Lesson Plan: Surrealist Games
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Suggested Grade Level: 3–5
Estimated Time: One class period

Introduction
Surrealist artists believed that imagination was most alive in the expression of unconscious or illogical thought. Some artists painted directly from dreams while others incorporated chance or the accident. Still others created impossible scenes by combining objects or events that had nothing to do with one another.

The phrase "exquisite corpse" originated with a Surrealist game of chance in which sentences were jointly created by a group of people, each person unaware of the words written by previous players. The Surrealists also played a similar game with drawings instead of words. In a modified game of Exquisite Corpse, students review and practice the parts of speech. By looking at a painting by René Magritte and creating their own Surrealist "room," students further explore the Surrealist idea of placing common objects in unusual locations.

Lesson Objectives
Learn the parts of speech and practice using them to construct Surrealist sentences
Describe and analyze a work of Surrealist art
Experiment with collage techniques

Key Terms:
• Surrealist
• exquisite
• corpse
• transfixed
• collage
Instructional Materials

- Pencil
- Paper
- Room worksheet (included here)
- Magazines
- Scissors
- Glue stick

Activity One

- Review with students the parts of a speech and decide on a sentence structure for the game. (For example, article + adjective/noun/verb/adjective/noun.)
- Divide students into groups of five and have each group create its own Exquisite Corpse sentence by following these steps:
  1) Instruct one student in each group to write the first word or words of the sentence (article + adjective) at the top of a piece of paper. He or she should then fold the piece of paper over to conceal the written word and pass it to the next person.
  2) The next person should fill in the next part of speech (a noun), conceal it, and pass the paper to the next person.
  3) When the first round has been completed, open the papers and read the sentences aloud, making sure all groups use the correct parts of speech. The results are often strange and humorous!

Activity Two

1) In *Time Transfixed*, Magritte forced objects into illogical relationships by depicting a train emerging from a fireplace. Show students the image and discuss why the painting is unusual, asking:
   - What do you see?
   - What kind of a room is this?
   - What is out of place?
   - What kind of lines are used in the picture? Straight or curved?
   - Do you see different textures? What are they?
   - Is the painting full or empty? What takes up most of the space?
   - Do the objects in the painting seem to be moving or still?
   - Is the image serious or lighthearted?
2) Using the worksheet provided, have students cut out objects from magazines and create their own Magritte-inspired room.

**Evaluation**

Base students’ evaluation on their ability to recognize and use the parts of speech and on their demonstrated understanding of principles in art such as line, texture, composition, and mood.

**Illinois Learning Standards**

Fine Arts: 25, 26