Realtà Surreale



Surrealism is an European artistic and literary movement that was born in Paris in the 1920s, inspired by dreams and manifestations of the unconscious, freely associating images without a predetermined purpose.

1. Artist Fakes



On the right of our collage, we can see the self-portrait of the famous 17th-century Italian painter Artemisia Gentileschi, the first female artist to sign her paintings.

Her fame, however, has often been attributed to a dramatic event in her life, which made her a heroine for having the courage to denounce her rapist.
It was one of the first documented rape trials in history. But she was not believed and had to endure the court's inquisitorial methods to prove her virginity prior to the assault.



2. Bipolar Personality



On the right, the melancholy woman dressed in white is a work by Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun, one of the most sought-after and acclaimed female painters in France—a woman capable of building her own success in a society run almost entirely by men.

Her rise was such that one of her greatest admirers was Queen Marie Antoinette, with whom the painter shared both joy and sorrow.

The two medallions hanging at the top of the columns depict the faces of Isabella d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia, respectively. Two true "first ladies," among the most famous and powerful women of the Italian Renaissance.

3. Bodyguard Angels



The central image of our collage is taken from the painting "The Birth of Venus" by French artist Alexandre Cabanel: Venus is lying facing forward with her head turned toward the viewer's right, her long hair cascading beneath her body. The young goddess appears to be shielding herself from the sunlight with her right hand.

Cabanel presented the painting at the 1863 Paris Salon. The work achieved great success, but it also sparked a heated debate in the press. Napoleon III purchased Cabanel's painting and added it to his personal collection.

The Birth of Venus is an example of a style of painting highly praised by French patrons in the late 19th century; this classical theme in particular enjoyed tremendous popularity and was interpreted by many artists.

4. Clay Actors

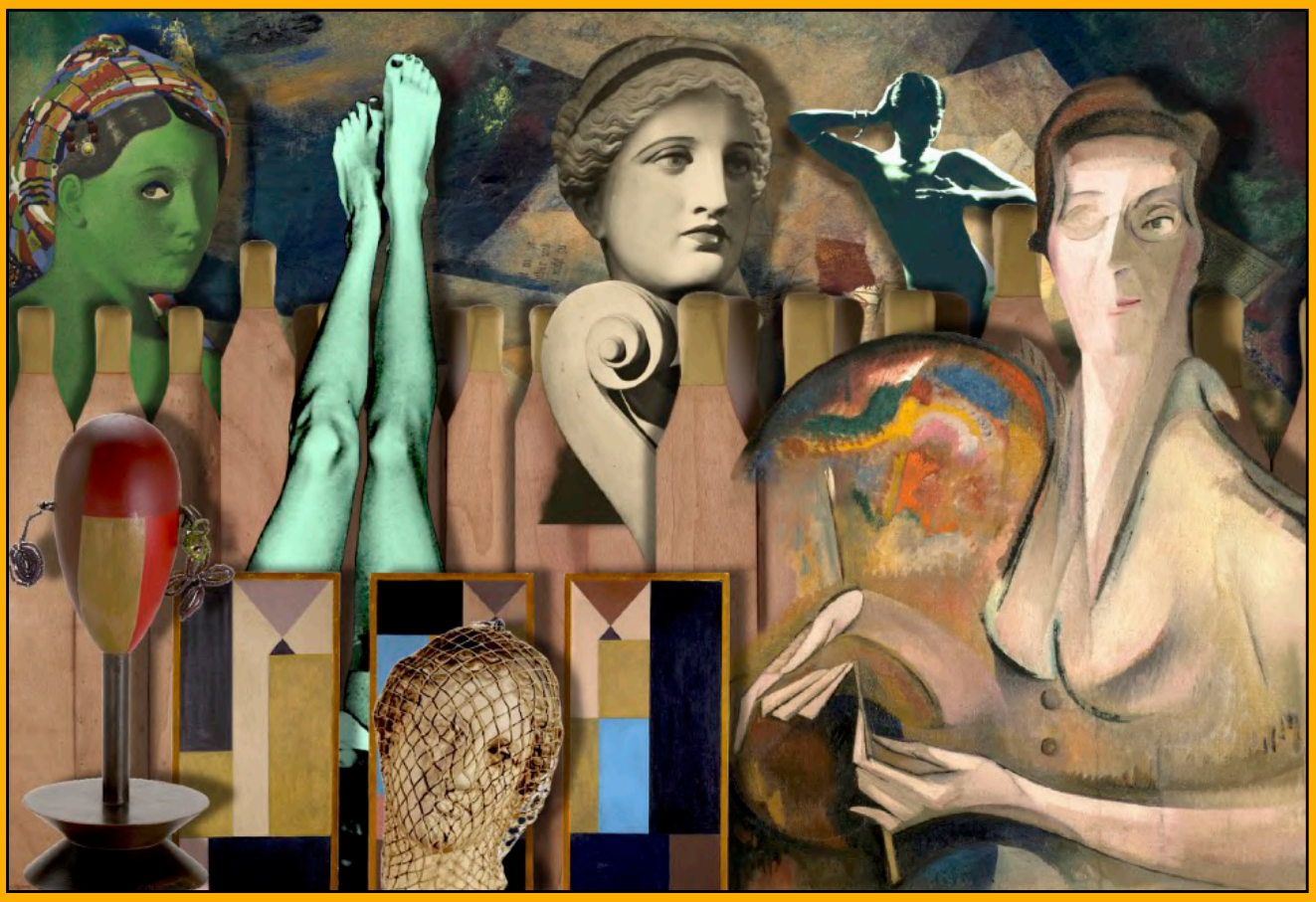


Thanks to its malleability in contact with water, clay—the material of which the figures in our collage are made—is elastic and easy to work with. As it dries, it irreversibly loses its ductility and becomes solid and compact.

Integral to the evolution of civilizations, clay has told our story since the time of the Sumerians, who were among the first to understand the potential of working with this material. Humanity has made everything with clay, from bricks for building houses to utensils and sculptures.

Numerous historical artifacts have come down to us from antiquity, helping historians and anthropologists reconstruct our past.

5. Dada Dada’



From the French word "dadaïsme", derived from "dada"—considered one of the first words spoken by children—the name was adopted by the artistic and literary movement that developed from 1916 to 1923. It was a true cultural revolt that proposed the overturning of all old orders and values to reaffirm the complete irrationality of art.

The importance of Dadaism lies not so much in the individual works produced by the movement, but rather in its contribution to the cultural renewal of the last century, reevaluating freedom of expression and the dimension of the fantastical and ironic as essential components of artistic creation. The technique best suited to the Dadaists was collage, often using waste materials, as a symbol of anti-conformism and social rebellion.

6. Dalì’s time



Salvador Dalí (1904–1989) was a Spanish painter, sculptor, writer, photographer, filmmaker, and designer—a master and a world-famous personality known for his creations and his eccentric mustache.

An icon of Surrealism, Salvador Dalí plays with the subject matter and materials of his paintings to create astonishing works. According to the eccentric artist, reality is dismantled to "systematize confusion and contribute to the total discrediting of the world of reality," while still maintaining a foundation of realism through easily recognizable objects in his work.

“The blindness of human beings, constantly doing and re-doing the same things, surprises me; it astounds me that no painter before me ever thought of painting a soft watch!” (Salvador Dalí)

7. Death will come and have Your Eyes



"Death Will Come and Have Your Eyes" is a poem by Cesare Pavese, published posthumously in 1951 following the author's suicide a year earlier, triggered by the heartbreak he suffered over the American actress Constance Dowling. A famous actress in the 1940s, Dowling lived and acted in Italy between 1946 and 1950, which is when Pavese met her. He fell in love instantly and tried desperately to get close to her, but without success.

However, fate brought them together a second time in Turin. After spending a few days together, their intense yet brief romantic idyll began. Shortly thereafter, Constance returned to the United States, leaving the poet heartbroken. With the end of that love story, all hope for the future vanished for Pavese—a moment when the horizon of life narrows to a dark slit through which one stares death in the eye...

8. Decide your Future



Let us consider the noble-looking young man at the center of our collage. This is the English monarch George III, portrayed in 1765 by Allan Ramsay.
Ascending the throne in 1760, the sovereign lived longer than any of his predecessors and became famous for two things: he was the king who lost America and, in the final stages of his reign, he went completely mad.

Speaking of ruling dynasties, we conclude with the exquisite Chinese porcelain figurine (on the right of the collage) created to celebrate a princess of the Tang dynasty, which ruled China for nearly 300 years (618–907). Ancient Chinese culture has passed down centuries of wisdom, artifacts, and proverbs such as this: "The wise man does not worry about the past because it is over and cannot be changed, nor does he worry about the future because it is yet to come."

9. Design Week



The Milan Design Week is an annual event held since 2003, featuring over 1,000 events scattered across the city.

Let us now move from a high-society event to a legendary one. The bottom-left of our collage shows a detail from the painting *Lot and His Daughters*, painted in 1622 by the Tuscan artist Orazio Gentileschi, one of Caravaggio's most accomplished followers.

The theme is a biblical event of rare drama: Lot's daughters witness God's destruction of the city of Sodom, which burns in the distance. Believing they must survive solely to perpetuate the human race, the daughters ply their father with alcohol to facilitate his incestuous seduction. Each daughter would later bear a son by Lot: Moab and Ammon, the founding fathers of tribes that were often hostile to one another.

10.Desire for Modernity



Max Weber (1881–1961) was a Jewish-American painter and poet who, in 1905, pursuing his dream of modernity, was finally able to move to Paris, where he attended Henri Matisse's academy and learned the poetic style of Modernism and Cubism.

In 1908, he returned to Brooklyn, where he helped introduce Cubism to the United States—the most modern painting style of the era which, breaking with past tradition, sparked the revolution in contemporary art.

We have included an example of his style in our collage inspired by modernity: it is the couple placed at the center. The title of the original 1919 painting, *Conversation*, strikes us as ironically ambiguous, and therefore extraordinarily modern.

11. Epochal Contaminations



The collage features various representations of a highly popular artistic genre: the portrait.
We begin with the girl at the doorway on the left, who is wearing an 18th-century "English-style gown" (*robe à l'anglaise*), consisting of a tight-fitting, one-piece bodice with an overskirt open at the front to reveal the underskirt.
The large painting in a frame at the center, on the other hand, is a 1637 work by the Italian artist Guido Reni—an era that had no qualms about displaying nude figures even in public and religious spaces.
During the Baroque period, especially in Austria and Bavaria, woodcarving was a widespread art form, as seen in the bust of the young man in the foreground; meanwhile, behind him, resting on the sofa, is a nude male figure carved in stone over 200 years ago.The composition concludes on the right doorway with a portrait of an Armenian woman in her traditional late-18th-century attire.

12. Female Pride

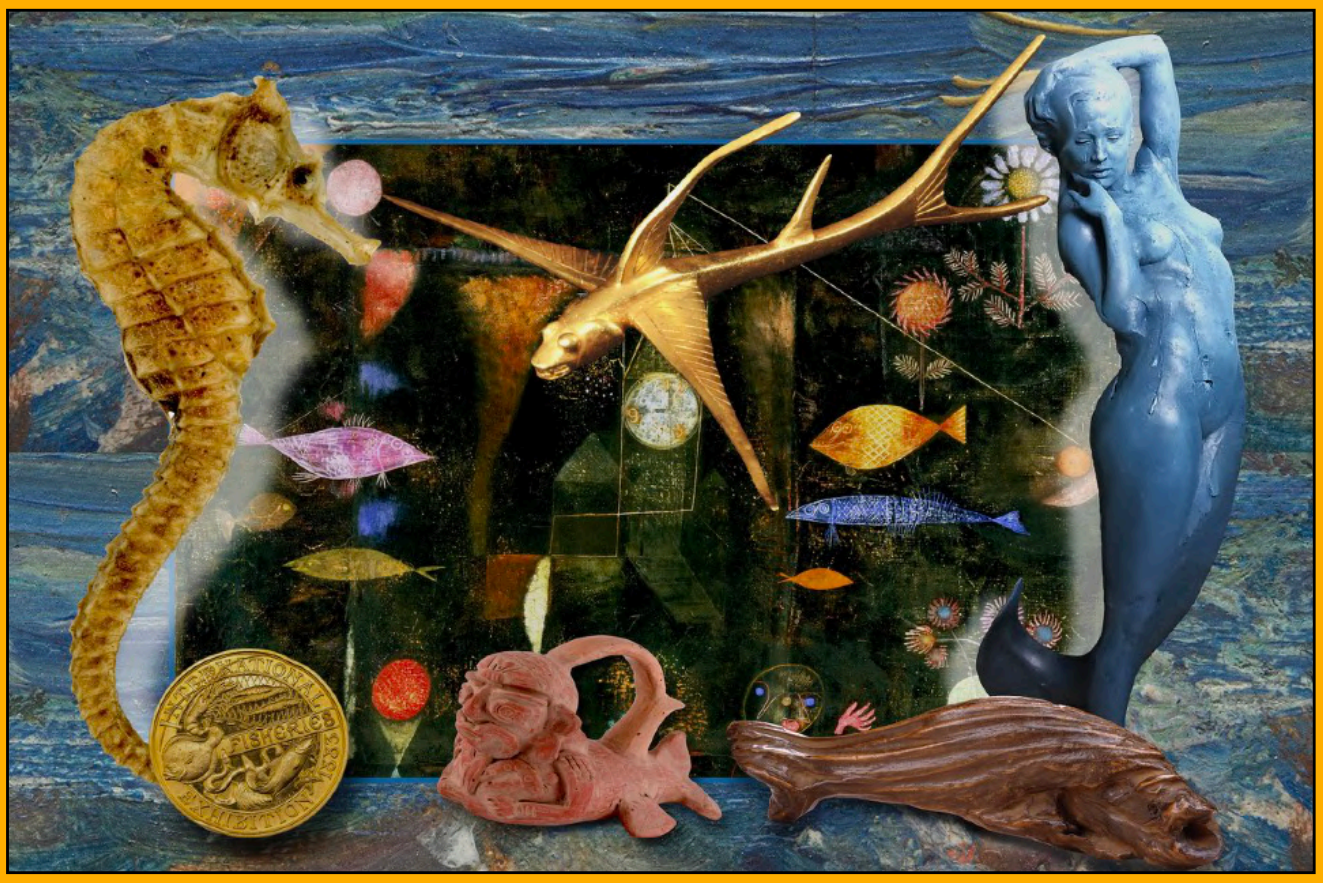


The Italian noun *donna* (woman) is the adapted form of the Latin word *domina*, which means lady or mistress.

"But mistress of what? Initially—historically speaking—only of the home. Over the centuries, we have gained mastery over the hearts of our partners, poets, and writers, taking on an increasingly active role and embodying a spirit so close to the divine, generative and inspiring, both as mothers and as muses.

Until we realized that, just like our male counterparts, the only thing that truly matters is to be mistresses of ourselves. Mistresses, therefore free—mistresses of our own lives, our choices, and everything we desire." (Francesca Pizzigati)

13. Fish and Klee



This collage draws inspiration from the famous 1925 painting *Magic Fish* by the Swiss artist Paul Klee, one of the greatest exponents of early 20th-century abstract art.

A versatile artist, he successfully engaged in various disciplines until finding his true expression in painting. The fish is one of the artist's favorite motifs for intellectual meditation and childhood memories.

As the years passed, Klee's popularity grew, solidified, and was cemented through a series of successful exhibitions across Europe—from London to France—and even overseas in the United States.
However, the Nazi regime did not share the widespread acclaim Klee was receiving; they labeled his creations as "degenerate art" to be censored and removed all of his works from German museums.

14. Gulliver's Dreams



The collage illustrates the dreamlike fantasies of Gulliver, fast asleep in the forest surrounded by some of the characters met during his travels around the world.

Gulliver's Travels is the masterpiece of Irish writer Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), one of the greatest satirists in the English language.
The book recounts the misadventures of the ship's surgeon, Lemuel Gulliver, who encounters improbable beings and societies on imaginary islands.

Behind this seemingly fantastical tale—which draws inspiration from travel narrative literature such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)— Swift highlights the flaws and hypocrisies of all the various inhabitants Gulliver encounters. Moral: there are no paradises on Earth.

15. I am Just my Mind



The title of the collage features a quote by the Italian scientist and 1986 Nobel Laureate in Medicine, Rita Levi-Montalcini, given during a 2009 interview on the occasion of her 100th birthday: "Let the body do what it wants. I am not the body: I am the mind."

Therefore, the collage depicts a man, visibly lacking a brain, who emotionlessly stares at other bodies across various stages of life, all sharing the same fate: the deterioration and subsequent decay of the physical form.

"And when the body dies?" the interviewer asked her again. "What survives is what you have done," the scientist replied. In her case, it is the discovery of the protein molecule NGF (Nerve Growth Factor), used in the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases.

16. Love that Comes, Love that Goes



The title of the collage—which references a popular song—aims to illustrate love between two people in a universal sense. Starting with the woman in the framed painting tidying her hair: this is a 1906 portrait by the Italian painter Camillo Innocenti, one of the most followed artists of the early 20th century, celebrated for his modern and elegant style.

The man, on the other hand, is the painter Johann Zoffany (a self-portrait from 1756) in the role of David, leaning on the lifeless head of the defeated giant. To complete the analysis of the collage, we see a small statue and a horse's head. The former is the *Lady of Baza*, a 4th-century BCE work by the Iberian people, while the horse—or knight in chess—is one of the so-called "minor pieces," whereas the woman is the queen, known as a "major piece"; an allusion to the eternal battle of the sexes.

17.Magritte never seen



A tribute to the great Belgian painter René Magritte (1898-1967), master of the enigma, famous for his surreal and metaphorical rebus-like paintings. Poetry, humor, reality and dream, the visible and invisible, fantasy and elegance all define this visionary artist.

He refused to explain the meaning of his paintings, leaving viewers free to interpret them in their own way. His work, defined as "oneiric illusionism," has influenced artists and designers across fields from music to fashion, becoming a landmark for subsequent artistic movements up to the present day.

“People who look for symbolic meanings fail to grasp the poetry and mystery of the image... the world is so wonderfully devoid of meaning that being happy is not luck, it is pure art." (René Magritte)

18. Malatesta's dreams



Sigismondo Malatesta (1417–1468) was the Lord of Rimini. Considered by his contemporaries to be one of the boldest Italian *condottieri*, he took part in numerous battles of that historical era.

Always in need of funds to finance his grandiose projects, he sometimes proved ruthless in war, even ready to switch sides in favor of whoever guaranteed him the greatest privileges. He invited some of the most qualified and cutting-edge architects and artists of the era to his court, from Filippo Brunelleschi to Piero della Francesca.

Piero painted a fresco portrait of Sigismondo to celebrate his knighthood, conferred by the Emperor in 1450. This is the very portrait seen in the foreground of our collage, along with several objects—futuristic for the 15th century—that symbolize the dreams of a great man: romantic and violent, dynamic and visionary, constantly reaching into the future.

19. Malgre Tout



Jesús Contreras (1866–1902) was a Mexican sculptor who lost an arm to cancer. After recovering from the amputation, he sculpted a life-sized marble figure despite his disability, making the title of his work even more symbolic: *"Malgré Tout"*indeed means "in spite of everything."

The sculpture depicts a nude woman struggling against her chains to rise again. It was submitted by the artist to represent Mexico at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle.

In our collage, the woman is surrounded by other human and animal figures: an ancient Greek lioness, the torso of a warrior discovered in the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento, and the cheetah-woman embracing a young man in a portrait painted by Belgian artist Fernand Khnopff in 1896.

20. Mascherata



Carnival is a festival linked to the Catholic and Christian traditions, but its origins date back to far more ancient times when paganism was the dominant religion. In fact, the celebration has its roots in the Saturnalia of ancient Rome and the Dionysian festivals of classical Greece.

In the collage, we have placed two masked figures at the center, taken from frescoes recovered during the excavations of Pompeii, dating back to 1st-century CE Roman civilization. The male figures wearing black hats, on the other hand, are from a 1750 portrait by Italian artist Pietro Longhi.

The proverb associated with Carnival derives from the ancient Latin saying: *"Semel in anno licet insanire"* — Once a year it is permissible to go mad.

21.Mental Manipulation



Psychological manipulation is a dynamic that can profoundly affect people's lives, often in subtle and imperceptible ways. There are numerous contexts in which this phenomenon can occur: from personal and professional relationships to interactions in the public sphere.

It is a complex phenomenon involving the devious use—whether conscious or not—of tactics to influence or control an individual's behavior, emotions, or thoughts, without their full consent or awareness.

This type of manipulation can manifest in multiple ways, but the final result is always the same: exercising significant control over the victim, driving them to perform actions or make decisions they would not have otherwise made.

22.Mystical Hallucination



Hallucinogenic substances have been part of the human experience for millennia. Throughout the world and across every era, plants and substances capable of inducing altered states of consciousness and visions were used, sometimes accompanied by the feeling of attaining the mystical, revelation, or enlightenment.

For this reason, such substances have also been called psychedelic (capable of revealing the mind) or entheogenic (revealing the divine within us).
Hallucinogens interfere with the interactions between nerve cells and serotonin, a neurotransmitter present in the central nervous system involved in controlling behavior, the perceptual system, and regulating mood, hunger, body temperature, sexual behavior, muscle control, and sensory perception.

23.Nostalgia for Childhood



Deep within every person lies a child who connects with the world through imagination and sensitivity. The inner voice of the child brings poetry to life in adults; it enlivens, makes us daydream, uncovers the attractive and mysterious side of everything, and lets the imagination soar into thrilling universes. It represents that pure, naive, candid, and innocent nature that can be preserved within an individual's personality even into adulthood.

“Today, the childlike capacity for emotion, wonder, and intuition finds little room to breathe. The yoke of power and the thirst for futile conquests have produced a dishonorable equation, to say the least: the loss of childlike genuineness creates ever-increasing indifference toward the most basic human needs. However, the problem with today’s daily social life is that it overflows with human suffering and painful situations that violate personal dignity, making the absence of genuineness and sincerity increasingly unacceptable.” — M.F. Carnea

24. Purple Time



In the West, purple is associated with royalty, rarity, piety, magic, and mystery. Purple is the color of royalty, creativity, and numerous social movements.

Purple became a color linked to social change when the women's suffrage movement adopted purple and white as its official colors. The counterculture's adoption of purple is recent, but its impact has been lasting. From Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze" to Prince's "Purple Rain," the color purple carries powerful symbolism.

“Purple is a cool red in both a physical and psychological sense. It thus has something sickly, extinguished, and sad about it. It is no coincidence that it is considered suitable for older women's clothing, as well as by the Chinese, who use it for mourning attire.” — Wassily Kandinsky

25. Room of Memories

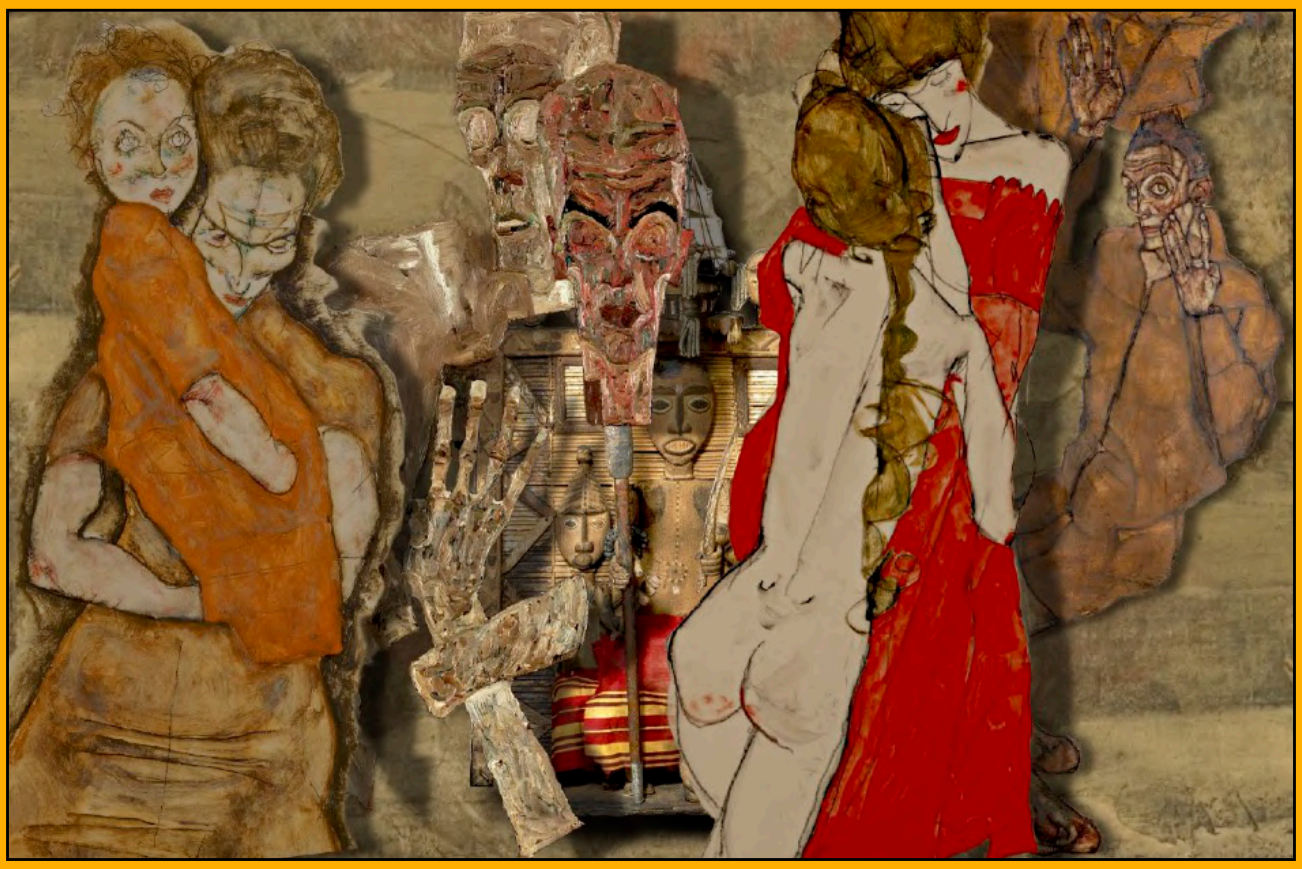


In our lives, certain objects have a fundamental importance in bringing back to mind memories of moments, places, or people, in that process that we conventionally call "memory." Depending on the intimacy of the memory that the object evokes in us, it will be kept, hidden, or displayed in our home. This is a topic related to psychology, so it is best to leave the floor to psychologists:

"The home as the quintessential place of memory therefore—of that type of compassionate memory capable of feeding on the reverberations of emotions that emanate from cherished places of the past—thus becomes the instrument to ensure that the past reappears, repeats itself, revealing in this sense its active and unfinished character.

Because it is true that the tape cannot be rewound, nor can what happened be undone, but the meaning of what happened is not fixed just once. For everyone, it continually requires being rethought, understood, that is, taken into consideration by an interpretation that seeks to bring out its meaning, perhaps by rereading it in the light of new experiences." — Sergio Garufi

26.Schiele's Nightmares



Prematurely marked by his father's death and entangled in an ambiguous relationship with his younger sister Gertrud—his first model and companion in erotic explorations—the Austrian Egon Schiele (1890–1918) developed a morbid and neurotic personality that manifested in a raw and expressive artistic style.

Building upon Klimt’s work, Schiele developed a unique, jarring, and twisted style suited to representing the complexity of his tormented emotions. Lines are deformed, and decoration is replaced by a dramatically distorted composition.

The dream turns into a nightmare, both in Schiele's art and in society, as the euphoria of the 19th-century Belle Époque sinks into the malaise of 20th-century modernity.

27. Surrealist Style



Surrealism is an artistic movement created by avant-garde painters as an evolution of the Dadaist movement; in 1924, their theories were published in the Surrealist Manifesto.

The writing reveals the artists' desire to uncover the most diverse aspects of the psyche, describing a parallel reality permeated by the irrationality of dreams.
Surrealist art is distinguished by the bold use of bizarre, irrational, and often unsettling images that provoke and challenge the viewer to reflect on the complex relationships between image and meaning through the reinterpretation of reality.

Thus came to life one of the most intriguing movements in the history of the arts, which today, given the historical situation we are living through, is perhaps possible to understand even better.

28. The Guardians of Morality



Our collage, through symbolic images, addresses the theme of morality with different types of characters:

the Puppeteer (on the left with a mustache), the Invisible Man (dressed in green), the fiery lovers (lying on the long fortune), the pious woman (intent on reading codes of good conduct), the Guardian of Morality (with the flags).

The Guardians of Morality, strictly chosen men, guard an imaginary city where all inhabitants must obligatorily follow the imposed moral rules, and where transgressors become prosecutable and punishable primarily by the Guardians themselves.

29. West and Dalì



The Spanish artist Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), a brilliant and eccentric Surrealist, had already realized in the 1930s that to succeed in contemporary art, artists themselves had to become their own promoters. Their name, once a modest signature at the bottom of paintings, would transform into a fashion brand. Here is one of his famous declarations of intent: "My ambition continues to grow, and now my ambition is to become Salvador Dalí, nothing else."

As for the sensual American actress Mae West, of whom Dalí was an ardent admirer, in her films and theatrical shows Mae celebrated female sexuality, the male body, and the thrill of "sin" with doses of humor and exaggerated glamour, as in this line extracted from one of her performances: "Ten men waiting for me outside? Oh, God... send just one up to my room. I'm tired tonight!"

30. Wolves Inside and Out



The wolf has earned a bad reputation because of its terrifying appearance.

Conversely, the human "wolf" can present himself with an elegant and reassuring attitude, just like Giuliano de' Medici, Lord of Florence, in Botticelli's 1480 portrait (on the right-hand screen of the collage).

Giuliano, with an indifferent expression, observes his victims: the reclining Venus portrayed by the French painter Alexandre Cabanel in 1875, and "Angelica in Chains," a 1859 work by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres.

Outside the home, wolves and foxes are busy defending themselves against armed knights hunting them down, as depicted by the Flemish painter Pieter Paul Rubens in 1616.

