

Surrealism as a Bridge Across Cultures and Time (Barcelona, 9–10 Mar 27)

Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, Mar 9–10, 2027

Deadline: Sep 20, 2026

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The research projects MULTISURREALISM (MSCA), Surrealist Religion (NWO) and Countermovement (TRT), based at the Department of Humanities in Pompeu Fabra University, invite the submission of proposals for the International Conference “Surrealism as a Bridge Across Cultures and Time.” The call is open to researchers from all academic career stages interested in studies on Surrealism as a driver of innovative ideas at the aesthetic, cultural, political, and social levels.

In June 1929, the surrealists published a “Surrealist Map of the World” in the Belgian magazine *Variétés*, wherein global geography is distorted according to their geopolitical and poetic affinities: Oceania, Alaska, Russia, and Easter Island are disproportionately large, while Western Europe is drastically reduced, excepting Paris (Tyacott, 2014). This graphic play actually reflected an explicit cultural reclamation that they had been developing since the beginning: the recognition of the non-Western systems of thought as an alternative to European logic. Although sometimes considered exoticizing (Winks, 2003), the interest in the cultural production of the peoples of Oceania, North America, and Africa (Clifford, 1988) constituted a genuine repositioning of the aesthetic norm hitherto governed by the hierarchy of European art. As a consequence, Peruvian and Mexican artists and writers, among others, gradually altered the self-perception of their ancestral and contemporary cultures, revalorizing expressive forms that had previously not been considered artistic.

This deliberate distortion of the world was deeply political: indeed, their anti-war stance led them to view the rise of nationalism and imperialism as the root causes of the conflicts that culminated in the wars of the first half of the twentieth century. Consequently, their struggle against fascism also translated into a defense of self-determination and diversity. The Rif War in Morocco (1925) constituted a watershed moment, as they radicalized their anti-colonialism and their defense of non-Western cultures—a position aligned with the left-wing sectors with whom they partnered in their international defense of the oppressed of the world (Nadeau, 1993; Winock, 2012).

Surrealism not only brought together poets and artists of diverse nationalities—thereby promoting cultural exchange that enriched their own heritage while fostering tolerance and appreciation for the other. Breton's diagnosis of the European crisis during the interwar period in the First Manifesto (1924) led him to declare the decline of Western rationality and to value other cultures as an alternative. This included a critical reassessment of the West's own cultural sources, as the literary and artistic genealogies disseminated by the Surrealists attest, transforming the canons to our days. In 1922, Breton and Aragon already saw in Christian mysticism exciting new ways to

engage with modern aesthetic and epistemic problems, and many Surrealists followed, nuancing their well-known suspicion against religion and tradition (Biles and Bransford, 2023).

Surrealism developed a poetics that, through artistic and literary mediation centred on dreams, madness, and sexuality, exposed the collective fears and traumas of its time. At the same time, it generated a series of conceptual and discursive displacements that provided new ways of understanding and dismantling the ideological foundations of conflict. It promoted a model of cultural relations founded upon respectful curiosity towards the other, nourished by diversity, and committed—as far as historical knowledge and discourse permit—to overcoming the logic of exoticism. At a time of war, hate-speech against the migrant and the poor, new religious and political dogmatisms and extremisms promising homogeneity and appealing to “common sense” as a justification of exclusionary beliefs and practices, just as it was the 20th Century, it is both productive and urgent to revisit the responses that the Surrealists offered to the catastrophes of their time (Buck-Morss, 2000).

We do not believe this to be merely an exercise in historical scholarship, but a compelling example of how the Humanities can contribute to understanding and imagining possible responses to contemporary crises. We therefore invite proposals for papers addressing these issues in surrealist groups from all over the world, from the 1920s to the 1960s. The following themes are intended as indicative rather than exhaustive, and contributions on both literature and the visual arts are welcome:

- Transnational Surrealist Networks and Groups: epistolary exchanges, journals and periodicals, and collaborations among writers and artists across different countries; surrealist groups outside France and their connections with the original Parisian movement.
- Surrealist Anti-Fascism: analyses of the ideas, manifestos, and texts through which the movement opposed fascism and other forms of totalitarianism.
- Surrealism and Religion: Surrealist attraction to non-western traditions, to mystical and/or heretical texts and authors within Christianity, surrealist critiques of Christianity and Islam (e.g. surrealist blasphemy, anti-clerical discourse, satire and caricature).

Submission details

The conference invites proposals from scholars working in literary criticism, art history, aesthetics, art theory, and related fields, as well as from those adopting interdisciplinary approaches. The event will take place over two full days in Barcelona.

Each paper will be allocated 20 minutes for presentation, followed by a panel discussion. There will be no parallel sessions. Participants are expected to present their papers in person whenever possible; remote presentations will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Proposals should include:

Title

Abstract (max. 500 words)

5-7 keywords

Short biographical notice (max. 100 words)

We invite proposals in English, French, and Spanish.

Please send your proposals to luciana.delgizzo@upf.edu, lieven.demaeyer@upf.edu,

Arthist.net

and / or sergi.castella@upf.edu.

Deadline: September 20th 2026, 23:59h (CET)

Acceptance notification by October, 2026

Please contact the organizers by referring to the email addresses above.

Reference:

CFP: Surrealism as a Bridge Across Cultures and Time (Barcelona, 9-10 Mar 27). In: Arthist.net, Sep 6, 2026 (accessed Oct 11, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/53583>>.