

Objects of Desire
Surrealism & Design
Press kit

O B J E T S D E D É S I R
8.3-4.8.24

S u r r é a l i s m e & D e s i g n



mudac

10⁰ QUARTIER
DES ARTS
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↑ View of the exhibition *Objects of Desire*, mudac, Plateforme 10.
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Cover
Graphic design : Neo Neo
Bocca (Sofa), 1970.
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Objects of Desire Surrealism & Design

08.03 – 04.08.2024

In 1924 André Breton published his *Manifesto of Surrealism*, initiating one of the major artistic movements of the 20th century. In 2024 the three Plateforme 10 museums—MCBA, Photo Elysée and mudac—will join forces to mark this 100th anniversary with a Surrealism season, featuring a wide-ranging collective reflection on one of the most fascinating and influential artistic movements of the last century. Starting on 7 March, mudac will start things off with the first two exhibitions: *Objects of Desire. Surrealism & Design* and *Alchemy. Surrealism & Glass Art*.

mudac presents *Objects of Desire*, an exhibition by the Vitra Design Museum that explores the close dialogue between Surrealism and design over the last hundred years. From Salvador Dalí to Meret Oppenheim and Iris van Herpen, the exhibition features both pioneering works from the 1930s and contemporary projects. Even today, Surrealism provides designers with a wealth of inspiration, whether through the motifs of its fantastic universe, its subversive approach, or its interest in the human psyche. *Objects of Desire* showcases this abundant diversity, bringing together design furniture as well as graphic design, fashion, decoration, and photography.

Surrealism is renowned for its dreamlike imagery, in which objects play a central role. Diverted from their function, they are treated with humour or combined to create curious hybrids. Conversely, Surrealism has had a decisive influence on designers, encouraging them to explore the reality hidden behind what is visible and to create thought-provoking, innovative objects that challenge our habits. The movement helped free post-war design from the straitjacket of functionalism and shift our gaze from the form of objects to their oft-hidden messages.

The vast *Objects of Desire* exhibition reveals this fruitful dialogue, bringing together works by Gae Aulenti, BLESS, Achille Castiglioni, Giorgio de Chirico, Le Corbusier, Salvador Dalí, Dunne & Raby, Max Ernst, Ray Eames, Front, Frederick Kiesler, Shiro Kuramata, Carlo Mollino, Isamu Noguchi, Meret Oppenheim, Man Ray, Iris van Herpen, and many others.

Curator

Dr. Mateo Kries

Assistant curator

Tanja Cunz

Assistant

Isabelle Schorer

Design of the exhibition

EMYL

Milestones of the exhibition

The origins of Surrealism can be traced back to André Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism*, which was published in 1924. The movement quickly took on an international dimension, drawing writers, artists, and filmmakers in its wake. The subconscious, dreams, obsessions, chance, and the irrational were just some of the sources from which the Surrealists drew to create their new artistic reality. In the 1930s, the first signs of Surrealism's influence on the world of design began to be felt, but it was mainly in the 1940s that the trend gained strength and spread to the world of fashion, furniture, and photography, appearing on the front cover of magazines such as Harper's Bazaar and Vogue.

Even today, Surrealism provides designers with a wide range of inspiration, including motifs drawn from its fantastic imagery, a subversive approach, and an interest in the human psyche. The exhibition *Objects of Desire* juxtaposes surrealist artworks and design objects, revealing fascinating parallels and cross-references. Representative works from the world of design range from the 1930s—Meret Oppenheim's *Table with Bird's Feet* (1939)—to contemporary works, including fashion creations by Iris van Herpen, objects by Konstantin Grcic, or Odd Matter, as well as critical design projects that question new technologies or gender roles in subversive ways. These works demonstrate that design is not just about function or technology, but also about the hidden reality of objects, our secret dreams, obsessions, and myths—in other words, the surreal.



Dan Tobin Smith, *A Matter of Perspective* (published in *Wallpaper**, no. 69, June 2004, set design by Lyndsay Milne McLeod).

© Dan Tobin Smith



Roberto Sebastian Matta Echaurren, *MAGriTTA*, 1970.

© Vitra Design Museum, photo: Jürgen HANS

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View of the exhibition *Objects of Desire*, mudac, Plateforme 10.
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The exhibition begins with an overview of Surrealism from the 1920s to the 1950s, highlighting the crucial role played by design in the evolution of the movement. Inspired by the metaphysical paintings of Giorgio de Chirico, artists such as René Magritte and Salvador Dalí sought to capture the aura and mystery of everyday objects. At the same time, heavily influenced by Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades, artists such as Meret Oppenheim and Man Ray experimented with a whole new form of sculpture, creating absurd objects from materials and found objects.

From the 1930s onwards, the search for the narrative potential of objects had a growing influence on designers and architects such as Le Corbusier, as illustrated, for example, by the Paris flat he designed for Carlos de Beistegui (1929 - 1931), one of the greatest collectors of surrealist art. When many of the protagonists of Surrealism were forced to emigrate to the United States because of the rise of National Socialism in Germany and the occupation of France, the movement spread to the world of design on the other side of the Atlantic, influencing designers such as Ray Eames and Isamu Noguchi. In 1942, Frederick Kiesler demonstrated surrealist spatial concepts in his interior design for Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery in Manhattan, New York. The biomorphic forms developed by the Austro-American architect for the gallery's furniture are emblematic of the emergence of the organic language of post-war American design.



View of the exhibition *Objects of Desire*, mudac, Plateforme 10.
© Etienne Malapert / mudac

The second part of the exhibition shows how the Surrealists explored the archetypes of everyday objects and appropriated the codes of meaning of a world we thought we knew. After 1945, many designers adopted similar strategies, including Achille Castiglioni, whose surprising creations were often based on the idea of the ready-made that had already inspired the Surrealists. Many of the creations of the Italian Radical Design movement—such as *I Sassi* (1967/68) by Piero Gilardi or the seated object *Capitello* (1971) by Studio65—resemble the disconcerting, decontextualised object fragments of Salvador Dalí or Giorgio de Chirico. Even surrealist artists such as Man Ray and Roberto Matta exploited the possibilities offered by the new plastics in the 1960s and 1970s to transform surrealist motifs into sculptural seated objects.

The decontextualization and misappropriation of seemingly ordinary objects remains a driving force in the more recent creations presented in this section of the exhibition, such as Front's *Horse Lamp* (2006) and *Coathangerbrush* (1992) by Konstantin Grcic, who cites Marcel Duchamp as a major source of inspiration for his work.



View of the exhibition *Objects of Desire*, mudac, Plateforme 10.
© Etienne Malapert / mudac

The third part of the exhibition is devoted to the themes of love, eroticism, and sexuality, which played a central role in the surrealist movement. In the post-war period, these themes even found their way into interior design, as evidenced by the sensual interiors and furniture of Italian designer Carlo Mollino or Salvador Dalí's *Mae West Sofa* (1938), which Studio65 later adapted into its famous lip-shaped *Bocca Sofa* (1970). The crossovers between Surrealism and design are particularly evident in the field of fashion, once again under the impetus of Salvador Dalí, who collaborated with fashion legend Elsa Schiaparelli from the 1930s onwards, designing several fashion magazine covers as well as ads and prints for textile companies.

While the work of male Surrealists is often peppered with gender stereotypes, the work of many female Surrealists is characterised by a more subtle exploration of these themes, making them an important reference point for contemporary designers. This is demonstrated by pieces in the exhibition such as Lee Miller's subversive fashion photographs, Claude Cahun's androgynous self-portraits, and Mimi Parent's assemblage *César* (undated).

The dark side of sexuality also played an important role in Surrealism, inspired in particular by the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud, who saw love and eroticism as closely linked to opposing forces such as violence, oppression, and destruction. In the exhibition, these themes are illustrated by works by Wolfgang Paalen, and are also reflected in design, with objects by Gaetano Pesce, Maarten Baas, and Studio Wieki Somers. The *High Tea Pot* (2003) by Studio Wieki Somers is shaped like a pig's skull and comes with muskrat fur, subverting any notion of comfort in a way similar to several works by Meret Oppenheim, one of the leading female Surrealists.



View of the exhibition *Objects of Desire*, mudac, Plateforme 10.
© Etienne Malapert / mudac

The final part of the exhibition addresses what French ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss called “the savage spirit”: an interest in the archaic, the accidental, and the irrational that was as evident in the Surrealists’ enthusiasm for non-Western tribal art as in their experiments with materials and techniques such as “automatic painting”. In artistic terms, this approach led to a visual vocabulary with its own formal logic, often characterised by creeping or melting forms, as in the paintings of Max Ernst.

Similar motifs appeared in design in the 1980s, when experimental approaches gained ground and designers began to deconstruct the forms and typologies of objects. A striking example is Robert Stadler’s *Pools & Pouf* collection (2004), in which a classic Chesterfield sofa appears to have melted away like a Dalí painting, or Ingo Maurer’s *Porca Miseria!* (1994), a hybrid lamp that reveals a similar approach.

Direct references to surrealist imagery can also be found in the video for Björk’s song *Hidden Place* (2010), in which a tear runs down the singer’s face—a reference to Man Ray’s famous photograph *The Tears* (circa 1932). Projects in the field of critical design, in particular, find decisive inspiration in the subversive and socio-critical agenda of Surrealism, as illustrated by Dunne & Raby’s project *Designs for an Overpopulated Planet: The Foragers* (2009), which consists of fictional objects destined for a dystopian future and situated between art and design, reality and fiction.

Featured artists & designers

- Jean Arp
- Antonin Artaud
- Gae Aulenti
- Maarten Baas
- Denise Bellon
- Björk
- BLESS
- Louise Bourgeois
- Erwan & Ronan Bouroullec
- Andrea Branzi
- Alberto de Braud
- Victor Brauner
- André Breton
- Luis Buñuel
- Claude Cahun
- Fernando & Humberto Campana
- A. M. Cassandre
- Achille Castiglioni
- Pier Giacomo Castiglioni
- Giorgio de Chirico
- René Clair
- Comme des Garçons (Rei Kawakubo)
- Salvador Dalí
- Maya Deren
- Robert Desnos
- Óscar Domínguez
- Marcel Duchamp
- Germaine Dulac
- Dunne & Raby
- Ray Eames
- Aube Elléouët Breton
- Paul Éluard
- Max Ernst
- Piero Fornasetti
- Ruth Francken
- Pedro Friedeberg
- Front
- Antoni Gaudí
- Piero Gilardi
- Konstantin Grcic
- Iris van Herpen
- André Kertész
- Frederic Kiesler
- Shiro Kuramata
- Alicja Kwade
- Danny Lane
- Audrey Large
- Le Corbusier
- Dora Maar
- René Magritte
- Man Ray
- Marcel Mariën
- Roberto Sebastián Matta Echaurren
- Ingo Maurer
- Lee Miller
- Patrick Mimouni
- Carlo Mollino
- Isamu Noguchi
- Odd Matter
- Meret Oppenheim
- Wolfgang Paalen
- Mimi Parent
- Irving Penn
- Gaetano Pesce
- Viviane Sassen
- Elsa Schiaparelli
- Kurt Seligmann
- Dan Tobin Smith
- Ettore Sottsass
- Philippe Soupault
- Robert Stadler
- Studio Wieki Somers
- Studio65
- Yves Tanguy
- Dorothea Tanning
- Aldo Tura
- Raoul Ubac
- Nanda Vigo
- Francesca Woodman

Publication

OBJECTS OF DESIRE. SURREALISM AND DESIGN, 1924 - TODAY.

Surrealism expanded our reality by drawing on myths, dreams, and the subconscious as sources of artistic inspiration. From the 1930s onwards, the movement had a crucial impact on design, and continues to inspire designers today.

Objects of Desire. Surrealism and Design, 1924 – Today documents this fascinating dialogue, featuring numerous essays and a wide selection of images of representative works of art and design objects. The book includes works by artists and designers such as Gae Aulenti, BLESS, Achille Castiglioni, Fernando & Humberto Campana, Le Corbusier, Salvador Dalí, Marcel Duchamp, Front, Iris van Herpen, Frederick Kiesler, René Magritte, Carlo Mollino, Meret Oppenheim, and many others. It is complemented by historical quotations and short statements by contemporary designers. This in-depth examination highlights one thing: form does not always follow function—it can also follow our obsessions, fantasies, and hidden desires.

Project management

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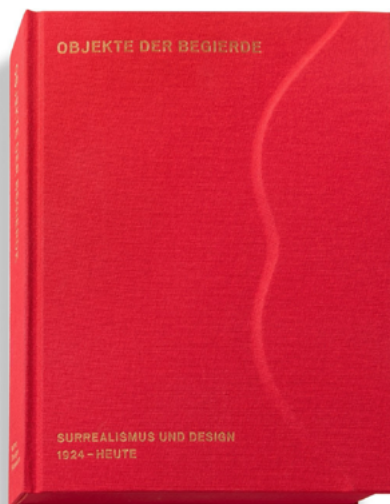
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Rebecca Blum (English)
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Image rights

Isabelle Schorer

A Vitra Design Museum publication, available in English and German from the mudac/Photo Elysée bookshop for CHF 59.90.



Public programme

A SURREALIST SUNDAY AT PLATEFORME 10

19 MAY 2024

The three Plateforme 10 museums will join forces to celebrate Surrealism on a special day that will feature workshops, games, and other surprises.

LECTURE – FABRICATING DESIRE: THE SURREALIST JOURNALS

Lecture by Julia Gelshorn and Thomas Hunkeler

21 March at 6 p.m.

Julia Gelshorn and Thomas Hunkeler, teachers of art history and French literature at the University of Fribourg, will discuss the importance of surrealist journals. These collective works were one of the Surrealists' favourite forms of expression. The speakers will relate these to the "objects of desire" on display at mudac and will seek to highlight that it is in the leaflets, poetry, and puns of these surrealist journals that this desire was written and created. In this way, the journals themselves become objects of desire through their design.

FAMILY WORKSHOP – SURREAL STAINED GLASS

For children 6+, with artist Bérénice Blois

13 April at 2.30 p.m.

Discover surrealist motifs in the mudac exhibition and create your own using collage, decals, engraving, and painting. You will then be able to take the stained-glass windows you have created home with you.

CREATIVE WORKSHOP – SURREALIST MISHMASH

17 April at 2 p.m.

As part of the BDFIL festival, discover Surrealism in the mudac exhibitions. Drawing inspiration from what you have seen, create your own surrealist work and leave with a collectively created notebook. All ages 6+, children under 8 must be accompanied. Free workshop, registration required.

SURREALIST COLLAGE WORKSHOP – DREAM-OBJECT

For children 6+, with artist Anne-Marie Lendi

27 March and 24 April at 2 p.m.

André Breton suggested creating objects that reflected our dreams. You too can play with the fantastic, the strange, and the unexpected. Imagine objects straight out of your dreams, with useful or futile design, and infuse them with a new poetic or eccentric function.

GLASS ART DAY – IN THE GLASS ART BUBBLE

8 June from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For the first time at Plateforme 10, mudac invites you to a day devoted to glass art, to discover or rediscover its magnificent collection. From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Swiss studio Niesenglass will be offering glass-blowing demonstrations, followed by guided tours at set times (10 a.m., 11 a.m., 12 noon, 1 p.m., 2 p.m., 3 p.m., 4 p.m. and 5 p.m.) of the glass art on display in our two exhibitions. Snacks and refreshments available on site.



GUIDED TOUR – OBJECTS OF DESIRE EXHIBITION*

Visit in English by Mateo Kries, Director of the Vitra Design Museum

30 May at 6 p.m.

Mateo Kries, Director of the Vitra Design Museum, offers a guided tour in English to help you better understand the exhibition he curated and the influence of Surrealism on design. The tour will be followed by an aperitif.

GUIDED TOUR – ALCHEMY EXHIBITION*

Visit given by Amélie Bannwart, curator of the exhibition

2 May at 6 p.m.

Amélie Bannwart, curator at mudac, will introduce you to a hidden facet of the collection and, above all, will share her love of curating.

GUIDED TOUR – SURREALISM, DESIGN & GLASS ART*

10, 17 and 24 March, 7, 14 and 21 April, 5 and 12 May, 9 and 16 June, 7 July and 4 August at 2.30 p.m.

Accompanied by a guide, discover the two exhibitions, *Objects of Desire* and *Alchemy*, and gain valuable insights into the movement.

FAMILY TOUR – SURREALISM, DESIGN & GLASS ART

31 March, 28 April and 26 May at 2 p.m.

This tour, specially adapted for families and children, takes visitors on a journey of discovery through the two exhibitions *Objects of Desire* and *Alchemy*. A children's route is available for further exploration. For children aged 6+, accompanied by an adult. Duration 1 hour. Free with admission ticket.

CHILDREN'S ROUTE

A tailor-made itinerary is available to accompany the youngest visitors to mudac's exhibitions.

BROCHURE IN SIMPLIFIED FRENCH

To discover Surrealism through photography and design, a brochure in simplified French will take you through the exhibitions at Photo Elysée and mudac.

On mudac.ch

Find all the events and lectures around the exhibitions, as well as practical information, prices, and registration.

*All guided tours are accessible to the hearing impaired thanks to the magnetic loop system (on request from reception). Free with admission ticket.

Surrealism season at Plateforme 10

In 1924 André Breton published his *Manifesto of Surrealism*, initiating one of the major artistic movements of the 20th century. In 2024 the three Plateforme 10 museums, MCBA – Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Photo Elysée and mudac – museum of Contemporary design and Applied Arts, will join in the celebrations to mark this 100th anniversary and will offer a Surrealism season featuring a wide-ranging collective reflection on one of the most fascinating and influential artistic movements of the last century.



Poster of the exhibition *Alchemy. Surrealism & Glass Art*
Graphic design © Neo Neo
Photography © Daniela et Tonatiuh

mudac

Alchemy. Surrealism & Glass Art

Alongside the *Objects of Desire* exhibition, mudac will present *Alchemy. Surrealism & Glass Art*, a selection of works from the mudac collection, some of which are being exhibited for the first time, demonstrating the movement's legacy among contemporary glass artists.

Curators

Marco Costantini, director of mudac
Amélie Bannwart, exhibition curator

Press kit and HD visuals

available for download on mudac.ch/presse



Marion Adnams, *Emperor Moths / Thunder On the Left*, 1963
Oil on panel, 56 x 45 cm © Raw collection

MCBA

Surréalisme. Le Grand Jeu

12.4.2024 – 25.8.2024

MCBA will stage its first thematic exhibition devoted to this movement since 1987, exploring its unprecedented topicality through the lens of play. *Surréalisme. Le Grand Jeu* brings together more than sixty historical and contemporary artists.

Curators

Juri Steiner, director, MCBA

Pierre-Henri Foulon, contemporary art curator, MCBA

assisted by Paolo Baggi, external scientific collaborator, and Eleonora Del Duca, scientific collaborator, MCBA

More information on mcba.ch



Man Ray, *Jacqueline Goddard*, vers 1932
© Man Ray 2015 Trust / 2024, ProLitteris, Zurich

Photo Elysée

Man Ray. Liberating Photography

29.3.2024 – 4.8.2024

Photo Elysée presents an exhibition devoted to Man Ray entitled *Liberating Photography*. The exhibition will show the extent of the creativity of this renowned photographer, who belongs in the pantheon of twentieth-century artists.

Curator

Nathalie Herschdorfer, director

More information on elysee.ch

Partners

An exhibition by

**Vitra
Design
Museum**

Main partner of mudac

Julius Bär

Partner of the exhibition

HUGO BOSS

**ART FOUNDATION
MENTOR LUCERNE**

Practical information

Press tour at mudac

→ Wednesday 6 March 2024 at 10.30 a.m.

Opening of the two surrealist exhibitions at mudac

→ Thursday 7 March 2024

Opening times

- Monday: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- Closed on Tuesdays
- Wednesday: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- Thursday: 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.
- Friday to Sunday: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- Free admission on the first Saturday of the month

Rates

- Visitors are invited to take advantage of the “1 ticket-3 museums” offer to visit all the Surrealism exhibitions at Plateforme 10. Valid for 3 months.
- Full price: CHF 25
- Reduced price: CHF 19
- Duo (visit for two): CHF 38
- Free for under-26s

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mudac – museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts

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mudac, museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts, is a museum of the State of Vaud managed by the Plateforme 10 Foundation.



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