

Arts Review

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René Magritte: The Revealing Image, Photos and Films

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An exhibition of works by one of the world's most influential Surrealists, the Latrobe Regional Gallery presents in an Australian exclusive, *René Magritte: The Revealing Image – Photos and Films*, currently on display until 19 November 2017.

Director of the Latrobe Regional Gallery, Dr Mark Themann said the *René Magritte: The Revealing Image – Photos and Films* was an opportunity to experience an amazing assembly of intimate and insightful photographs and films, many of which have never been exhibited previously.

“Magritte had a unique creative ability to enchant. He used the ordinary and the everyday to evoke the mysterious and to question our perceptions of reality,” said Dr Themann. “He is an iconic artist, whose influence on fellow artists, designers, film directors and visual culture continues to this day. “It’s a magnificent opportunity to present this major international exhibition in our newly-renovated Latrobe Regional Gallery in Morwell.”

Featuring a collection of photos and film-works never before seen in Australia, *René Magritte: The Revealing Image – Photos and Films* features 132 original photographs by Magritte, and 8 films – the majority of these works have never been exhibited outside Europe before.

Staged in collaboration with the Magritte Foundation Belgium, the exhibition is described by Chief Curator, Xavier Canonne, as a rare cultural treasure. “The photographs and films were created as works of art by Magritte, one of the signature Western artists of the 20th Century,” said Mr Canonne. “The works were discovered in the mid-1970s, more than 10 years after the artist’s death, and have contributed significantly to our appreciation of Magritte’s wider oeuvre.

“Magritte used photography and film for a range of purposes, including as exemplars for paintings and commercial work, circumventing the need for live models, improvising scenes with friends, and recording family events and images of other Brussels Surrealists. These photographs and films are pervaded by the spirit of Magritte, making them inseparable from his famous paintings.”

René Magritte (1898–1967) is closely linked to the surrealist movement, which was founded in Paris by French writer André Breton in 1924. Surrealism was shaped by emerging theories of perception, including

Sigmund Freud's theories (though Magritte always denied any Freudian interpretations of his work), such as the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny – a sense of disquietude provoked by particular objects and situations.

The movement's primary aim was to resolve the contradictory conditions of dream and reality into an absolute reality – a super-reality – and to revolutionize human existence by freeing people from what the surrealists saw as false rationality and restrictive social customs.

Initially influenced by Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico, Magritte was one of the founders of Belgian surrealism in 1926. His work from this period frequently places objects in unusual contexts or with unusual words or phrases, thus giving them new and surprising meanings. In 1929, Magritte moved to Paris in order to collaborate with Breton's group. However, the idiosyncratic Magritte grew tired of their rigidity.

In 1933, he broke from them by stating that the primary aim of his work from that point on would be to reveal the hidden and often personal affinities between objects, rather than juxtaposing unrelated objects. Nevertheless, he would remain associated with surrealism in general throughout his career.

Magritte's philosophical approach to images and language interested many post-war artists. In 1954, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg saw a ground-breaking exhibition of Magritte's word-and-image paintings at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York, and later acquired examples of these works.

Magritte's interests also foreshadowed other post-war artistic pursuits: a generation before the artists involved in pop art began working with images from popular culture, Magritte himself turned to this source. And before his death in 1967, Magritte even lived to see the impact of his own works on advertisements, popular culture, and television [internationally].

René Magritte: The Revealing Image – Photos and Films

Latrobe Regional Gallery, 138 Commercial Road, Morwell

Exhibition continues to 19 November 2017

Admission fees apply

For more information, visit: www.latroberegionalgallery.com for details.

Image: René Magritte, *René Magritte and The Barbarian [Le Barbare]*, London Gallery, London, 1938 (detail). Private collection, Courtesy Brachot Gallery, Brussels. Original photograph, 43.2 x 33.2 cm

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