

A vibrant, surreal painting of a courtyard. On the left is a brown wooden house with a gabled roof and a large open doorway. On the right is a blue house with a red tiled roof and a yellow window. The courtyard floor is sandy and yellow, with a red wavy line and a path of small stones. In the foreground, a blue peacock with orange and black spots stands on the left, and a green plant with pink flowers is on the right. The background features stylized green foliage and red wavy lines against a yellow and green sky.

MAGICAL SURREALISM

CURATED BY MYRIAM MUSGRAVE

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Virtual Exhibition

Norah Eccles Harrison Museum of Art

January-May-2023

Curated by Myriam Musgrave





Myriam Musgrave moved to Utah from North Carolina to apply for Utah State's Interior Architecture and Design Program. It has always been her dream to design buildings and homes. She was accepted into the program last spring and is now in her Sophomore year . In the future, Myriam hopes to repurpose old buildings to give them new life and introduce them to a new audience.

MAGICAL SURREALISM

Magical Realism is a style of art that, with the exception of certain elements that are magical or supernatural, depicts real life. Surrealism, on the other hand, is an artistic style that focuses on the uncanny, impossible, or subconscious. Do we need separate categories for these styles of art? It is difficult to distinguish between Surreal art and art that is Magical Realism. During her time, Frida Kahlo was categorized as a surrealist, but she refuted this title by saying: “I painted my own reality.” Does this mean that she was a Magical Realist?

“Magical Surrealism” will explore these questions. Magical Realism gained popularity as a literary genre in Columbia, but has been expanded to an artistic style since then. Surrealism started in France with Andre Breton, but became a popular philosophy in Spain with artists such as Salvador Dali. In this exhibition, you will see a selection of works made by Latin American artists. As you view these artistic works, the viewer is challenged to determine the style of the pieces independently before reading gallery descriptions. Perhaps, by the end of this exhibition, a consensus can be reached about whether or not Magical Realism and Surrealism should be separate categories or combined into one category that encompasses all the magic, subconscious, and uncanny.

Jose Guadalupe Posada was born in Mexico in 1852. He is most famous for his many works of art depicting *calaveras* (skeletons). His works became staples for *Dia de Los Muertos* (Day of the Dead). The Day of the Dead celebrates the lives of those who have passed on. Many stories under the literary genre of Magical Realism view death in a similar manner to the celebration of *Dia De Los Muertos*: a cycle of life. In his work “*Calaveras Riding Bicycles*,” Posada implemented Magical Realism, even if it was not his intention. Typically skeletons are inanimate, the opposite is true of the depicted skeletons in this piece. These *calaveras* are lively and interact with each other. They are riding bicycles and wearing hats, and it looks as though they are laughing with each other. The largest of the *calaveras* sports a set of very large wings. This has been seen in other stories and pieces that are Magical Realism. It is reminiscent of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s “*A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*,” a story about a fallen angel-like figure that is held in captivity. Posada’s *calaveras* are certainly not in captivity, they seem free and equal.



Jose Guadalupe Posada
Calaveras Riding Bicycles

1900

Etching on Zinc



Remedios Varo

1957

Tailleur Pour Dames

Oil on Board



Leonora Carrington

1953

And Then We Saw the Daughter of the Minotaur

Oil on Canvas

Remedios Varo was a Spanish-Mexican born in 1908. While living in Madrid, at the age of fifteen, Varo enrolled in the Escuela de Bellas Artes where she was taught by Manuel Benedito. Although she was from Spain, it was not until she moved to Mexico that she was labeled an influential Surrealist artist. In this piece, "*Tailleur Pour Dames*" (*Tailor for Ladies*) many surreal elements are depicted. The tailor at the center of the room creates women's dresses, upon close inspection, his glasses and nose are in the shape of a pair of scissors, and his shadow ripples like a ribbon. Each of the women sports a dress with odd qualities. The woman in pink is wearing a dress that is also a sailboat, The woman in blue is sitting on her dress as if it were a chair, and the woman in purple has bubbles being created on the purple fabric. On the right, pins and needles are flying through the air alongside a floating dress.

This is one piece that is classified as surreal but may take close inspection to fully realize all of the surreal happenings being depicted which is why it could be classified as Magical Realism.

Leonora Carrington was born in 1917. She was introduced to Surrealism when she met her husband Max Ernst in 1937. Carrington went on to meet and learn from many well-known surrealists including Breton and Dali. She was then labeled a Surrealist. Her pieces often create surreal environments that can not fully be explained. "*And Then We Saw the Daughter of the Minotaur*" is one such work that creates a surreal environment. While Carrington's purpose behind "*And Then We Saw the Daughter of the Minotaur*" is unbeknownst to the viewer, her use of formal elements can be analyzed through a surreal lens.

In this piece, there are magical and surreal elements juxtaposed with completely natural elements. In some cases, there are natural elements in an unnatural setting. Both the cloaked children and the two white dogs are natural and normal; however, they are standing in a room with magical or supernatural creatures. Depicted are a minotaur, a strange dancing figure, and a green flower creature. The minotaur is wearing a robe and makes eye contact with the viewer, the flower figure is focused on the children. There are spheres, some of which appear weighted on the table and others weightless in the air. Vines climb up the supporting column of the room, and its ceiling is a night sky.



Great Goddess

circa. 100 B.C.

Fresco



Miguel Cabrera

1760

The Divine Shepherdess Oil on Copper



Rufino Tamayo

Perro Aullando a la Luna

(Dog Howling at the Moon)

Oil on Canvas

1942



Felipe Morales

Nuevo Amanecer y eclipse

(New Dawn and Eclipse)

Oil

2021

Rufino Tamayo was born in Mexico in 1899. His paintings sport bright colors and textured surfaces. Tamayo sought to depict Mexican culture in his works. It has been agreed upon that his works marry Cubism and Surrealism, but he has also been labeled a Magical Realist. Upon initial inspection, it is not clear what qualifies this work, "*Perro Aullando a la Luna*" (*Dog Howling at the Moon*), to be Magical Realism or Surrealism. It can be difficult to see due to the fragmented portrayal of this dog. Upon closer inspection, its bones and other organs are shown on the outside of its body. A tube starts at the dog's open mouth and travels down to its chest where we see what could be its heart. Under the heart, are the dog's ribs. Other artists that have been called Magical Realists have portrayed anatomy on the outside of a figure's body. One such artist is Frida Kahlo in her piece *The Two Fridas* Where her heart and veins are painted atop her clothing. These similar elements along with the fact that Tamayo has been called a Magical Realist could be used as evidence that *Perro Aullando a la Luna* is in fact Magical Realism.

Felipe Morales was born in Mexico in 1959. He was part of the first class of the "Rufino Tamayo Plastic Arts Workshop." This piece, along with many others, was made to commemorate Tamayo after his death. *Nuevo amanecer y eclipse* translates to *New Dawn and Eclipse*. Pictured is a girl communicating with the moon's shadow. The anthropomorphizing of inanimate objects is a common theme in Magical Realism. Another common subject found in Magical Realism is the hybridization of humans and animals. For example, humans may be depicted with wings or tails. In the case of Morales' piece there is a nahuatl, a personal spirit guardian that can shapeshift. Depicted on the opposite side is a large black dog, Morales meant the dog to be a guardian to the afterlife. This cycle of life and afterlife is another common theme found within Magical Realism

Wifredo Lam was born in Cuba in 1902. Lam fused Surrealism and Cubism, which can be seen in his work “*La Jungla*.” With this piece, Lam wanted to rethink the identity of Afro-Caribbeans in Latin America. Lam’s pieces did not fit into an artistic category at the time. In *La Jungla*, there are figures gathered amongst sugarcane. The sugarcane resembles bamboo and represents his Chinese and Cuban heritage. The figures themselves have heads with similar shapes to those of the sculptures from Nigeria and the Congo Basin.

The piece transports the viewer to a new spiritual plane where everything seems to be a distorted reality. Even though this work is a combination of Surrealism and Cubism, it is not Cubism in the European sense. This piece does not resemble the Picasso pieces that many other Cubist artists try to emulate. Just because this is not the same Cubism people were used to, it was concluded that this piece must be a hybrid Cubist-Surrealist work.

Roberto Matta was born in Chile in 1911, his works create a bridge between abstraction and surrealism. This is seen at play in “*On the Edge of a Dream*.” At first glance, this piece confuses viewers. The scene depicted is abstract. However, upon closer inspection, it still seems to depict a dream-like locale from afar. The title is appropriate for this work. Matta captured the feeling of trying desperately to recall a scenario from a dream. When trying to remember a dream, often it seems memories are mixed up and changing constantly. This is the same sensation that one might feel when viewing this piece. It may seem as though the different components of the work change at each new glance. The abstracted forms are grouped in clusters, and each seem to be in slightly different atmospheres. Part of the reason these abstractions are reminiscent of an actual scene is Matta’s use of light, shade, shadow, and arrangement. The shapes in this piece overlap and are shaded making them appear more three-dimensional. All of these components add to the implied depth of and a sense of a surreal environment to “*On the Edge of a Dream*.”



Wifredo Lam

1943

La Jungla

Gouache on Paper

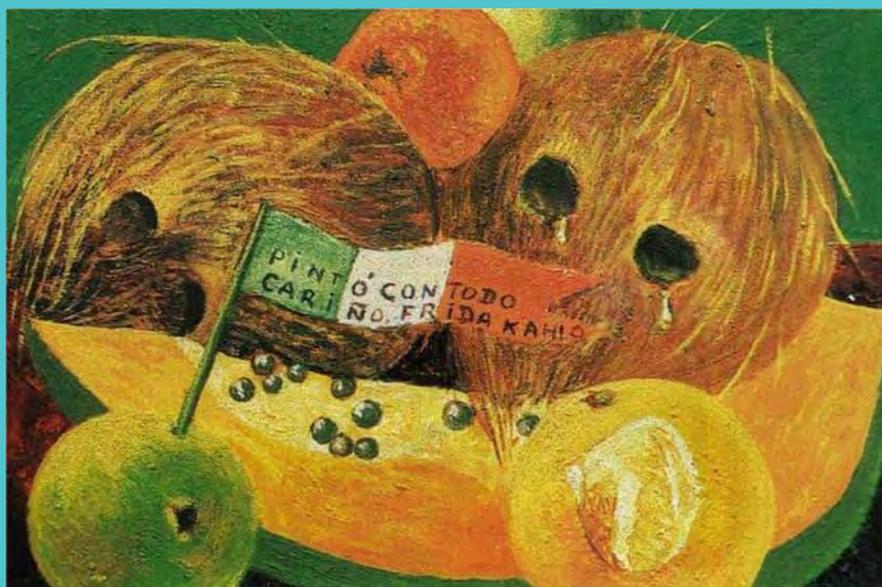


Roberto Matta

1956

On the Edge of a Dream

Oil on Canvas



Frida Kahlo

Weeping Coconuts

1951

Oil on Masonite

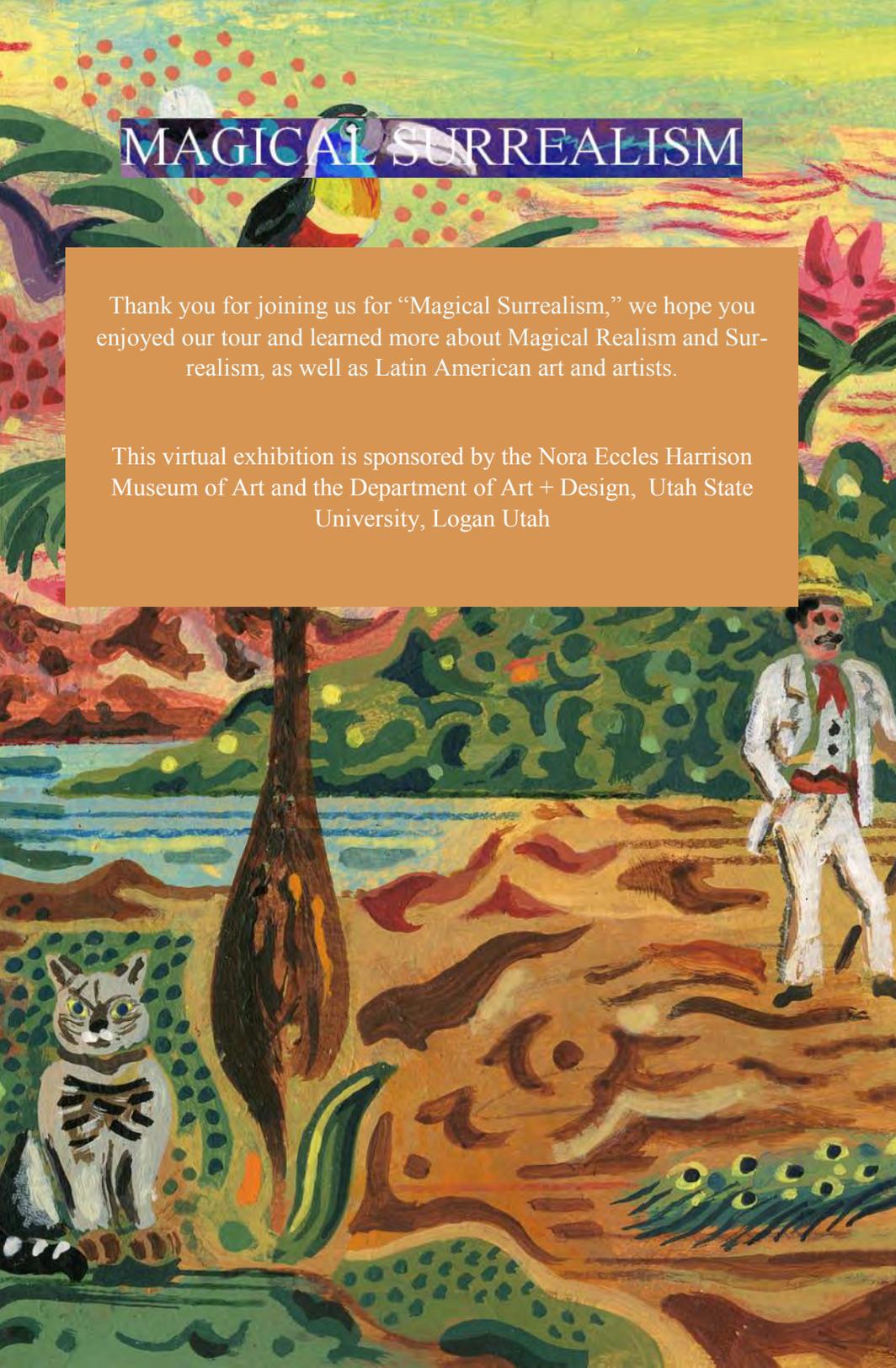
Frida Kahlo's piece "*Weeping Coconuts*" is different from her other works. The majority of Kahlo's works of art are self-portraits. In this piece, an arrangement of different fruits is depicted. There is a flag supported by an apple, the flag reads "PINTO CON TODO CARINO, FRIDA KAHLO." This translates to "I paint with all my love, Frida Kahlo." This all seems fairly naturalistic; however, the coconut on the right has tears dripping down its side. Magical Realism is often described as being a normal, natural depiction of something with the exemption of a few surreal or supernatural components. Although Kahlo was labeled a Surrealist, it could be argued that "*Weeping Coconuts*" is a piece that falls into the category of Magical Realism as there is only one part of the piece that does not fit in.

We would like to thank NEHMA for making this
exhibition possible.

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Thank you for joining us for “Magical Surrealism,” we hope you enjoyed our tour and learned more about Magical Realism and Surrealism, as well as Latin American art and artists.

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