Family Activity: Surrealist Games
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Introduction
Have you ever had a strange dream?

*Surrealists* created art of the imagination. Some artists painted dreams and others made work that included chance happenings or accidents. A few artists created impossible scenes by combining unrelated objects or events.

Look carefully at René Magritte’s *Time Transfixed*.

Discussion Questions
- What do you see?
- What belongs here?
- What does not?
- What might happen next?

Activity
Exquisite Corpse was a Surrealist game in which sentences were created by a group of people, each person unaware of what previous players had written. The Surrealists also played a similar game with drawings instead of words.

Play Exquisite Corpse with your family and friends.

Materials Needed:
- Paper for each player
- Pencils
- Markers

Steps for the Writing Game:
1. Gather a group of three to five family members or friends.
2. Decide on a sentence structure for the game. (For example: article + adjective/noun/verb/adjective/noun)
3. Write two words for the first part of the sentence (article + adjective).
4. Fold your piece of paper over to conceal the words and pass it to the next person.
5. The next person should write a word from the next part of speech (noun), conceal it, and pass the paper to the next person.

6. When a round has been completed, open the papers and read the sentences aloud. The results are often strange and humorous!

Example:

The hairy queen wears huge lamps.
The slimy candle tickles flashy shoeboxes.

Steps for the Drawing Game:

1. Fold a piece of paper horizontally: one fold for each person playing the game.
2. Draw a design in the top section and just over the edge of the next fold.
3. Fold your drawing under so it is hidden, pass the paper to the next person, and ask them to repeat this step.
4. When a round of drawings has been completed, open the paper to reveal the composite drawing and display it.

Glossary

Surrealism (n)

movement introduced by a group of writers and artists led by French poet André Breton (1896-1966) in Paris in 1924. Surrealists embraced the act of spontaneous creation. To unleash their creativity, some used Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis, probing the world of dreams, fantasies, and the subconscious in their art. Many Surrealists produced fantastic, meticulously rendered objects, while others combined ordinary objects in strange and startling ways. Some strayed from realism to work in abstract Surrealist styles that incorporated whimsical, organic forms.