

The Surreal Body as Theatre of the Mind (online, 30 Sep 26)

Online, The University of Sydney and The University of Melbourne, Sep 30–Oct 1, 2026

Victoria Souliman, University of Sydney

The Surreal Body as Theatre of the Mind: Women, Surrealism and Contemporary Visual Culture.

This free two-day online symposium features research and reflections by Australian and international art historians, curators and artists on the legacy of surrealism in contemporary visual culture. Speakers particularly foreground how women creatives, working across image-based practices, mobilise surrealist-inflected, body-focused strategies to articulate female and queer subjectivities, embodied experience, and alternative modes of seeing, feeling, and being in the world. Registration available here: <https://www.thesurrealbodysymposium.com/>

Wednesday 30 September – Thursday 1 October 2026 (Australian Eastern Standard Time AEST (UTC+10))

The Symposium is organised by:

Dr Victoria Souliman, Lecturer in French and Francophone Studies, The University of Sydney

Dr Mimi Kelly, Lecturer in Art History and Curatorship, The University of Melbourne. mimikelly.com

PROGRAMME:

Day 1 – Wednesday 30 September 4:00-11:00 pm AEDT (UTC+10)

4:00-4:10 pm | Welcome and Opening Remarks

4:10-6:15 pm | Panel 1 (includes a 5-min break halfway) - Fragmented Bodies, Mediated Images: Surrealism in Film and Collage

Moderator: Beth Kearney

✉ Marie-Pierre Burquier | Université Paris Cité, France

Alchemical Reanimations: Stacey Steers' Surrealist Recompositions

✉ Jaime Tsai | National Art School, Sydney, Australia

Lip: Surrealist Strategies in Australian Women's Video Art

✉ Linda Alpermann | Dresden State Art Collections, Germany

Beyond the Canvas: Surrealist Legacies in the Work of Christine Schlegel

✉ Kiki Loveday | Artist, Australia and Susan Potter | University of Sydney, Australia

Traffic in Kisses: An exquisite experiment

6:15-6:30 pm | Break

6:30-7:30 pm | Artists Roundtable

Jaime Tsai in conversation with Tara Marynowsky, and Mimi Kelly with Jane Burton

7:30-7:45 pm | Break

7:45-9:15 pm | Panel 2 - The Commodification of the Body: Surrealism, Fashion, and Visual Culture

Moderator: Victoria Soulman

✉ Irene Calvi | University of Bologna, Italy

An Eye, a Lip, a Leg: Surrealist Dismemberment and the Visual Language of Fashion

✉ Louisiane Maily | University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Consuming Surrealism: Food, Advertising, and Feminine Subversion

✉ Paula Muhr | Brand University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Double Flowers: Reinterpreting Medical Photographs of Hysteria Through Symbolic Displacement

9:15-9:30 pm | Break

9:30-11:00 pm | Panel 3 - Monstrous-Feminine and Sculptural Bodies

Moderator: Cristina Moraru

✉ Martina Genetti | Vienna Museum, Austria

Return to the Dark: The Monstrous-Feminine as Pure Aesthetics in Contemporary Visceral Sculpture

✉ Sara Damiani | University of Bergamo, Italy

The New Exquisite Corpses of Contemporary Women Artists: Hybrid Bodies and Social Claims

✉ Hugh Magnus | University of Melbourne, Australia

To See the Shadow You Have Become: Heather B. Swann's "Performance Tools"

11:00-11:05 pm | Closing Day 1

Day 2 — Thursday 1 October 4:00-10:30 pm

4:00-4:10 pm | Welcome Back

4:10-5:45 pm | Panel 4 (includes a 5-min break halfway) - Ecologies of the Surreal Body: Hybridity, Care, and More-than-Human Relations

Moderator: Irene Calvi

✉ Cristina Moraru | George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași, Romania

Monstrous Intimacies: Ecology, Crisis, and Surrealist Feminist Visualities

✉ Christina Haupt | University of Passau, Germany

Care, Ecological Kinship and Hybridity in Patricia Piccinini's More-than-Human Art

✉ Corey Ratch | University of Tübingen, Germany

Inter-Precarity: Hybrid Bodies, Queer Materialism, and the Surrealist Legacy from Leonor Fini to Wangechi Mutu

✉ Tor Scott | National Galleries of Scotland, United Kingdom

Edith Rimmington, Ecofeminism and Surrealism: Resonances Today

5:45-6:00 pm | Break

6:00-7:00 pm | Keynote Address

The Haunted House as Theatre of the Mind: The Unravelling Self in the Horror Films *Relic* (2020) And *Hereditary* (2018)

Associate Professor Victoria Carruthers | Australian Catholic University, Australia

7:00-7:15 pm | Break

7:15-8:45 pm | Panel 5 - Bodies of Resistance: Dissidence, Gender, and Political Surrealism

Moderator: Paula Muhr

✉ Ewa Giezek | École du Louvre and Jean Monnet University, Saint-Étienne, France

Surrealist Legacies in the Representations of Masculinities in the Fight Censorship Group

✉ Rex Butler | Monash University, Australia and ADS Donaldson | Artist, curator and art historian, Australia

Mary Low: The Militant Surrealist Woman's Body

✉ Lena Appel | Free University of Berlin, Germany

Embodied Estrangements: Dissident Surrealism and the Collaged Body in Sylvia Palacios Whitman's *Cup and Tail* (1977/78)

8:45-9:00 pm | Break

9:00-10:30 pm | Panel 6 - Digital Dreams and Surreal Bodies

Moderator: Mimi Kelly

✉ Holly Durant | RMIT University, Australia

Alien Kinaesthesia: Surrealist Defamiliarisation and the Femme Performing Body

✉ Milly Kynaston | University of Sydney, Australia

Desire.exe: Cyberfeminism and the Legacies of Surrealist Photography in Mindy Seu's *A Sexual History of the Internet*

✉ Angelique Joy | RMIT University, Australia

Do cyborgs dream of digital penes? Freud, Firestone and the cyborg (*We Perform*)

10:30-10:45 pm | Closing Remarks

Reference:

CONF: The Surreal Body as Theatre of the Mind (online, 30 Sep 26). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 11, 2026 (accessed Sep 12, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/54208>>.