Surrealist Dreams in the International Exposition of Surrealism in Paris and the Second Exhibition of Free Art in Cairo

MA Dissertation

Abstract

The relationship of the notion of a ‘dream’ to Surrealist art has long been established, however, it has not been applied to exhibitions studies. The aim of this dissertation is to show the influence of 1938 Paris *International Surrealist Exhibition* on the *Second Exhibition of Free Art* that took place in Cairo in 1941.

This thesis argues that both of these exhibitions were not only designed to resemble a dream but aided the immersion into it. This dissertation concludes that the main similarity between two exhibitions and the main aspect inherited by the *Art and Liberty* group from Surrealists in Paris is in the emphasis on the dream whether in curation or in art.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the 1938 *International Surrealist Exhibition* in Paris. The exhibition is analysed from the point of view of characteristics of dreams. It focusses on the fantasy of intra-uterine existence and sexualisation of the female body. Chapter 2 deals with the painting and curator at the 1941 *Second Exhibition of Free Art* in Cairo. It focusses on the Surrealist depiction of suffering and explains the original idea of the group called Subjective Realism. Chapter 3 is dedicated to both exhibitions and their response to the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* in Münich and ideas of freedom and liberation.

Even though some scholarly literature has been dedicated to each exhibition, nobody has studied them together. The research, therefore, has largely focused on the primary sources. André Breton’s *Manifesto of Surrealism* and Art and Liberty’s *Long Live Degenerate Art* have played a key role in understanding the motivations of both groups.The thesis draws upon Sigmund Freud’s ideas about dreams and the subconscious. Artist’s publications like Salvador Dalí’s autobiographies and Kamel el-Telmisany’s articles on Modern art also contribute to the argument. The secondary sources are

used to support and elaborate on the primary sources. The research employed both digital materials and physical materials available in major London libraries.

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Introduction

Surrealism's preoccupation with dreams occurred as a result of Sigmund Freud's extended research on psychoanalysis on the pursuit of the unconscious. By using the imaginative impetus of the dream, Surrealists uncovered individual and collective desires as well as the cultural and social prohibitions that censored them.[1]

The relationship of the notion of a 'dream' to Surrealist art has long been established, however, it has not been applied to exhibitions studies. Particularly, it has never been related to the *International Surrealist Exhibition* in Paris and 1941 *Second Exhibition of Free Art* in Cairo. This thesis argues that both of these exhibitions were designed to resemble a dream.

The aim of this dissertation is to show the influence of 1938 Paris *International Surrealist Exhibition* on the *Second Exhibition of Free Art* that took place in Cairo in 1941. Both exhibitions marked stark breaks with the previous exhibitions of these groups of artists. Their dialogue had started when George Henein 'the Pope of Egyptian Surrealism'[2] visited the exhibition in Paris and stayed in contact with André Breton, who wrote the first ever manifesto of Surrealism.

This dissertation argues that the dream-like features of the display, such as dark and convoluted spaces at the Parisian exhibition, had the greatest influence on the Cairo artists as both exhibitions were designed to act like an immersion into a dream. While the central theme in Paris was seeking liberation through the unleashing of repressed desires of European society, the Cairo exhibition sought liberation through conscious striving to be universal and appealing to the theme of human suffering.

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[1] Trilling Lionel, *The Liberal Imagination, Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: New York Review Books, 2012), p. 107

[2] Gharib Samir, Surrealism in Egypt (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization Press, 1998), pp. 245, 255

The thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the 1938 *International Surrealist Exhibition* in Paris. The exhibition is analysed from the point of view of characteristics of dreams. It focusses on the fantasy of intra-uterine existence and sexualisation of the female body.

Chapter 2 deals with the painting and curator at the 1941 *Second Exhibition of Free Art* in Cairo. It argues that both aspects of the exhibition reinforce the intention of the *Art and Liberty* artists to create a dreamlike experience. It focusses on the Surrealist depiction of suffering and explains the original idea of the group called Subjective Realism.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to both exhibitions and their response to the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* in Münich and ideas of freedom and liberation. It focuses on the Surrealist attitude to Nazi rejection of imagination and the insane.

The thesis is based on primary sources including manifestoes, artist's publications, Freud's writings cited by artists. The secondary sources are used to support the argument. It employed both digital materials available online and physical materials available in major London libraries.

Even though some scholarly literature has been dedicated to each exhibition, nobody has studied them together. In Sam Bardaouil's book *Surrealism in Egypt: Modernism and the Art and Liberty Group*, he traced the conceptual relationship of the Surrealist *Art and Liberty* group in Cairo with the seminal writings of André Breton and particularly his belief that Freud's writings on psychoanalysis call for a dramatic turn in art towards the subconscious and unconscious structures.[3]

Even though authors did not compare the exhibitions together, when Mahon Alyce spoke about the Paris exhibition in the book *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros 1938-1968* it was noted how the

[3] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt: Modernism and the Art and Liberty Group* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017)

unprecedented curation of exhibition space, particularly paintings and installations involving mannequins, induced erotic dreams.[4]

The article of Maria Aline Ferreira titled *Fantasies of intra-uterine life and immaculate conceptions: Breton, Eluard, Dali and Ernst* has been instrumental in understanding the potential relationship the exhibition space could have with the dream or fantasy of the intra-uterine life described by Sigmund Freud.[5] Ferreira outlined the link between Dalí and Freuds writing and linked this psychological discourse to Surrealist art.

Natalia Lusty's article *Surrealism and Dreams* has shown how the idea of the dream became a catalyst for the development of new Surrealist art that is based on the freedom of imagination. These efforts gave birth to a new Surrealist aesthetic.[6] Ian Dunlop's *The Shock of the New* gave an extensive account of the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* in Münich, to which both groups of artists in France and Cairo responded. This book was key in understanding why dream structures were employed by artists in response to the historic exhibition in Nazi Germany and why certain images and themes were populating the Surrealist dream world.

This dissertation concludes that the main similarity between two exhibitions is in the emphasis on the dream whether in curation or in art. This is the main aspect inherited by the *Art and Liberty* group from Surrealists in Paris.

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[4] Mahon Alyce, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), p. 12

[5] Ferreira Maria Aline, "Fantasies of intra-uterine life and immaculate conceptions: Breton, Eluard, Dali and Ernst" in *Literature and Psychoanalysis* (Lisbon: Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada, 2003), pp. 133-147

[6] Lusty Natalya, *Surrealism and Dreams* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2021), p. 94

Chapter 1: The Surrealist Dream in the *International Exposition of Surrealism* in Paris

This chapter is dedicated to the 1938 *International Exposition of Surrealism* in Paris.[7] The exhibition will be analysed from the point of view of characteristics of dreams. It aims to show that in Paris the Surrealist vision of an exhibition was a recreation of a dream world by inducing a dream state which artists achieved through curation and art that drew upon the subconscious and the fantasy of *intra-uterine existence* and sexualisation of the female body.

The overview of the exhibition

The *International Surrealist Exhibition* was the first exhibition that challenged the traditional way of display.[8] It contained 229 artworks and consisted of three stages.[9] The installation *Rainy Taxi* (1938) by Salvador Dalí featured an old taxi with water drizzling down on mannequins sitting inside welcomed visitors prior to the gallery entry. Behind the entrance was the *Rue Surréaliste*, a wide corridor of female mannequins unconventionally adorned and dressed by various artists. The corridor led to the last and the largest room with labyrinth-like passages that despite being almost without lights was filled with paintings, installations, sounds and smells that created an atmosphere a dream.

Surrealist manifesto and the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis

Marcel Duchamp, Paul Eluard and André Breton were the main organisers of the exhibition. André Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924) is the piece of writing that, to use Breton's word, 'baptised' Surrealism as the new mode of expression based on the new theoretical vocabulary related to

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[7] The exhibition is also known as the *International Surrealist Exhibition*. The dissertation uses both names interchangeably

[8] Greenberg Reesa, Bruce Ferguson, Sandy Nairne, *Thinking about Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 382

[9] Janvier Février, *Un Catalogue du L'Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*, (Paris: Jourde, 1938), p. 8

Freud's seminal *Interpretation of Dreams* and other publications.[10] While the *Interpretation of Dreams* was first published in 1899 in German, it only emerged in French in the early 1920s. The Surrealists were one of the first intellectuals in the arts and literature to have recognised the potential of Freud's ideas and make extensive use of them in their art.[11] The Surrealists believed that Freud's theory of psychoanalysis was proved legitimate through the exploration the difference between the sexes.[12]

In his manifesto, Breton puts forward Surrealism as a movement in art and literature that is based on the belief in the 'disinterested play of thought', a superior reality of forms of neglected associations, and the omnipotence of dream.[13] He expressed the view that an ordinary observer lends greater credence and importance to the events happening in the waking state rather than those occurring in dreams.[14] His argument was the following formula, the sum of the moments of reality is not superior to moments in the dreams of sleep.[15] Thus the conception of Surrealist art as such is indebted to Freudian psychoanalysis and this relationship is best described by Lionel Trilling: 'Freud discovered in the very organisation of the mind those mechanisms by which art makes its effects, such devices as the condensations of meanings and the displacement of accent'.[16]

Dreams and the feminine

The Salvador Dalí's installation *Rainy Taxi (1938)* (fig. 1) welcomed the visitors at the courtyard of the gallery. It consisted of a real taxi car and two dressed mannequins. The shark-headed chauffeur

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[10] Breton André, *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (trans.) Richard Seaver, Helen Lane Ann (Michigan, The University of Michigan Press, 1972), p. 4

[11] Fabrice Flahutez, "Automatism" in *Surrealism Beyond Borders* (eds.) Gale Matthew, D'Alessandro Stephanie (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2021), p. 240

[12] Telmisany Kamel, "Naḥwa fann ḥurr", *al-Tatawwur*, no. 1, (January 1940), p. 35

[13]Breton André, *Manifestoes of Surrealism,* p. 4

[14] ibid

[15] ibid

[16] Lionel Trilling, p. 191

at the driver's seat and his passenger a female mannequin in a blonde wig. The latter one was sprinkled with chicory, had an omelette on a lap and was dressed in live snails

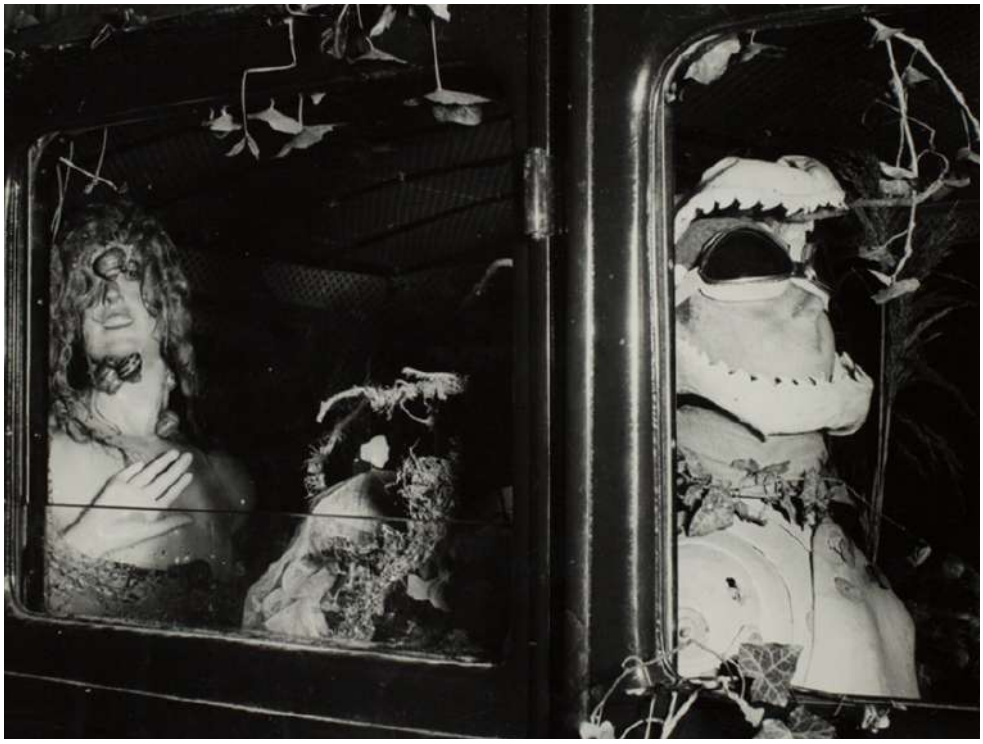

fig. 1 Salvador Dalí, *Rainy Taxi*

crawling over the body.[17] Alongside it was a sign 'Lady Snob' mocking the glamour of the typical exhibition opening.[18] Indeed, René Guetta described the chaos and excitement prevailing in the aura of the opening night of exhibition as the cars and elegantly dressed couples were battling to enter the gallery.[19]

The semi-nude blonde mannequin was seen by Gretta as both 'cadaverous' and 'delicious'.[20] He highlights the horror of seeing mutilated erotic mannequins. Dalí wrote about this 'thirst for Eros',[21] or thirst for the erotic climate that he teased out in the taxi greeting the public outside the gallery,

[17] Mahon Alyce, "Surrealism and Eros" in *Surrealism* (ed.) Natalya Lusty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 120

[18] Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous. Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2001), p. 34

[19] quoted in Moscatelli Jean, "Les Guetta René, L'Exo du rève", *Marianne,* 26 Jan 1938, p. 13

[20] ibid

[21] Dalí Salvador, *Maniac Eyeball: The Secret Confessions of Salvador Dalí 1937* (trans.) André Parinaud (Gardena: Elektron Books, 2013), p. 95

which then continued on in the brothel-like exhibition space.[22] The interior of the car was wet because water was supplied with pipes spraying water inside. This was meant to 'satiate' that libidinal thirst. Everyday objects were transformed into erotic fetishes fashioned by such artists like Marx Ernst and Joan Miró. By walking through the room of mannequins visitors were embarking on, what Mahon called, a 'pilgrimage to Eros in the *Rue Surréaliste*'.[23]

Having passed through the *Rainy Taxi* visitors entered the actual exhibition space. A parade of sixteen eroticised mannequins dressed and adorned by various artists in what is called the *Rue Surréaliste.* René Guetta's review of the exhibition highlighted the uncanny effect the mannequins had on the public and the erotic tension they could give rise to.[24] A member of the Surrealist group, Maurice Henry, wrote that the viewer had to abandon one's personality and submit to an adventure, where mannequins of attractive women were meant to invite visitors to dream.[25]

Surrealists aimed to create a space inducing libidinal excitement.[26] A viewer would pass along a *Rue Surréaliste,* a long corridor with street signs which reminded of a red-light promenade as 'sixteen mannequin ladies-of-the-night traded their wares, each fetishistically attired by a Surrealist artist'.[27] The *Rue Surréaliste* preceded the main gallery space branching into four rooms with four large beds.[28] Mahon calls it the central grotto space that took the form of a wet, warm and dark grotto.[29]

The grotto room, praised by Guetta, where beds remind of a brothel. Guetta seems to have described exactly what Maurice Henry said about the main agency of the mannequins to make

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[22] Alyce Mahon, "Surrealism and Eros", p. 120

[23] ibid

[24] quoted in Moscatelli Jean, p.13

23 Maurice Henry, "Le Surréalisme dans le décor", *Marianne*, 26 Jan 1938, p. 11

[26] Alyce Mahon, "Surrealism and Eros", p. 120

[27]Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 43

[28] ibid

[29] ibid

visitors dream. For Guetta, mannequins, grotto room, and various kinds of paintings and installations engendered 'a creepy, gnawing sensation of sickness, but real in [his/my] throat'.[30] Every object made Guetta dream of erotic scenes like Miró's painting *The Body of My Brunette* (1925),[31] that is full of the feminine erotic (fig. 2).[32] According to *Concise Dictionary of Surrealism*, such experience is precisely the one Surrealists hoped for.[33]

As James Thrall explains, the imagery in *The Body of My Brunette* is based on actual appearances while dreaming or hallucinating.[34] Produced a year after the release of Breton's Surrealist manifesto, it appears Miró extrapolated on Breton's definition of Surrealism as 'thought's dictation' with an absence of moral preoccupation.(cite) The definition, however, begins with 'pure psychic automatism' , which Miró is experimenting with automatic painting, a type of painting characterised by the absence of recognisable objects.[35] This reveals a more abstract direction in Surrealist art. His use of written words is an integral

fig. 2. Joan Miró, *The Body of My Brunette*

[30] quoted in Moscatelli Jean, p.13

[31] ibid

[32] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 58

[33] Breton André, Paul Eluard, *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme* (Paris: Galerie Beaux-Arts, 1938), p. 11

[34] James Thrall Soby, *Joan Miró* (The Museum of Modern Art, 1959), p. 45

[35] ibid, p. 45

element in this painting where words are not written but rather painted against ‘cafe-au-lait’ or soft brown background.[36] The dark patches create a sense of a shadow, which makes the space of the painting volume up. The crossed axial structure of the painting is used to represent a standing body with outstretched arms.[37] While not being materialised , the body is nevertheless represented. The cross defines the painting’s structure

Miró is known to have ‘made a series of drawings in a state of hunger-induced hallucination’ which he included in paintings: ‘ ‘I made many drawings into which I put the hallucinations provoked by my hunger’.[38] (Cairo guys were also. Using trans state) ‘The inscriptions do not explain the imagery: they "illustrate" it’.. ‘thereby expanding its evocative power’.[39]

Miró came up with such abstract shapes as the white and red cloud-like structure while in a half-waking state, he saw hypnotic images projected on the ceiling of his room. While *The Body of My Brunette* in a trance state with loss of control, Miró asserted that the dream state forms part of the content of this work.[40,41]

The word and image relationship is characteristic of the dream state. This is evident in the part of the text ‘my pussy dressed in green salad’, which immediately called the green colour to mind, however, the painting itself does not contain it. Instead, this sexually charged sentence is shown in a different way. If the cross stands for a human figure then the blue circular and oval shapes with black dots that are reminiscent of human eyes have flame-like appendages symbolise sexual excitement.[42] Instead of painting a ‘a pussy dressed in green salad’, Miró decided to show his

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[36] ibid, p. 48

[37] Rosalind Krauss, *Joan Miró: Magnetic Fields* (New Fork: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1972), p. 121

[38] Miró Joan, “Je reve d'un grand atelier”, *XXe siècle*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1959, p. 27

[39] Rosalind Krauss, *Joan Miró: Magnetic Fields*, p. 54

[40] Margit Rowell, “Magnetic Fields” in *Joan Miró: Magnetic Fields* (ed.) Krauss Rosalind (New Fork: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1972), p. 60

[41] Rosalind Krauss, *Joan Miró: Magnetic Fields*, p. 15

[42] ibid

reaction to seeing the body of his brunette. This is characteristic of how information is revealed in dreams, namely, in an emotional manner, in thoughts and dialogues together with images. From a wider resolution, this echoes the movement of the exhibition attendee who sees these hyper-sexualised mannequins arranged in a brothel-like space with ones thoughts going about, or having a dialogue with another attendee.

The association with the erotic dream is also created by the staging of the exhibition in nocturnal light and the exhibition's 'brothel-cum-asylum atmosphere'[43] This nocturnal light is best described in Breton's definition of 'night': 'dirty night, night of flowers, night of groans, intoxicating night'….![44,45] The central grotto was not only reminiscent of the brothel.[46] Mahon argues that the layout of the exhibition itself could stand as 'a representation of the female sex in spatial terms'.[47]

Through the employment of elements of dreams like dislocation and disorientation and the general disorder. The Surrealist exhibition's optical challenges, adornment and lighting speak to the disorderly feminine rather than the rational masculine and encourage one 'to pierce into the Surrealist world'.[48] The exhibition space exposed abandoned rationality, suppressed desires and anxiety as stated in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*.[49] The space, therefore, substituted the rationality for irrationality, believed to be a feminine quality in the Western metaphysical tradition as in the notions of the insane, emotional, primitive, subjectively intuitive.[50]

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[43] Breton André, Paul Eluard, *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme*, p.18

[44] ibid

[45] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 58

[46] ibid, p. 54

[47] ibid, p. 50

[48] ibid, p. 47

[49] Freud Sigmund, *Interpretation of Dreams* (trans.) (ed.) James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2010), p. 306

[50] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 55

This is best explained by a collaborative text *The Immaculate Conception* (1930) co-authored by Eluard, Breton and Dalí, where one section 'the intra-uterine life' reveals a utopian vision of an imaginary world defined as being free from conventional dichotomies such as: public and private, rational and irrational thought, inner and outer experience.[51] Apart from the intra-uterine life, this book tranced the internal and external life of a human being as well as events from conception to death and the Original Judgement.[52]

The fantasy of the intra-uterine life in the curation

The central gallery space, namely, the grotto was 'described by Marcel Jean as one of the most remarkable object-pictures - on the architectural scale - which Surrealism has ever known'.[53] It may, therefore, be argued that the grotto had such a strong immersive experience that Jean considered it as an object-picture, hence, its effect on the visitor resembled the immersion one experiences when daydreaming or dreaming in sleep.

Fig. 3 *Main hall of the Exhibition*

Duchamp prepared the last exhibition room at the *Galerie des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. He made the ceiling itself well lit but that light only faintly penetrated into the exhibition space (fig. 3). The light was obstructed by 1200 suspended coal bags filled with newspaper.[54] This caused tiny coal dust

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[51] André Breton, *The Immaculate Conception* (trans.) John Graham (London: Atlas Press, 1990), p. 69

[52] Maria Ferreira, "Fantasies of intra-uterine life and immaculate conceptions: Breton, Eluard, Dali and Ernst", p. 141

[53] Marcel Jean, *The History of Surrealist Painting* (Grove Press, New York, 1960), p. 280

[54] Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (trans.) Ron Padgett (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971), p. 81

particles rained on the visitors.[55] This must have created an effect of a fog and obstructed people's vision. The artworks could only be seen with flashlights which were handed out to the visitors (fig. 4). Moreover, the floor was covered with a carpet of brown dead leaves.[56]

The decision to create a dark room where the visitors would have difficulty seeing anything without the flashlights is evidently a conscious one. Arguably, they purposefully recreated or simulated aspect of dreams like blurry or foggy haze and characteristics like unarticulated, undirected and unfocused.[57] Germano Celant argued that the Surrealist exhibition was not a walk through the void but rather 'a voyage through the viscera of the unconscious'.[58] Indeed, unfocused vision, darker spaces than in a conscious state almost recreated the effect of a dream in the conscious state.

fig. 4 *A spectator looking at paintings with a flashlight*

Anthony Vadler noted that while Surrealists openly disliked functionalist, modernist architecture, they were fascinated by the 'unconscious' of architecture.[59] Instead, they favoured the primitive and intra-uterine constructions.[60]

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[55] Matthews Johns, *André Breton: Sketch for an Early Portrait* (Amsterdam: Johns Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986), p. 163

[56] Reesa Greenberg, et al., *Thinking about Exhibitions,* p. 382

[57] Brunner Edward, *Splendid failure: Hart Crane and the making of the bridge* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 161

[58] Germano Celant, "A Visual Machine: Art installation and its modern archetypes" in *Thinking about Exhibitions* (eds.) Greenberg Reesa, Bruce Ferguson, Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 267

[59] Anthony Vidler, *Architectural uncanny: essays in the modern unhomely* (London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1992), p. 150

[60] Ibid, pp. 150, 153

Tristan Tzara, the founder of Dada movement, wrote about modern architecture in a 1933 essay in the publication *Minotaure*, read by Surrealists. Tzara believed that modern architecture was doomed to die out because of the lack of ornaments and stands in contrast with what he called 'primitive' architecture.[61] In turn, primitive architecture is imbued with life and is associated with inherently maternal and uterine nature.[62] For Tzara, people inhabit the Earth, 'the mother', where one's dwelling is of uterine construction and entered through cavities, it symbolises parental comfort.[63] In his mind the maternal dwelling essentially an intra-uterine space appears as a vertiginous, 'tactile maternal' and 'emphatically soft' apartment: 'Man misses the dark thrusts of his origin which enveloped him in damp walls where the blood beat close to the eye with the noise of the mother'.[64]

This highlights the experiential aspects of the grotto exhibition space. The performative aspects are emphasised by the layout and street signs that echo the real city plan and is a mediation between the real and imaginary. Duchamp's reference to the object-pictures on the architectural scale add into the central argument of the dissertation, that the exhibition was designed to be a performative dream.

This powerful dream of a blissful return to the protective mother's womb, to the 'jouissance of intra-uterine life', is ambiguous.[65] Being a predominantly male dream[66] it is reflected in the Surrealist art and writings. For Freud, such a dream-phantasy is one of a series of 'primal phantasies'.[67] As Hal Foster explains, the reason why the intra-uterine existence is considered by

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[61] Tristan Tzara, "D'un certain automatimse du Gout", *Minotaure,* Dec 1933, p. 84

[62] ibid

[63] ibid

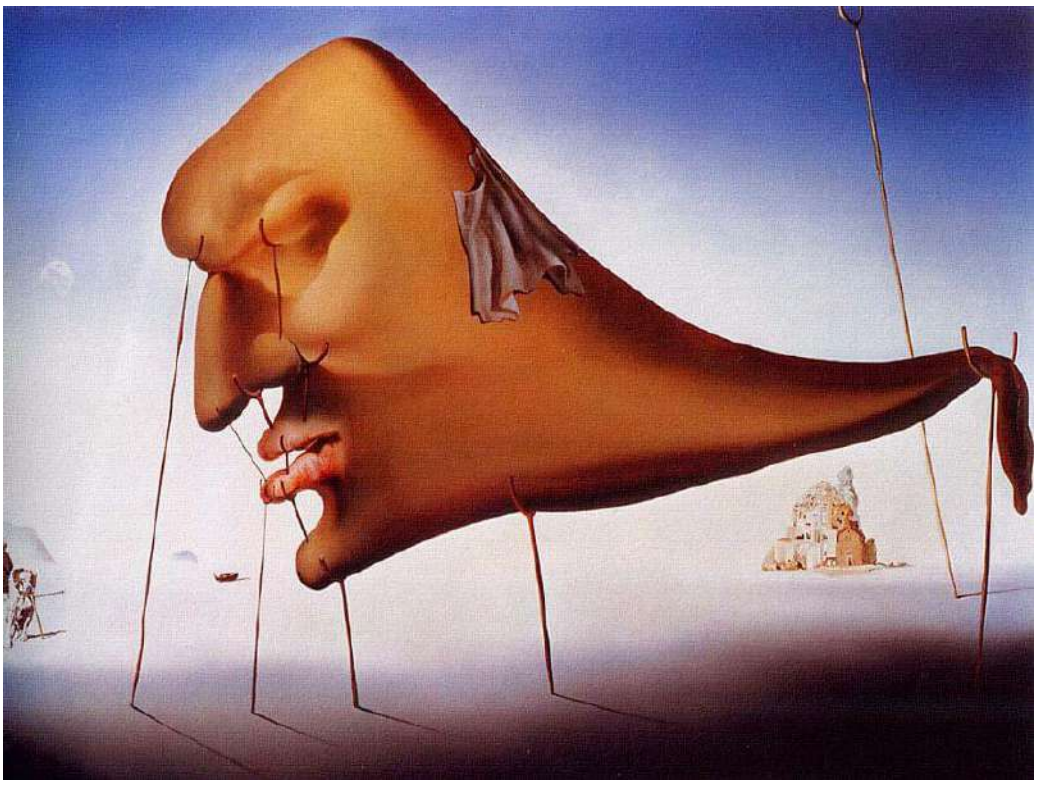
[64] Matta Echaurren, "Mathématique sensible Architecture du temps", *Minotaure*, no. 11, Spring 1938, p. 45

[65] Maria Ferreira, "Fantasies of intra-uterine life and immaculate conceptions: Breton, Eluard, Dali and Ernst", p. 133

[66] ibid

[67] Freud Sigmund, *A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psychoanalytic Theory of the Disease" (1915): On Psychopathology: Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety and Other Works* (trans.) James Strachey (ed.) Angela Richards (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 154

Fig. 5
Salvador Dalí,
Sleep



Freud to be fundamental is because it is a fantasy from which a child may 'tease out the basic riddles of origins'.[68]

Reason why feminine - Dream as the site of repressed desires. The exhibition became a tactile and interactive space which drew on feminine features like uterine stricture of the grotto and so on. According to Mahon, it was staged to invoke emotional outbursts, subjective intuition and a sense of dislocation, which were all by-products of the liberation of the spectator from the 'repressive day-to-day masculine environment' by means of creating a feminine environment.[69]

The intra-uterine fantasy in art

[68] Foster Hal, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1997), p. 57

[69] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 55

Sleep was a subject of particular interest among Surralists because of its associations with fantasies, dreams, the feeling of the subconscious.[70] The Salvador Dalí's *Sleep* (1937) is a personification of the very idea of sleeping (fig. 5). The theatrical setting is aided by the interruption of a huge head that takes centerstage amid an expansive landscape. According to Dali, it is the 'monster of sleep' that is a heavy giant head 'held up by the crutches of reality'.[71] In his *Secret Life* Dalí explained: 'When the crutches break, we have the sensation of falling'.[72] The presumed area of an ear is covered by a cloth suggesting the absence of sound and the boat in the farm distance may be a metaphor 'of being cut off from the normal environment'.[73] The suspension in vast empty space and detachment from the earth refers to the 'disembodiment from a conscious state when asleep'.[74]

According to Dalí, when 'in the twilight zone between falling asleep and waking up' the supports collapse, a common sensation of one's heart plunging into terror.[75] He describes the experience of the fall into emptiness as the 'involuntary remembrance'[76] of one's own birth, of what is the brutal expulsion from paradise through the womb.[77] The expulsion and the 'exile to the earthly world'[78] reflected in the painting are 'intuitions of life in the womb'[79] that Dalí expressed earlier in his 1932 *Oeufs sur le plat sans le plat* and the *Sublime Moment*. By presenting the sleeping monster as an embryo in the foetal sleeping position, Dalí is partly reviving the experience of the lost Eden.[80] The effect of suspension of the monster against the forces of gravity as it 'recaptures the warm, dark

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[70] Robert Radford, *Dalí* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997), p. 177

[71] Dali quoted in Eric Shanes, *Dalí* (London: Studio Editions, 1990), p. 90

[72] Robert Radford, *Dalí*, p. 177

[73] Eric Shanes, *Dalí*, p. 90

[74] ibid

[75] Carlos Rojas, *Salvador Dalí, Or the Art of Spitting on Your Mother's Portrait* (Pensilvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010) p. 39

[76] ibid

[77] Robert Radford, *Dalí*, p. 177

[78] Carlos Rojas, *Salvador Dalí*, p. 39

[79] ibid

[80] ibid

bliss of his mother's womb'[81] is how Dalí represented his complex understanding of sleep and its psychological nature. Dali was recorded to say that he aims to plunge deep into the human mind.[82]

Freud is at the heart of Dalí's intellectual concerns which is in accordance with Surrealist writings.[83] In *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Uncanny* Freud related the fantasy of the intra-uterine life to the dream of a return to the mother's womb and a dream of rebirth.[84,85] In *Sleep* Dalí recreates these clear memories of 'a lost paradise'.[86,87] Dalí 'had boundless respect for Freud' [88]'s autobiography starts with chapter on *Intra-Uterine Memories* where he writes: 'I remember this period' and then describes his perceptions.[89] For Dalí, the imaginative life of man, the life of a person in a dream state has the power to and does all it can to symbolically reconstitute of that state of living in the mother's womb, the expulsion from the paradisal state of intra-uterine bliss, and protect one from the 'real new world, with the concomitant phenomena of asphyxiation, of compression, of blinding by the sudden outer light and of the brutal harshness of the reality of the world, which will remain inscribed in the mind under the sign of anguish, of stupor and of displeasure'.[90] One of these symbolic manifestations of this paradisal state is in the jolt, a feeling of one falling into a void, that happens sometimes when one is in between full consciousness and falling asleep.[91]

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[81] Tiempo Edilberto, *Watch in the Night* (Manila: Archipelago Publishing House, 1953), p. 36

[82] quoted in Cleveland Amory, *Celebrity Register: An Irreverent Compendium of American Quotable Notables* (Boston: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 153

[83] Kirsten Bradbury, *Essential Dalí* (ed.) Jonathan Wood (Bath: Parragon, 2000), p. 11

[84] Sigmund Freud, *"The Uncanny": Art and Literature* (ed.) Albert Dickson (trans.) James Strachey, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 367

[85] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (trans.) James Strachey (ed.) Angela Richards (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 198

[86] Roger Schiebler, *Dalí: Genius, Obsession and Lust* (Munich: Prestel, 1999), p. 27

[87] Maria Ferreira, "Fantasies of intra-uterine life and immaculate conceptions", p. 135

[88] Kirsten Bradbury, p. 11

[89] Dalí Salvador, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (trans.) Haakon Chevalier (New York: Dover Publications, 1993), p. 27

[90] ibid, p. 27

[91] ibid, p. 29

Dalí believed the dreams of flight is of paradisal significance. The sleeping monster in suspension supported by crutches may be paralleled with the metaphor of a foetus being connected to a maternal placenta via umbilical cord. When the cord breaks the foetus is being 'banished' from the paradisal state.[92]

This Surrealist motivation for a strong metaphoric scene of a sleeping monster and the psychoanalytic theory behind it suggests a rebellious drive to break taboos about dreams of the repressed and religiously forbidden about a primal fantasy of the intra-uterine life may be seen as a revolutionary drive.[93]

This painting is filled with elements of sleep and associated metaphors. It also echoes the clear detachment of the grotto-like dark space of the exhibition from the rest of the city.

The exhibition as the Surrealist world of dreams

It evoked the Surrealist's obsession with eroticism through evocation of the glamorous decadence of Parisian brothels and what was known as the 'Secret Paris' of the 1930s, which called to mind opium dens and half-dressed prostitutes, as is the case with mannequins on the exhibition.[94] The exhibition catalogue mapped out the Surrealist city.[95] As Breton asserted, this Surrealist city while drawing on the familiar aspects of Paris, the theatrical 'city' at the exhibition insisted on its distinctly Surrealist vision.[96]

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[92] ibid, p. 30

[93] Maria Ferreira, "Fantasies of intra-uterine life and immaculate conceptions", p. 145

[94] Halász Gyula, *The Secret Paris of the 30's* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), p. 48

[95] André Breton, Paul Eluard, Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme, p. 72

[96] André Breton, *The Immaculate Conception*, p. 69

There were also evocative street signs behind mannequins which magnified these emotional responses to the exhibition.[97] The actual Parisian street names were alternated by imaginary ones, for example, the *Rue Vivienne* was alternates with imaginary *Blood Transfusion Street*, *Porte de Lilas* was alternated with the *Street of Lips* and *All Devils Street*. The dream like prototype of Paris and its imaginary *Rue Surréaliste* added to the staging of 'an uncanny city of marvellous encounters'.[98] This evoked Paris as a city full of potential for the unpredictable encounters.[99] This echoes the dreams, where the ending or even the point is not known, making the sense and situations have unpredictable results and consequences.

Maurice Henry wrote that the exhibition caused a variety of responses like sympathy, reprobation and curiosity.[100] Indeed, like a dream it causes a mix of responses such as fear, confusion, alienation, and as Mahon says, the various elements of the exhibition harbour a sense of attraction and repulsion, as well as a sense of life and death.[101]

According to Breton, the main aim was to create an atmosphere that would greatly differ from that of an 'art' gallery.[102] Breton also believed that the unorthodox curation and art presented an opportunity for the audience to experience agitation at the time of tense mental climate prevailing in the city.[103] The organisers saw the exhibition space as a perfect place for initiating the public into the Surrealist world view and manipulating its fears and desires.[104]

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[97] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 47

[98] ibid

[99] André Breton, *The Immaculate Conception*, p. 72

[100] Henry Maurice, "Le Surréalisme dans le décor", p. 11

[101] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 47

[102] Breton André, "Devant le rideau" in *Le Surréalisme en 1947: Exposition internationale du Surréalisme présentée par André Breton et Marcel Duchamp* (ed.) Maeght Éditeur (Paris: Pierre Rein, 1947), p.81

[103] ibid, p. 80

[104] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 34

Mahon argues that the Surrealists aimed to disorientate the visitors.[105] Mahon points out the participatory nature of the role of the viewer predetermined by the organisers.[106] As argued the paintings and the curation of the exhibition itself conveys the idea of a dream. The exhibition space of the *International Exposition of Surrealism* at the fashionable Galerie Beaux-Arts presented the exhibition unlike a conventional one.[107] The gallery space was transformed into a microcosm of the Surrealist world view and a radically new gallery experience following radical curatorial approaches.[108,109]

The rejection of the 'supposedly neutral' gallery space into a grotto inverted the traditional viewing experience. Arguably this immersion into a 'dream' was created by aspects of the exhibition curation each with a particular symbolic meaning. It is widely acknowledged that dreams are highly symbolic. These include what Durozoi and Mahon mention: 'an artificial pool symbolic of the synthesis of the inner and outer world, an iron brazier burning coals symbolic of friendship, four immense beds symbolic of love',[110] including the smell of brewing Brazilian coffee.[111]

These aspects reinforce the exhibition as a site of a dreamlike experience. The walls that were made to look like one has just entered a grotto, the screams of the insane all together create a fuller picture than each one separately, they create an immersive environment akin to what one experiences when dreaming while asleep. [112]

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[105] ibid, p. 47

[106] ibid, p. 43

[107]Filipovic Elena, *Surrealism, Politics and Culture* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), p.179

[108] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 35

[109] Janine Mileaf, "Body to Politics: Surrealist Exhibition of the Tribal and the Modern at the Anti-Imperialist Exhibition and the Galerie Charles Ratton", *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 40, 2001, p.242

[110] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 63

[111] Gérard Durozoi, *History of the Surrealist Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 343

[112] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 63

This chapter discussed how the combination of paintings such as *The Body of My Brunette* and *Sleep*, sounds of the insane, mannequin installations like the *Rainy Taxi* by Dali, and the grotto exhibition space have defined the exploration of the notion of the dream as dominant aspect of the exhibition. It concluded that, indeed, the paintings, installations, exhibition curation contributed to the experience of dreamlike state in the public by demanding an active participatory role.

Chapter 2: The Surrealist Dream in *Second Exhibition of Free Art* in Cairo

This chapter is dedicated to the 1941 *Second Exhibition of Free Art* in Cairo. The exhibition will be analysed through the notion of a dream. It aims to show that the immersion into a dream-like state was aided by blurring the distinction between the form of the exhibition and art on display. There are no photographs of the exhibition space, this thesis has attempted to recreate the space through description compiled from various sources.

The Exhibition Interior

Polemicist, a Sorbonne graduate George Henein together with artists Kamel el-Telmisany, who attended art school in Paris, and a local artist Ramses Younane were emerging as leaders of the *Art and Liberty* group.[113] The group's members staged the 1941 *Second Exhibition of Independent Art* in an unfinished space in the Immobile building, newly constructed and the tallest one in Cairo at the time.[114] The layout took the form of a dimly lit labyrinth in what could be seen not as an attempt to guide but to confuse the public.[115] The unusual exhibition layout was read by the poet Marie Cavadia, who visited the exhibition, as an intentional move to rid the visitor of the logic of the conventional exhibition space that is full of bourgeois imagery.[116]

A review of another visitor by Jean Bastia describes million turns of a labyrinth which create an impression of desperately wanting to get out.[117] This echoes another impression of a 'tortuous maze'.[118,119] One of the comments in relation to the exhibition layout was 'unfortunately, it is all too

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[113] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 184

[114] Erik Frank, "International Notes: Egypt", *Fourth International*, vol. 8, no. 7, July-August 1947, p. 220

[115] Jacques Berque, *Egypt: Imperialism and Revolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), p. 580

[116] Erik Frank, "International Notes: Egypt", p. 220

[117] Jacques Berque, *Egypt: Imperialism and Revolution*, p. 580

[118] Tareq Ismael, Rifa'at el-Sa'id, *The Communist Movement in Egypt, 1920-1988* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), pp. 56-7

[119] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 182

original'.[120] While these reviews are essentially negative, it appears that this is the effect the group thought to achieve. Namely, to transport the visitor into an irrational, dark and convoluted place reminiscent of a dream.

Artworks were hung in non-conformist ways, for example, on partitions irregularly arranged, on a hangman's noose and attached by clothespins.[121, 122] Some hand-shaped cut-outs were hung alongside upside-down posters and ornaments shaped by black-gummed tape.[123, (124)] Someone also noted a scrap of paper and a piece of cloth hung on a wall.[125] A poet S. Kantarovitz referred to this occurrence as 'indoor games' in his review in *L'Egypte Nouvelle*.[126] Additionally, there was a display of mannequins which echoes the Parisian *International Surrealist Exhibition*.

The exhibition space likely smelled of paint because there were accounts of the exhibition walls being not yet dry. Pots of paint, used to colour the exhibition walls, were scattered around on the floor.[127] This, Bardaouil argues, could be interpreted as criticism of conventional exhibition space as a spacial construct for the display of an art object.[128] The curation reflects the stylistic rupture and a type of revolt against local artistic milieu characterised by tendency towards satisfying nationalist agenda.[129] In fact, as Bardaouil continues, the group sought to 'blur the lines between the art on display and the form of the exhibition itself'.[130]

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[120] Tareq Ismael, Rifa'at el-Sa'id, *The Communist Movement in Egypt, 1920-1988,* p. 56-7

[121] Erlich Haggai, *Students and University in 20th Century Egyptian Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 141

[122] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 183

[123] Jacques Berque, *Egypt: Imperialism and Revolution*, p. 580

[124] ibid

[125] Erlich Haggai, *Students and University in 20th Century Egyptian Politics*, p. 139

[126] Perrault Gilles, *A Man Apart: The Life of Henri Curiel* (London: Zed Books, 1987), p. 93

[127] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt,* p. 175

[128] ibid

[129] Erik Frank, "International Notes: Egypt", p. 220

[130] ibid

Key artworks at the exhibition

fig. 6 Ramsès Younan, *Untitled*, 1939

Ramsés Younane's *Untitled* (1939) demonstrates this point clearly(fig. 6). The painting may be called a quintessential Art and Liberty painting. The scene is set in a desert landscape where the sky is blue and the ground is light beige. This combination of background colours recalls Dalí's painting *Sleep* (1937). Younane's central figure is thought to be a reworking the ancient Egyptian goddess Nut.[131] He had likely chosen to depict this goddess for two reasons.[132] First, Nut symbolises life and protection and is a personification of the visible sky, is the goddess of stars, cosmos and mothers. Nut is a key goddess in the myths of the afterlife because in mythology she gives birth to the sun every morning. The ancient goddess became a vehicle for the metaphor or life and death.

It is believed that her brother Geb lies beneath her at her feet, simulating the ground. Her body is depicted as arching over the Earth in nude human form, her body forming the sky as one of the oldest deities of the Egyptian pantheon. Secondly, regular iconography sees her arching her back while on all fours, creating this encompassing semi-spherical position of the visible sky.[133] For example, in the papyrus fragment of the Book of the Dead of Henuttawy, *A scene with Nut, Geb and*

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[131] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt,* p. 181

[132] Though Younan refrained from a direct reference to the goddess Nut, it is, nevertheless, believed that Younan recruited the historic depiction of the goddess in his painting. The motif of the arched body was convenient to employ to demonstrate a broken body, the myth reworked. Sam Bardouil, *Surrealism in Egypt,* p. 181

[133] Barbara Lesko, *The great goddesses of Egypt* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), p. 53

Osiris dating back to circa 2100 BC shows the scene of the cosmos (fig. 7). The goddess Nut represented alongside the god Osiris, the maker of heaven, earth and the netherworld, the god Geb the father of the gods.[134]

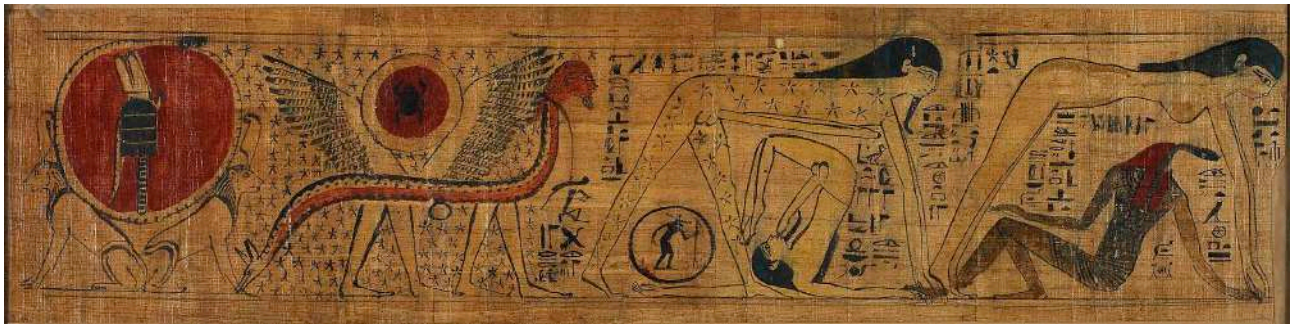

Fig. 7 Anonymous, *Frame 2: A scene with Nut, Geb and Osiris*

While the ancient papyrus emphasises Nut's procreative qualities, Younan's Nut symbolises death. Younan inverted the bent shape body to arch outward rather than inward which conveys the idea of pain and torment. Her body appears to be held at her shoulders and the knees by Geb or her doubles, dismembered parts of Nut's body such as the head underneath her legs. While her body is arched, it is arched in sharp right angles rather than in a curve. Amina Diab describes the body as mutilated and almost crucified.[135] The arching is parallel to the sun which may point to the goddess, as a metaphor for Egypt, being burned and almost dried up by the sun, which as the myth goes, Nut gives birth to.

While the context is local, the language is distinctly Surrealist.[136] It conveys the suffering of Egypt and all of humanity. The image reflects the mission of *Art and Liberty* group to create pictorial language that is locally oriented but internationally engaged as it drew upon the suffering of people during pre-WWII years and during the war.

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[134] Quack John, "Altägyptische Amulette und ihre Handhabung. Orientalische Religionen in der Antike", vol.31, 2022, reproduced in https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA10018-2, [accessed 25.05.2023]

[135] Diab Amina, "Art et Liberté Rupture, War and Surrealism in Egypt (1938–1948) at the Centre Pompidou", 2016 dec 22, https://www.ibraaz.org/reviews/119 [accessed 25.05.2023]

[136] Hopkins David, *A Companion to Dada and Surrealism* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), p. 111

This painting was likely hung on black partitions and was covered by a black veil requiring the visitor to unveil the cloth to see the paintings.[137] This made the exhibition more immersive and blurred the line between the Younan's *Untitled* and the exhibition curation. This also echoes the dream state, where thoughts and images are revealed gradually one at a time.

Roland Penrose employed a key feature of Nut iconography for a surrealist portrait of Lee Miller. The painting *Egypt* (1939) (fig. 8) depicts a contoured figure of what is reminiscent of the shape of the goddess and turned it into anthropomorphic hybrid with human and vegetal elements as a frame of the view of the desert and a metropolis emerging on a horizon.[138] Roland Penrose was an artist and a leading figure of Surrealism in England who had a love affair with Lee Miller, an American photographer and photojournalist residing in Egypt.[139] Miller is distinguished for establishing the links between European and Egyptian Surrealists.[140,141] Together with Henein, Miller played a key role in introducing Surrealism to artists in Cairo through Surrealist literature and reviews of Surrealist exhibitions provided by Penrose.[142] He published *Art and Liberty*'s

fig. 8 Roland Penrose, *Egypt*

[137] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 183

[138] ibid

[139] ibid, p 92

[140] Rubinstein Raphael, "Surreal Cairo", *Art in America,* 2017, p. 82

[141] Alaaeldin Mahmoud, "Beyond the Colonial, Orientalist Encounter: "European" Cultural Contributions to Arab Modernity" *Hungarian Cultural Studies,* Volume 12, 2019, p. 53

[142] Sam Bardouil, Surrealism in Egypt, p. 9

manifesto in the *The London Bulletin* in 1939 because of Henein's friendship with Lee Miller.[143] Through Miller, Penrose was acquainted on his visits to Cairo with Henein and the *Art and Liberty* group.[144] Roland Penrose became a member of the collective along with many other expatriates and refugees into Egypt.[145] This shows that the group in Cairo was internationally engaged.

In 1939 el-Telmisany published a response to an article on Surrealism written by an Egyptian art critic. His response reveals the group's understanding of ancient and religious art: 'Have you heard stories or poems from local, popular literature?… All of these, Sir, are all Surrealist. Have you seen the Egyptian Museum?… Much of pharaonic art is Surrealist. Have you seen the Coptic Museum? Much of Coptic art is Surrealist'.[146,147]

Fig. 9 Ida Kar, *Pharaoh and Doll*

Another potent exhibit is by Ida Kar a photographer of Armenian origin who grew up in Alexandria in Egypt. Her *Still Life (Pharaoh and the Doll)* (c.1940) consists of a mask pertaining to look like a Pharaoh's head and a rag doll that 'hugs' the head (fig. 9).[148] The Pharaonic elements of the gypsum mask, a motif loaded with historic-cultural and semantic weight, are deprived of the rhetoric of national identity which *Art and Liberty* group rejected.[149] Kar juxtaposes two objects, one carries a

[143] ibid, p. 7

[144] ibid, p. 10

[145] Mahmoud, Alaaeldin. "Beyond the Colonial: Orientalist Encounter", p. 53

[146] Telmissany Kamel, "Ḥawla al-Fann al-Munḥaṭ", *Al-Risālah,* 1939, p. 17

[147] Seggerman Alexandra, *An Enhanced Timeline of Egyptian Surrealism,* no.19, (2013), reproduced in http/// ir.uiowa.edu/dadasur/vol19/iss1/ [accessed 10.03.2023], p. 12

[148] It is not clear whether Kar exhibited a photograph or a still life itself before making a photograph

[149] Sam Bardaouil, Surrealism in Egypt, p. 180

historical weight other looks like child's doll and is of no historical significance.[150] The pharaonic looking piece of sculpture, perhaps referring to a king, someone with status is embraced by a common kid's doll.[151] It rests on the doll's shoulder and is embraced by doll's legs with a childlike playfulness while one arm is holding what appears to be a flute. What Bardaouil does not mention is the fact the while the doll appears whole the sculpture is part of a bigger picture, at least a bust. A head on its own calls up association of death and, therefore, becomes unsettling in the eyes of the spectator. Such stark juxtaposition of objects that may look bizarre is characteristic of dreams.

The theory of radical dreaming

Younan sought to move away from Dalí's premeditated style and this lead him to conceptualise a new type of Surrealism called Subjective Realism, which called for radical dreaming that is void of preconceived notions but rather 'driven by the subconscious impulse'.[152] This idea for Kamel el-Telmisany was encompassed by the term 'Free' art, that is why the group chose the name *Art and Liberty*. This put them apart from the European counterparts particularly in terms of the subject matter. In contrast to hyper-sexualised female figures of Dalí, *Art and Liberty's* paintings and Younan's *Untitled* painting becomes a platform to voice their concern over Egyptian's dire economic injustices during WWII.

In their mind such work of modern art, best described in el-Telmisany's words, is concerned with 'humanity and all that it is suffering from in our present age'.[153] For the *Art and Liberty* group, art cannot provide joy, amusement or mental pleasure because these emotions are seen to remove the

[150] ibid, p. 181

[151] ibid, p. 181

[152] Sam Bardaouil, Till Fellrath, *Art et Liberté: Rupture, War and Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 127

[153] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 138

spectator from the real existence that shatters humanity every day.[154] Thus, art acts as an aid for each and every one person to bear the ruggedness of existence and inspire life.[155]

In fact, the same rupture that Younan's *Untitled* (1939) is communicating is paralleled by the very curation of the exhibition with the chaos of the maze-like interior, pots of paint laying around. The exhibition is a direct manifestation of the overarching mission of the group, 'the total liberation of the human condition'.[156] The realm of the dream offers and promotes this liberation and allows for the repressed emotions of torment to surface through.

Like Dalí, Younan took note of the Freudian concept of the unconscious. In his book *The Aim of the Contemporary Painter* Younan described a significant potential danger of creating art that is informed by one's exploration of the subconscious. It lies in the danger of slipping into an artificial type of the expression where the ingenuity of the conscious mind and skill prevail over 'the imagination and the desires of the subconscious mind'.[157] *Art and Liberty* artists delved deep into their subconscious. Younan's *Untitled* and Kar's *Still Life* are exemplary of the idea behind Subjective Realism. The painting depicts unknown reality which, arguably, difficult to describe in words but the mere look at the painting translates its emotions poignantly.

The fact that Younan's paints were veiled with black cloth points to dreams as performative acts. Barbara Tedlock explains that in psychology dreams are often taken to be a part of action rather than a mere description of action. When delving into the subconscious, *Art and Liberty* artists did not see art as a mirror of the subconscious, rather as sources of meaning and inspiration, which, in turn, could lead to liberation.[158]

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[154] ibid, p. 138

[155] ibid

[156] ibid, p. 123

[157] Sam Bardaouil, Till Fellrath, *Art et Liberté: Rupture, War and Surrealism in Egypt,* p. 142

[158] Barbara Tedlock, *Dreaming: Anthropological and psychological interpretations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 7

*Subjective Realism in actio*n

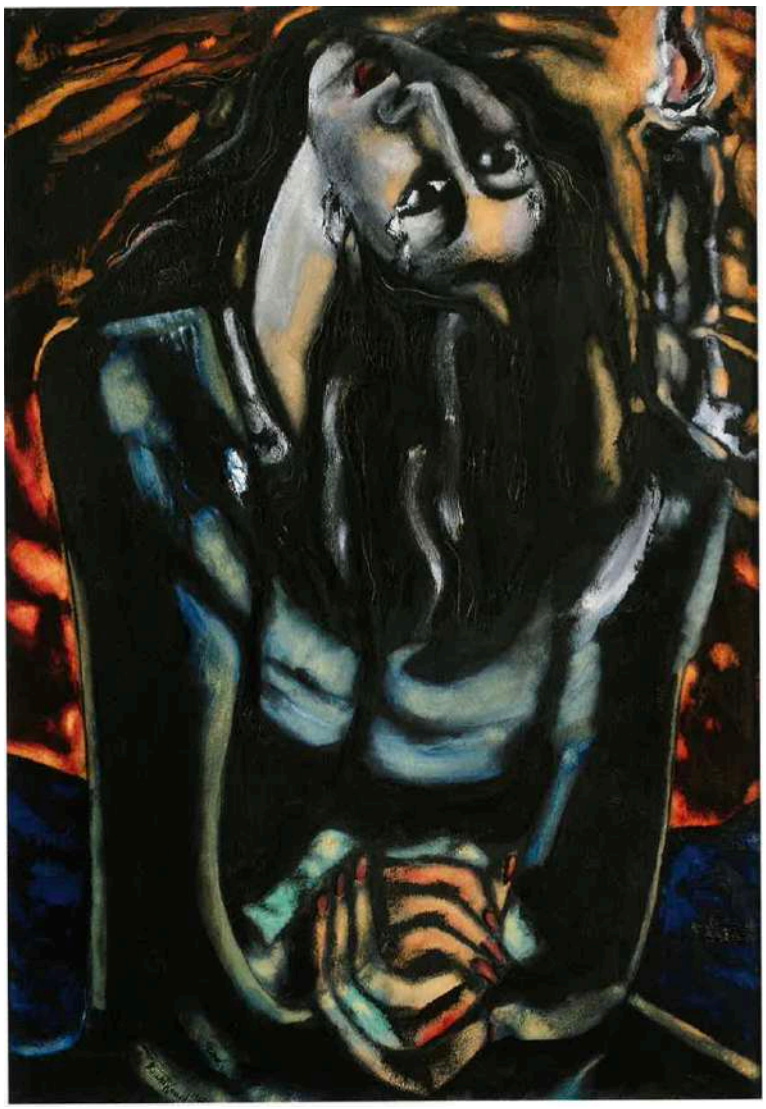

Fig. 10 Fouad Kamel, *Untitled*

Fouad Kamel's *Untitled* (1940) is both a powerful and unsettling Surrealist work. It depicts a female figure in agony (fig. 10). Tears are flowing from her hopeless eyes and merge into coal black hair. Unnatural and militated impression is created by the twisted head, wide shoulders and curving arms. Hands are clapped together in what is perhaps the only warm part of her body. The background is dramatic and is reminiscent of a scene of volcano eruption. A dramatic effect is accentuated by sharp contrast between light and dark tones, where the ice blue is contrasted with fiery red-orange. The only recognisable source of light, a candle, on the top right is dim and may symbolise her soul fading away. Her body is about to get totally blue like a corpse suggesting that she is dying and turning into black ashes. The black colour dominates the painting, it creates an effect of a centuries old icon of The Mother of God that became dark from church candles.

The distinctive feature of Surrealism in Egypt as opposed to the one in Paris, is in the moving away from depiction of otherworldly creatures and bizarre juxtapositions of Man Ray, Dali, Magritte.[159] Bardaouil points out that the resemblance to German Expressionism did not make *Art and Liberty*

[159] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 154

art less Surrealist.[160] Even though they were interested in Paris surrealism they were interested in different ways of depicting reality more like German Expressionists. This combination of Surrealism and German Expressionism is, arguably, a defining feature of Subjective Realism proposed by the Art and Liberty group. While conveying the suffering of women in Egypt as many were forced to work as prostitutes because poverty was increasingly widespread, the painting may be perceived as a psychological portrait of Egypt.

In summary, this chapter discussed the paintings and curation at the *Second Exhibition of Free Art* in Cairo. It concluded that both aspects of the exhibition reinforce the intention of the *Art and Liberty* artists to create a dreamlike experience. This servers the purpose of developing the argument further.

[160] ibid

Chapter 3: Two Exhibitions Against Nazi Opposition Imagination in the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* in Münich

The previous two chapters were concerned with the notion of a dream reflected in two Surrealist exhibitions. Both exhibitions broke the art exhibition mould and marked a new chapter in exhibition curation.[161] This chapter aims to look at the two exhibitions together to show the motivations for unorthodox curation and the political context that surrounded it. Thus, this section will look at the two exhibitions and will examine them in responses to the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* in Münich in 1937.

The Degenerate Art Exhibition

The aim of the *Degenerate Art Exhibition*, attended by over two million visitors, was to demonstrate Nazi racial and cultural superiority. The curators dramatised display of texts and paintings of contemporary and primitive art.[162] The exhibition showcased over 650 works including paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, Mare Chagall, Max Ernst, Wassily Kandinsky and Pablo Picasso, to name a few.[163] 'Degenerate' art was seen as an insult to the 'Aryan race' of the Third Reich. The main message behind the curation was to demonstrate the 'degenerate' art confusing natural form, revealing a complete absence of manual and artistic skills.

In his address at the Nuremberg Parteitag in September 1935 titled *Art and Politics*, Adolf Hitler, a 'failed artist' himself,[164] announced the need to rid the German art of the totally corrupt and diseased 'degeneracy'.[165] Thus, the exhibition berated any art that was seen as an antithesis to true

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[161] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 35

[162] The exhibition opened on 19 July 1937 and was extended from September to 30 November due to popular demand

[163] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 24

[164] Stephanie Barron, *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991), p. 12

[165] Adolf Hitler, "Address on Art and Politics at the Nuremberg Parteitag on 11 September 1935" in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler* (ed.) Nadia Baynes (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019), p.577

German art. Adolf Ziegler was a neoclassical painter and a key figure in selecting works on show. He gave a speech at the opening where he announced: 'You see around you the products of madness, or impudence, of ineptitude and decadence. This show produces in us feelings of shock and repugnance'.[166]

The exhibition aimed to re-educate the public through shock tactics.[167] It was also running at the same time as the *Great German Art Exhibition* held in the nearby House of German Art.[168] The display tactics at the *Degenerate Art Exhibition,* the use of interpretive texts and prescriptive captions and the hanging of works upside down all contributed to the visual alienation of the 'degenerate' art from the 'correct' National Socialist art. The exhibition achieved its aim of instilling a sense of fear in the public of the 'degeneracy' threatening to disease the German state. It was made clear that anyone who supported this 'degeneracy' would be wiped out.[169]

The second room of the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* contained paintings by Jewish artists like Marc Chagall and were lumped 'under the heading 'Revelation of the Jewish soul''.[170] The wall text featured quotations from Hitler's aforementioned speech and *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* (1930) written by the Nazi ideology theorist and a cultural warrior, Alfred Rosenberg. He was one of the key authors of the racial theory which lead to the persecution of Jews, considering non-Nordic nationalities subhumans or non-humans and opposition to modern art termed 'degenerate'.[171]

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[166] Adolf Ziegler cited in Dunlop lan, *The Shock of the New* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), p.253

[167]Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 24

[168] Elena Filipovic, "Surrealism in 1938", p. 180

[169] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968,* p. 24

[170] Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau, *Degenerate Art. The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (eds.) Stephanie Barron, (New York: Harry N. Abrams Publishers, 1991), p. 52

[171] Evans Richard, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), pp. 238, 40

The paintings were hung closer together which created an impression of chaos and even claustrophobia because the quotations, texts, strong colours and a small room.[172] The large number of people were loudly proclaiming their dislike of the works and ridiculing them, which 'created the impression of a staged performance intended to promote an atmosphere of aggressiveness and anger'.[173] The fact that may paintings were purposefully misnamed enhanced these responses from the public.

One such painting hung in the second room was Marc Chagall's *Purim* (1916-17) (fig. 11) which was confiscated from the Museum Folkwang in Essen. It shows a festive day at his village which commemorated a story recorded in the book of Esther about the saving of the Jews from annihilation. The scene takes place in a typical village in Vitebsk, the Russian Empire. The figure on the right is a stall-keeper who made sweetmeats. The male figure is Chagall's son Pinya who offers to deliver the Purim presents.[174]

Fig. 11
Marc Chagall, *Purim*

[172] Peter Guentber, "Three Days in Munich 1937" in *Degenerate Art. The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (ed.) Stephanie Barron (New York: Harry N. Abrams Publishers 1991), p. 38

[173] ibid

[174] Bella Chagall, *First Encounter* (trans.) Brian Bray (New York, Schocken Books, 1985), p. 130

However, the accounts of Chagall's wife Bella revealed more symbolism of this painting. According to her, the old woman in the foreground wearing a shawl was 'a strange woman like someone out of the madhouse' because she carefully carried a sugar horse as if the treat is a newborn.[175] The festive joy, however, is interrupted by a serious note in the background. The blue quadrangle at the top shows a horseman, which points to a messenger of King Ahasuerus who granted permission to the Jews to unite and defend themselves.[176] The most unsettling scene is revealed in the background. It shows human figures on poles, likely pointing to the sons of the king Hamam, who ordered the killing of the Jews.

In *Purim*, the translation of childhood memories mixed with religious stories is combined with visual imagery.[177] The inclusion of this painting by Chagall at the exhibition is not only an indication of hatred for anything Eastern European and Jewish, but also fear of imagination.[178] This painting was misnamed by the curators of the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* as *The Village Scene*.[179] This conscious move stripped the painting of its religious, mystical and imaginary aspects which denigrated its meaning and presented the painting as 'degenerate', that is a non-art.

The powerful translations of his memories, the fables and tales Chagall shared with André Breton prompted Breton to hail the artist as the 'rediscoverer of the metaphorical content of painting'.[180] Chagall's metaphorical and imaginative paintings had a liberating influence on the artists of the German Expressionists which then influenced the development of Surrealism.[181]

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[175] ibid, p. 125

[176] Susan Compton, *Chagall* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1985), p. 193

[177] Barron Stephanie, *Degenerate Art,* p. 218

[178] ibid

[179] ibid, p. 52

[180] ibid, p. 218

[181] Grimm Dagmar, Peter Guentber, Pamela Kort, "The Works of Art in Entartete Kunst, Munich 1937" in *Degenerate Art. The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (eds.) Stephanie Barron (New York: Harry N. Abrams Publishers 1991), p. 219

The response to the exhibition

The assault on the avant-garde at the exhibition and the Hitler's proclamations outraged the Surrealists.[182] In summer 1938 in Mexico, Breton together with Leon Trotsky and Diego Rivera formulated their resistance to totalitarianism in a tract published on behalf of the *Fédération Internationale de 'Art Révolutionnaire Indépendant.* It advocated for an 'independent art', art free from propaganda, political constrains. Not only was it a strong strand against Fascism, it also expressed the disillusionment artists felt towards the French government and its almost indifferent attitude to what was happening in Germany.[183] In their Manifesto for an *Independent Revolutionary Art* they stated: 'True art is unable not to be revolutionary, not to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society'.[184]

In the political stance, the Surrealists followed the principle of a proletarian revolution where art and literature were to be free to adopt a revolutionary poetic in the pursuit of a collective revolt. As Mahon concludes, thus, Surrealism is a manifestation of the true avant-gardism because it was part of political action but was not subsumed by political propaganda.[185] Therefore, for Surrealists, art had political agenda which in turn had the power to transform the perception of the world through imagination and dream.

The response of Surrealists in Paris

The Surrealists in Paris were acutely aware of the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* from media, personal accounts of artists and the counter-exhibition set up in London.[186] The radical curatorial decisions

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[182] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros 1938-1968*, p. 27

[183] ibid, p. 63

[184] André Breton, *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings* (London: Pathfinder, 1978), p.243, 246

[185] Bürger Peter, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 54

[186] Penrose Antony, *Roland Penrose: The Friendly Surrealist (Art & Design* (Berlin: Prestel, 2001), p. 92-3

were informed by the rejection of the Surrealist movement and the increasingly proliferating ideology of Fascism that was gaining considerable ground across Europe. The Paris *International Surrealist Exhibition* reacted to the assault on so-called 'degenerate' art in Germany.[187]

These aesthetic and conceptual provocations seen in both exhibitions were in fact largely directed against the message expressed at the *Degenerate Art Exhibition*. The *International Exposition of Surrealism* began six months after the opening of the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* in Münich.

As evident in Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924) and poetry by Louis Aragon in *Wave of Dreams* (1924) the dream is a catalyst for new imaginative freedom.[188] The imaginative freedom paved the way for the new type of aesthetic and moral judgement of the Parisian Surrealist group manifested in their uncanny exhibition space with a brothel-like grotto room, provocative female mannequins. In Cairo, this imaginative freedom gave rise to convoluted exhibition space.

The employment of the dream-like structures in both art and exhibition curations would likely not have happened if the artists had not decided to mount an insulting response to the 1937 *Degenerate Art Exhibition* in Münich. The Nazis labelled Surrealism 'degenerate' because it drew upon the impressions of dreams, children and the insane.

Notably, at the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* visitors could hear Hitler's voice broadcasting his address to the public about the cleansing of the German society of 'degeneracy'. In this address the works of avant-garde artists were equally disregarded as that of the insane.[189] Moreover, the fact that Surrealism was perceived by artists as a weapon for political action would threaten the efforts of the National Socialism and had to be shown to be 'degenerate'.

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[187] ibid, p. 23

[188] Natalya Lusty, "Surrealism and Dreams" p. 94

[189] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 63

The exhibition included a collection of three dozen paintings of the insane belonging to Hans Prinzhorn, the psychiatrist, art historian and the author of *Image-Making by the Mentally Ill* (1922). It was employed to visually prove that the works of Paul Klee and others were that of the idiot, the cretin, and the cripple'.[190]

Thus, the main room of the *International Surrealist Exhibition* was filled by the 'sound of hysterical laughter' played on a hidden phonograph and recorded at an insane asylum.[191] By unleashing the 'disturbing power of insanity' the exhibition explored manifestations of insanity and the 'uncanny effect of epileptic fits' to use Freud's words.[192]

In his Surrealist manifesto Breton believed that the insane 'are, to some degree, victims of their imagination… indeed, hallucinations, illusions, etc., are not a source of trifling pleasure. These people are honest to a fault, and their naïveté has no peer but my own'.[193] What seems to interest Breton the most is the freedom of imagination exercised by the insane.

The space of *International Surrealist Exhibition* in Paris, therefore, contradicted the exhibition in Münich because it represented everything the Nazi Party despised. The Surrealists transgressed boundaries of what could be shown at a public exhibition through attacking the conventions and taboos like intra-uterine life, the concept introduced to the Surrealists through the writings of Freud.[194]

One of the ways to induce in viewers the sense of insanity was through *dépaysement* or displacement. This notion was first described in Freud's investigations of the subconscious, often

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[190] Bruce Altshuler , *The Avant-garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), p.143

[191] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 63

[192] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny", p. 347

[193] André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, p. 5

[194] Maria Ferreira, "Fantasies of intra-uterine life and immaculate conceptions", p. 134

observed in patients when they are in a semi-conscious or hypnotised state of mind.[195] It is characterised by 'bizarre juxtapositions' of different objects alienated from their natural environment and often transported into an 'absurd context' which allowed these objects to be interpreted differently.[196,197]

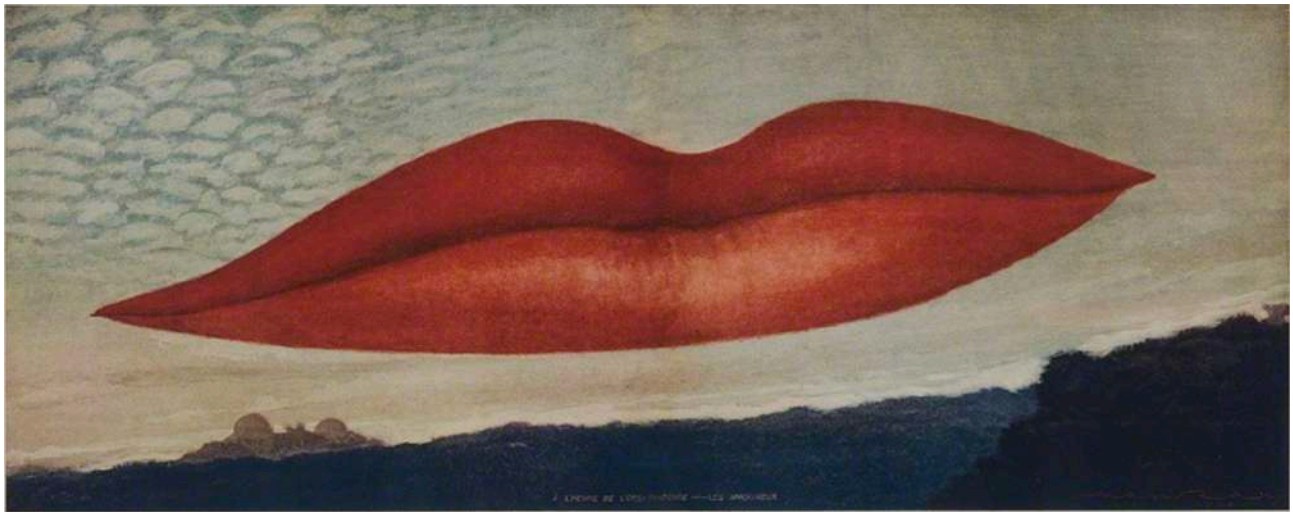

Fig. 12 Man Ray, *The Observatory Time. The Lovers*

Man Ray's *Observatory Time. The Lovers* (1932-34) exhibited at the *International Surrealist Exhibition* demonstrates this point poignantly (fig. 12). It shows a visual juxtaposition of lips against a landscape. This huge pair of lips hovers over a dark twilight landscape of a clouded Parisian skyline.[198] The detachment of lips into the background symbolises the loss of love and the end of their relationship.[199] Nicknamed by Ray *My Lovers*, this painting has been described as 'the quintessential Surrealist painting' by Neil Baldwin.[200] It shows the cosmic dimension of love.[201] This is because lips are a symbol of a man and a woman in embrace, Ray wrote: 'Your mouth

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[195] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 149

[196] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 47

[197] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 142

[198] Annalisa Zox-Weavel, *Women Modernists and Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 154

[199] Prodger Philip, "Lee Miller and Man Ray. The Ultimate Surrealist Object" in *Man Ray, Lee Miller. Partners in Surrealism* (ed.) Philip Prodger (New York: Merrell, 2011), pp. 43-45

[200] Baldwin Neil, *Man Ray: American Artist* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1988), 174

[201] Christian Keathley, *Cinephilia And History or the Wind in the Trees* (Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 172

becomes two bodies, separated by a long, undulating horizon. Like the earth and the sky, like you and me'.[202] The origin of the juxtaposition is in a vivid impression Ray had when saying goodbye to his former lover after a dinner party. According to Roland Penrose, after she pressed her lips on his shirt Ray had a vision or a dream of floating lips.[203]

The response of the Surrealists in Cairo

The *Art and Liberty* second exhibition took place in March 1941, almost a year after the invasion of France by Nazi Germany. The four-year occupation of Paris began in 1940 which ended the first phase of Surrealism.[204] The exhibition responded both to the *Degenerate Art Exhibition* in Münich and the *International Surrealist Exhibition* in Paris.

The Art and Liberty group was 'unmistakably artistic and equally political'.[205] The group's radical dreamers were dedicated to the belief in freedom of expression.[206] It was a time when news about the Nazi Art Plunder were spreading globally. Artworks were being confiscated from collectors, museums and galleries in Germany, Poland and France. The 'degenerate' art, a notion which included Surrealist art, was put in a type of art 'concentration camps'. One such camp was the notorious Jeu de Paume Museum in Paris, a former headquarter of the Special Staff for Pictorial Art.[207]

The impressions of George Henein following his visit to the *International Surrealist Exhibition* in Paris featuring unusual juxtapositions of artworks were shared with artists in Cairo. Henein issued a

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[202] Neil Baldwin, *Man Ray: American Artist*, p. 174

[203] Penrose Roland, *Man Ray* (London: Thanks and Hudson, 1975), pp. 100-101

[204] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 63

[205] Sam Bardaouil, Till Fellrath, *Art et Liberté: Rupture, War and Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 18

[206] ibid

[207] Joseph Wulf, *Die bildenden Künste im Dritten Reich: Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 1983), 415-19, reproduced in http://docproj.loyola.edu/jdp/index.html [21.05.2023]

manifesto in 1938 signed by 37 intellectuals proclaiming *Long Live Degenerate Art*, which directly responded to Nazi labelling of modern art as 'degenerate' discussed in the following chapter. The Art and Liberty group was formed following.

Their stand against totalitarianism which was infamous for silencing artistic expression that did not conform to its beliefs, the works would be confiscated which fulfilled radical agendas. The *Long Live Degenerate Art* manifesto addressed 'the hostility towards new artistic expression': 'O men of art, men of letters! … We stand absolutely as one with this 'degenerate' art. In it resides all the hopes of the future. Let us work for their victory over the new Middle Ages that are rising in the heart of Europe'.[208]

Ramsès Younan was described as 'the most tormented' amongst Henein's friends by Edouard Jaguer, the author of the General Dictionary of Surrealism.[209] The artist had declared: 'I cling onto my madness with the smallest hope to conquer the world and to destroy the emptiness'.[210] The 'emptiness' Younan was referring to was the emptiness of the academia in the likes of the mainstream art tending increasingly towards nationalism which he denounced in his essay *Aim of the Modern Artist*.[211] In fact his motto 'Long Live Degenerate Art!' defined the revolutionary antifascist manifesto.

The opposite of emptiness is depth. The depth of meaning in the violent composition *The Devouring Passion* (1940) showing a tormented female (fig. 13). She seems to shout and scream for freedom or artistic freedom advocated by the Art and Liberty group. The female body frustrates the depiction of the female body in traditional academic painting characterised by perfection and

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[208] Georges Henein, et al.,"Long Live Degenerate Art" in *Surrealism in Egypt: Modernism and the Art and Liberty Group* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), p. 245

[209] André Breton, Paul Eluard, *Concise Dictionary of Surrealism*, p. 14

[210] Ramsés Younane, *Ghayat al-rassam al-'asri* (Cairo: Jara'aat al-di'aayah al-fanniyyan, 1938), p. 50

[211] ibid

beauty.The naked body of this woman is portrayed in the most 'degenerate' way, it is unidealised, it is almost washed in the dirt of the earth, it is sexualised and it is not aiding an Egyptian nationalist agenda. Younane emphasised the muscles and bones and creates an impression of body being exhausted and starving.

The thickly painted layer of ochre is interrupted by blood-red earthy tones and ultimately by violently black oil paint. Such powerful combination of colours conveys the feelings of torment, anger, pain. This is echoed by her open mouth.

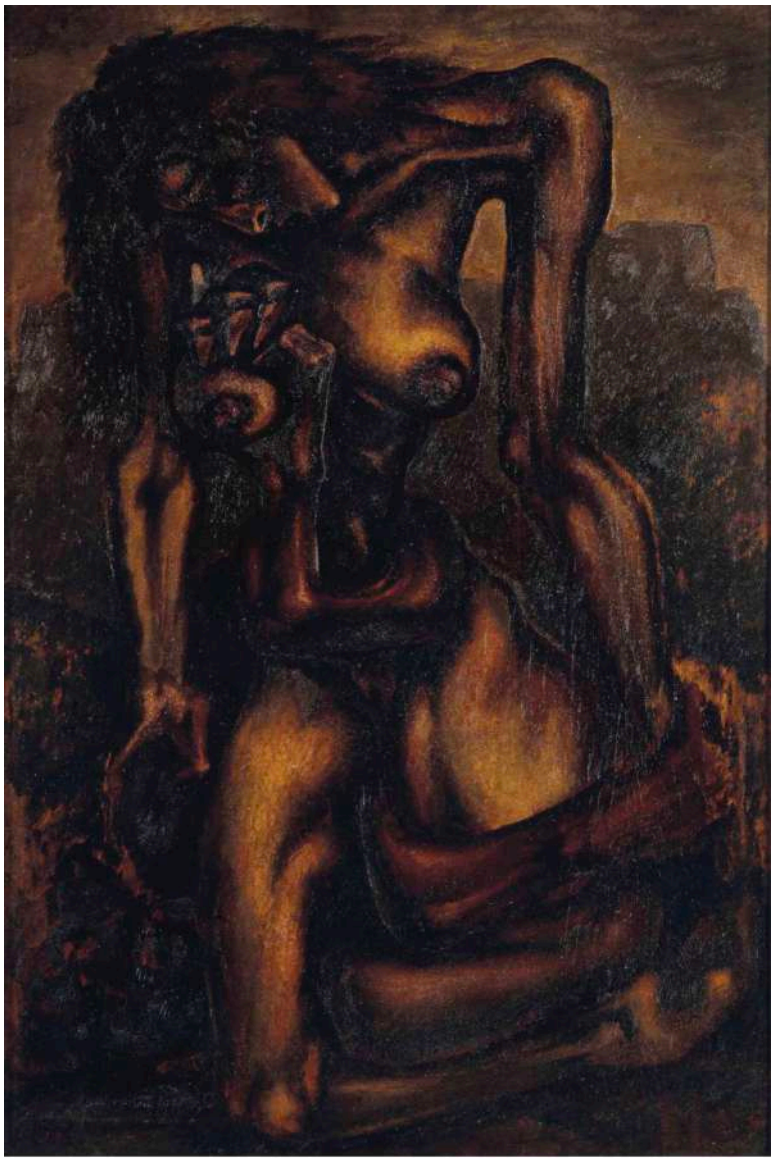

fig. 13 Ramsès Younan, *The Devouring Passion*

The painting helps one pave the road towards one's subconscious, to one's dream. The painting is evocative because it makes the spectator recall moments in life when the subconscious was 'screaming' like this woman. Her right breast is engulfed by claws of what appears to be a blood-red hand or creature of unknown origin that tightly encircles her left leg. It appears to grow out of her body to the point that they are perceived as one. This flesh with claws may symbolise the subconscious. The ambiguity of the claws goes as far as to resemble broken and protruding ribs.

The title *The Devouring Passion* refers to the incarnation of a range of struggles: the physical struggle with war and poverty, the psychological struggle between the conscious and the subconscious. It could also symbolise the social struggle with the shackles of tradition and an artistic discontent with the 'emptiness' of the academic painting. Paul Eluard proclaimed that the duty of poets and artists is to be deeply involved in communal like, in the life of other people.[212]

Art and Liberty sought to dismantle academism because it was ripe with the bourgeois notion of art for art's sake.[213] This strong emotional impact and its disturbing inferno-like power painting calls to mind the lines El-Telmisany wrote in his publication *Humanism and Modern Art* written in the same year the painting was produced: Art will not be a tool for pleasure of people to bring joy to their idle minds. Cheerfulness is far from humanism and life that crashes and keeps crashing every day.[214] This painting incarnated the horrors, struggles and sufferings of modern Egyptians.

Jean Moscatelli wrote that scenes in Younan's paintings are deeply rooted in his subconscious.[215] The dreamlike tragic figures and tormented foreground of his compositions grab viewer's attention and invite to 'unravel the unconscious'.[216] Younan tightly framed the body trapping her in the burning hell. This painting is attempting to show the true humanism through this violent portrayal of the human condition in the context of WWII. She seems to be consumed by the hellish surroundings as she is trapped and suffocating and being strangled.

Nazi opposition to imagination

Both groups are known to aim at achieving a certain altered state of consciousness to …

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[212] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt* , p. 129

[213] ibid

[214] Kamel el-Telmissany, "The Humanity of Modern Art", *Al-Tatawwur* 2, 1940, p. 45

[215] Jean Moscatelli, "Expositions", *Images*, Cairo, no. 814, 16th April 1945, p. 16

[216] ibid

It is known that members and affiliates of the *Art and Liberty* group were taking part in night-time events where some were wearing costumes with piss pots full of flowers or in gas masks,[217] and engaging in clairvoyance sessions, spontaneous drawing exercises. These sessions were meant to find ways for unlocking the subconscious mind. The fact that they were happening during exhibition opening nights, these exercises together with exhibitions transcended the confines of the conventional exhibitions spaces.[218]

It may be argued, that the reason why the Nazis thought Surrealist art was 'degenerate' was not only because of Freud's writings on psychoanalysis,[219] but also on Surrealists' emphasis on dreams and their power in generating ideas. Jews and, therefore Freud, were seen as enemies of German nationalism, more so the opposition to them was a centrepiece of Nazi ideology.[220] Freud's psychoanalysis had no chance but to be rejected and repressed. Additionally, the chaos and rupture of Surrealism and its emphasis on dream structures which was deemed unsavoury for nationalists, is the only way it could counter balance.

The aims of Surrealists

Instead of instructing the public how and what to think as it was in the *Degenerate Art Exhibition*, Surrealists broke down the conventions and, in effect, freed the public to dive into a dream of the Surrealist city. This city exposed the fears and desires of the European society.[221] Through the

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[217] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 10

[218] ibid, p. 9

[219] George Mosse Lachmann , *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 199

[220] Cordón Luis, *Freud's World: An Encyclopaedia of His Life and Times* (London, Greenwood, 2012), p. 338

[221] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 63

structure of the dream, these issues could be resolved. Mahon explains that the exhibition rejected the notion of an artist as individual genius that came down through the rational Enlightenment.[222] Breton cities two telling quotes by Ouspensky: 'Anything that restricts freedom of thought is false'.[223]

Through the insistence on the irrationality of dreams and imagination the Surrealists were opposed to everything rational. Their advocacy for the irrational thought served the purpose of freeing from the ideological contains. Dreams offered the free terrain where conventions and taboos could be disregarded. The key belief exercised by Surrealists in both exhibitions and art was that it is possible to influence the tangible and rational realm of the real only through intangible realm of the dream driven by imaginative, spiritual, infinite and irrational forces. The *International Surrealist Exhibition* in Paris and the *Second Exhibition of Free Art* in Cairo disoriented the spectator and attacked the idea of art serving the nationalist agenda. Exhibitions acted as vehicles of social and political revolt.[224]

The *International Surrealist Exhibition* explored the imagination of the insane, sexual fantasies. Both exhibitions were in striving for universal sensibility.[225] The significance of dream in ones life was seen to be in it as a source of freedom that is accessible to all. Narratives which seem to be incoherent and illogical in the waking mind seem normal and meaningful in the dream. Dreams are characterised by 'orientational disability' meaning that, places, people and time change without warning which has a disorienting effect on an individual.

For el-Telmisany, free art, meaning Surrealist art, reconciles 'seemingly contradictory spiritual, psychological and physical realms of existence'. He referred to Henein's words which expressed

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[222] ibid, p. 27, 63

[223] Sam Bardaouil, *Surrealism in Egypt*, p. 124

[224] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 12

[225] Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938-1968*, p. 27

that only the Surrealist notion has the power to merge the concrete with the abstract, which by non-Surrealists is seen as contradiction.[226]

Moreover, the employment of disorientation at the *International Surrealist Exhibition* in Paris took a form of dark interior with the sounds of the insane and Nazi marching music. At the *Second Exhibition of Free Art* in Cairo disorientation was manifested in tunnel like convoluted arrangement of temporary walls and black fabric covering some works.

Additionally, the paint pots lying on the floor of the *Second Exhibition of Free Art* in Cairo recall the fascist assault on the film *L'ge d'or* (1930) by Salvador Dalí and Luis Bufuel. Due to the praising of an attack on moral myths and religion, the screening was sabotaged by right-wing protesters who slashed the Surrealist paintings hung in the foyer and threw ink at the screen.[227] This point, not discussed by scholars, is a significant one, as it goes in line with the motto of the group's manifesto *Long Live Degenerate Art*. By leaving the pots of paint on the floor, the group's members assert and praise their art as 'degenerate'.

This chapter has looked at the use of the dream-like structures in the works and curatorial strategies deployed in the two exhibitions in Paris and Cairo in response to the *Degenerate Art Exhibition*, as the one that rejected the imaginary realm of human thought and expression.

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[226] Telmisany Kamel, "Naḥwa fann ḥurr", p. 34

[227] Pierre José, *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives,* p.155

Conclusion

This thesis discussed the notion of the dream manifested in the *International Surrealist Exhibition* and the *Second Exhibition of Free Art*. It drew parallels and defined the influence of the Paris exhibition on the Cairo exhibition. While in Paris the emphasis was on sexual fantasies revealed by Freud and shown through provocative mannequins, paintings and curation, in Cairo the sexualisation of bodies or the *dépaysment* was not employed to the same extent. For Art and Liberty, dream was a vehicle for the expression of human suffering.

The experience of both exhibitions was immersive and its unusual curation prompted the public to interact differently with artworks and submerge into the dream-like microcosm of exhibitions. The low visibility also limited the space needed for contemplation of an artwork. The dissertation would benefit from an additional chapter on the Surrealist exhibition in London, which was prior to both exhibitions discussed.

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