

Surrealism in Britain, 1925–1955 (Wakefield, 6 Oct 18)

The Hepworth Wakefield

Deadline: Jul 15, 2018

Rachel Stratton

Coinciding with the exhibition 'Lee Miller and Surrealism in Britain' at The Hepworth Wakefield (22 June – 07 October 2018) this one-day symposium aims to rethink Surrealism in Britain through an expanded lens. The deliberately broad time-frame allows for exploration of Surrealism's presence in Britain before its supposed arrival in 1936 and in the postwar era. We also welcome proposals that explore regional and transnational Surrealisms and Surrealist explorations among marginalized groups in Britain.

This summer, The Hepworth Wakefield will present the first exhibition exploring the connections between Lee Miller and Surrealism in Britain. As a mobile figure who bridges fine art, commercial and journalistic practices, Miller serves as a useful starting point for a renewed consideration of pre- and post-war Surrealist practices and discourses in Britain.

Surrealism blasted its way into British popular consciousness in 1936 with the International Exhibition of Surrealism at the New Burlington Galleries in London. Unlike its French equivalent, Surrealism in Britain was associated with the visual arts from the outset, and Herbert Read's 1936 publication 'Surrealism' popularised a connection between the movement and Britain's rich romantic literary and landscape-painting traditions, an interpretative framework which remains dominant. Meanwhile, accounts of Miller's photography often repeat familiar biographical mythologies, privileging her singularity over more robust investigations of her contexts and contemporaries. Revisiting these narratives, the proposed symposium aims to reconstruct intricate networks of artists, writers, dealers and critics – friends, lovers and rivals – through which Surrealist ideas circulated and mutated during a turbulent historical period.

Topics might include (but are not limited to):

- Surrealism's presence in Britain prior to the International Exhibition of Surrealism in 1936
- Networks of Surrealist artists, exhibitions, dealers, collectors and publications, including the London Gallery and London Bulletin
- De-centred narratives and vernacular Surrealisms
- Surrealist politics and (inter)nationalism in 1930s, 1940s and 1950s Britain
- Photography and Surrealism across genres
- Women in Surrealism
- Surrealism in popular culture e.g. fashion, design and journalism
- Surrealism in Britain during the Second World War
- Surrealism and the Independent Group

- Surrealism in Britain's postwar environment

Organised by Rachel Stratton (Courtauld Institute of Art) and Dr Hilary Floe (The Hepworth Wakefield).

Papers are 20 minutes long. Please send your 250-word abstract and a short CV to hilaryfloe@hepworthwakefield.org and rachel.stratton@courtauld.ac.uk by 15 July 2018. You will be notified in early August.

Reference:

CFP: Surrealism in Britain, 1925–1955 (Wakefield, 6 Oct 18). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 1, 2018 (accessed Jul 13, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/18286>>.