

IN PRINT: SURREALISM NOW

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Art in America

[Surrealism Now: Global Views + Afrosurrealist Film + Automatism and AI](#)



The cover of our April 2022 issue, featuring Meret Oppenheim's *Mask with Tongue Sticking Out*, undated, wire mesh, plastic, and velvet, 11 3/4 by 7 7/8 by 3 1/2 inches.

We live in surreal times. On the day of this letter's writing in early March, when I search Google for recent uses of that adjective in the news, I found Mike Krzyzewski, longtime Duke University basketball coach, telling ESPN of his impending retirement, "it's been a surreal few days." I found actor Sam Richardson saying to CBS of his newfound success, "it's kind of surreal." I found Texas teenager Jackson Reffitt testifying to jurors that the experience of tipping off the FBI about his father's participation in the storming of the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, was "surreal."

Having become part of the vernacular, the word has in certain ways eroded in meaning, so it's been refreshing to have a hefty museum exhibition, "Surrealism Beyond Borders"—which debuted at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York this past October and is currently on view at Tate Modern in London—remind us what Surrealism, according to the artists and writers who invented it, was actually all about. We at Art in America have taken the occasion of that show to meditate on the movement, and delve into what it means in the context of art being made today.

Defining a movement is not as simple as revisiting uncanny objects, automatic writing, and exquisite corpses. In her deep dive into the historiography of Surrealism and how various exhibitions have presented it over the years, Art in America Senior Editor Rachel Wetzler finds it eminently malleable, going from a harbinger of Abstract Expressionism to a plaything for theorists to a vehicle for global revisionism.

Surrealism casts a long shadow, and many artists working today remain very much engaged with it—in very different ways. Yasmina Price explores how Black experimental filmmakers, engaged in what cinema scholar Terri Francis in 2013 dubbed "Afrosurrealism," have used the movement's disorienting techniques to investigate colonialism and racism. Travis Diehl looks at a group of Los Angeles painters steeped in a twenty-first-century version of Surrealism. And Art in America Associate Editor Emily Watlington reminds us that the endlessly inventive Meret Oppenheim was far more than just the creator of a famous fur cup.

That Surrealism was born between two world wars will surely not be lost on today's readers, who—beginning just as this issue was going to press—have been mired in images of horrific battle scenes in Ukraine. Some of Surrealism's most brutal imagery—Salvador Dalí's, for instance—was inspired by the conditions of war. At its heart, Surrealism has always been a prompt: how do we envision the unimaginable?

—Sarah Douglas, Editor in Chief



Orion Martin: M.R.E., 2021, oil on linen with aluminum frame, 27 1/2 by 47 1/2 inches.
COURTESY DEROSIA, NEW YORK.