

Surrealism in Yorkshire (Wakefield, 28 Feb 25)

Yorkshire, The Hepworth Wakefield, Feb 28, 2025

Deadline: Nov 29, 2024

Kirstie Gregory, Henry Moore Institute

2024 marks the centenary of Surrealism. In Yorkshire, The Hepworth Wakefield and the Henry Moore Institute are celebrating this with two exhibitions which look at different aspects of this enduringly compelling movement.

At The Hepworth Wakefield, *Forbidden Territories: 100 Years of Surreal Landscapes* is a journey through the fantastical terrains of Surrealism over 100 years, looking at how surreal ideas can turn landscape into a metaphor for the unconscious, fuse the bodily with the botanical, and provide means to express political anxieties, gender constraints and freedoms.

At the Henry Moore Institute *The Traumatic Surreal*, co-curated by Professor Patricia Allmer (University of Edinburgh), brings together work made from 1960 to the present day by women artists in German-speaking countries, whose appropriation of surrealist sculptural traditions provided a means to negotiate the impact on women of the historical traumas of fascism and Nazism.

Yorkshire also hosts significant collections of British Surrealism that are held at Leeds Art Gallery and The Hepworth Wakefield, including through the Jeffrey Sherwin & Family Collection of British Surrealism, and the rich exhibition histories associated with these.

This one-day conference will explore the themes emerging from these exhibitions and collections. We invite proposals for the following panels, focused on Botanical Surrealism, Surrealism and Trauma, and Surrealism in Yorkshire.

Keynote: Professor Patricia Allmer, University of Edinburgh.

Panel 1: Botanical Surreal

Chaired by Eleanor Clayton (Head of Exhibitions and Collections, The Hepworth Wakefield) and Dr Anna Reid (Senior Lecturer in History of Art, University of Leeds)

The development of British Surrealism in the 1930s coincided with that of important new research and knowledge in the life sciences, notably in ecology, including the coining of the term 'ecosystem' by botanist Arthur Tansley.

Key British Surrealists were fascinated with botanical studies, evidenced in the hybrid creatures of Leonora Carrington, the 'scientific' practice of Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff which resulted in tumescent depictions of flora and fauna, and in the work of Desmond Morris who trained as a Zoologist before becoming drawn to Surrealism in the 1950s.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Surrealist interactions with botany and mycology
- Surrealism, life sciences and Imperial context
- Ethnobotany and Surrealism

Panel 2: Surrealism and Trauma

Chaired by Professor Patricia Allmer (Professor of Art History, University of Edinburgh) and Dr Clare O'Dowd (Research Curator, Henry Moore Institute)

Surrealist art and writing, forged in the aftermath of the First World War, offered from its inception aesthetically experimental, theoretically complex, and politically radical responses to that war's deep traumas. Subsequent historical traumas have often impacted directly on surrealist artists (many of whom were, for example, forced to flee Europe to escape Nazism) and their works.

The legacies of such experiences, and other historical and contemporary traumas across the globe, continue to resonate in works produced by artists working in international surrealist traditions. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Trauma and surrealist aesthetics and temporalities
- Surrealism, the dream and psychoanalytic theories of trauma
- Global Surrealisms, trauma and cultural memory
- Surrealism and the traumatised body

Panel 3: Surrealism in Yorkshire

Chaired by Dr Clare Nadal (Assistant Curator, Sculpture, Leeds Museums and Galleries / Henry Moore Institute)

Leeds and West Yorkshire have long had an important connection to Surrealism, with Leeds Art Gallery hosting the 1986 exhibition Surrealism in Britain in the Thirties to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the International Surrealist Exhibition held in London in June 1936.

The Leeds doctor and city councillor Jeffrey Sherwin amassed a significant private collection and archive of British Surrealism, now housed at The Hepworth Wakefield, which formed the basis for reassessment of British Surrealism through exhibitions including British Surrealism in Context: A Collector's Eye at Leeds Art Gallery in 2009.

Many artists based around Leeds College of Art worked in the legacy of Surrealism, beginning in the 1960s with Anthony Earnshaw, Patrick Hughes, Ian Breakwell and Glen Baxter. The first edition of the Leeds surrealist magazine Melmoth was first published in 1980, and 1994 saw the formation of the Leeds Surrealist Group.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Jeffrey Sherwin & Family Collection
- Surrealist activity in Leeds, including the Leeds Surrealist Group and Melmoth magazine
- Public collections of Surrealism in Yorkshire

Submit a proposal:

We are seeking proposals for 20-minute presentations.

Applicants are kindly asked to submit:

a brief abstract (no more than 250 words)

a short biographical note (100 words)

The deadline to apply is Friday 29 November 2024.

Please email your proposals to: research@henry-moore.org

Submissions are also welcome in alternative formats.

Speakers will receive an honorarium of £100, and travel and accommodation costs within the UK will be reimbursed.

Reference:

CFP: Surrealism in Yorkshire (Wakefield, 28 Feb 25). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 14, 2024 (accessed Jul 16, 2025),

<<https://arthist.net/archive/43154>>.