

Press release | June 2025

RENDEZVOUS OF DREAMS Surrealism and German Romanticism

13 June to 12 October 2025

The major exhibition *RENDEZVOUS OF DREAMS* at the Hamburger Kunsthalle commemorates the 100th anniversary of the founding of international Surrealism by examining its striking affinities with German Romanticism. Taking as its starting point a novel comparison of two paintings in the Kunsthalle, the show places over 230 iconic works by both great and lesser-known Surrealists – among them Max Ernst, Meret Oppenheim, René Magritte, André Masson, Salvador Dalí, Dorothea Tanning, Paul Klee, Valentine Hugo, Victor Brauner and Toyen – in new contexts as well as stimulating juxtapositions with more than 70 masterpieces of German Romanticism, including works by Caspar David Friedrich and Philipp Otto Runge alongside examples of Romantic poetry.

Themes that fascinated German Romantic artists and writers, such as the night and dreams – understood as a kind of higher vision – as well as the power of imagination, the microcosm versus the macrocosm, and a special feeling for nature would serve as sources of inspiration for Surrealism one century later. The intellectual attitudes and pictorial inventions of Friedrich, Runge, Carl Gustav Carus, Carl Wilhelm Kolbe and many more, along with the writings of Novalis, Achim and Bettine v. Arnim, Karoline v. Günderrode, Johann Wolfgang v. Goethe, Friedrich Hölderlin and Heinrich von Kleist, would play an important role in the search for a revolutionary form of art in the twentieth century. Astoundingly, this recourse to Romanticism was even more pronounced in the years of war, resistance and exile, when Surrealism took up the mantle of the earlier movement as a reaction against the »disenchantment of the world«, reflecting its revolutionary dimension. Both movements focused on evoking a certain attitude toward life and calling into question assumptions about reality and its limitations – culminating in nothing less than a transformation of individual and society. Though born out of a different historical situation, Novalis's credo of the »romanticisation of the world« seems to anticipate the Surrealists' striving for a higher spiritual revolt in the form of a »surreality«.

When the two movements are considered together based on intriguing comparisons as well as explicit tributes, in some cases involving works selected from the Kunsthalle's own collection, certain analogies and differences become manifest. One example is Max Ernst's painting *A Beautiful Morning* (*Un beau matin*), an homage to *Morning (first version)* (1808) by Philipp Otto Runge. Produced after his first visit to the Hamburger Kunsthalle in 1965, Ernst's painting makes reference both conceptually and formally to his revered Romantic colleague. The two important works have been in the Kunsthalle's collection for more than 60 years



Max Ernst (1891–1976)
The Fireside Angel (The Triumph of Surrealism) (*L'ange du foyer [Le triomphe du surréalisme]*), 1937
Oil on canvas, 114.2 x 146.5 cm
Hersaint Collection
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025
Photo: Vincent Everarts Photography Brussels

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but are now being analysed and presented together for the very first time. New research has also brought to light another surprising Hamburg reception history, in this case for Max Ernst's programmatic Surrealist painting *The Rendezvous of Friends* (1922).

In another section of the exhibition, Julian Rosefeldt's contemporary video *Manifesto* (2015) highlights the enduring relevance of the question André Breton posed 100 years ago in his Surrealist manifesto regarding the importance of imagination, dreaming and the exploration of other levels of reality. *RENDEZVOUS OF DREAMS* thus brings together specific local as well as far-flung international discoveries spanning different media and periods.

For this large-scale exhibition, the Hamburger Kunsthalle is collaborating for the first time with the Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'Art Moderne, Paris, enabling it to present over 30 exceptional works on loan including Salvador Dalí's *The Invisible Sleeping Woman, Horse, Lion etc.* (1930) and René Magritte's *The Double Secret* (1927). In its entirety, the comprehensive exhibition offers visitors the unique opportunity to experience world-renowned artworks, some of them never before shown, from over 80 international, private and public collections in the USA, Mexico and several European countries, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Colección FEMSA (Mexico); the Centre Pompidou in Paris; the Tate London; the Kunsthalle Prague; the Kunsthau Zürich and many more, as well as more than 30 international private collections, some of which have remained hidden until now.

The works on display date from the late eighteenth century to 1980 and cover all media, comprising around 300 paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, films, sculptures and objects by 65 Surrealists and 30 Romantic artists. Among them are many still under-recognised Surrealists such as Meret Oppenheim, Dorothea Tanning, Remedios Varo, Suzanne Van Damme and Jane Graverol. A large number of archival documents and manuscripts in the show trace the reception of the German Romantics by the Surrealists.

In 15 chapters, including *Friendship, Dream, Metamorphoses, Perception of Nature, Love, Ruin, Forest, Cosmos* and *Hymns to the Night*, the extensive exhibition compares and contrasts themes, philosophical concepts, paradigms, motifs and methods in visual art, poetry and theory, beginning with a consideration of the *Manifesto of Surrealism* by André Breton and explicit homages by the Surrealists to the German Romantics.

RENDEZVOUS OF DREAMS comprises three exhibition areas and extends over a total of 2,000 square metres, from the Hubertus Wald Forum (**1/Dream**), via a »Passage« consisting of several cabinets providing background information, to the gallery before the Rotunda in the Lichtwark building (**2/Forest**) and finally the stately domed hall (**3/Cosmos**).

In the »Passage« between the sections, the Kunsthalle's **Art Education and Outreach** department has devised interactive activities that allow viewers to draw inspiration from the original works to try out various artistic techniques, Surrealist processes and games. In addition to a photo station and the Surrealist game *Cadavre Exquis*, Romantic and Surrealist literature enables visitors to immerse themselves in the artists' world. Another station offers sylvan sounds and scents that attune visitors to the exhibition section *2/Forest*.

A wide range of guided tours for the public or for private booking provide in-depth information on the exhibits, as do the audio tours for adults (German/English) and for children and young people aged 8 and over (German), which are available free of charge via the Kunsthalle app. On one Saturday a month, various artistic techniques can be tried out at the *Open Studio for the whole family*.

The comprehensive **event programme** offers expert and artist talks as well as panel discussions at the Hamburger Kunsthalle and the Abaton Cinema, which will be screening a number of Surrealist films to

accompany the exhibition. For example, the internationally renowned artist Julian Rosefeldt will speak about the background behind his work *Manifesto* in the show and the power of Surrealism (4 Sept.). The *Salon Surreal* (18 Sept.) will musically spotlight current topics relating to the exhibition and host some interesting guests. And the young friends' society, Junge Freunde der Kunsthalle e. V., is organising a big party to round out the show (3 July).

An extensive, richly illustrated **catalogue** (344 pages, Hatje Cantz Verlag) is available for 45 euros at the museum store or via www.freunde-der-kunsthalle.de at the bookstore price of 58 euros. Over 30 international scholars of Surrealism present here the latest findings on the relationship between international Surrealism and German Romanticism, organised according to the chapters of the exhibition and with a focus on individual protagonists.

The exhibition is part of the international celebration marking the 100th anniversary of the Manifesto of Surrealism and is being hosted in varying forms at the Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels (21 February to 21 July 2024), the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (4 September 2024 to 13 January 2025), the Fundación Mapfre, Madrid (6 February to 11 May 2025), and the Philadelphia Museum of Art (8 November 2025 to 16 February 2026).

Curator: Dr. Annabelle Görgen-Lammers

Assistant curators: Vera Bornkessel and Maria Sitte

Research assistant: Laura Förster (Jan.–Sept. 2024)

Dr. Carsten Brosda, Hamburg Senator for Culture and Media: *»Following the major exhibition marking the 250th anniversary of the birth of Caspar David Friedrich, the Hamburger Kunsthalle is now celebrating 100 years of Surrealism. In keeping with the collection's focus on Romanticism, the exhibition explores for the first time the Surrealists' fascination with the German Romantics and spotlights the extent to which artists reacted to social upheavals in their works. The cooperation with the Centre Pompidou and other renowned museums demonstrates what is possible when cultural institutions work together across borders. The Kunsthalle is thus once again creating a first-rate cultural occasion for residents of the city and a reason for visitors from all over to flock to Hamburg.«*

Michael Behrendt, Chairman of the Hapag-Lloyd Foundation: *»Surrealism, whose 100th anniversary we are celebrating with this exhibition, promoted values that are more important today than ever: questioning what is familiar, appreciating the power of the imagination and strengthening interpersonal dialogue. We therefore immediately agreed to act as the main sponsor for this marvellous retrospective as our contribution to the creative dynamism and cultural diversity of our ›home port‹ of Hamburg.«*

Dr. Ekkehard Nümann, Chairman of the Freunde der Kunsthalle e. V.: *»We are once again delighted to be able to provide significant support for such a trailblazing exhibition project. The origins of this show lie in a pair of paintings by Max Ernst and Philipp Otto Runge in the collection of the Hamburger Kunsthalle that have prompted a joint consideration of German Romanticism and international Surrealism. Comparing these two masterpieces has opened up new areas of research while offering art-lovers a fresh perspective on the two periods.«*

Prof. Dr. Frank Druffner, Acting Secretary General of the Kulturstiftung der Länder: »With this exhibition, the Hamburger Kunsthalle is proposing a new approach to two important focal points of its collection by juxtaposing works of German Romanticism for the first time with the international Surrealist movement in order to trace intellectual affinities across time and national borders. I am particularly pleased that the achievements of female artists from both movements are also being honoured here – thanks to prestigious international loans – so that attention can be drawn to this gap in the history of art.«

The exhibition *RENDEZVOUS OF DREAMS* is under the patronage of the **French Ambassador to Germany, François Delattre**, and the **First Mayor and President of the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Dr. Peter Tschentscher**.

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The art education programme for the exhibition was made possible by Fürst Bismarck Quelle.



Annette Kreidler, Marketing Director at Fürst Bismarck Quelle: »Varied offerings can help to promote cultural education across generations and societal barriers, and we are therefore delighted to be able to support this aim with the Fürst Bismarck brand for the third year in a row.«

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