

SURRÉALISME AU FÉMININ ?

31 March - 10 September 2023
at the Musée de Montmartre Jardins Renoir

'The emancipation of these women through the practice of their art echoes the quest for independence and the spirit of contestation that are so characteristic of Montmartre's history. This exhibition underlines my absolute determination to present works by artists who have often been overlooked in the history of art.'

Fanny de Lépinau
Director of the Musée de Montmartre Jardins Renoir



Jane Graverol (1905-1984), *Le Sacre du Printemps*, 1960, oil on canvas, © RAW, ADAGP, Paris, 2022, © Stéphane Pons

The Musée de Montmartre is holding an exhibition that explores the extent and various forms of involvement of female artists and poets in the Surrealist movement. The exhibition itinerary will feature fifty of these women, along with almost 150 works.

A provocative and dynamic movement, Surrealism sparked significant aesthetic changes and an ethical revolution in the twentieth century. Men were not the only driving force behind Surrealism and its transgressive orientation: many women played a decisive role in the movement, but their works were neglected by museums and undervalued by the art market. The exhibition will present major artists, such as Claude Cahun, Toyen, Dora Maar, Lee Miller, Meret Oppenheim, and Leonora Carrington, and highlight other, less well-known, figures such as Marion Adnams, Ithell Colquhoun, Grace Pailthorpe, Jane Graverol, Suzanne Van Damme, Rita Kernn-Larsen, Franciska Clausen, Josette Exandier, and Yahne Le Toumelin.



Surrealism provided these women artists and poets with opportunities for artistic expression and creativity that probably had no equivalent in the other avant-garde movements. However, their freedom often found expression via the appropriation and development of themes initiated by the movement's founders. They also carved out their path by freeing themselves from the Surrealist doxa. 'They were both 'within' and 'without' the movement, close to and far from it. It is this complexity that the show hopes to capture.

Kay Sage (1898-1963), *Magic lantern*, 1947, oil on canvas, Paris, Centre Pompidou - Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle © Estate of Kay Sage / ADAGP, Paris, 2022, Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Audrey Laurans

MARION ADNAMS 1898-1995
EILEEN AGAR 1899-1991
RACHEL BAES 1912-1983
MYRIAM BAT-YOSEF 1931
BONA 1926-2000
DIANA BRINTON-LEE 1897-1982
CLAUDE CAHUN 1894-1954
LEONORA CARRINGTON 1917-2011
FRANCISKA CLAUSEN 1899-1986
ITHELL COLQUHOUN 1906-1988
LISE DEHARME 1898-1980
MAYA DEREN 1917-1961
VALENTINE DOBRÉE 1894-1974
AUBE ELLÉOUËT 1935
ANNE ETHUIN 1921-2009
JOSETTE EXANDIER 1944-2008
LEONOR FINI 1907-1996
ALINE GAGNAIRE 1911-1997
JANE GRAVEROL 1905-1984
VALENTINE HUGO 1887-1968
RITA KERNN-LARSEN 1904-1998
JACQUELINE LAMBA 1910-1993
YAHNE LE TOUMELIN 1923
MARCELLE LOUBCHANSKY 1917-1988
MARY LOW 1912-2007
DORA MAAR 1907-1997
JOYCE MANSOUR 1928-1986
MARIA MARTINS 1894-1973
EMILA MEDKOVA 1928-1985
LEE MILLER 1907-1977
NORA MITRANI 1921-1961
MERET OPPENHEIM 1913-1985
GRACE PAILTHORPE 1883-1971
MIMI PARENT 1924-2005
VALENTINE PENROSE 1898-1978
JUDIT REIGL 1923-2020
MARY REYNOLDS 1891-1950
EDITH RIMMINGTON 1902-1986
KAY SAGE 1898-1963
DOROTHEA TANNING 1910-2012
ELSA THORESEN 1906-1994
TOYEN 1902-1980
SUZANNE VAN DAMME 1901-1986
MARIANNE VAN HIRTUM 1935-1988
HÉLÈNE VANEL 1898-1989
PAULE VÉZELAY 1892-1984
ISABELLE WALDBERG 1911-1990
MARY WYKEHAM 1902-1998
UNICA ZÜRN 1916-1970

Curators :

Alix Agret, art historian
Dominique Païni, independent
curator

Associated curator :

Saskia Ooms, head of Conservation
of the Musée de Montmartre
Jardins Renoir

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Suzanne Van Damme (1901-1986), *Couple d'oiseaux anthropomorphes*, 1946, oil on panel, © RAW (Rediscovering Art by Women) © Stéphane Pons

Between the 1930s and the 1970s, 'female' Surrealists established ephemeral constellations as various women joined the movement, often temporarily, and formed friendships outside this framework. The imagery of these artists was not aligned with that of their male counterparts within the group. Their often interdisciplinary practices (pictorial, photographic, sculptural, cinematographic, and literary) reflected their desire for 'beautiful escapes' that transcended heterosexual norms and geographical boundaries.

The exhibition maps out this dispersed and global movement by featuring women artists from the Belgian, Mexican, British, American, Czech and French Surrealists groups, which they enriched, occasionally shifting from one to another.

By highlighting the work of fifty women artists, visual artists, photographers, and poets from all around the world, this exhibition invites visitors to reflect not only on the ambivalent status of women within Surrealism, but also on the capacity of one of the most important twentieth-century movements to integrate women.

The question mark in the title reflects the underlying suspense in the exhibition, which is more of a hypothesis than a demonstration. It provides a non exhaustive and partly subjective inventory to identify the female contribution to Surrealism.

After a first room devoted to documentary material, the exhibition is divided into seven thematic sections (Metamorphosis, Nature, Seductions and Female Plurality, Chimeras, Architectures, Interior Nights, and Abstractions) that are independent of the chronology of the history of Surrealism. The documentary room designed as a kind of 'panoramic wallpaper' presents all the exhibited artists and poets, while underlining the bonds that brought them together and the collaborative aspects of a female creativity that often merged art and life.

The Surrealist community was undeniably fascinated by Montmartre. It was a district in which the Surrealists roamed, lived, and dreamed—a place of popular fantasies and entertainment. Aragon celebrated Montmartre as a 'sort of melting pot of the imagination where the worst conventions and the basest literature merge with the reality of desires, the simplicity of desires, and what is most free and inalienable in me, and in man'. And André Breton was attracted to the Butte's geographical position and the panoramic views it provided of the capital: 'You have to climb to the top of the hill of Sacré-Coeur early in the morning to see Paris, slowly emerging from her splendid veils before stretching out her arms'.

The exhibition has benefitted from major loans from the following institutions: the Musée National d'Art Moderne-Centre Pompidou, the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, the Centre National des Arts Plastiques in Paris, the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts in Belgium, the Musée d'Arts in Nantes, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen, the MABA (Maison d'Art Bernard Anthonioz) in Nogent-sur-Marne, and the Statens Museum for Kunst (SMK) in Copenhagen, the National Gallery of Denmark; works have also been loaned by many galleries and prestigious private collections.



Valentine Hugo (1887-1971), *Le rêve du 21 décembre 1929*, 1929, pencil on paper, Collection Mony Vibescu, © ADAGP, Paris, 2022 © Gilles Berquet



Marion Adnams (1898 - 1995), *Emperor Moths / Thunder*, 1963, oil on canvas, © RAW (Rediscovering Art by Women) © Stéphane Pons



Elsa Thoresen, *Terre brûlée*, 1946, oil on panel, SMK - National Gallery of Denmark Statens Museum for Kunst Copenhagen ADAGP, Paris, 2022, © SMK Photo / Jakob Skou-Hansen

Le Musée de Montmartre

Jardins Renoir

Certainly the most charming museum in Paris, the Musée de Montmartre - Jardins Renoir was inaugurated in 1960 in one of the Butte's most ancient buildings, built in the seventeenth century. A meeting place and residence, 12 Rue Cortot attracted many artists. Auguste Renoir had a studio there, as did Suzanne Valadon, Émile Bernard, and the Fauve artists Émile-Othon Friesz and Raoul Dufy.

The permanent collections

Since 1960, the collections of the Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie 'Le Vieux Montmartre' have been exhibited in the Musée de Montmartre, in one of the Butte's oldest buildings. The collections comprise more than 6,000 works and over 100,000 items of archive material: paintings, posters and drawings signed by the likes of Toulouse-Lautrec, Modigliani, Kupka, Steinlen, Valadon, and Utrillo. The exhibition itinerary features the history of the Butte, the artistic dynamism of its studios, from the Bateau-Lavoir to the Cortot studio, and the atmosphere of its famous cabarets, from the Lapin Agile to the Moulin Rouge. One room focuses on the French Cancan, and another features a shadow show, a magical set consisting of zinc plates that established the reputation of the Chat Noir cabaret.

The Jardins Renoir

Close to the Place du Tertre, the three Jardins Renoir surround the Musée de Montmartre and overlook the vineyards. They were named after Auguste Renoir, the Impressionist painter who lived here in 1876 and painted several masterpieces, such as the Bal du Moulin de la Galette (Ball at the Moulin de la Galette), La Balançoire (The Swing), and Jardin de la Rue Cortot (Garden in the Rue Cortot). The views from the Jardins Renoir are quite exceptional, as they overlook the Clos Montmartre vineyards and in the distance the vast plain to the north of Paris.

Suzanne Valadon's and Maurice Utrillo's studio-apartment

An artistic hub in Montmartre at the beginning of the twentieth century, this building on the Rue Cortot was occupied in turn by the 'Fauve' painters Émile-Othon Friesz and Raoul Dufy, by Émile Bernard, Gauguin's friend, and the writers Léon Bloy and Pierre Reverdy. Suzanne Valadon moved there for the first time in 1898, and returned in 1912. She stayed there until 1926, along with her son Maurice Utrillo and boyfriend André Utter. Valadon became famous as one of the first women painters; and Utrillo painted superb views of Montmartre. Their studio has been recreated exactly as it was when the painters lived there.

Café Renoir

The Café Renoir is the ideal spot to meet up and take a break from the tumult of the city. Its glazed panels, decorated in the style of a conservatory, overlook the magnificent Jardins Renoir. The tea room offers refreshments that change with the seasons, with a selection of tasty items.

Temporary exhibition

The Musée de Montmartre holds two temporary exhibitions each year. The scientific programme is devoted to avant-garde artists and movements that contributed to Montmartre's artistic dynamism: Van Dongen and the Bateau-Lavoir (2018), Otto Freundlich, the Revelation of Abstraction (2020), Dufy's Paris (2021-2022), Charles Camoin, the Free Fauve (2022), Fernande Olivier and Pablo Picasso, in the Intimacy of the Bateau-Lavoir (2022-2023)...



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Opening hours

The museum is open everyday,
from 10 am to 7 pm

Bookshop

The bookshop is open during
museum hours.

Access

Lamarck-Caulaincourt (line 12)
Station Anvers (line 2)

Rates

Full rate : 15 €

18-25 years-old : 10 €

10-17 years-old : 8 €

Under 10 years-old : free

People with disabilities : 10 €

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