

Revised Sept. 2011

FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES: RENE MAGRITTE (1898-1967)

“Golconde”, 1953

Oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm

Supplies Needed:

- * Laminated examples from supply box (13 total)
- * 8 ½” x 11” sheets of light blue, 5” x 6” rectangles of black, 2” x 3” rectangles of white paper construction paper from teachers’ workroom
- * 1” x 3” strips of different colored construction paper from supplies in teachers’ workroom
- * Assorted ¼ sheets of red, orange, purple, yellow, etc. (for making fruit) from construction paper in teachers’ workroom
- * Students will need a white crayon, black pen or thin tipped marker, glue sticks and scissors
- * Bright blue construction paper for matting
- * Project sample
- * **Magritte**, by Meuris in supply box for reference

AHEAD OF TIME NOTE: Please cut ahead of time the following from construction paper. You will need one blue, one black & one white piece for each student. The construction paper is available in the teachers’ workroom, but try to utilize scraps if you can.

***8 ½” x 11” sheets of light blue,
5” x 6” rectangles of black,
2” x 3” rectangles of white paper
1” x 3” strips of different colored paper***

***In addition, please cut a number of colors (for the fruits) of construction paper into ¼ sheets .
Please copy the master “Famous Artist Series” note for each student in the classroom.***

Rene Magritte was a painter whose mysterious pictures teach us to look at objects in a new way. He was born in Belgium in 1898. His father was a tailor (he made suits) and his mother was a milliner (she made hats). His mother died tragically when Magritte was 12. Magritte was interested in art as a child and took art classes, though he did not stay in Art School as he wasn’t interested in the way his teachers wanted him to paint. In the early 1920’s Magritte worked designing wallpaper and making theater sets to earn money. Most painters have a studio where they paint, but Magritte worked on an easel in a corner of his small living room, even though it was not very practical.

Magritte painted everyday objects but he put things together in his paintings that do not usually go together, creating a strange, dreamlike picture. The items look “real” even though they are not exactly “right”. This is known as “Surrealism”. When he painted his pictures he applied his paint smoothly and without any brush marks, wanting them to look like photographs.

Present laminate #1 “The Clairvoyance”, “Double Self-Portrait” and photograph. Magritte painted the Clairvoyance picture early in his career. **Ask the students to look at the painting and the double self-portrait and see if they can notice anything odd.** When a painter is painting a “still life” painting, they often set up the scene they want to paint (i.e a vase of flowers) and then refer to it as they paint. In this painting, Magritte is looking at an egg but painting a bird. **Ask the students if they can figure out why the second picture is a “double” self-portrait. Show the students the double photo of Magritte as an older man. Note the hat he wears is called a “derby” and was very common in his day.**

Present laminate #2 “Personal Values”

What are the objects in this room? Are they really just normal things? All of a sudden a comb, a glass, a piece of soap, a shaving brush, and a match, become enormous - way too big to be usable. The scale of the items is not realistic. **Explain to student what “scale” means in a painting – how items are painted to look like they would in real life.** Now all of these ordinary things become exciting. Some people like to assign “meaning” to the images Magritte painted but he said they simply are items he’s put together – his paintings are not representing anything specific.

Present laminate #3 “Time Transfixed”. This painting was one of three commissioned for a wealthy man from England. The only thing Magritte said about this picture was that he had wanted the man to hang it in his staircase. That way as someone walked up the stairs, it would look like the train was coming straight at their head! This painting is now owned by The Art Institute in Chicago where you can see it for yourself.

Present the laminates #4, “The Lovers” and “The Heart of the Matter”, #5 “The Great War”, #6 “The Art of Living”, #7 “The Son of Man”.

Magritte rarely painted normal portraits (pictures of people). He found it boring when the person was recognizable and there was nothing unusual to see in the picture. When he was asked to paint portraits, he would think up surprising things. In these examples he has covered the people's heads with a cloth or fruit or flower. Even though their faces are cannot be seen, you can still tell a little bit about the people by the rest of the painting.

Present laminate #8 "The Dominion of Light". Ask the students if anything looks unusual in the painting.

Magritte has combined a night street and a daylight sky at the same time in one picture. When you first look at it, it looks normal. It is only after studying it that you see something is odd.

Show laminate #9 "Portrait" and #10 "The Red Model" as more examples of how Magritte changed the ordinary into the unusual.

Present laminate #11 "The Great Family", #12 "The False Mirror", and #13 "Private Diary."

Magritte liked to paint a sky in unexpected places. In these pictures he has made an eye, a dove, and a man into the sky.

Present framed picture "Golconde". In this painting, it looks as if men are raining from the sky instead of rain. Because of the way Magritte turned ordinary objects into bizarre scenes, he is considered a "Surrealist" painter. Golconda is a place in India that features an ancient fortress built at the top of a rocky granite ridge. Over time, the fortress has been used as a mausoleum for ancient kings, a treasury and a prison. In literature, Golconda refers to diamonds found throughout provinces in ancient India. ***Ask the students if they can think of any reason Magritte would have named this painted "Golconde"?*** Often Magritte made his pictures even more of a puzzle by adding titles that don't seem to mean anything about the picture itself. ***Refer to the double photo of Magritte in laminate #1 and point out the hat.*** There are many examples of men in Magritte's art who wear this style hat.

Project:

Today you are going to make a surrealist portrait like one of Magritte's.

Demonstrate the following steps (refer to sample project for assistance):

- 1. With your white crayon draw a rounded edge on each side of the black construction paper to make the man's shoulders. Cut out and glue it on the light blue construction paper. MAKE SURE THE BOTTOM OF THE COAT IS LINED UP WITH THE BOTTOM OF YOUR PAPER.**
- 2. Next you will need to cut out a triangle from the small piece of white paper. Glue on the top of the "coat" to make a shirt.**
- 3. Use the small strip of construction paper to make a tie. Demonstrate on the board how to draw a tie. Cut it out and glue it on the top of the shirt. Have them trim the tie, so it ends where the shirt ends (Some could make bow ties).**
- 4. Using your white crayon, draw a line straight down from the point of the shirt, and draw some buttons. Then draw two lines down on each side to make arms. Show the kids how to draw a collar for his suit jacket.**
- 5. Have student's chose the fruit (or veggie if they want) they would like to make for the head, but STRESS THAT THE HEAD SHOULD BE LARGER THAN NORMAL TO ADD TO THE BIZZARRE LOOK. Make sure they glue the fruit heads on the paper so that they are floating above the body.**
- 6. Demonstrate drawing a face on the board. Have them draw a face on their fruit with a black pen.**
- 7. The students may use their white crayon to color clouds in the background, and make sure they write their name on the back of their work.**
- 8. Matte in bright blue construction paper.**

FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES

Rene Magritte

Today in class a volunteer parent presented the works of Belgian Surrealist artist Rene Magritte to your child's class. They learned about Magritte's background, as well as made an art project in the style of his work. Ask your student about Magritte's work – what made his portraits so unique? What is surrealism?

The Art Institute of Chicago owns six of Magritte's paintings: "Untitled", "The Banquet", "The Tune and also the Words", "Time Transfixed", "On the Threshold of Liberty", and "The Eye". In addition, there is a wonderful childrens' story entitled Dinner at Magritte's by Garland which tells a tale of Magritte.

Sincerely yours,

Art Volunteer