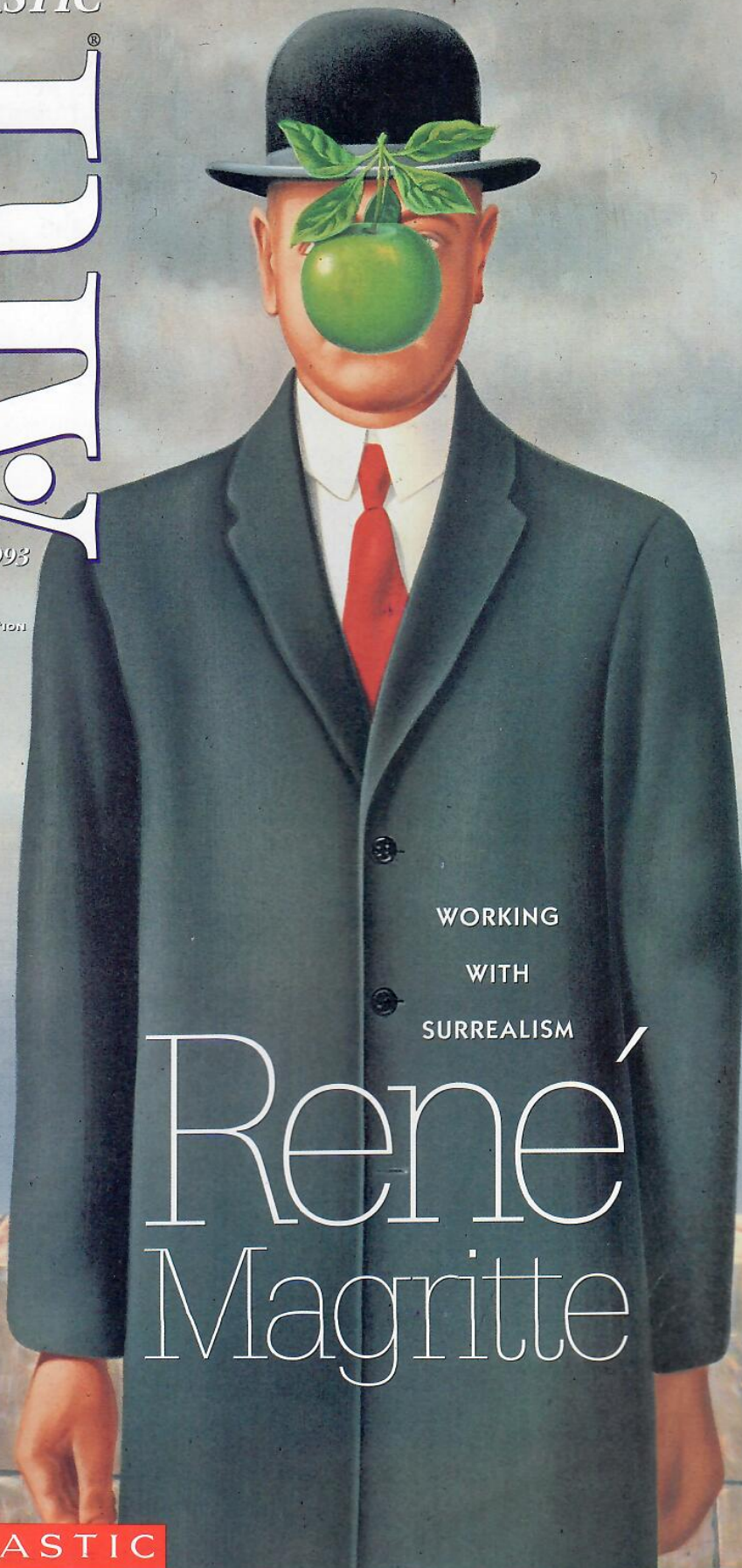


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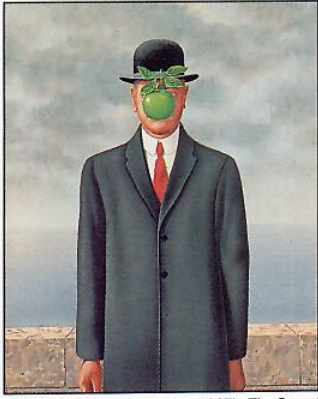
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WORKING
WITH
SURREALISM

René Magritte



COVER: René Magritte (1898-1967). *The Son of Man*, 1964. Oil on canvas. Collection, Harry Torczyner, NY, NY. Photo, Art Resource.

SCHOLASTIC

ART

Maurice R. Robinson, founder of Scholastic, Inc., 1895-1982

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Mysterious Worlds

Do you see anything unusual in the images you see here and on the cover of this month's *Scholastic Art*? Actually, the scenes would be very ordinary except for the one element in each that is out of place. And, would the image on the cover have the same impact if the man's

face was not hidden by an ordinary-looking apple, floating mysteriously in front of him?

These and the other bizarre and unsettling images on the next few pages were painted by 20th-century Belgian Surrealist René Magritte [ren-A mag-REET] long before computer alterations or film special effects were developed. In Europe during the 1920s, artists and writers who had lived through World War I were rebelling against conventional values. They turned inward, basing their art on memories, feelings, and dreams. Most of these *Surrealists* worked with psy-

Why do you think Magritte called the painting below *The False Mirror*?

The False Mirror, 1928. Oil on canvas. 21 1/4" x 31 7/8" The Museum of Modern Art, NY, NY. Photograph ©1993, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.





chology and fantastic visual techniques. Magritte painted realistically, and his subjects were objects he saw every day. His visions are so powerful because his images are so familiar. By creatively changing aspects of the world around him, Magritte seems to have discovered a new reality.

René Magritte was born in 1898 in a small Belgian town. A merchant's son, Magritte was the oldest of three boys. When he was 16, he met the girl who was later to become his wife. After graduating from the Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, Magritte worked as a designer in a wallpaper factory. When he was nearly 40, he began painting full time.

Magritte created some of the most fantastic images in modern art, but he lived most of his life with his wife in the same ordinary house in a small Belgian suburb. Only one unusual and tragic event occurred during the artist's life. When Magritte was 14, his mother drowned herself. He was there when her body was found, her nightgown wrapped

around her face. Most of the faces in Magritte's paintings are hidden. Those that can be seen are blank and expressionless and many of the figures' heads, like those of the *Lovers* (above), are wrapped in cloth.

The artist in his black suit and bowler hat, features himself over and over in his paintings. He transforms his silent, mysterious figure in dozens of ways—he floats, turns to stone, grows wings, multiplies, becomes invisible, and breaks into pieces. One small change can transform the whole figure. René Magritte's ability to turn dull, ordinary objects into unforgettably haunting visions is one of the most imaginative achievements in 20th-century art.

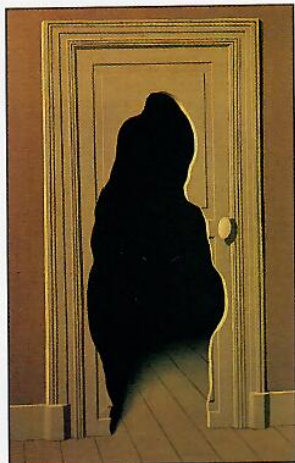
How do you think this image of two shrouded people relates to the artist's life?

The Lovers, 1928. Oil on canvas. 21 3/8" x 28 7/8". Richard S. Zeisler Collection, NY, NY.

"The invisible is only the visible hidden."

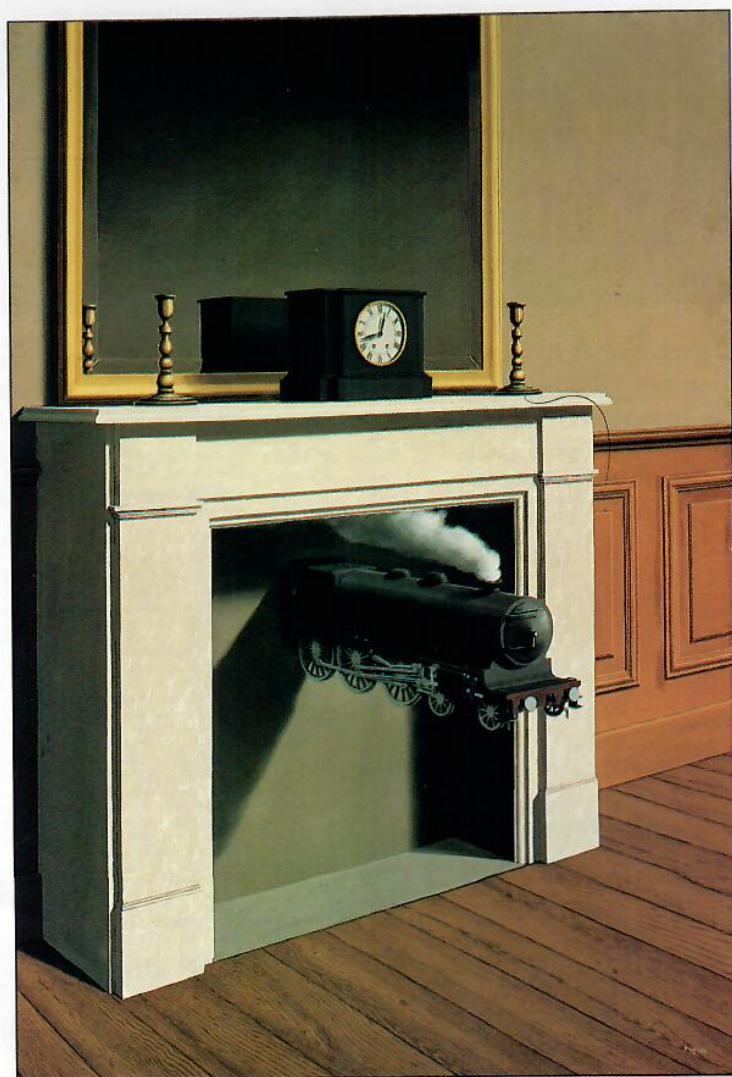
— RENÉ MAGRITTE

Ordinary Places



René Magritte set many of his paintings in ordinary rooms inside normal houses on conventional streets. But is there anything ordinary about the three scenes you see here or on the following pages?

In Magritte's world, apples float, trains roar from fireplaces, paintings turn into windows, people become rocks, men fall from the sky. While Surrealist painters like Salvador Dali and Max Ernst were creating fantastic, nightmarish visions, Magritte saw hidden, sometimes ominous meanings in familiar objects. To communicate his unique world, the artist used certain *surreal* devices.



Changing an object's **scale**, or relative size, was a favorite Surrealist technique. On page 7, an enormous apple floats in the sky, dwarfing the small man below. The same device—**levitation**—is also used in the work on the cover to give a fantastic effect.

Juxtaposing—joining two images together in impossible combinations—is another technique used by Magritte. The artist juxtaposed apples with men on the cover and on page 7. By joining the images of a train and a fireplace (below, left), Magritte creates a bizarre new scene. He takes the train from its usual environment and places it in an unfamiliar one (a process the artist called **dislocation**), causing us to question our senses. How would another image—a bicycle or car—look? Why does the image of a speeding train work so well?

By using **transparency**, Magritte questions reality in another way. On the right, a canvas stands in front of an arched window framed by curtains, almost like a stage. Which is the “real” landscape, the one seen through the window or the painted version in front of it?

Magritte uses **transformation** to change objects right in front of us. People turn to stone (page 6) and a hole transforms a closed door (above, left) into an exit. Would this scene be as effective with another opening? The hole's human proportions suggest that a mysterious, possibly sinister scene has just taken place, prompting a hasty escape.

Magritte said, “I want to make familiar objects scream aloud.”

Top, left

The Unexpected Answer, Oil on canvas, 32 3/8" x 21 1/8" Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels. Photo, Art Resource.

Bottom, left

Time Transfixed, 1938. Oil on canvas, 57" x 38 1/2". The Art Institute of Chicago, Joseph V. Winterbotham Collection. © 1992 The Art Institute of Chicago, All rights reserved.



*“I seek to uncover
a real world we think we know
but don’t know at all.”* — RENÉ MAGRITTE

What is so unusual about the window in this painting?

The Human Condition, 1933. Oil on canvas, 39" x 32". National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

MASTERPIECE
OF
THE MONTH

Preview

Compare Magritte's self
portrait below with
photographer Duane
Michals' 1965 double
exposure photo of the
artist on the right.

The Song of the Violet, 1951,
Oil on Canvas, 39" x 31"
Private Collection



© Duane Michals



The Artist Transformed

René Magritte lived for 69 years (he died in 1967) and practically all of them were very conventional, almost dull. His schedule was very regular. He painted neatly in the bedroom of his home on a suburban

street in Brussels. And when he went out, he always wore a topcoat and bowler hat.

Magritte's images are so unsettling it's hard to understand how uneventful his life was. The power of his work comes from the clarity and realism of the painting style he learned early, as a poster and wallpaper designer.

Magritte saw hidden, sometimes sinister meanings in the ordinary objects around him. In his paintings, apples float or grow to fill the landscape. Men turn to stone (left) or fall like raindrops from the sky (pages 8-9). Could there be a hint of violence in the train that roars out of a fireplace, or the human silhouette torn through a door (both on page 4)? How do you feel about the enormous eye on page 2, or the huge apple (right), ready to crush the viewer? Perhaps the artist is commenting on the importance of surroundings and possessions in our lives. We count on them, and the thought that they could change and turn on us is terrifying.

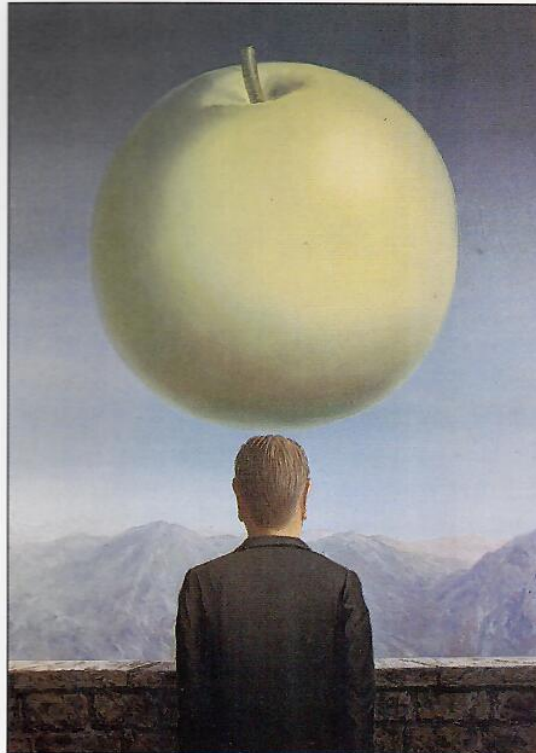
To populate his world, Magritte used his own image dressed in his suburban "uniform." His dark suit and bowler hat turn up in painting after painting. If his face is not completely hidden, it is calm, expressionless, and blank. Can you find the five paintings within this issue in which this figure appears?

Most artists use titles to clarify the meanings of their works. Magritte's titles tell us little. Why is the eye on page 2 called *The False Mirror*; why is the work on page 4 called *The Human Condition*? In the two paintings shown here, Magritte defies natural law. *The Postcard* (right) features a landscape in which the law of gravity doesn't exist. In *Song of the*

Violet (left), the artist uses texture to create a stone world. In the work on pages 8-9, Magritte repeats and juxtaposes two aspects of suburban life—houses and commuters—titling it *Golconda*. Golconda was a city in India famous for diamonds. Is Magritte suggesting that the men are diamonds or comparing the dull buildings to a rich, exotic city? By repeating the same figure over and over in unexpected positions, what might the artist be saying about the conformity and sameness of modern suburban life?

"Life obliges me to do something, so I paint."

—RENÉ MAGRITTE



Magritte featured himself again and again in paintings like these.

The Postcard, 1960. Oil on canvas, 28" x 20". Private Collection, London.

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Golconda
SCHOLASTIC ART 8-9

René Magritte (1898-1967). *Golconda*. 1953. Oil on Canvas, 31 1/2" x 39 1/2". The Merrill Collection, Houston. Photo by Hickey-Robinson.





MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH #1

SCHOLASTIC
ART

MODERN
TRANSFORMATIONS
These three contemporary
American artists transform the
real world in unique ways.

Reality Reinvented

René Magritte said that if you find the “secret link between two images, you can create a marvelous new image.” This is just what sculptor Nancy Graves did when she created *Cantileve*, left. To make this work, Graves collected dozens of objects that once had a function—shells, pods, ferns, tools—and cast them in bronze. She used a blow-torch to weld these forms into a new plant-like shape seven feet tall. Graves transformed the identity of all her found objects by juxtaposing them in new ways. The “hidden qualities” in one object, allow it to take on another meaning when it is recombined in Graves’ sculpture.

Sculptor Nancy Graves has transformed a number of found objects to create this surreal-looking plant-like form.

Nancy Graves (b. 1940). *Cantileve*, 1983. Bronze, 98" x 66" x 54" © 1983 Nancy Graves. Collection, Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, NY. Photo by Geoffrey Clements.

Nature Fragmented

African-American artist Romare Bearden used fragments of cloth and torn and cut photographs to create collages like *Baptism* (right), based on memories of his childhood in North Carolina. The artist's **dislocated** and **juxtaposed** fragments re-create his early impressions of a southern Christian baptism, a ceremony usually held outdoors, beside a river. The changes of **scale** and **texture** in the photographs that make up the faces give an unreal feeling to this scene. And the lack of perspective (depth) adds to the dream-like quality of Bearden's symbolic figures. The oversized hands, teeth, and eyes and the inclusion of fragments of African masks create an alarming effect. This may reflect the feelings experienced by the baby (lower right corner) about to be placed into the water during the baptismal ceremony.



Can you tell what is going on in the collage above done by African-American artist Romare Bearden.

Romare Bearden (1912-1988). *Prevalence of Ritual: Baptism*, 1964. Collage. 9 1/8" x 12". Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Incongruous Images

How does American artist Sandy Skogland's work titled *Fox Games* (below) remind you of a Magritte painting? In her sculptural environments, the artist contrasts modern "civilization" with the natural world that lurks just beyond it. In *Fox Games*, Skogland **juxtaposes** elements from each of these two worlds — a gray, upscale restaurant with fancy tables, chandelier, and place settings and a large group of

brightly colored wild foxes that seem to have taken over.

The artist is known for creating life-size sculptures featuring an element of nature which has been **dislocated** to a "civilized," man-made environment. The fact that neither the waiter nor his two customers in back notice the bright red foxes that surround them adds to the **incongruous** and surreal quality of this work. Like the paintings by René Magritte, Skogland's sculptures evoke our fear of a world beyond our control, hidden in the most ordinary environments.



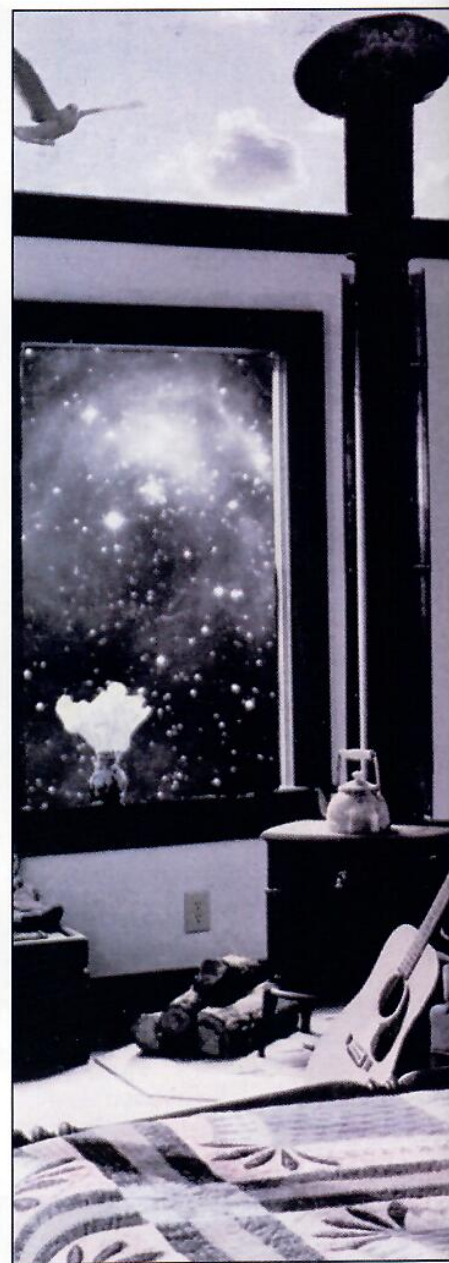
How does color add to the mood of this environmental sculpture by contemporary artist Sandy Skogland?

Sandy Skogland (b. 1946). *Fox Games*, 1989. 47" x 65". Cibachrome print. Courtesy Janet Borden, Inc.

Meredith Kaiser: CREATING SURREAL IMAGES



Compare the work on the right done by Meredith Kaiser, 18, with some of Magritte's paintings in this issue. Both artists have chosen ordinary rooms as settings for not so ordinary events. Meredith won a Scholastic Art Award for this work when she was a senior at Glen Bard West High School in Glen Ellen Illinois. Meredith is currently studying elementary education (with a major in art) at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellen. She says, "I want to keep art up as a hobby and see what happens professionally down the road."



■ What got you started in art?

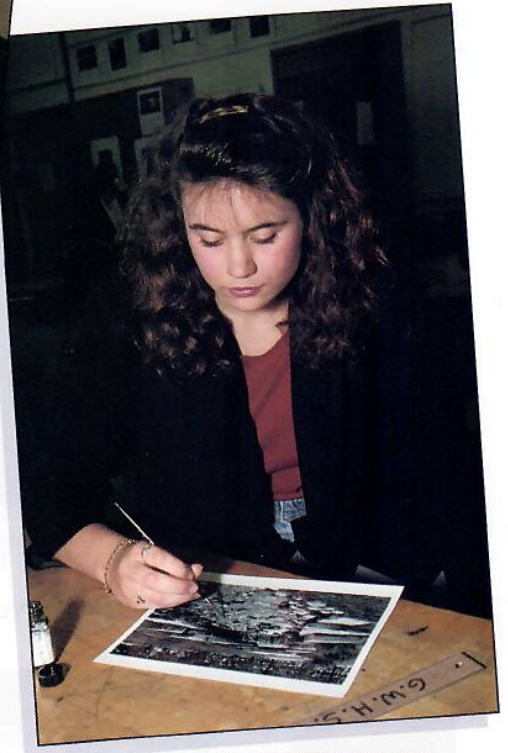
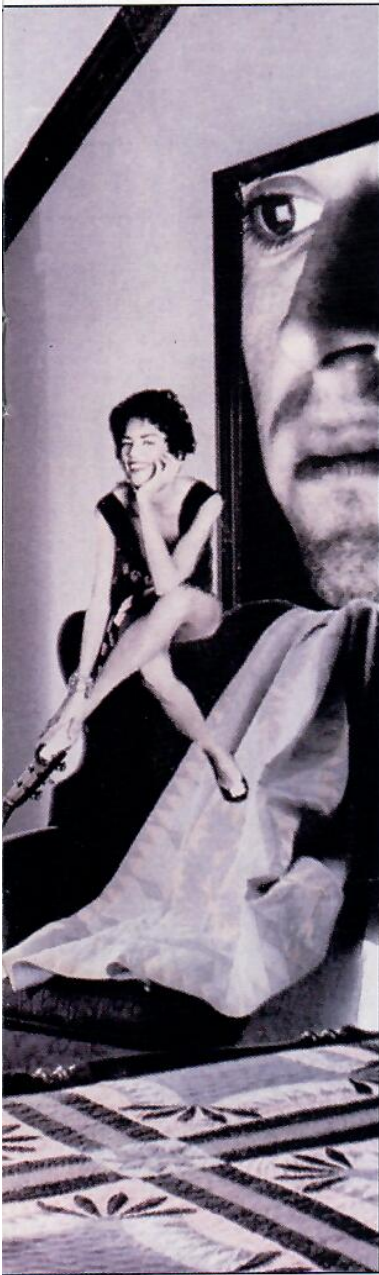
I took an introductory class my sophomore year. I did a lot of different art—printmaking, drawing, painting, and sculpting—but I didn't feel I was good at anything. There was one medium I hadn't taken yet—photography. I took it my junior year and really loved it. I found out that photography comes easily to me. I took it again during my senior year and that's when I did my collage.

■ How did you come to do this collage?

It was a class assignment. Our teacher wanted us to create a surrealistic collage. He wanted us to leaf through magazines, pick out one picture for a background, then add different pictures that would make that photograph seem fantastic and unreal. I really liked that there were no specifics as to what the content of the collage had to be—that was left up to us.

■ Where did you get the idea for your collage?

I didn't really have an idea so I started flipping through magazines. What started my creative ideas flowing was a picture of a room. I thought it was a great photograph. The picture was balanced and I especially liked the windows. I could see a lot of creative possibilities in terms of cutting out the windows and pasting in fantastic images. It was a good framework to start working with.



*“In ‘Illusion Scape’
you think you’re
seeing day
but it’s really night,
or is it?”*

■ **Where did you get the rest of the images?**

I saw a sky I liked in one magazine and initially thought I'd put it in one window. But then I thought it would be much more effective on the ceiling. It gave the collage depth, almost as if there was no top to the picture. I put a picture of stars I got from an astronomy magazine in one of the windows. I thought the juxtaposition of day and night made the collage look bizarre.

■ **Does the picture have a particular message?**

The title is *Illusion Scape*. It's daytime at the top and night through the window which creates an illusion—you think you're seeing day but it's really night, or is it? The face in the window creates an illusion because of its size. It couldn't happen in real life.

■ **Did you like working with images in this way?**

Yes. I think this kind of art is very creative. There are so

many possibilities. You can take any pictures from any magazine and put them together. It's a terrific outlet for creativity.

■ **What did you learn from doing this piece?**

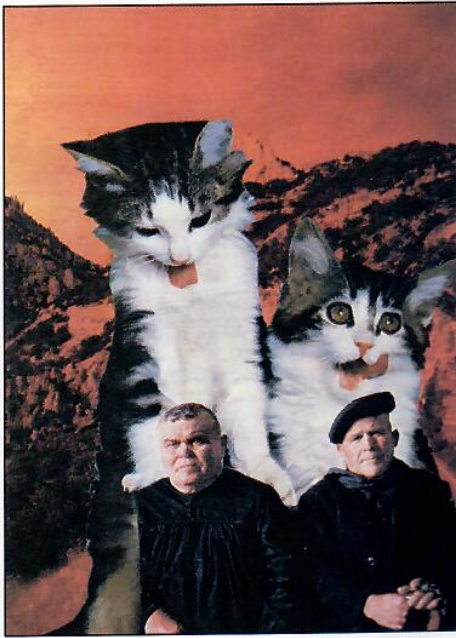
I learned to keep looking and not to settle. I explored all different kinds of art until I found something I really enjoyed and was good at. I think everyone is good at something; they just have to find it.

Meredith photographed her finished collage, made an 8" x 10" glossy print, then colored the print by hand.

Photos by Robert Lundin, Jr.

We select our Artist of the Month from among Scholastic Art Award winners. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 for entry deadlines and rules books.

Scholastic Art magazine does not have a separate competition.



WORKING WITH SURREALISM

Turn an ordinary object into an extraordinary one.

Surrealist artists like Magritte created a very lifelike world, then disrupted it to see things in an entirely different way. Many Surrealists worked with *collage*, using certain techniques—**transformation, scale change, dislocation, juxtaposition, levitation**—to uncover

hidden meanings in ordinary objects. In this workshop, you'll use one of these techniques to develop your own memorable image.



Prepared by Ned Nesti, Jr., assisted by Jane Ann Ardapple. Photos by Larry Gregory.

Materials

- Variety of older/recent topic magazines (*National Geographic*, nature, sports, *Life*, *Look*, etc.)
- X-Acto knives, single-edge razor blades, sharp scissors
- Thick cardboard for cutting surface
- Elmer's Glue-all
- Prisma-Color pencils
- Variety of fabric scraps/old clothes
- Variety of string, rope, cord, thread, yarn, etc.
- Textural materials (fur, sandpaper, beads, etc.)
- 18" x 24" oak tag paper



Starting Out

Collect magazine images (background, middleground, foreground) that are easily recognizable and visually interesting to use in collage. Review images, develop a unique concept or theme best expressed by using one dominant technique.

Step 2.

Lay your images out. What emotions and feelings are associated with the visuals you chose? Think of ways to change reality. How can you make things happen that don't happen in nature? Background imagery should *contrast* with focal point imagery. There should be a *relationship* or *connection* be-

tween background and images in front. *Balance* composition *symmetrically* (both sides the same) or *asymmetrically* (sides not the same but visually equal). Do not glue down.

Step 3.

Carefully cut out images. Arrange and rearrange. Avoid busy or complex arrangements. Keep the composition simple to focus attention on the concept behind the art. Is your theme or story obvious? When composition is final, glue down using tiny dots of glue to prevent wrinkling.

When you look at the four collages on these pages, can you guess the main theme each artist was working with?

Credits (clockwise from top left of facing page): Jessica D. Richards; Jeremy Houseman; Andrea Johnson; Damien Paul Beveroth.



Some Solutions

Which artists have used juxtaposition to achieve an incongruous effect? What about levitation (floating); transparency; dislocation (objects in a strange new environment)? Has any artist used replacement? Do dramatic scale changes (small/large) create fantastic effects in any of these collages? Which theme or emotion do you think each artist has expressed in his/her work—fear, humor, horror, loneliness, captivity?



Two contemporary American "Surrealists"



What is wrong with the picture above and why?

Images Reversed

The life-size painting above by California-born artist Mark Tansey covers an entire wall. Like a work by Magritte, at first glance the subject appears to be very realistic. Can you spot the one element in this painting that is out of place?

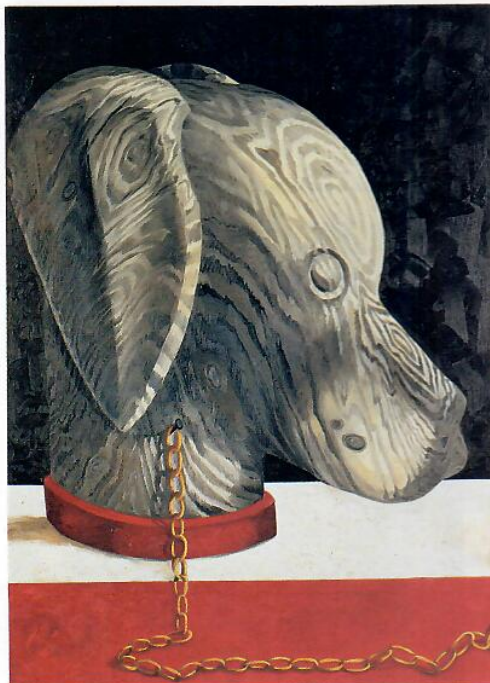
In this work, Tansey realistically depicts an unreal turned-around, *surreal* world. In *The*

Innocent Eye Test, a group of museum curators unveils a painting of cows and stands waiting to hear the opinion of the ultimate art expert.

To further enhance the impression of reality, Tansey has worked in black and white which makes the painting resemble an old photograph. In this work, the artist uses two

surrealist techniques—**juxtaposition** and **dislocation**—in order to express his opinion of contemporary art critics.

Mark Tansey, b. 1957. *The Innocent Eye Test*, 1981, 198" x 305" The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, NY. Charles Cowles Gallery; Curt Marcus Gallery, NY, NY.



A World of Wood

Like René Magritte, contemporary New York artist Cheryl Laemmle reverses natural laws. Each of these artists have used childhood images in their work. Magritte painted toys and trains while Laemmle has chosen toys, dolls, and animals.

Compare *Martyr* on the left with Magritte's painting *The Song of the Violet* on page 6. Both artists have **transformed** objects by changing their **texture**. Magritte's figures all have expressionless faces. The ani-

mals and people in Laemmle's works have no mouths, so they are unable to speak; their eyes are made of wood, so they can't see either. Which seems more strange—René Magritte's stone world or Laemmle's world in which friendly domestic animals have turned to wood?

What might artist Cheryl Laemmle be saying in the surreal work on the left?

Cheryl Laemmle, *Martyr*, 1991, Terry Dintenfuss Gallery, NY, NY.