

On Surrealism, Gender, Objects & Photography (Berlin, 22 Mar 25)

Berlin, Museum für Fotografie, Mar 22, 2025

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Gender constructions play an essential role in the art and theory as well as in the self-portrayals of the surrealist movement. Their dream-like, sometimes disturbing visual worlds contain women's bodies as central motifs, regardless of the artists' gender. However, in the early days in particular, the real-life female artists tended to remain subordinate, as lovers or muse. In the meantime, art history has rediscovered important female artists and shed light on gender constructions in surrealist circles. The symposium builds on this: it combines academic analyses with artistic perspectives in order to provide new insights into the diverse interrelationships between gender and surrealism as well as the social implications. The focus is on photographic stagings and object art.

The contributions ask about photographic conventions of representation and their breaks. What kind of visibility did female artists achieve back then? And how have established narratives of Surrealism changed today? While female body images have long been the focus of research, concepts of masculinity and gender performances are now also coming into focus. The role of artistic objects as carriers of historical experiences will also be examined.

Discussions with artists build a bridge to contemporary positions that critically examine the legacy of artistic avant-gardes using photographic archives. This perspective shows the continuing relevance of surrealist strategies for current discourses on gender and media representation.

The conference language is English.

The conference is free of charge. Registration is not required.

Program, 2 – 5 pm

2:00 Welcome and introduction Katja Böhlau and Ludger Derenthal

2:15 Professor Änne Söll (Ruhr Universität Bochum): Playing Masculinities. Max Ernst, gender performance and photography

2:45 Artist talk with Ronit Porat: A glance into Luis Straus Ernst's life through my project Paradiesvogel

3:15 Coffee Break

3:45 Professor Patricia Allmer (University of Edinburgh): Objects of the Traumatic Surreal

4:15 Artist talk with Anaïs Boutot: Les Oubliées / The forgotten ones

4:45 Closing Discussion

The symposium is part of the supporting program for the exhibitions “FOTOGAGA. Max Ernst and Photography. The Würth Collection as Guest” and “Surrender to the Dreamers” at the Museum für Fotografie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

Reference:

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