

# Surrealist Composition Project

## Overview

In this project, you will explore the artistic movement of Surrealism by creating a composition that combines unexpected elements to create a dreamlike, imaginative scene. Surrealism emerged in the early 20th century as artists sought to unlock the creative potential of the unconscious mind, creating artworks that challenge our perception of reality and invite viewers to see the world differently.

## Materials Needed

- Drawing paper (11"x14" recommended)
- Pencils (various hardness)
- Eraser
- Fine-tip black markers or pens
- Colored pencils, markers, watercolors, or other coloring media
- Access to research materials (books, internet)

## Instructions

### Step 1: Explore Surrealist Art

Research Surrealist artists and their works. Some notable Surrealist artists include:

- Salvador Dalí
- René Magritte
- Frida Kahlo
- Max Ernst
- Leonora Carrington
- Giorgio de Chirico
- Dorothea Tanning
- Yves Tanguy

Look for common techniques and themes in Surrealist art such as:

- Juxtaposition of unrelated objects
- Distortion of scale and proportion
- Metamorphosis (objects transforming into other objects)
- Dream imagery and symbolism
- Impossible or contradictory scenarios
- Visual puns and optical illusions

**Step 2: Generate Ideas**

In your sketchbook, brainstorm ideas for your surrealist composition:

- List objects that could be combined in unexpected ways
- Think about personal dreams or subconscious thoughts that could inspire your work
- Consider opposites that could be brought together (hot/cold, soft/hard, etc.)
- Reflect on meaningful symbols or recurring images in your life

Choose one of these techniques to spark ideas:

- Automatic drawing: Draw without planning, letting your hand move freely
- Word association: Write a word, then write another word it makes you think of, and continue
- Random object combination: Select 3-5 random objects and sketch ways they could interact

**Step 3: Plan Your Composition**

Decide on the elements and arrangement of your surrealist composition. Your artwork should include:

- At least 3 objects or elements that wouldn't normally be found together
- Alteration of scale, proportion, or physical properties of at least one object
- A cohesive composition with foreground, middle ground, and background
- Consideration of balance, emphasis, and visual flow

Make thumbnail sketches to explore different compositional possibilities.

**Step 4: Find Reference Images**

If creating an original composition feels challenging, you may search for surrealist artworks online for inspiration. Select a surrealist artwork that appeals to you and:

- Analyze its composition and techniques
- Identify the unexpected combinations and surrealist elements
- Use it as a reference for your own work, but make at least 3 significant changes to make it your own

**Step 5: Create Your Surrealist Composition**

1. Begin with a light pencil sketch of your composition
2. Refine your drawing, paying attention to proportions and details
3. Add shading and texture to create dimension
4. If using color, apply it thoughtfully to enhance the surreal qualities
5. Consider the background and negative space as important elements of your composition

Whether creating an original composition or a variation of an existing work, focus on creating a dreamlike quality that challenges normal perception.

### **Step 6: Write an Artist Statement**

Write a brief artist statement (150-200 words) that explains:

- The surrealist techniques you employed
- The meaning or symbolism behind your chosen elements
- How your composition reflects surrealist principles
- Your artistic process and challenges
- If you referenced an existing artwork, explain what changes you made and why

### **Step 7: Submit Your Work**

Hand in the following items:

- Your completed surrealist composition
- Your artist statement
- Preliminary sketches and planning notes
- If applicable, a copy of the surrealist artwork that inspired your piece

### **Assessment Criteria**

Your project will be assessed on:

1. Understanding and application of surrealist principles
2. Technical skill and craftsmanship
3. Creativity and originality (or thoughtful adaptation of existing work)
4. Compositional strength and visual impact
5. Depth of reflection in your artist statement

### **Tips for Success**

- Push yourself to think beyond conventional combinations
- Pay attention to creating a cohesive composition, not just random juxtapositions
- Use reference images for individual elements to draw them accurately
- Consider how light, shadow, and perspective can make impossible scenes appear more believable
- Remember that surrealism often contains humor, mystery, or unsettling elements
- If adapting an existing artwork, make thoughtful changes that demonstrate your understanding