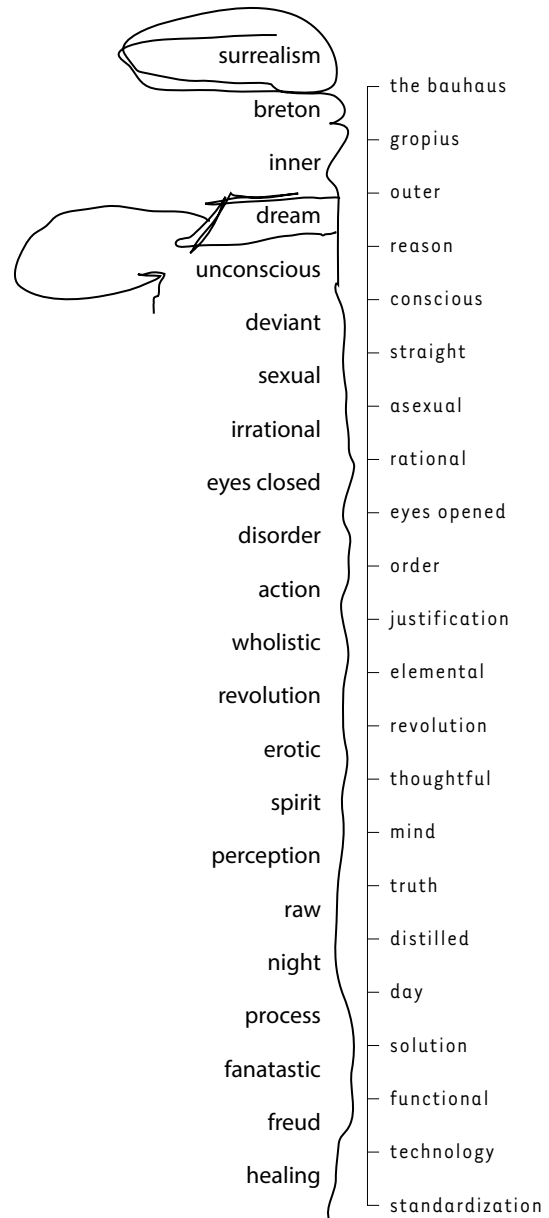


In Need of Therapy

a look at surrealism & the bauhaus

by kathryn kelley

fall 2004



Automatistic Impressions

art between the wars with brauer

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Primary Surrealism Disorder
Diagnostic criteria for 313.81 Oppositional Defiant Disorder

- A. A Pattern of negativistic, hostile, and defiant behavior lasting at least 6 months, during which four (or more) of the following are present:
 - (1) often loses temper
 - (2) often argues with adults
 - (3) often actively defies or refuses to comply with adults' requests or rules
 - (4) often deliberately annoys people
 - (5) often blames others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior
 - (6) is often touchy or easily annoyed by others
 - (7) is often angry and resentful
 - (8) is often spiteful or vindictive
- B. The disturbance in behavior causes clinically significant impairment in social...functioning.
- C. The behaviors do not occur exclusively during the course of a Psychotic or Mood Disorder.
- D. Criteria are not met for Conduct Disorder, and, if individual is age 18 years or older, criteria are not met for Antisocial Personality Disorder (many surrealists, such as Dali, also fit the criteria for Antisocial Personality Disorder).

Primary Bauhaus Disorder

Diagnostic criteria for 301.4 Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder

A pervasive pattern of preoccupation with orderliness, perfectionism, and mental and interpersonal control...as indicated by four (or more) of the following:

- (1) is preoccupied with details, rules, lists, order, organization, or schedules...
- (2) shows perfectionism...
- (3) is excessively devoted to work and productivity...
- (4) is overconscientious, scrupulous, and inflexible about matters of morality, ethics or values...
- (5) is unable to discard worn-out or worthless objects even when they have no sentimental value...
- (8) shows rigidity and stubbornness

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed. American Psychiatric Association
 (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994)

PATIENT *Surrealism*
DIAGNOSIS *social deviant*
SYMPTOMATIC *1924-1945*

CLINICAL CLASSIFICATION
313.81—Oppositional Defiant Disorder
302.9—Sexual Disorder
312.30—Impulse-Control Disorder

patient rant

"You, stuck to the echoes of our ears like the octopus-clock on the wall of time, you can invent pitiful tales which will make us smile nonchalantly. We no longer bother. There is a good line: the idea of movement is above all an inert idea, and the tree of speed becomes visible to us. The mind spins like an angel and our words are the lead beads which kill the bird. You to whom nature has given the power to turn on the electricity at noon and stay under the rain with sun in your eyes, your acts are gratuitous, ours are dreams. Everything is whispers, coincidences; silence and brilliance ravish their own revelation. The tree loaded with meat which rises among the paving stones is supernatural only in our astonishment, but the time for closing the eyes has not yet begun...Revolution...Revolution...Realism is the pruning of trees, surrealism is the pruning of life."¹

patient history

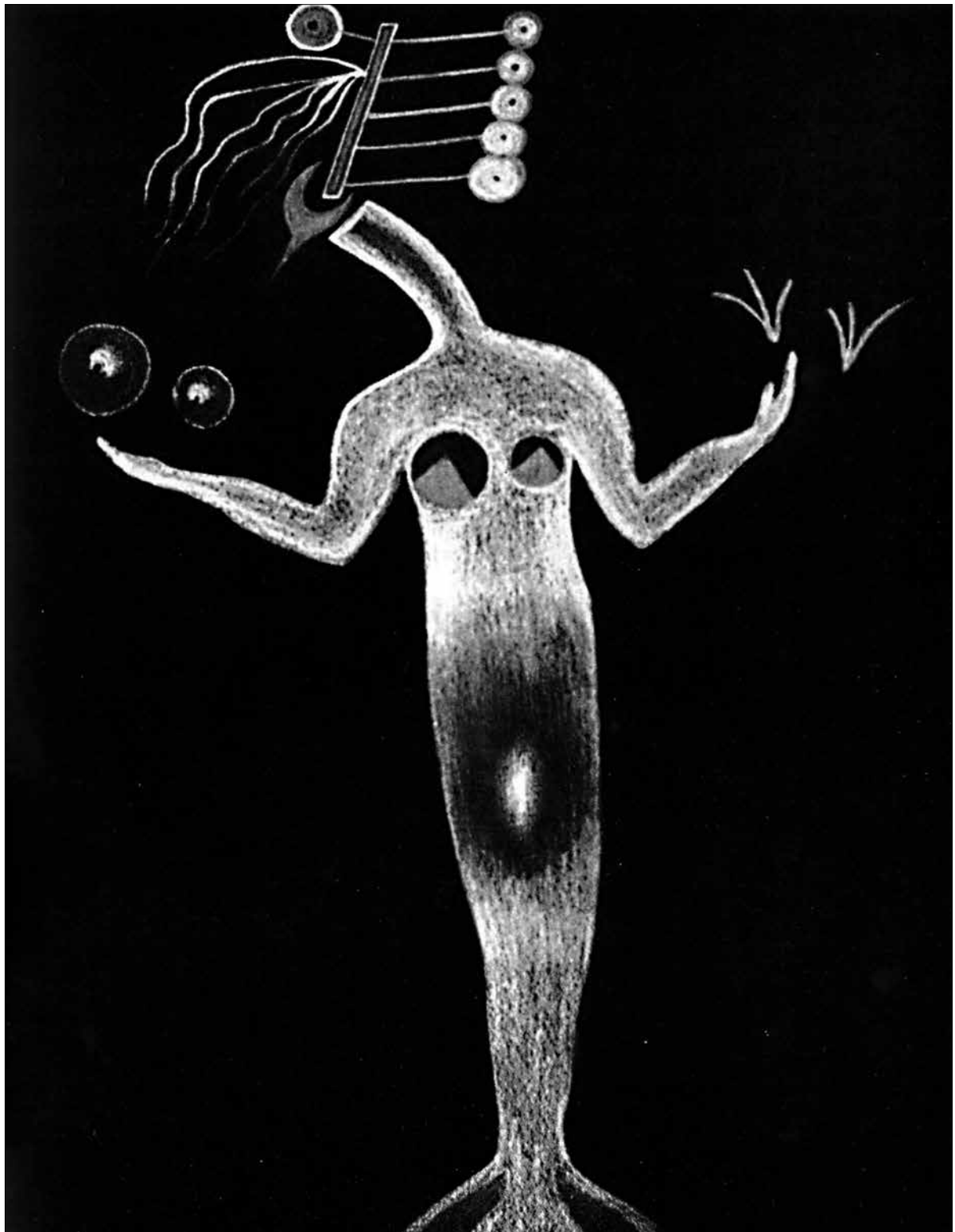
Surrealism officially began in 1924 with the publishing of the Surrealist Manifest by André Breton. Surrealism was not an art movement. It was birthed as a literary movement with strong alliances forged between artists and writers, many of which were former Dadaists. Surrealism was more than a mere movement; it was a way of being. It ran somewhat in tandem with the Dada (1916-1924) movement and parallel with Constructivism (1910-1933) both chronologically and in revolutionary thought. All three movements functioned as a response to the horrors of World War I and the societal systems that precipitated the war. Yet Surrealism was distinct from these other movements.

Surrealism sought a new way—attempting to change society by changing the self from the inside out. Surrealists explored alternatives to current ways of living and being by delving into their own unconscious minds, the place of dreams and desires, and by breaking social norms, mores and modern logic. Their works, both literary and visual, presented ordinary things in such odd juxtaposition that it forced one to rethink one's

EXAMINER *Kathy Kelley*

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MANIFESTATION *Paul Eluard, Valentine Hugo, André Breton and Nusch Eluard*
SYMPTOMATIC *1937*
DIAGNOSIS *The Exquisite Corpse*



PATIENT *Surrealism*
DIAGNOSIS *social deviant*
SYMPTOMATIC *1924–1945*

CLINICAL CLASSIFICATION
313.81—Oppositional Defiant Disorder
302.9—Sexual Disorder
312.30—Impulse-Control Disorder

understanding of how things are and revealed how unstable the line is between “reality and unreality, reason and irrationality, reflection and impulse, knowledge and ‘fatal’ ignorance, usefulness and unusefulness.”² Yet by exposing this blurry line between apparent contradictory states, Bretons hoped to forge a new absolute reality—a surreality. He felt this could be accomplished if one could but liberate the mind.

“...the liberation of the mind, demands as primary condition, in the opinion of the surrealists, the express aim of surrealism, the liberation of man, which implies that we must struggle with our fetters with all the energy of despair; that today more than ever before the surrealists entirely rely for the bringing about of the liberation of man upon the proletarian Revolution...”²

In addition to seeking revolution by delving into the unconscious mind and breaking social norms, mores and modern logic, desire was a key element in the lives and works of the surrealists. It was thought that desire was the authentic inner voice of the individual, the true language of the soul. It revealed the nature of sexual instinct as well as love. Sigmund Freud’s writings greatly influenced the surrealists’ attitudes and adventures into the uncensored unconscious of dreams and desire.

Not to be lost in the unconscious, dreams or desires was the goal of surrealism—the revolutionary transformation of culture and society. This goal, this revolutionary transformation according to Breton was to take place in the mind by exercising both individually and collectively all that was within to release hidden resources that would alter the world around it. Exercises came in the form of experiments with stream-of-consciousness writing, automatism, Exquisite Corpse, paranoiac-critical method, hypnotic trances and the public breaking of social mores.

EXAMINER *Kathy Kelley*

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MANIFESTATION *Max Ernst*

SYMPTOMATIC *1937*

DIAGNOSIS *A Week of Kindness (Printing techniques obliterate cut edges of collage, unifying the image.)*



PATIENT *Surrealism*
DIAGNOSIS *social deviant*
SYMPTOMATIC *1924-1945*

CLINICAL CLASSIFICATION
313.81—Oppositional Defiant Disorder
302.9—Sexual Disorder
312.30—Impulse-Control Disorder

symptomatic manifestations

To limit scope, only three symptomatic manifestations of surrealism shall be briefly presented here: Max Ernest, Salvador Dali and Joan Miro. Each was chosen, because they represent different visual venues of surrealism. All deal with the unconscious, dreams and desire. All are in need of some serious therapy.

Max Ernst (1891-1976)

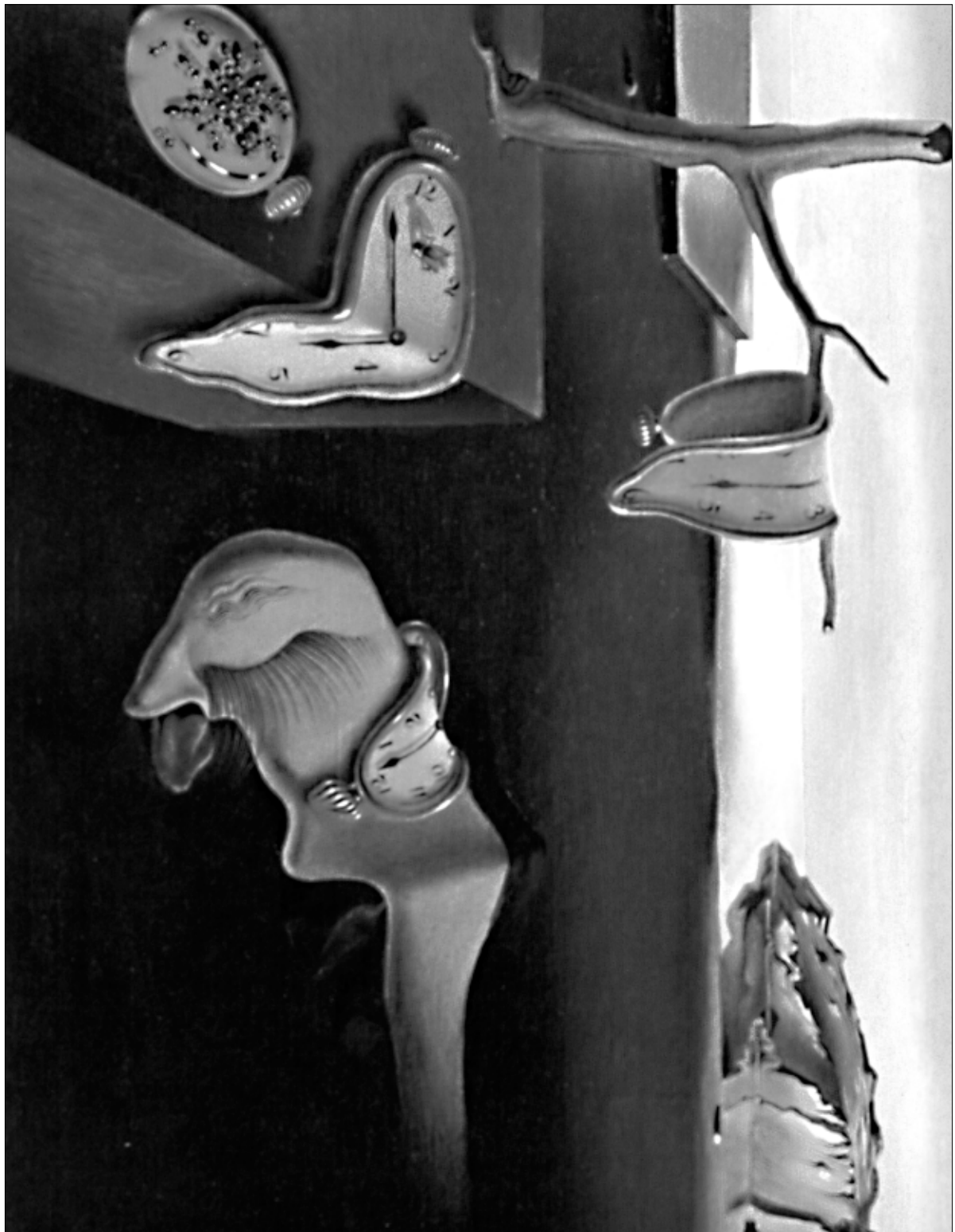
One of the founding members of surrealism, Max Ernst was born in Bruhl, Germany, and studied philosophy at Bonn University. He abandoned his studies in pursuit of painting and printmaking. Ernst, a self-taught artist initially influenced by Van Gogh and more directly by August Macke, helped established the Cologne Dada group in 1919. He moved on to become one of the initial members of surrealists in Paris. Ernst attempted to take a waking journey into the unconscious. Shock and surprise were integral to Ernst's works in conjunction with eroticism. He created pieces by literally merging objects via paint, collage, grattage and frottage into beings of unknown origins (the unconscious mind). Frottage, which he pioneered, involves the placing of paper on the surface of an object and then rubbing a pencil over it until the texture of the surface is transferred. These rubbings were often then layered to create patterns that were then used in oil painting compositions as seen in the forests he created on display at the Menil.

"A ready-reality, whose naïve destination has the air of having been fixed, once and for all (a canoe), finding itself in the presence of another and hardly less absurd reality (a vacuum cleaner), in a place where both of them must feel displaced (a forest), will, by this very fact, escape to its naïve destination and to its identity; it will pass from its false absolute, through a series of relative values, into a new absolute value, true and poetic: canoe and vacuum cleaner will make love. The mechanism of collage, it seems to me, is revealed by this very simple example. The complete transmutation, followed by pure act,

MANIFESTATION *Salvador Dali*

SYMPTOMATIC *1931*

DIAGNOSIS *The Persistence of Memory (Oil on canvas, 21.1 x 33 cm)*



ASYLUM

Museum of Modern Art, New York

PAGE 10

PATIENT

Surrealism

CLINICAL CLASSIFICATION

DIAGNOSIS

social phobia sexual deviant sociopathic?

313.81—Oppositional Defiant Disorder

302.9—Sexual Disorder

SYMPTOMATIC

1924–1945

312.30—Impulse-Control Disorder

as that of love, will make itself known naturally every time the conditions are rendered favorable by the given facts: the coupling of two realities, irreconcilable in appearance, upon a plane which apparently does not suit them..."³

Surreal desire played out for Ernst not just in his work but his life as well. As demonstrated through a succession of wives—Luise Straus, Marie-Berthe Aurenche, art collector Peggy Guggenheim, and Surrealist artist Dorothea Tanning—from which came one son, the abstract painter Jimmy Ernst.

Salvador Dali (1904–1989)

Dali, born in Figueres, Spain, is today the most well known of the surrealist. Dali studied the arts at the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid. As a child he was precocious, easily overexcited and enjoyed violent hysterical outbursts. Art became a safe semi-socially acceptable outlet for his dysfunction. Pittura Metafisica and Futurism were strong influences in his early work. Prior to joining the surrealists, he had already begun to experiment with dreams as source material for paintings. When he came to Paris in 1929, he joined the surrealists. It was a natural fit.

His struggles with desire manifested as sexual neurosis is evident in his work. Examples of such are Dismal Sport (1929) and The Great Masturbator from the same period. Of course the Paris surrealists, with the exception of the excrement in Dismal Sport, embraced both works readily. Excrement, penis or pure illusion, Dali painted his dreamscapes and fantastical objects with the deep perspectives, precision, and the naturalism of still life. This fantastical precision can be seen in "The Persistence of Memory" or "Soft Watches" (1931), his most famous painting currently on exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Depicted is a barren landscape in which time has been subdued, no longer functions—impotent, and it appears in an infinite state of twilight. Dali described it as "nothing else than paranoiac-critical, gentle, and extravagant Camemberts outside of time and space." Additionally Dali was responsible for 'paranoiac-

EXAMINER

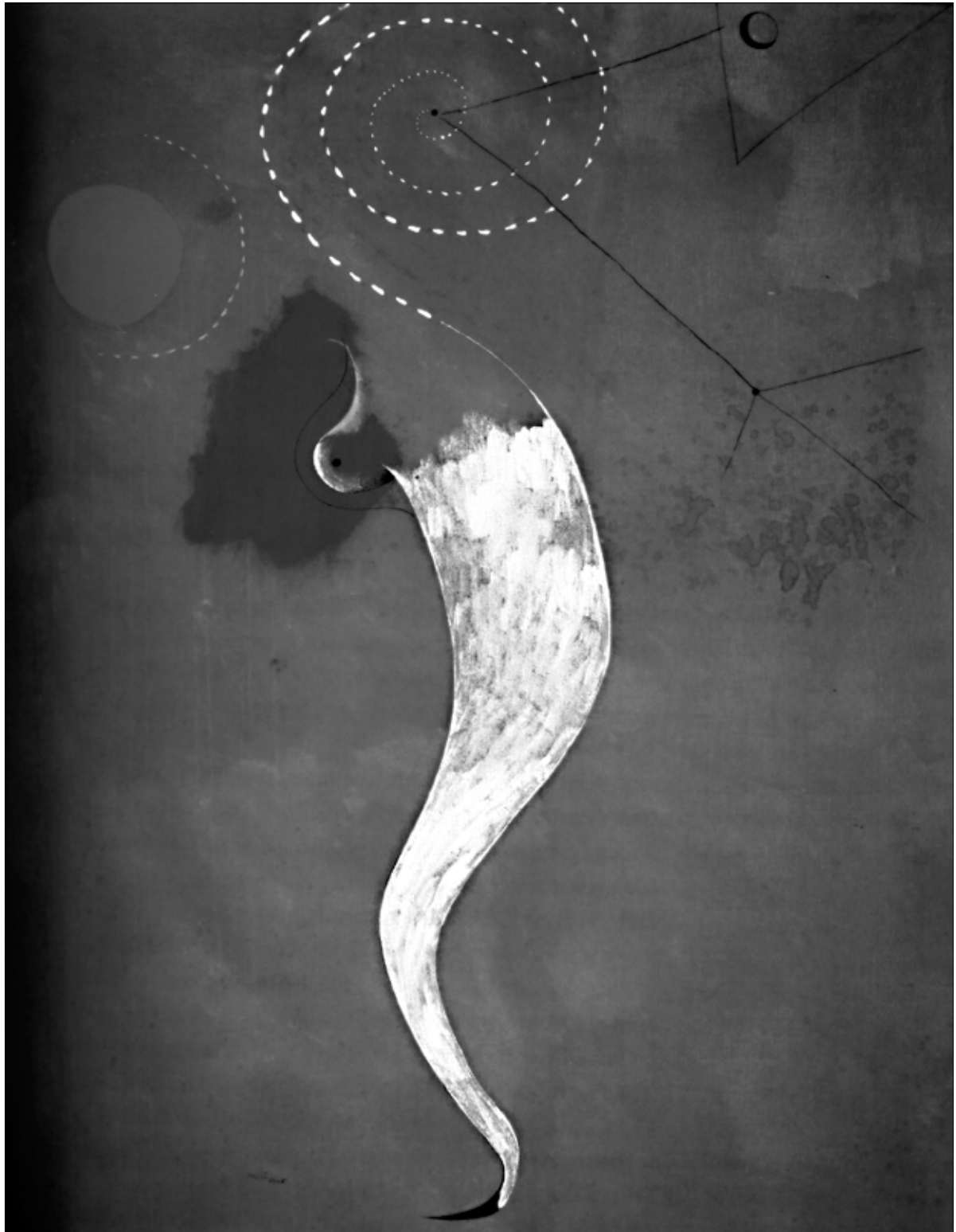
Kathy Kelley

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MANIFESTATION *Joan Miro*

SYMPTOMATIC *1925*

DIAGNOSIS *Lady Strolling on the Rambla in Barcelona (Oil on canvas. 132 x 97 cm)*



PATIENT *Surrealism*
DIAGNOSIS *social deviant*
SYMPTOMATIC *1924-1945*

CLINICAL CLASSIFICATION
313.81—Oppositional Defiant Disorder
302.9—Sexual Disorder
312.30—Impulse-Control Disorder

critical activity' that became highly influential in surrealist circles. It was a method that attempted to disorient the artist from the outside world in order to create a new fantastic world.

"It was in 1929 that Salvador Dali fixed his attention on the internal mechanisms of paranoiac phenomena, envisioning the possibility of an experimental method based on the unexpected power of those systematic associations peculiar to paranoia; this method subsequently became the delirious-critical synthesis which bears the name 'paranoiac-critical activity.'"⁵

Breton eventually ousted Dali from the group for his outrageous behavior. Whether Dali was a true lunatic, sociopath or feigned it, he was surreal in every way. If not for the outlet of art, Dali would most probably been committed to an asylum.

"The only difference between a madman and myself is that I am not mad!"

Dalí: Diary of a Genius (1952)

Joan Miró (1893-1983)

This painter-sculptor was born near Barcelona. He studied the arts at the Barcelona School of Fine Arts and the Academia Gali. Like Dali and Ernst, Fauvism, Cubism and Dada initially influenced Miró. And like the others he shared a tendency toward fantasy in his art. In 1921 Miró moved permanently to France. By 1924 he had joined the circle of surrealists in Paris. Miró was one of the few surrealists that could actually practice automatic creations in visual works. Though his works appear abstract, reality was used as a starting place from which he allowed imaginative fantasy, hallucinations, and memory to take over.

"What really counts is to strip the soul naked. Painting or poetry is made as we make love; total embrace, prudence thrown to the wind, nothing held back...Have you ever heard of

greater nonsense than the aims of the Abstractionist group? And they invite me to share their deserted house as if the signs that I transcribe on canvas, at the moment when they correspond to concrete representation of my mind, were not profoundly real, and did not belong essentially to the world of reality!"⁶

"For me form is never something abstract; it is always a sign of something. It is always a man, a bird, or something else. For me painting is never form for form's sake..."⁷

conclusion

Each of the three visual manifestations of surrealism is quite unique—Ernest's collaged creations, Dali's realistic dreamscapes and Miró's marks and signs. These artists pioneered new techniques and forged visual methods to depict the unconscious mind and fantasy. Yet their works are drastically different. They exemplify the fact that surrealism isn't about style or even technique, but about a way of being, a state of mind, and an adventure into the unconscious dream world of desire. If one studies their lives in depth, immersing one's self into their world, much therapy will be required.

1 La Revoluion Surrealiste, No. I, December 1924. Editorial by J.A. Boiffard, P. Eulard, R. Vitrac.

2 André Breton, *What is Surrealism?* (Lecture in Brussels on 1st June 1934.)

3 André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969)

4 *Conquest of the Irrational*. La Conquete de l'Irrationel, 1935.

5 Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968)

6 Joan Miro, Interview with Georges Duthuit, 1936. Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*.

7 Joan Miro, Interview with James Johnson Seeney, 1947. Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*.

OTHER MATERIALS THAT ADDED TO THE MENTAL CREATION OF MY IMAGINATION OF SURREALISM:

Surrealism: Desire Unbound, Jennifer Mundy, ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001)

Patrick Waldberg, *Surrealism*. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1965)

David Brauer, Art History Professor, University of Houston, ARTH6394

Art Between The Wars: 1918-1940 lecture series. (Fall 2003)

MANIFESTATION Lyonel Feininger

SYMPTOMATIC 1919

DIAGNOSIS Bauhaus Manifesto Cover



patient rant

“The complete building is the ultimate aim of the visual arts...There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman...Together let us desire, conceive, and create the new structure of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will one day rise toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith.”

Walter Gropius, *Bauhaus Manifesto*

“In them (the arts) we do not measure our works with the yardstick of beauty, we do not weigh them with pounds of tenderness and sentiments. The plumb-line in our hands, eyes as precise as a ruler, in a spirit as taut as a compass...we construct our work as the universe constructs its own, as the engineer constructs his bridges, as the mathematician his formula of the orbits. We know that everything has its own essential image; chair, table, lamp, telephone, book house, man...they are all entire worlds with their own rhythms, their own orbits. That is why we in creating things take away from them the labels of their owners...all accidental and local, leaving only the reality of the constant rhythm of the forces in them”

Theo van Doesburg, *Introduction to Volume II of De Stijl*, 1919

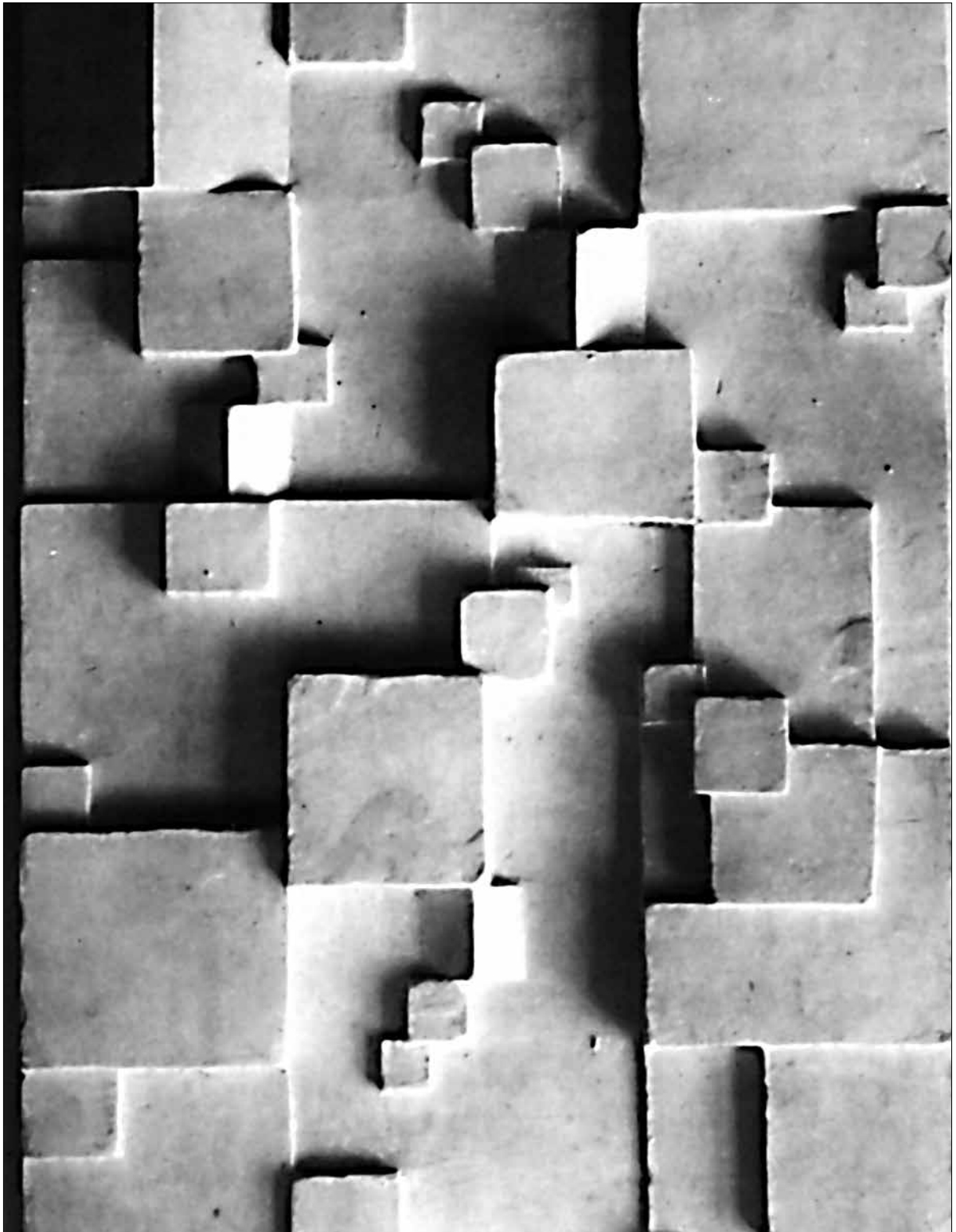
“Three days in Weimar and you’ve seen enough squares for a lifetime.”

Critic, Paul Westheim

MANIFESTATION

SYMPTOMATIC

DIAGNOSIS



PATIENT the bauhaus
DIAGNOSIS obsessive
SYMPTOMATIC 1919–1933

CLINICAL CLASSIFICATION

300.6—Depersonalization Disorder
300.3, 301.4—Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

patient history

The Das Staatliches Bauhaus was founded in 1919 by the merging of the Weimar Arts and Crafts School with the Grand Ducal School of Fine Arts of Saxo Weimar. The merging of schools began the process of fulfilling the visioning of architect, Walter Gropius (1883–1969), the state appointed director. Gropius sought a new unity between art and technology as a response to the full embracing of industrialization by society. He believed art should emerge from the fundamentals, and handicraft was required for the emergence. The artistically trained, both in form and craft, might “breathe a soul into the dead product of the machine.”¹ Elementary forms and primary colours formed the basis for design; and, of equal significances was the evaluation of function. Much of his visioning for the school was a result of the influence of his own instructor, mentor, Peter Behrens, as well as his involvement in the German Werkbund.

Artists and craftsmen, called Masters of Form and Masters of Craft, taught the courses. Students, journeymen and apprentices, following their preliminary course work, participated in workshops focusing on pottery, textile, metal, furniture, stained-glass and mural painting, wood-carving and stone sculpture, bookbinding, graphic printing and theatre. A handful of workshops were available at any given time, dependent on internal politics and financing. The school had a profound impact on industrial and graphic design as well as architecture in its relatively short lifespan of fourteen years. Primarily for political reasons, the Bauhaus migrated from Weimar (1919–1924) to Dessau (1925–1932) and ultimately died in Berlin (1932–1933) with the rise of Hitler. The directorship also was handed off due to the same political pressures. Gropius resigned from the directorship in 1928. Hannes Meyer, a Swiss architect, succeeded him. In 1932 the directorship was forced from his hand, and Mies van der Rohe attempted to run the final phase of the Bauhaus. The bulk of the masters fled to the USA and became instrumental in the development of American modernism.

MANIFESTATION Marcel Breuer

SYMPTOMATIC 1923

DIAGNOSIS Wood-slat chair, second version



PATIENT the bauhaus
DIAGNOSIS obsessive
SYMPTOMATIC 1919–1933

CLINICAL CLASSIFICATION
300.6—Depersonalization Disorder
300.3, 301.4—Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

symptomatic manifestations

The thirty-five masters of the Bauhaus (avante-garde artists and craftsmen) were its foundation...Walter Gropius, Johannes Itten, Paul Klee, Josef Albers, Laszlo Maholy-Nagy, Vassily Kandinsky, Marcl Breuer, Herbert Bayer and such. The influence the Bauhaus exerted both during and after its life was a direct result of the masters. A book could be written on each, and probably has. I shall touch on two.

Master Johannes Itten (1888–1967)

Itten, painter and art theoretician, was born in Switzerland, trained as a teacher as well as studying mathematics and natural sciences in Bern. He also studied at the Stuttgart Academy. He had a strong interest in Eastern philosophies of life.

The initial key to the Bauhaus was largely the preliminary 'basic' course created and lead by Johannes Itten. He set out to teach students the principles of design underlying art, the nature of materials, and an awareness of their own inner resources. They explored paired opposites such as intuition and method, subjective experience and objective recognition. He led the students in investigations of contrast, form, rhythm and colour. Itten was greatly revered by his students, and his influence at the Bauhaus cannot be over stated. His course development and methods are still practiced in today's design schools. In 1923 Itten left the Bauhaus in response to the Bauhaus shift in focus from expressionism and handicraft to that of rationalism and designing for the machine (commercialization).

Theo van Doesburg (1883–1931)

Van Doesburg, not a master at the Bauhaus but a visiting professor of sorts, was the founder of the De Stijl movement (1917–1931) in Holland. In 1921 he and his (third) wife settled in Weimer hoping to gain more recognition for his ideas via lectures at the Bauhaus. Van Doesburg did not receive a teaching appointment from Gropius, so he set up lectures in town. Twenty-five people responded and participated in the course,

MANIFESTATION Iwao Yamawaki

SYMPTOMATIC 1932

DIAGNOSIS The Attack on the Bauhaus (collage)



mostly Bauhaus students. His significant influence can be seen in the 1921–1925 designs of student, Marcel Breuer, and others. According to student Werner Graff, van Doesburg was equally as influential at the Bauhaus as Itten.

“Where Itten set different tasks in order to detect and encourage the nature of each individual, van Doesburg was solely interested in the Constructive. Whereas Itten discovered that everyone preferred an individual colour palette, van Doesburg and Mondrian insisted upon a universal, supra-individual range of colours: yellow/red/blue + white/grey/black; these modest means, correctly employed, were sufficient to create maximum effects. While Itten sought, even in writing, not only to increase the overall power of individual expression but even to emphasize the feeling of an individual word, van Doesburg believed that lettering should be as uniform and legible as possible, in keeping with its role as a universal means of communication...van Doesburg was a vigorous opponent of romantic faddishness. He favoured a stiff black hat and fashionable-cut suits. Itten, on the other hand, was a member of a mystical sect. He wafted through Weimar in a monkish outfit of his own design while van Doesburg struck out sporting a monocle, black shirt and white tie. They were exact opposites, personal enemies perhaps, and yet linked by their same unrelenting obstinacy, their same remarkable talent both as propagandists and teachers.”¹

I could go on and on about both men as well as the Bauhaus, but you already know its influences; you may even be reading this paper by the light of lamp whose design is that of Bauhaus student Marianne Brandt.

PATIENT

the bauhaus

DIAGNOSIS

obsessive

SYMPTOMATIC

1919–1933

CLINICAL CLASSIFICATION

300.6—Depersonalization Disorder
300.3, 301.4—Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

conclusion

I am at six pages and thus conclude that neither surrealism nor the Bauhaus discovered an absolute solution to the depravity of man or society. Each in its own way attempted to bring healing—surrealism inwardly by exploring the mind; the Bauhaus outwardly by attempting to distill universal truths to be rationally applied to our environments and artifacts. Culturally we have absorbed the truths that we can from each group, and still therapy is required.

1 Werner Graeff: Mit der Avantgarde. In" Kunsteverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen exh. cat. Düsseldorf 1962

OTHER MATERIALS THAT ADDED TO THE RATIONAL AND FUNCTIONAL INTERPRETATION OF THE BAUHAUS:

Magdalena Droste, *bauhaus 1919-1933*. (New York: Taschen, 2002)

Philip B. Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design*, 3rd ed. (USA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1998)

David Brauer, Art History Professor, University of Houston, ARTH6394

Art Between The Wars: 1918-1940 lecture series. (Fall 2003)

EXAMINER

kathy kelley

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