

More than three months of Surrealism at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen

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SUMMARY

From Saturday 11 February visitors to Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen can immerse themselves fully in Surrealism. Firstly, the exhibition Mad About Surrealism offers a fantastic overview of the early years of Surrealism with works drawn from four private collections. Then there are exhibitions of works by contemporary artists Paul van der Eerden, Melanie Smith and Rhonda Zwillinger, who have been inspired by Surrealism or have a connection with the movement. And the cherry on the cake is an exhibition of approximately one hundred works from the rich collection of Surrealist works that the museum has built up over the past few decades.

There is a constant coming and going of couriers at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. Works by artists such as Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, René Magritte, Joan Miró, Yves Tanguy, Leonor Fini and Leonora Carrington are arriving for the museum's major spring exhibition, Mad About Surrealism.

Masterpieces

The exhibition brings together sensational masterpieces from all over the world. 'An exhibition of Surrealism of this calibre happens only once every fifty years,' says director Sjarel Ex. The exhibition's curator Saskia van Kampen-Prein: 'We were only able to realise this through a close partnership with two other important European institutions: the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the Hamburger Kunsthalle.'

Pioneering spirit

Mad About Surrealism was shown earlier in Edinburgh and in Hamburg. In each city it had a slightly different emphasis. In Rotterdam the accent is on the pioneering spirit of the artists and their collectors. The story is told through 300 masterpieces from the former collections of Roland Penrose (1900-1984), Edward James (1907-1984) and Gabrielle Keiller (1908-1996) and the collection of Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch, who are still actively collecting.

Driving force

The British collectors Roland Penrose and Edward James were driving forces behind the Surrealist movement. They commissioned and purchased Surrealist works at a time when museums were not yet interested in the movement. The Scottish collector Gabrielle Keiller focussed on smaller works and drawings and also amassed an important and extensive library of rare Surrealist publications.

The German couple Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch have assembled a world-class Surrealist collection over the past few decades.

Fabulous women

The exhibition has been designed by MAXWAN Architects + Urbanists. Through a simple yet radical architectural intervention, they have divided the 1500m² Bodon Galleries into five distinct spaces: one for each collector and a central space devoted to Surrealist themes such as automatism, objects of desire and fabulous women.

A feast of Surrealism

Mad About Surrealism is part of a broader programme around Surrealism. Adjacent to the Bodon Galleries is an exhibition of Surrealists works from the permanent collection. The museum has been collecting Surrealism for decades and has mounted important exhibitions of the work of René Magritte, Man Ray and Salvador Dalí. The exhibition Collection – Surrealism contains not only artworks but also treasures from the library collection including pamphlets ('papillons') that artists handed out to passers-by on the streets. Collection – Surrealism shows that Surrealism was not a style but a mentality, which continues to pervade the museum. During the run of this exhibition, the museum will publish a catalogue of all the Surrealist works in the collection.

Treasures

Throughout the museum there are displays and exhibitions that relate to Surrealism in one way or another. The Print Room is displaying a selection of extraordinary prints by the nineteenth-century artist Max Klinger, who inspired Giorgio de Chirico and the early Surrealists. Paul van der Eerden makes drawings based on art works that have made a deep impression on him, including works by Surrealists such as Dalí and Magritte. Lisan Freijisen's wall hangings are based on chance: the amorphous forms are inspired by stains and mildew.

Mexico

The Mexico-based British artist Melanie Smith has a very different connection to Surrealism: she has made a film about the fantastic garden that the Surrealist collector Edward James built in the Mexican jungle. Finally, the American artist Rhonda Zwillinger embellishes objets trouvées with a shimmering coat of glass beads. In the 1980s she mainly covered old pieces of furniture that she found in her native New York; now she works with rusty machines and animal bones that she finds during her walks in the Arizona desert.

Ambassadors

Because Surrealism began as a literary movement, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen has invited well-known Dutch writers, including Roland Giphart, Kluun, Ellen Deckwitz and Elfie Tromp, to be ambassadors of Mad About Surrealism. During the exhibition they will stage several surprise readings at various times, including during Museum Night 010 on 4 March.

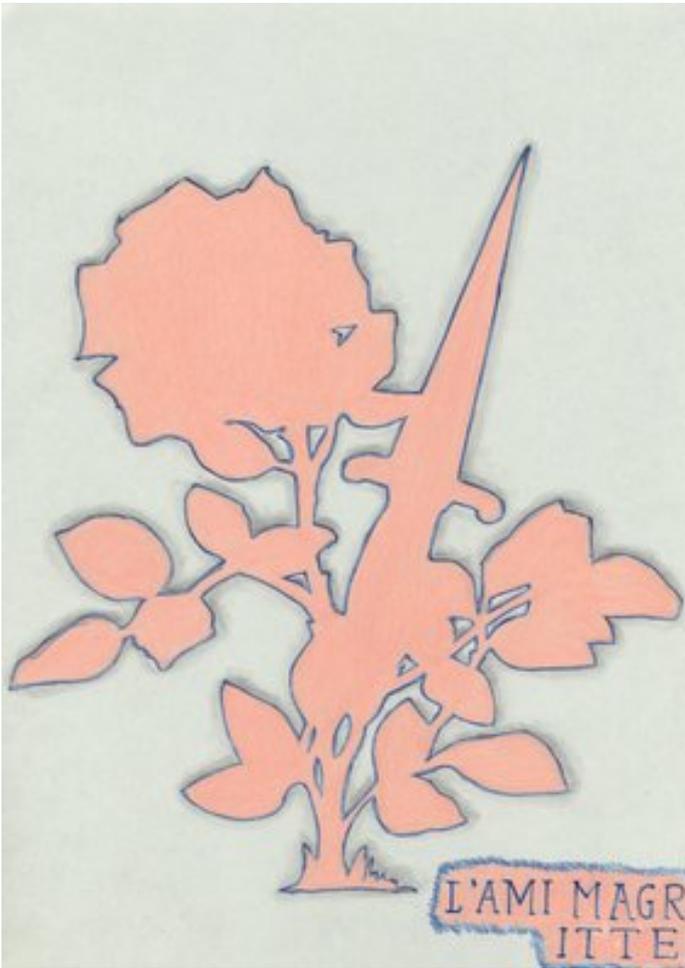
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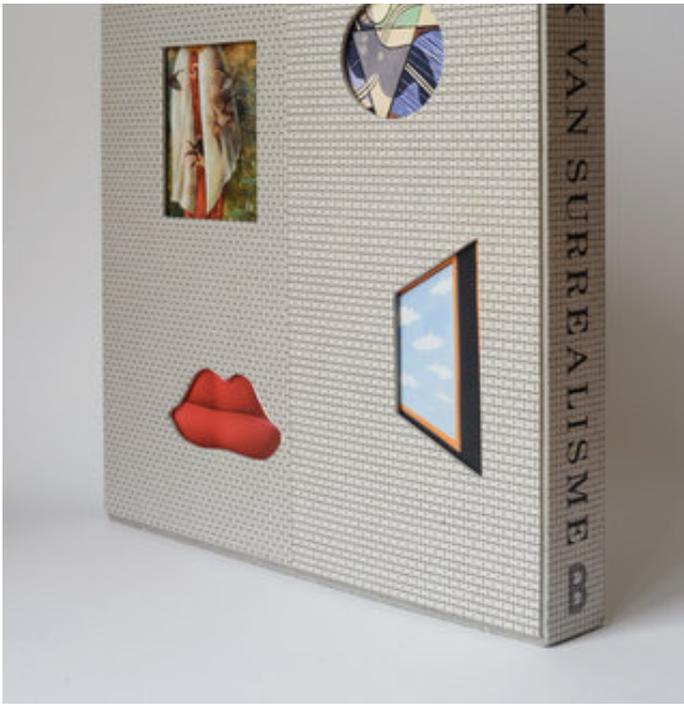
Mad About Surrealism is accompanied by a beautiful catalogue. With its ring binder and sleeve, it is more of an object than a book. Like the exhibition, its starting point is the four collections. The essays discuss how the collections were formed and trace the provenance of the works from the birth of Surrealism in 1924 to the present day. The catalogue, designed by De Esther de Vries, (354 pages, price €44.95) is available from the museum shop and via webshop.boijmans.nl.



IMAGES







Museum Boijmans Van Beuningennewsroom