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Artificialism was an artistic approach formulated in Paris by two avant-garde Czech artists, Jindřich Štýrský and Toyen (Marie Čermínová), in 1926. It was developed as a visual analogue to the literary movement, poetism. The manifesto of artificialism was published in ReD (Revue Devětsil, ‘Artificielismus,’ in *ReD* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1927-28)) in Prague in 1927, and called for painters to adopt many of the tenets of poetism. The most important principle of artificialism asks artists to rely on imagination in their creative work, suggesting that they find ways to use their memories and feelings productively in their art; this claim was determined in opposition to the assertion that the function of memory is limiting. Artificialism shares some characteristics with contemporary surrealism. Like surrealism, artificialists experimented with impulsive processes of artistic creation comparable to automatic writing, a process of writing that minimizes conscious engagement. The aim of such spontaneous modes of creation was to connect the artist with his or her sunbconscious mind during the creative process. The creative process pursued by the artificialists can be interpreted as a journey to find inspiration in sensual, poetic and imagined landscapes—the space between the conscious and the subconscious realms. As such, artificialism is sometimes seen as a bridge between abstraction and surrealism.

Jindřich Štýrský (1899 – 1942) conceived of artificialism, together with his artistic ally Toyen, in Paris in 1926. As a Devětsil member, poet, painter and art theorist he used the pages of the well known avant-garde group publication ReD to publish the prinicples of artificialism. His early work was inspired by cubism and primitivisim. Later, after he returned to Prague following many years abroad in Paris, Štýrský became a founding member of the Surrealist Group of Czechoslovakia. Štyrský is considered a leading Czech surrealist artist and a pioneer in collage and photomontage in the European context. His progressive expression in collage was further developed by his successor Jiří Kolář.

Toyen (1902 – 1980), born Marie Čermínová, was a young revolutionary who stirred the Czech avant-garde scene with her provocative imagination and erotic art. She garnered public attention with her male dress, eccentric behavior and sexually ambiguous pseudonym. Toyen was a member of Devětsil, and was a lifelong surrealist and progresive artificialist. Her contact with Paris intensified after she founded the Surrealist Group of Czechoslovakia in 1934 and her associates received a visit from leading French figures André Breton and Paul Eluard in Prague in 1935. Toyen continued her artistic practice secretly during WWII and in 1947 she immigrated to Paris. Her work re-appeared on the Prague exhibition scene only in 1966. Upon the dismantling of the Surrealist Group of Czechoslovakia in 1969, Toyen retired and died alone in Paris in 1980.

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