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_eP8tuvniN1o0W7I

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 Novembere 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:
CONF: Surrealism and Anti-Fascism (New York/online, 14-15 Nov 24). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 29, 2024 (accessed Nov 19, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/43046>.