

Surreal versus Surrealism in Contemporary Art

Curated by Gianni Mercurio & Demetrio Paparoni

IVAM, Valencia, 29th September – 11th December 2011

The birth of psychoanalysis gave rise to a vast movement of thought that constituted a true revolution in the ambit of 20th century modernism. Like the Bolshevik revolution, which through class struggle transformed the perception of the social role of the masses, the psychoanalytical revolution also had great influence on the culture and customs of the 20th century and continues to influence in this day and age. The collective awareness of the role played by the unconscious in the daily life of an individual and the influence exerted by Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* was already in the first half of the 20th century the major reference point for the Surrealists, who in turn influenced the art of the decades that followed. The turning point occurred around the end of the 1970s, as a result of the initial effects of the social changes caused by the telematic revolution. Shortly thereafter, the Internet, satellite TV, Photoshop, and new scientific discoveries would change our perception of reality.

It is in this context that Postmodernism and a global vision of the world became established. It is in this context, which saw in art – but not only art – the relationships between individuals of different cultures and geographic areas undergo enormous change, that Surrealism and its ramifications gave way to the Surreal. That is if Surrealism offered images of oneiric visions, immediately perceived as improbable in the reality of everyday, the Surreal instead proposed real images that are hard to accept as true, to the point of being easily confused with oneiric or imaginary visions. Therefore, if Surrealism is the mirror of the individual's upheavals of the unconscious, which are projected into reality as a work of art, the Surreal is the mirror of reality that is projected into the

unconscious of the individual, causing upheavals. In this sense, *Surreal versus Surrealism in Contemporary Art* focuses in particular on images showing unreal situations that at first glance are perceived as real and on true situations, on the contrary, that are perceived as a figment of one's imagination.

Surreal versus Surrealism in Contemporary Art, curated by Gianni Mercurio and Demetrio Paparoni for the IVAM in Valencia, addresses this important aspect of today's art for the first time. The exhibition shows that while the surrealist concepts that developed from the early 1920s are still in the works of several important artists of today, many others have developed an aesthetic concept influenced by the languages of the telematic tools for the masses.

The exhibition uses the term "Surreal" as opposed to "Surrealism" for the first time, thus giving rise to the formulation of an original critique.

The exhibition is divided into four chronological sections, each of which presents works from a different decade, from the 1980s to the present day, and includes works by: **Matthew Barney, Ross Bleckner, Monica Bonvicini, Maurizio Cattelan, Francesco Clemente, Roberto Cuoghi, Hans Op de Beeck, Nathalie Djurberg, Francesco Gennari, Dionisio Gonzalez, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, Robert Gober, Peter Halley, Karsten Holler, Shirazeh Houshiary, Michael Joo, Li Tian-Bing, Anish Kapoor, Oleg Kulik, Yue Minjun, Komar e Melamid, Liu Jianhua, Rudi Mantofani, Wangechi Mutu, Vic Muniz, Luigi Ontani, Tony Oursler, Javier Perez, Richard Prince, Marc Quinn, Shi Yong, Cindy Sherman, Kiki Smith, Ronald Ventura, Wang Guangyi, Erwin Wurm, Zhang Xiaogang.**