

Surrealism and Anti-Fascism (New York/online, 14-15 Nov 24)

New York University, Remarque Institute and Espacio de Culturas @KJCC / online,
Nov 14-15, 2024

Ara H. Merjian, New York University

Surrealism and Anti-fascism: The Political Imagination between Reason and Dream.

2024 marks the centenary of the Surrealist movement - more specifically of its founding manifesto and attendant journal. The title of the latter, *La Révolution surréaliste* (1924-29) made plain the movement's ambition: nothing less than a social and political revolution, a synthesis of unconscious desire and waking reality. Hamstrung by both communist resistance to its "interior model" and by the rise of fascism and a new World War, this sur-reality never came to pass in the terms imagined by its originators.

Yet Surrealism's influence upon everything from Spanish Civil War protest, the Négritude and Black Arts movements, queer theory, Situationism, and other activist phenomena reveals its early anti-colonialist and anti-fascist agitation to be not merely the product of a historical contingency, but a possible model for radical politics more universally.

This conference marks Surrealism's centenary while attending to its ideological legacies - in the wake of the movement's frequently de-politicized museumification on the one hand, and an international resurgence of neo-fascist politics on the other. The conference is inspired by and coincides with the Lenbachhaus's exhibition, *BUT LIVE HERE? NO THANKS: Surrealism and Anti-Fascism* (October 15, 2024 – March 2, 2025) as well as the publication accompanying it.

Sponsored by the Department of French Literature, Thought, and Culture; Department of Spanish & Portuguese; Department of Italian Studies; Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò; Deutsches Haus; Espacio de Culturas @KJCC; Remarque Institute; NYU Humanities Center; Center for European and Mediterranean Studies; Department of Comparative Literature; XE Experimental Humanities; Lenbachhaus Munich.

Programme:

Thursday November 14
Remarque Institute, NYU
60 Fifth Avenue, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10011

Link to register for Nov. 14: https://nyu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eP8tuvniN1o0W7l

4-5:30pm

Translation at the Trial of the Real World: Surrealism and Anti-fascist Protest Politics

Stephen Duncombe, Gallatin School of Individualized Study, NYU

'They will torture you my friend – Artaud': Surrealist Anti-fascist Iconography in the American Art Left, 1969-72

Joanna Pawlick, University of Sussex

Moderator: Robert Zeller

5:30pm

Surrealism & Antifascism: A Discussion of Exhibition and Anthology (Hatje Cantz, 2024)

Adrian Djukic (Lenbachhaus, Munich), Stephanie Weber (Lenbachhaus, Munich), and Ara H. Merjian (NYU) in conversation with Stefanos Geroulanos (NYU)

6:45pm

Reception

Friday November 15

Espacio de Culturas @KJCC

53 Washington Square South

New York, NY 10012

Link to register for Nov. 15:

<https://as.nyu.edu/research-centers/remarque/events/Fall-2024/surrealism-event--ara-merjian.html>

9am

Coffee

9:20–9:45am

Introductions

Ara H. Merjian and Stephanie Weber

9:45–11am

Expressionlessness: The Anti-fascist Significance of Surrealist Image-Space

Toni Hildebrandt, University of Bern

Surrealism, Eroticism, and the French-Algerian War: The Re-treat of Politics

Raymon Spiteri, Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand)

Moderator: Ara H. Merjian

11–11:30am

Break

11:30–1:15pm

Claude Cahun's Curiosity

Hannah Freed-Thall, NYU

Max Ernst's Horseshoe Theory of Politics

Jonathan Odden, CUNY

Moderator: Lori Cole

1:15–2:30pm

Lunch

2:30–4pm

Roundtable: The Spanish Civil War and Surrealism

Robin Greeley, University of Connecticut

Carles Guerra, Transart Institute for Creative Research

Jordana Mendelso, NYU

Merging Surrealism, Anti-Fascism and Radical Psychiatry: Tosquelles and Solanes.

Carles Guerra

Moderator: Ameya Tripathi

4–4:15pm

Coffee Break

4:15–6pm

The Object at War: Surrealism's Resistant Materials, 1939-1945

Krzysztof Fijalkowski, Norwich University of the Arts

An Anti-fascist Aesthetic?: La Main à Plume in Occupied France

Léa Nicolas-Teboul, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3

Moderator: Emily Apter

6pm

Reception

Reference:

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(accessed Dec 18, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/43046>>.