loving merger of a couple, and *The Oblivion Seller* (1936), is a portrait of Georgette surrounded by objects that resembles a painting of the artist's wife from 1937.

Magritte used photography to produce models for his paintings. Some of these correspond closely, like *God, the Eighth Day* (1937), which prefigures *The Healer* (1937), and an image of Scutenaire posing for *Universal Gravitation* (1943). Others, like *The Death of Ghosts* (1928) and *Queen Semiramis* (1947), evoke later paintings with slight variations.

Magritte often put himself in the picture alongside his works, as well as incorporating his friends and paintings in the little amateur films he made during the 1950s.

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**Image Credits Top:** *God, the Eighth Day (Dieu, le huitième jour) (detail)*, 1937. Rue Essegheem, Brussels Collection: Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels.  
**Bottom:** *The Healer (detail)*, 1937. © 2017 Charly Herscovici c/o SABAM

# PHOTOGRAPHY ENHANCED

## GOD, THE EIGHTH DAY AND THE HEALER

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### PRIMARY

#### Questions

- What objects do the painting and photograph have in common?
- What do you think the man in *God, the Eighth Day (Dieu, le huitième jour)* is doing?
- What are the differences between the photo and the painting?

#### Classroom activity

Stage a photograph using props that can obscure different parts of the body. Print your photograph and recreate as a surrealist pastel drawing.

### SECONDARY

#### Questions

- Do the works represent real or imagined places, objects, or experiences?
- Describe the subject matter used in the painting of *The Healer*.
- What ideas has the artist communicated with his choice of the subject matter?

#### Classroom activity

Using rich, descriptive language to engage the viewer write the story of *The Healer*.

### VCE

#### Questions

- Suggest some factors may have influenced the artists' choices in art elements and subject matter.
- What is the theme or purpose of these works? Consider the ideas, traditions, and the events related to the time, place, society or culture in which the works were created.

#### Classroom activity

Identify an artwork by a contemporary artist who you believe has appropriated or been directly influenced by Magritte. Give evidence to support your findings.

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THE IMITATION OF PHOTOGRAPHY: MAGRITTE AND THE CINEMA(TOGRAPH)

# EXTRACT FROM RENÉ MAGRITTE: THE REVEALING IMAGE

XAVIER CANONNE

More than painting and to the same extent as literature, the cinema was a seminal influence on the work of René Magritte. As a child, Magritte had been exposed to the first silent films, and he tried to recreate their freshness and spontaneity in the short films he made that featured his close friends.

Magritte may still be posing in the photographs in this section of the exhibition, but the emphasis is on entertainment. The photos are accompanied by extracts from Magritte's own films, presented on TV screens, and by images from films by directors he admired, such as Louis Feuillade with his celebrated *Fantômas*.



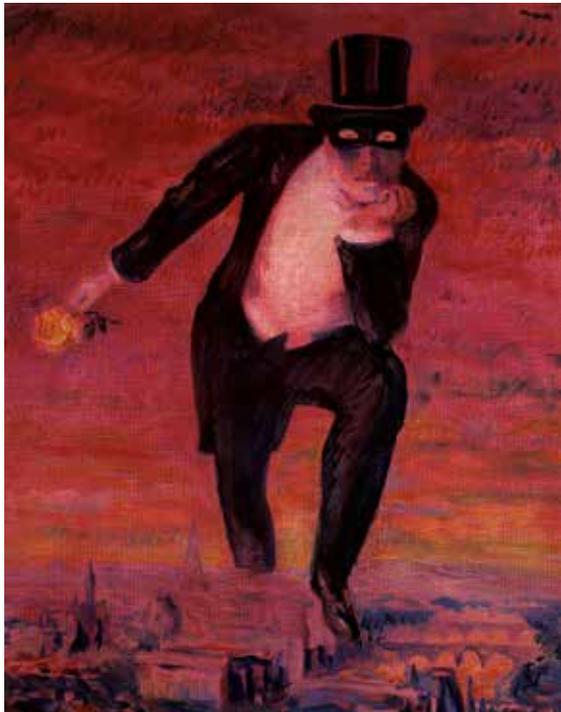
**Image Credit Top:** René Magritte filming (detail), about 1959 Collection: Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels  
**Bottom:** René Magritte, Verona (detail), 1967. Collection: Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels

The Surrealists were born at the same time as the camera and film projector. Films were as much a part of their childhood and adolescence as popular literature was. The first generation to be permeated by the moving image, they saw their storybook heroes come to life on the screen in the neighbourhood cinemas in the form of *Fantômas*, *Musidora* and the first vamps, and Charlie Chaplin, who was also known as Charlot the Little Tramp, and whom the Surrealists supported during his legal troubles. Magritte went to the cinema often, favouring comedies, westerns and entertaining films.

Various works by Magritte refer to films that impressed him. *The Murderer Threatened* (1927) directly quotes a scene from Louis Feuillade's *Fantômas*, the film about the criminal genius who is also seen in Magritte's painting *The Flame Rekindled* (1943). Similarly, the painting *In Memoriam Mack Sennett* (1934) refers to the director of silent slapstick comedies.

Faithful to the films of his youth, Magritte made little home movies in the 1950s that involved his long time kindred spirits in screenplays he devised. These intimate films, meant for private screening, are known only from mutilated excerpts when they are not lost altogether. In them, Magritte is a facetious improvisational actor. This attitude is in contrast to the premeditation that presided over his painting. Like his photographs, the films are 'enhanced', attesting to a pleasure in play and constant research.

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**Image Credit Top:** René Magritte and *The Barbarian (Le Barbare)* (detail), London Gallery, London, 1938 Collection: Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels.  
**Bottom:** *The Flame Rekindled* (detail), 1943. © 2017 Charly Herscovici c/o SABAM.

# THE IMITATION OF PHOTOGRAPHY: MAGRITTE AND THE CINEMA(TOGRAPH)

## RENÉ MAGRITTE AND THE BARBARIAN AND THE FLAME REKINDLED

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*I don't make films or cinema, I make home movies.* - René Magritte

### PRIMARY

#### Questions

- Describe the similarities and differences in the photograph and painting.
- What does the background in the painting remind you of?
- What are some reasons that people wear masks?
- Does the figure in these artworks appear to be good or bad? Why?

#### Classroom activity

Create a painting or drawing that uses your favourite element from the artworks opposite.

### SECONDARY

#### Questions

- What are the most influential art elements in these artworks? Compare your answers, between the photograph and the painting. Are they the same?
- What do you think the narrative is in these artworks? Which artwork do you think communicates a story better and why?
- What themes or ideas are present in the painting?

#### Classroom activity

In pairs, describe one of the artworks in as much detail as possible to a friend who cannot see the painting. Use rich descriptive language that focuses on the painting technique, colours, lines, and shapes. Describe how you experience the landscape and/or figure in front of you. Your description should try to evoke feeling and atmosphere as well as the physical features of the view.

### VCE

#### Questions

- What meaning do you think the artist intended to communicate in his artwork?
- What meanings and messages can you pick out of the artwork? What symbols or imagery help you decipher these meanings?
- Did everyone in your class see the same meaning and messages in the artworks?
- Suggest reasons people may have had different interpretations of the artwork.
- What is the focal point of the artworks? Why?

#### Classroom activity

In small groups create a storyboard using Magritte's film and photographs as inspiration. You may use the same style, imagery or themes. Your storyboard should include a sequence of sketched images and descriptions that effectively identify the main scenes and characters. Aim to create a strong narrative that engages the audience. Use a digital camera to bring your short film to life.

**RENÉ**

**MAGRITTE**

THE REVEALING IMAGE  
PHOTOS AND FILMS

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THE FALSE MIRROR

# EXTRACT FROM RENÉ MAGRITTE: THE REVEALING IMAGE

XAVIER CANONNE

This title of a celebrated painting by René Magritte opens the final section of the exhibition, which essentially consists of portraits of the artist at different stages of his life. Sometimes these portraits depict him in a dreamy mood and sometimes he is expressing amusement, although the images generally show him with his eyes closed and his mind focused inwards.

This section also includes photographs in which the painter and his friends mask their faces or turn away from the camera lens. As such, they are prolonging in photographic mode Magritte's painterly research on the *caché-visible* (things hidden in plain sight).



**Image Credit Top:** *The Death of Ghosts (La mort des fantômes)* (detail), 1928. Jacqueline Belcourt and René Magritte, Le Perreux-sur-Marne Collection; Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels.  
**Bottom:** *René Magritte, Houston* (detail), 1965 Collection; Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels

In many photographs, Magritte appears with his eyes closed, as if lost in introspection, concentrating on the exercise of his own thoughts. While the representation of a face with eyes closed is generally associated with sleep or death, Magritte's works contradict any unconditional allegiance to the all-powerful dream that was so dear to André Breton.

*'My painting is the opposite of a dream, since a dream does not mean what we say it does. I can only work lucidly.'*

- René Magritte, 1962

Rather than being the expression of a dream, Magritte's portraits with closed eyes represent an inner life. They demonstrate an action that aims to represent thought itself.

Magritte believed that a face does not express a person's real nature but offers only an appearance or 'false mirror'. To accept that someone is identical to his or her image would be to recognise paradoxically that the image of a pipe is indeed a pipe. In this regard, a painted representation or photograph of a person is no different in its degree of reality than that of an object.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that a number of Magritte's photographs incorporate the notion of the 'hidden-visible'. These include the images of Louis Scutenaire and Paul Nougé hiding behind their shoes *The Plantigrades* (1935) and Nougé masked by a chessboard *The Giant* (1937). Sometimes, in other photographs, the models hide their features by turning their backs to the camera.

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**Image Credits** Top: *The Giant (Le Géant) (detail)*, 1937. Paul Nougé on the Belgian Coast  
Collection: Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels.  
Bottom: *The Son of Man (Le fils de l'homme) (detail)*, 1964 © 2017 Charly Herscovici c/o SABAM

# THE FALSE MIRROR

## THE GIANT AND THE SON OF MAN

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### PRIMARY

#### Questions

- Name all the objects that can be found in both the painting and the photograph.
- Why do you think Magritte chose to hide his figures faces?
- Describe the mood of the images, do you think they look happy, sad, angry, serious?
- Can you give evidence from the images for your answer? Look at the sky in the background, does that give you any clues?

#### Classroom activity

Take a portrait photograph of yourself and print it out in an A4 size. Colour in the line drawing of a bowler hat and apple. Colour showing tone, and form. Paste an object over your portraits face.

### SECONDARY

#### Questions

- Is the representation of subject matter naturalistic, or is there evidence of distortion, stylisation, exaggeration or imagination in the way the subject is represented?
- Why do you think Magritte choose to hide his subjects faces? Does this change your interpretation of the artworks?

#### Classroom activity

Create a poem that expresses the feeling that these images evoke in you.

Create a collage. Take a portrait photograph of yourself and print it out in an A4 size. Cut images from magazines to hide your face. What objects could you use and what meaning would those objects communicate to the viewer?

### VCE

#### Questions

- Does the artwork, or any part of it (including materials, art elements and subject matter) have any associations for you? Consider familiar places, spaces, things, objects, experiences, memories or moods, or other artworks or images? If so, what are these associations?
- What meaning do they bring to the artwork?

#### Classroom activity

Do you think that Magritte could be considered one of the first photographers to take a selfie? Find examples of his work to prove or disprove this theory. Annotate with evidence from the imagery you have collected.

**RENÉ**

**MAGRITTE**

THE REVEALING IMAGE  
PHOTOS AND FILMS

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GLOSSARY

# GLOSSARY

## ART TERMINOLOGY

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**Art elements:** The visual components of colour, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value.

**Balance:** A way of combining elements to add a feeling of equilibrium or stability to a work of art. Major types are symmetrical and asymmetrical.

**Colour:** An element of art made up of three properties: hue, value, and intensity.

- Hue: name of colour
- Value: hue's lightness and darkness (a colour's value changes when white or black is added)
- Intensity: quality of brightness and purity (high intensity= colour is strong and bright; low intensity= colour is faint and dull)

**Composition:** composition is the placement or arrangement of visual elements or ingredients in a work of art, as distinct from the subject.

**Contrast:** Contrast is a principle of art. When defining it, art experts refer to the arrangement of opposite elements (light vs. dark colours, rough vs. smooth textures, large vs. small shapes, etc.)

**Focal Point:** A focal point is the element in a painting that pulls in the viewer's eye.

**Form:** An element of art that is two-dimensional, flat, or limited to height and width.

**Harmony:** A way of combining similar elements in an artwork to accent their similarities (achieved through use of repetitions and subtle gradual changes)

**Line:** An element of art defined by a point moving in space. Line may be two-or three-dimensional, descriptive, implied, or abstract.

**Shape:** An element of art that is two-dimensional, flat, or limited to height and width.

**Space:** An element of art by which positive and negative areas are defined or a sense of depth achieved in a work of art .

**Surrealism:** One of the most important and subversive movements of the 20th century, it flourished particularly in the 1920s and 1930s and provided a radical alternative to the rational and formal qualities of cubism.

**Texture:** An element of art that refers to the way things feel, or look as if they might feel if touched.

**Value:** The lightness or darkness of tones or colours. White is the lightest value; black is the darkest. The value halfway between these extremes is called middle gray.

\* Sourced from the Oxford dictionary of Art Terms

# RESOURCES

## SURREALIST ARTISTS



Artist	Medium	Themes
Man Ray	Photography	People, everyday objects
Salvador Dali	Painting	Dreams, Landscapes
Frida Kahlo	Painting	Dreams
James Gleeson	Painting	Landscape
Max Ernst	Painting	Mental illness, landscapes
Yves Tanguy	Drawing, Painting	Landscape, biomorphic, organic abstraction
Jean (Hans) Arp	Sculpture, collage, painting	Nature, figure
Luis Bunuel	Film	Childhood, human form
Leonora Carrington	Painting	Metamorphosis, magic
Francis Picabia	Painting, drawing	Machines, comics
Victor Brauner	Painting	Human figure, disfigurement, magic
Maurits Escher	Drawing	Architecture, mazes, perspective, games, impossible spaces
Paul Nougé	Photography	Everyday scenes, people
Paul Nash	Painting	Landscape, War

*\*This is not an exhaustive list, just a starting point to direct student research.*

# RENÉ MAGRITTE

## THE REVEALING IMAGE, PHOTOS AND FILMS

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